

# The liberation Zone which is eternal and ephemeral

Review of 2016 Theater Playground Shiim's Street Performance 'Carrying Stones – Hello from Asia'

**Lee GoWon**

1

Theater Playground Shiim's "Carrying Stones – Hello from Asia" was presented in front of Bujun Library on the 21<sup>st</sup> of November. I knew that performance place very well. I just got a vague expectation before I arrived at the place, the very familiar street. The library itself as a place didn't seem to match with their aesthetics which was not easily understood with the title 'Carrying Stones'. While I was guessing the meaning of mismatch, stones piled up randomly over there came into my sight. Then I could understand why they had chosen Monday instead of Friday or weekend for the performance. When I recognized that the library was off, my vague expectation got some shape.

I heard that there were many arguments about whether this library which had opened in 1963 was to be reconstructed or to be conserved as its origin. I could sense slightly an irony from that story. The library as a space is also ironic. Aren't the words which are confined in the books clusters of desperate desires? At the same time, isn't the reading room in which only the sound of turning each page that has been eaten by time tensioned by the forced silence? These ironies bind the deep impression and the knowledge from the past confined in the book shelves to the reality of the present, make people pay time to read books, and are reinforced as it make people dream for the future at the same time. What did Theater Playground Shiim want to talk about in front of history and memory which might be kept by this space of actually great irony?

I was looking at the poster hung on the front gate of the library. City names came into my sight before the names of directors and actors. It went like this. Director (Tokyo) Hiroshi Ohashi / Performer (Busan) ChoiSeHee, BaekDaeHyun, HongSeungYi, YangSongYi, (Daegu) ParkMaria, GwonSoonJung, (Tokyo) Takumi Harada, (Shanghai) YuLingNa, (Hongkong) LeeChiMan, (Taipei) ChengYInChen, (Bangalore) Archana Sivaram Kumar. 11 performers from 7 cities of 4 countries would appear. I looked slowly into the cooperation and the result of these artists.

2

There were scattered small or big stones at the front gate of the library that was off. Stones were a little bit piled up at the corner in deferent ways. Some were on the white paper, others were on the pavement. That scenery made me associate it with ruins of the future or brought me to the prehistoric time of primeval vitality like illusion. Rough music recorded with noise came out of the speaker. It might be music for some, or it might be noise for others who passed by, because it was on the border line between music and noise. People naturally got together to see what would happen. Then, one performer started to walk around with desperate voice. Another performer staggered into the space with a heavy stone, while the former performer attracted the eyes of the people. The other went into the space through the more people who filled the street. Soon each of 11 performers was struggling with stones in their own ways.

One performer was yelling and another performer looked like talking with a stone as if falling in love. While people were watching the performer lying on the car road, another performer spit fire continuously. The yellow ginkgo leaves fell on the autumn street as if they were consoling their struggle. The leaves that were watching the insane movement of human beings with interest at the end of the branches fell down helplessly to the ground. One performer started to hang rope for the clothes after repeating these simple actions. He connected the pillar of the gate and street trees with the rope using ladder. Then they started to hang colorful cloth on the rope.

I suddenly murmured 'modern people' and 'stone'. Then I contemplated this directly translated 'carrying stones'. During today, I had held the mobile phone, key board, mouse, pen, etc. I had never even touched a stone. Yesterday, had I touched? I could barely remind the touch of stones. Then what have I carried recently? Even if it wasn't a stone, there might be something that I carried. But I could say anything. I can't say anything in instance even if I have lived in this physical world as the existence that has weight. The performers' bodies that were sustaining the weight of the stones came into my eyes when I realized this truth that was not normal. As for the weight of the stones, the stones have not only the real weight but also the weight combined with many meanings and textures. For example, it is the weight of the value of labor which has been excluded behind the modernization and is the symbol of the nature at the same time. It is the hidden desire to create civilization but is the desire to deny it.

Theater Playground 'Shiim' has tried to present various style of performances from 'Soft-light Room' to recently 'The Memory of a Sea Bird'. It is more interesting to trace their works than any other writers'. So I

could have nodded with confidence. I believed that their works were based on 'the theater of cruelty of Antonin Artaud'. But Shiim's artistic activities wouldn't be simply analyzed only with the term, 'absurd theater'. It seemed that the performers including the representative Mr. Baek made up their mind to deny any established system preparing this experimental performance. They would deny narrative and language in wide range. They talked to the stones, asked questions of them, or named them like 'the stone that has been broken into pieces', 'the stone of which soul is abnormal', 'the drowned stone', and 'the lazy stone'. This disability of communication shows the limit that language can't go beyond. So I need to write this review out of any intention to limit the effect and the meaning of this performance to the certain form of thought. But I am worrying if I just apply only one 'langue' to their movements and voices as an intellectual audience

I can remind the female performer who was lying on the pavement. This scene showed how to try to communicate where language was denied. Park Maria wrote like followings in the space of Face Book. "I carry, watch, touch, hold, and then try to become a stone. I stop the movement, open my ears, start to observe stones, and then breathe with stones." This was the movement that she shook off the meaning and the shell as a human being and lowered herself to a stone, and become an object like a stone. Audience who were watching this performance could have multiple meanings in their mind. In my case, 'A stone as an existence might be better human beings', 'human beings who distort themselves with embellishment, who get or lose the meaning of existence for the eyes of others.

On the other hand, the performers stood still yelling or sending messages enthusiastically to the audience while carrying stones. "Dear my love, kiss me to death." "I'm thirsty, Give me a water!" Though those sentences were spoken in a foreign language, their desperate desire to communicate showed the individual existence which couldn't break out of a nomadic object which had been molded by capitalism. The female performer who had come from Bangalore India kept shouting, 'Men are sitting on me', he from Tokyo kept talking about nuclear power station. They were conveying 'Hello from Asia' desperately like carrying stones.

4

The stone tied to rope crossed the car road. While this stone was crossing the car road in the center of the metropolis where many cars were passing, some cars stopped or others honked horns. The process of crossing the car road was definitely boring as Sisyphus had carried up the stones rolling down for ever. The performers who had crossed the car road shouted 'Don't give up' and played the saxophone to endure this boredom.

They danced and cheered when the stone had finally crossed the car road. The audience applauded after watching this unexpected event. But it was only a short moment. The cars were passing through the stones of Sisyphus as if nothing had happened. What did they want to show to the audience with this process? Stone and fire mean primitive power and are also the symbol of eternity. There must have been a strong will to send energy to the society with carrying stones. Soon it reached to creation of the liberation zone. What are these eternity and the liberation zone? Aren't they resistance against the alienation which was born by pariah capitalism or hope to recover the contact with eternity like universe or history. The liberation zone is where the controlling power is cut out, where the resistance is based, and where Asian People can say hello to the world as just human beings.

The task and diagnosis of an epoch can't be same.

But any genre of art in this land can't be free from the day, April 16<sup>th</sup> 2014.

The performers and some citizens got together at the rehearsal room of Shiim after the performance.

Time was still passing while they toasted saying 'Singueler'. One person stood up and sang a song a little drunken.

"Parting is so long, sadness so long / Time is so long to stand for waiting

Melt down the dried galaxy with tears / Put stones on the heart and heart

I can't explain why I associated 'Sewol' ship with the scene that the performer dragged the rope tied to the big stone.

Dear my love waving hand / Cross the galaxy

Even though there are no stones or a bridge / We can meet stepping on the hearts

Today, they put a stone at the center of Seomyun for ephemeral and eternal liberation zone. The petals of the white chrysanthemums which had been put in their chest were scattered in the street by the autumn wind.

The petal had gone far away till I couldn't follow with my eyes.