

DANCER OF THE WEEK – Mari Kamata Fri 1 July

There's only a few shows left of Matthew Bourne's *Sleeping Beauty* at the LG Arts Center in Seoul, it's been a great first stop on the Asia Tour, with such warm audiences! Nick, our Audience Engagement Coordinator, spoke to Mari this week, who plays the role of Ardor and covers Feral and Aurora.

Mari has been a part of the Company since 2010, first seen in *Swan Lake*. She is originally from Japan and is particularly excited to perform to a home crowd in Tokyo, in September with *Sleeping Beauty* and is due to be playing Aurora!



A young Mari performing

When did you start taking dance classes?

I started dancing when I was 6 years old, at my local ballet school in Sendai, Japan. My first lesson was particularly memorable and funny. I remember everyone smoothly doing bows to the teacher at the beginning of the class and I couldn't figure out how to do a fifth position. My instinct told me to turn both of my feet in as much as possible, looking like I wanted to go to toilet and pretended everything was just fine, with an awkward smile on my face. I was so nervous and embarrassed. The teacher chuckled at me but thank god she just carried on!

Where did your formal training take place?

I trained at Rambert School of Ballet and Contemporary Dance from 2004 to 2007.

What drew you to the Company?

I had always known of Matthew and his work, especially as his version of *Swan Lake* is such an iconic production and very famous in Japan! I first saw his work at Sadler's Wells, when the Company were performing *Edward Scissorhands* in 2005. I remember watching from the second circle and was so shocked when the topiary began moving and started dancing (which you can watch [here](#))! I had thought that the topiary was just a stationary part of the set! Time had stopped and it was like I was in a beautiful dream. It was just so magical! Coming out of the theatre, my heart was still pounding with excitement and it was nothing like I've ever seen or felt before! Matt always says 'be truthful' when storytelling, which is what I love about New Adventures' shows and over the years I have grown so attached to the Company.

Do you have any hobbies/interests outside of dance?

I love doing Yoga, especially Hot Yoga. It calms me and balances out my mind and body. I completed an International Yoga Alliance 200-hours course in 2014 and would like to make use of this qualification in the future. I also love watching movies. I love the feeling when you are drawn to the story, with so many emotions inside you. It is also a useful way to study acting as well, perfect for storytelling in the Company!

What's it like being on tour and in a different place every week?

I don't mind touring but I do enjoy staying in one place for long stretch, like the month-long run we usually do at Sadler's Wells. However, I feel so lucky to be able to travel all over the world with the Company and the international leg of our tours are definitely my favourite part, especially when we get to perform in Italy and New York City! I think finding a routine for yourself is key when you are touring. It is important to have decent digs, know where to get good food and a nice place to have a drink! I like finding cafés that do a good cup of coffee and we also often get together to go for brunch, which gives you a great boost of energy to start the day!

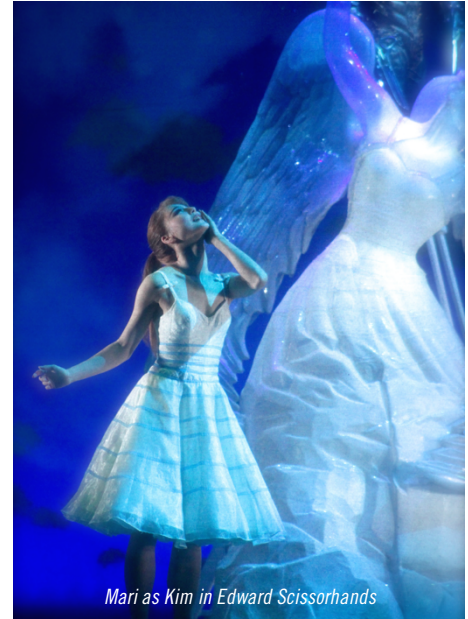
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Do you have a favourite venue to perform at?

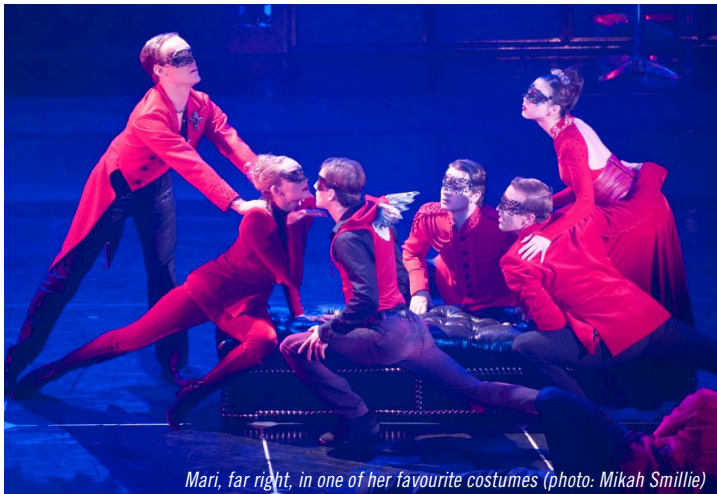
I like Sadler's Wells as I used to work there as a bar tender (surprise!) before I joined the Company, so it is very familiar and always nice to go back to. I also like Norwich Theatre Royal, as this is where I made my debut with the Company on *Swan Lake*, as well as where I performed my dream role as Kim in the 2014/15 tour of *Edward Scissorhands*. So always brings back such precious memories. However, I am looking forward to performing to a home crowd at the Orb Theatre, Tokyo, in September.

In many of Matthew Bourne's shows the dancers have to learn more than one role, performing several tracks in one show and *Sleeping Beauty* is no exception. How do you remember more than one role?

I mainly play Ardor, but also cover Feral and Aurora. It is something you need to get used to and you gradually find your own way to remember each track because each character is different. I must say everyone is a pretty quick learner in the Company, so spending time together, all the time, you get used to it and are ready for any circumstances, including in the case of injuries.



Mari as Kim in *Edward Scissorhands*



Mari, far right, in one of her favourite costumes (photo: Mikah Smillie)

Do you have a favourite costume you've worn during your time with New Adventures so far?

I particularly love 2 of my costumes in *Sleeping Beauty*. My fairy costume is absolutely beautiful, so detailed and individual (I also love my wig!). Another is my 'Kill Bill' style, open back costume from the Red Scene in Act 4. Both were made for me when we created the show, so are very special to me and always will be.

What's your favourite role that you have performed as so far, in the Company, and is there another New Adventures production that you would love to take part in?

This is very difficult to choose, every production is so different and I have enjoyed each role that I have played so far! If I had to choose, I have 3 roles that are my absolute favorite. I loved playing the Romanian Princess from *Swan Lake*, as it was my first role that I played with the Company. I also love playing the Ardor fairy in *Sleeping Beauty*. Playing Ardor as part of the original cast in 2012, I feel so attached to the role and it will always be special to me. Finally, it has to also be my dream role as Kim in *Edward Scissorhands*. I was lucky to have the opportunity to play this role and I will never forget it!

You are able to follow Mari on Instagram (@marichanchan72) for a further insight into her world!