



Yu Yu Rau in *Re-encounter*. Photo: Sammi Fang

# STEPPING EAST

## DONALD HUTERA sums up a platform for British East Asian dance

South Asian dance is well represented in the UK thanks to top-flight London-based crossover artists like Shobana Jeyasingh and Akram Khan, then trickling down to dance-makers throughout the regions. The next field ripe for development is British East Asian dance, but it's a strand of work much harder to identify. Why? Because it's less tied to established traditions than the various classical Indian genres, plus its various practitioners arguably hail from more diverse cultural backgrounds.

Step Out Arts wants to redress the balance by giving emerging British East Asian choreographers greater opportunities and exposure. To that end the organisation has received Arts Council England funding to present showcases of new work. The first was held last autumn at the University of Bedfordshire and Greenwich Dance Agency, with a second programme staged in both locations this year.

Stepping East 2010 demonstrated that Step Out Arts is on the right track. The six participating choreographers were chosen via a competitive process. Each worked with a mentor – including independent artist Wendy Houstoun and composer Matteo Fargion, who's collaborated regularly with British choreographic mainstays Jonathan

Burrows and Siobhan Davies – to help advance the presentation of their ideas. Two of the young makers also featured in the 2009 showcase, and were thus given a chance to build upon work created then.

The evening had value in terms of talent spotting. Consider Khamlane Halsackda, born in Laos but raised in Britain and probably best known here as a former member of Wayne McGregor's *Random Dance*. First seen in 2009, his solo *A single act* was a heart-felt act of exposure about first love. Initially clad in a loose white gown, Halsackda wheeled on a clothes rack before coming downstage and talking about walking proudly and lovingly beside an imaginary husband. Other brief, plain-spoken monologues ensued, interspersed with elastic yet muscular movement and a few costume changes (Halsackda nude, posed on a chair with a red cloth draped over his head, or in skimpy shorts, gyrating then running in place to club music). The work was a little rough and raw, and self-indulgent in the clubbing section, but I appreciated its sincerity alongside Halsackda's attractions as a dancer.

Formerly a member of Candoco, the Japanese-born deaf choreographer Chisato Minamimura is developing a style she dubs visual sound/music. *New Beats* was