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## Dance: Sachiyo Ito Presents The Old and New Japanese

By JACK ANDERSON

**O**N Wednesday night at the Theater of the Riverside Church, Sachiyo Ito and Company offered Japanese dances, old and new, that were really ageless dances because they suggested that certain themes recur in culture after culture.

Miss Ito was a doll who came to life in "Kyo Ningyo (A Craftsman and a Puppet)," a Kabuki dance from 1843. The way she spiced daintiness with slyness recalled a similar scene in "Coppélia," France's great 19th-century comic ballet.

Miss Ito and Sahotoyo Tachibana were lovers from feuding families in "Cho No Michiyuki (A Journey of Butterflies)," a kabuki dance of 1818. But this Japanese "Romeo and Juliet" ended with a supernatural twist when the lovers became butterflies in the afterlife.

A Kabuki offering from 1820, "Tama Usagi (A Rabbit in the Moon)" demonstrated the power of theatrical convention and interpretive conviction. The solo told of a rabbit who makes rice cakes in the moon, but who came to earth disguised as a woodcutter to trap an evil badger. Miss Ito was first glimpsed as a silhouetted figure pounding rice inside a lunar disk. Then she demurely

stamped and hopped her way to earth. And she did so with such conviction that she made one accept the unfamiliar mimetic conventions.

In "Bon Odori," a folk dance, a solemn procession gave way to swayings with fans. Although the cast portrayed spirits, the piece could be enjoyed simply for its formal austerity.

Miss Ito's own "The Sunset" was equally austere. Here, three women repeatedly placed their hands before their faces and, later, waved streamers to music that sounded as if it were written in traditional Japanese modes. It may well have been. But the composer was Stephen Sondheim.

Miss Ito's affinity for nature was evident in "Haru No Omi (The Sea in Spring)," in which fluttering fans became birds' wings. In "Kazahana" Shiro Kondo portrayed a boatman steering his vessel through misty waters while Miss Ito was a ghostly presence beside him. A dance about transience, it was timeless in its appeal.