

## VOICE

SACHIYO ITO in her concert of Kabuki and Kabuki-style dancing at Japan House, performed dances that, in their own way, were as pristine and fluid as Dean's. Yet Kabuki is a hot-house style—delicate, contrived, mysteriously lovely. Even the flyaway gestures that indicate terror or wavering spirits seem, in their disarray, true to some code.

It is beautiful and fragile. It's satisfying to see her dance roles that are usually played by men in travesty. In "Sagi Musume" (White

## dance

by Deborah Jowitt

Laura Dean at NYU's Loeb  
Sachiyo Ito at Japan House  
The Juilliard Dance Ensemble

Heron Maiden), a dance based on an ancient poem, she loitered veiled in white, waiting for love—making us see the snow, the dimness, her

uncertainty. Much later, after an assistant had disarranged the hair of her elaborate wig, she showed the torment of the unhappy woman in hell—sinking to the ground, swaying her body back and forth to evade some invisible horror. Elegantly resigned, even in agony.

The dancer's own two compositions in the Kabuki manner were in the same feminine style. Small footsteps, curving in. Almost every motion, as a matter of fact, curving and small. Following the dancer's body from head to feet,

your eyes see a series of curves that are perpetually being re-arranged. The process might be finicky if it were less subtle. Her head nods and wobbles delicately; her arms trace circles and scallops very close to her body. She'd look like a reed or a flower swaying if it weren't for the interesting small suddennesses of delicate hobbles, stumbles, freezes. In "Fuji Ondo" (Wisteria Melody), expressing a simple and humble love poem, Ito wore traditional wig and used a fan. In "Haru No Umi" (The Sea in the Spring), her attire was plainer and her hair unpinned. Some of the gestures seemed slightly looser, more impressionistic, but still traditional in feeling.

She also performed the Kabuki dance, "Urashima," which is in the masculine style. It's about a fisherman who, landing on his home beach after years of happy love bondage to an undersea princess, expresses bewilderment and remembered bliss. Then he opens a forbidden box and is transformed into an old man. The effect is both comical and pathetic: he's almost too weak to shoulder his fishing pole. The male style involves a broader stance, more forceful gestures, a weightier tread, but just as much ambiguity in the body. Sachiyo achieved surprising strength and roughness, although I

kept thinking she wasn't quite heavy enough.

The concert at Japan House was shared by the koto player Fusako Yoshida. She played three solos, one of which, the 17th-century "Midare" (Disorder) sounded wonderfully tangled and plangent.