

国際演劇年鑑 2019

Theatre
Yearbook
2019

Theatre in Japan

日本の舞台芸術を知る

NOH and KYŪGEN – KABUKI and BUNRAKU – MUSICAL – CONTEMPORARY THEATRE –
CHILDREN'S and YOUTH THEATRE and PUPPET THEATRE – JAPANESE
CLASSICAL DANCE – BALLET – CONTEMPORARY DANCE and BUTOH – TELEVISION

公益社団法人 国際演劇協会日本センター
ITI / UNESCO

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Published in March, 2019

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Foreword

The Japanese Centre of the International Theatre Institute is a non-governmental organisation under the umbrella of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and is also a member of an international network comprised of National Centres and professional organisations in approximately ninety countries and regions constituting the International Theatre Institute (ITI).

The preamble of the UNESCO Constitution begins with the following famous phrase: ‘Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed.’ In Article 3 of the standing rules of the Japanese Centre of the International Theatre Institute, the purpose of the Centre is stipulated as follows: ‘to contribute to the development of culture and realisation of peace in Japan by deepening mutual understanding and facilitating the creations and exchanges of theatre and dance based upon the purpose of the UNESCO Constitution.’

Theatre and dance are excellent media that enable us to take interest in one another and to think about people and society by sharing time and space together. Even in today’s society, where the means of communication have developed and the volume and speed of distributing information have increased dramatically, the role of theatre and dance that help us gain multifaceted and deep insights will not diminish.

The Japanese Centre has continued to publish the Theatre Yearbook since 1972. Starting from 1997, it has been published in two separate volumes, namely ‘Theatre in Japan’ (in English) for readers outside Japan and ‘Theatre Abroad’ (in Japanese) for domestic readers. From 2011, the Centre has been commissioned by the Agency for Cultural Affairs to carry out the publication project under the ‘Programme for Nurturing Upcoming Artists Leading the Next Generation’.

Furthermore, reading performances have been presented every year since 2009 to introduce remarkable plays from around the world as part of the research and study activities to promote international theatrical exchange. In 2018, the ‘Theatre Born in Conflict Zones’ series was carried out for the tenth consecutive year and two new plays from Israel/Germany and Canada were translated and introduced to Japan for the first time.

We hope that the publication of the Theatre Yearbook will be utilised widely to lay a firm foundation for actual activities to gain knowledge on the relationship between Japan and the world, to deepen the understanding between Japan and other countries and regions by positioning Japan within the global network, and to realise cultural development and peace.

We look forward to your continued support and co-operation to the activities of the Japanese Centre of the International Theatre Institute in the years to come.

March 27, 2019

In commemoration of the World Theatre Day

Nagai Taeko
President
Japanese Centre of International Theatre Institute

CONTENTS

005 **Shots from the Performing Arts in Japan in 2018**

The Japanese Performing Arts in Japan in 2018

- 034 **Noh and Kyōgen** Nishi Tetsuo
040 **Kabuki and Bunraku** Mizuochi Kiyoshi
051 **Musicals** Hagio Hitomi
060 **Contemporary Theatre** Yamaguchi Hiroko
069 **Children's and Youth Theatre and Puppet Theatre** Yokomizo Yukiko
078 **Japanese Classical Dance** Hirano Hidetoshi
092 **Ballet** Urawa Makoto
100 **Contemporary Dance and Butoh** Tsutsumi Hiroshi
112 **Television Dramas** Nakamachi Ayako

Developments in Japan and Overseas

- 122 Remembering Asari Keita:
A Master Living in the Irrational Contradictions of Art and Business / Uchida Yoichi
135 An Interview with Mr. Kobayashi Yasuhiro of the Performing Arts Section,
Secretariat for *Japonismes*, The Japan Foundation
On the influence of *Japonismes 2018* in Presenting Traditional to Cutting-Edge Performances / Katsura Mana

Special Feature

- 154 A Report on 'Theatre Born in Conflict Zones 10'
Two Plays from Germany and Canada Linked to Conflict Zones
– *Common Ground* and *This Is War* / Niino Morihiro
164 Companion Volume 'Theatre Abroad 2019' in Japanese
166 ITI Centres

Names are presented in the style of the person's country of origin.

For Japanese names, the order is family name followed by given name.

Play titles and company names include those supplied directly by the respective companies and are not the responsibility of the translator.

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**Shots from the Performing Arts in Japan
in 2018**

Noh and Kyōgen



Negi Yamabushi (The Shinto Priest and the Mountain Priest) Yamamoto Tōjirō © National Noh Theatre



The 229th program in Ibaraki City's project Commemorating the 70th Anniversary of the Implementation of its Municipal System / New Work for Kyōgen *Ibaraki Dōji (The Ogre's Child)* Shigeyama Senzaburō / Ibaraki Foundation of Culture © Ibaraki Foundation of Culture



Umewaka Minoru 4th Name-Succession Noh **Okina Tanzan Shiki and Hiyoshi Shiki Styles** Umewaka Minoru 4th / Umewaka Kai © Maejima Yoshihiro



Asami Masakuni Kiju Kinen Program (celebrating his attaining the age of 77) **Ōmu Komachi (The Legend of Ono no Komachi's 'Parrot Reply')** Asami Masakuni / Yoyogi Kashō Kai © Takahashi Ken

Noh and Kyōgen



13th Memorial Program for Uzawa Hayao *Dōjōji (The Legend of the Serpent Demoness and the Temple Bell)* Kanze Tetsunojō / Uzawa Yōtarō no Kai © Maejima Yoshihiro



Commemorative Program of the National Theatre's 50th Anniversary *Kazuraki Kagura (The Goddess Kazuraki with Kagura Dance)* Kanze Motonori in November 2016 © National Noh Theatre



Sumidagawa (Sumida River) Issō Hisayuki in May 2015
© National Noh Theatre

Kabuki



Kanjinchō (The Subscription List) Ichikawa Somegorō (left) Matsumoto Kōshirō (centre) Matsumoto Hakuō (right) © Shochiku



Sekai no Hana Oguri Hangan (The Tale of Oguri Hangan) Onoe Kikugorō (right) © National Theatre

Kabuki



Sukeroku Kuruwa no Hatsu Zakura Kataoka Nizaemon © Shochiku



Narukami Fudō Kitayama Zakura (Narukami and Fudō) Ichikawa Ebizō © Shochiku

Kabuki



Zōho Futatsu Domoe (*The New and Improved Story of the Thief Ishikawa Goemon*) Onoe Kikunosuke (left) Nakamura Kichiemon (right) © National Theatre



NARUTO Nakamura Hayato (left) Bandō Minosuke (right) © Shochiku

Bunraku



Sesshū Gappō ga Tsuji – Gappō Sumika no dan (The Tale of Tamate Gozen – Gappō's House)

© National Theatre and Ningyō Jōruri Bunraku-za



Yoshida Tamasuke V Name-succession program *Honchō Nijūshi Kō - Kansuke Sumika no dan (The Japanese Twenty-Four Examples of Filial Piety - Kansuke's House)* © National Theatre and Ningyō Jōruri Bunraku-za

Bunraku



Rôben Sugi no Yurai – Nigatsudô no dan (The Origin of the Cedar Tree of Rôben – The Nigatsudô Hall of Tōdaiji Temple)
© National Theatre and Ningyô Jôruri Bunraku-za



Kamakura Sandaiki – Takatsuna Monogatari no dan (Three Generations of Kamakura Shōgun - Takatsuna's Battle Tale)
© National Theatre and Ningyô Jôruri Bunraku-za

Musicals



Marie Antoinette Toho Theatrical Div. © Toho Theatrical Div.



History of Japan SIS Company. © Miyagawa Maiko

Musicals



THE Poe Clan Takarazuka Revue Flower Troupe © Takarazuka Revue © Moto Hagio / Shogakukan



Mary Poppins HoriPro Inc./Toho/Tokyo Broadcasting System Television, Inc./Umeda Arts Theater



Bullets Over Broadway Toho Theatrical Div. © Toho Theatrical Div.



WOMAN of the YEAR Tokyo Broadcasting System Television, Inc. (Tokyo) / Umeda Arts Theater © Mori Yoshihiro

Contemporary Theatre



Oh, Even So, Even So: The Dumb Waiter of Many Orders THEATRE OFFICE NATORI © Sakauchi Futoshi



Night Never Gets Darker Saitama Arts Theater © Miyagawa Maiko



The Misunderstanding New National Theatre, Tokyo © Hikiji Nobuhiko



Antigone PARCO CO., LTD. © Abe Akihito

Contemporary Theatre



TERROR PARCO CO., LTD./Hyogo Performing Arts Center © Hikiji Nobuhiko



The Air Ver. 2: No One Shall Write Nitosha © Homma Nobuhiko



ok, so long. GOTANNADAN © Maeda Shiro



Heritage Gekidan Chocolatecake © Ikemura Takashi

Contemporary Theatre



Nuns KERA MAP © Hikiji Nobuhiko



Me and War Ryuzanji Company © Yokota Atsushi

Children's and Youth Theatre and Puppet Theatre



The Wonderful Wizard of Oz Shadow Play Theatre KAKASHIZA © Umemura Takako



Children of the Sea ACO Okinawa © Lim, Young-hwan

Children's and Youth Theatre and Puppet Theatre



Scrum and Crash: Children's Second Plan is Ready KAZENOKO Theatre Company © Nakajima Shirusu

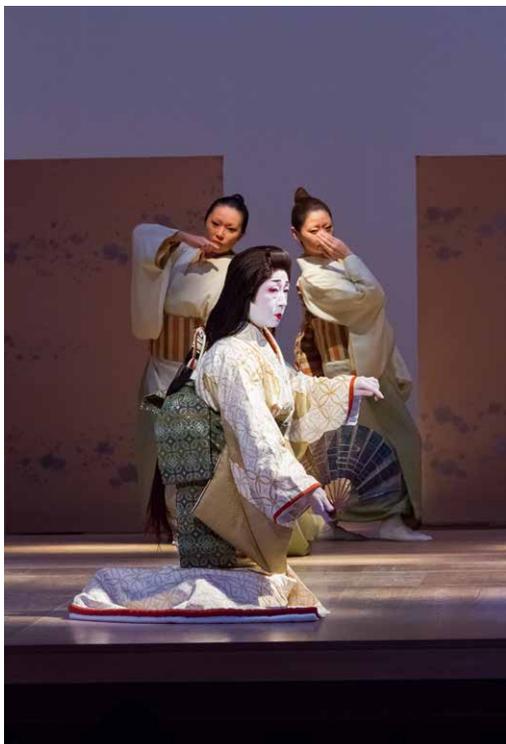


The Story of the Seagull and the Gang of Tomcats Puppet Theatre Puk © Agata Seiji

Japanese Classical Dance



Kiyomoto: Hokushū Hanayagi Mariko © Video Photo Saito



Sōfugaku: Omoi Takigawa Mizuki Yuka / Mizukiryū Tokyo
Mizuki Kai © Kotobuki Shasin

Japanese Classical Dance



Hanayagi Tamaito and Izumi Yūki Recital **Kiyomoto: Yoshinoyama** Hanayagi Tamaito (left) Izumi Yūki (right) / Tamayū no Kai
© Takada Etsuo



Geimaruzo Kenkyū Kai **Nagauta: Funa Benkei** Hanayagi Ōhisui / Geimaruzo © Mai Video

Ballet



HOKUSAI Tani Momoko Ballet © STAFF TESS



The Sleeping Beauty Jinushi Kaoru Ballet Company © Fumio Obana

Contemporary Dance and Butoh



ROMEO & JULIETS Noism1×SPAC © Kishin Shinoyama



Saitama Dance Laboratory Vol.1 Atelier Class Showing **solos** Saitama Arts Theater (Saitama Arts Foundation) © matron2018

Contemporary Dance and Butoh



UNETSU - The Egg Stands out of Curiosity (re-creation) Sankai Juku © Sankai Juku



"The Firebird" from Sumida Summer Concert 2018 -Chance to Play- Yukio Suzuki with the New Japan Philharmonic © K.MIURA



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Is it worth to save us? KAAT Kanagawa Arts Theatre / HiWood © bozzo



Pierrot Lunaire Tokyo Metropolitan Theatre / Tokyo Metropolitan Government / Arts Council Tokyo / KARAS © Oguma Sakae

Contemporary Dance and Butoh



START ME UP CONDORS © HARU



GAKA Tomoko Mukaiyama © Anke Teunissen

舞臺芸術の
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**The Japanese Performing Arts
in 2018**

Noh and Kyōgen

A Rich Variety on the Noh Scene

Nishi Tetsuo

Award Winners and Certifications

Certification as a 'Preserver of Important Intangible Cultural Property'

Kakahara Takashi was awarded the certification, 'Preserver of Important Intangible Cultural Property' – Individual Certification (so called, National Living Treasure). He is a performer on the Ōtsuzumi (hand-held hip drum) of the Takayasu Ōtsuzumi School. Born in 1940, he was the eldest son of Kakihara Shigezō and he received instruction from his father as well as from Yasufuku Haruo.

At present, he is the 45th person to have received this designation.

Japan Art Academy Membership

The Japan Art Academy selected eight persons whose artistic activities have displayed remarkable achievements as new members. From the Noh world, Yamamoto Tōjirō, Kyōgen performer of the Ōkura School, Yamamoto Tōjirō was chosen to receive this honor. Born in 1937 in Tokyo, the eldest son of Yamamoto Tōjirō 3rd, Mr. Yamamoto received instruction from his father. He is a recipient of: the Award for the Encouragement of the Arts of the Minister of Education, Science and Culture, the Japan Art Academy Prize and the Kanze Hisao Memorial Hōsei University Noh Theatre Award among others. He has also received the certification, 'Preserver of Important Intangible Cultural Property' – Individual Certification (National Living Treasure).

Award for the Encouragement of the Arts

The Award for the Encouragement of the Arts of the Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology for the year 2018 was presented to Sugi Ichikazu (March 7th). A *Nohkan* (traverse bamboo flute) performer of the Morita School, he was born in 1953 and received instruction from his grandfather, Sugi Ichitarō as well as from Morita Mitsuharu.

Membership in the Nohgaku Performers Association

In July 2018, the Nohgaku Performers Association conferred membership on 45 Nohgaku performers along with the designation, ‘Preserver of Important Intangible Cultural Properties’ (Collective Certification).

Grand Prize at the Arts Festival of the Agency for Cultural Affairs

The Grand Prize at the Arts Festival of the Agency for Cultural Affairs was awarded to the Takashi Takeda Memorial Nohgaku Foundation for the achievement of *shite* performer Takeda Yukifusa in *Sekidera Komachi (Ono no Komachi at Sekidera Temple)*, as well as to Kyōgen performer Zenchiku Takashi for his success in the *Ai-Kyōgen* (Subordinate Comic Character) role in *Tsuchigumo (The Monstrous Ground Spider)*

Hōsei University Awards in Noh Theatre

The 39th Kanze Hisao Memorial Hōsei University Noh Theatre Award was given to Oda Sachiko, a scholar in the field of Nohgaku, and Katayama Kurōemon, a *shite* performer of the Kanze School.

The Saika Award went to Yanagisawa Shinji a journalist in the

field of Nohgaku.

Name Succession

The public name-succession ceremony of Umewaka Minoru 4th (Umewaka Rokurō) was held on March 25th with a performance of *Okina* (an ancient felicitous and ceremonial work in which three main characters: okina an old man character, Senzai (a younger more vigorous character) and Sanbasō (an old man character played by a kyōgen performer), alternately perform dances to celebrate long life and prosperity) in the Tanzan Shiki and Hiyoshi Shiki Styles of the Tanzan and Hiyoshi Shrines. Performers included Umewaka Minoru 4th and others.

Newly Created Works for Noh (Shinsaku Noh) and Contemporary Noh Plays (Gendai Noh)

New Noh – <i>Tajimamori (The God of Sweets)</i>	Kanze Yoshimasa, August 29th
Contemporary Noh - <i>Onmyōji: Abe no Seimei (Abe no Seimei: the Master of Divination)</i>	Umewaka Minoru / Umewaka Genshō, September 6th & 7th
New Noh – <i>Osero (Othello)</i>	Tatsumi Manjirō, November 24th & 25th in the Tokyo Manjirō no Kai 10th Memorial Program
New Noh - <i>Oki no Miya (The Miracle at Oki no Miya)</i>	Kongō Tatsunori, October 6th
New Work for Kyōgen – <i>Ibaraki Dōji (The Ogre's Child)</i>	Shigeyama Senzaburō October 21st, the 229th program in Ibaraki City's project Commemorating the 70th Anniversary of the Implementation of its Municipal System.

Performances of *Dōjōji*

(The Legend of the Serpent Demoness and the Temple Bell)

The performance of *Dōjōji* is a milestone in the career of a young Noh performer. However, seasoned veterans also like to revisit the challenge a second or third time or even more.

Performances are listed in chronological order.

Sano Noboru	February 3rd, Traditions Connecting to the Future - Back to Basics
Tōyama Junji	March 25th, Hōshō Kai Special Spring Program
Ban Shintarō	April 22nd, in the Kanze Kyūkō Kai Special Program
Hōshō Kazufusa	May 12th, RYUTOPIA – Niigata City Performing Arts Center 20th Anniversary Commemoration at the Spring Program for the Appreciation of Noh.
Osada Akira	July 14th, in the Osada Takeshi-shi Sanju Kinen (celebrating Takeshi-sensei's turning 80 years old). Kita Ryū Noh no Kai
Ōe Yasumasa	October 8th, in the 110th Anniversary Program of the Ōe Noh Theatre
Nagayama Keizō	November 23rd, in the Keifū Kai. Commemorating the 15th year of its Establishment - Sandai Noh (Noh over three generations).
Saeki Kikuko	December 22nd, in the Saeki Kikuko no Kai's Special Program
Hōshō Kazufusa	December 22nd, The Meiji Restoration 150th Anniversary Project – Homage to the Difficult Times that Nohgaku has Undergone
Kanze Tetsunojō	December 23rd, the 13th Memorial Program for Uzawa Hayao at the Uzawa Yōtarō no Kai

Performances of 'Old Woman Plays'

The so called 'old woman plays' are among the most important in the Noh repertoire only performed by those who have reached a certain level of age and performing experience. Here is a listing of performances of the past year by title:

Performances of *Sotoba Komachi* (The legend of Ono no Komachi at the Stupa)

Daimatsu Yōichi	January 28th, Program Commemorating the 30th year of Independence
Matsuki Chitoshi	January 20th, Dan no Kai
Awaya Akio	March 4th, Awaya Noh no Kai
Komparu Hodaka	March 21st, Nishi Mikado Komparu Kai Special Program of Noh

Performances of *Obasute* (The Old Woman Abandoned in the Mountains)

Takeda Munekazu	April 1st, in the Kanze Kai's Special Spring Program
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Performances of *Ōmu Komachi* (The Legend of Ono no Komachi's 'parrot reply')

Asami Masakuni	April 17th at the Asami Masakuni Kiju Kinen Program (celebrating his attaining the age of 77)
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Okina* – in three variant performances

Komparu Norikazu	May 4th, Komparu Ryū Sōke Keishō Hirō Noh (a program to announce the succession of the title 'Grandmaster' of the Komparu School)
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- * 'Jūni Tsuki Ōrai' (The procession of the twelve months), 'Chichi no Jō' (a more ancient form of *Okina* in which the Old Man character uses the Chichi no Jō mask rather than the customary *Okina* mask) and 'Enmei Kaja' (in which the Kyōgen performer uses the Enmei Kaja mask which is meant to signify long life). In the 'procession of the twelve months' variation, three 'old man' characters enter the stage together and engage in a poetic dialogue describing the passing scenery of the twelve months beginning from the first month, 'Shōgatsu'.

Noh performers and Individuals Related to Nohgaku who passed away last year.

Kanze Motonori (2017 December 1st) A *Taiko* (stick drum) performer of the Kanze School. He was 51.

Kodera Ichirō (2018 January 29th) A *Shite* performer of the Kanze School. He was 90.

Kasai Takashi (March 8th) A *Shite* performer of the Kita School. He was 76.

Ogawa Akihiro (March 17th) A *Shite* performer of the Kanze

School. He was 78.

Gondō Yoshikazu (March 30th) A *Nohgaku* critic. He was 87.

Issō Hisayuki (April 24th) A *Nohkan* performer of the Issō School. He was 77.

Kobayashi Seki (May 22nd) A *Nohgaku* scholar. He was 89.

Aoki Shinji (May 30th) Photographer. He was 73.

Fujita Rokurobyōe (August 28th) A *Nohkan* performer of the Fujita School. He was 64.

Inoue Kikujirō (December 5th) A *Kyōgen* performer of the Izumi School. He was 77.

Fukui Shirobē (December 17th) A *Kotsuzumi* (hand-held shoulder drum) performer of the Kōsei School. He was 88.

Nishi, Tetsuo

Nohgaku Scholar, born in 1937. Graduated from Saitama University. He has worked for Tokyo-dō Shuppan Publishing House, and as part-time instructor at Musashino University and Bunka Gakuin University. He has also been chief juror for the Agency for Cultural Affairs' Arts Festival – both Nohgaku and Theatre departments, on the Selection Committee for Arts Encouragement – classical arts and theatre departments, and on the committee of experts for the Japan Performing Arts Foundation (National Noh Theatre). He is a co-author of the *Nohgaku Daijiten* (*Encyclopedia of Nohgaku*, Chikuma Shobō).

(Translation: James Ferner)

Kabuki and Bunraku

The Mature Art of Older Stars and the Activity of Younger Actors

Mizuochi Kiyoshi

In 2018, at the main venue for kabuki, Kabuki-za in Tokyo, which is commemorating the 130th anniversary of its opening, there were 12 months of performances of kabuki. (The standard run for a production of kabuki is one month, actually 25 days of performances.) At the National Theatre there were 7 months of performances. At Shōchiku-za in Osaka, the newly rebuilt Misono-za in Nagoya and Hakata-za in Fukuoka there were 3 months of performances. At the Shinbashi Enbujō there were 2 months of performances. In addition there were national tours in summer and autumn with three separate troupes and special performances in old kabuki theatres, which are preserved in many places in Japan.

The biggest event going on for the entire year was the simultaneous name taking by three generations of actors: Matsumoto Hakuō II, Matsumoto Kōshirō X and Ichikawa Somegorō VIII – father, son and grandson. There were commemorative performances beginning with those at Kabuki-za in January and February, then at Misono-za in April, Hakata-za in June, Shōchiku-za in July, and Minami-za in November as part of the annual *Kaomise* (“face showing”) performances. All of the productions attracted large audiences. Matsumoto Hakuō performed roles for which he himself and his family line are famous like Matsuōmaru in

“*Terakoya* (The Village School)” and Yuranosuke in the seventh act of “*Chūshingura* (The Treasury of Loyal Retainers).” His son Kōshirō also performed roles in the family tradition like Benkei in “*Kanjinchō* (The Subscription List)” and Kumagai in “*Kumagai Jinya* (Kumagai’s Battle Camp),” but at the same time, opened up new territory for the Kōshirō tradition by playing roles from other family traditions like the ten roles in “*Date no Jūyaku* (The Ten Roles of the Troubles in the Date Clan),” a play where one actor plays all the major roles in a classic play, a play created by Ichikawa Ennosuke III and Izaemon in “*Kuruwa Bunshō* (A Letter from the Pleasure Quarters),” which is one of the most famous plays in the distinctive Kansai style of kabuki. Among the performances, there was the rare event of three generations of actors playing the three key roles in the performances of “*Kanjinchō*” at Minami-za with Matsumoto Kōshirō as Benkei, Matsumoto Hakuō as Togashi and Ichikawa Somegorō as Yoshitsune.

The senior group of top actors are all vigorous and active. Sakata Tōjūrō is the oldest, being 87 at the time of this writing in March 2019, but he participated in all of the commemorative performances for the name taking of the Kōshirō family and spoke in the “*Kōjō*” stage announcement. There were actors who showed how their art has matured by playing roles for which they are famous. Onoe Kikugorō appeared as Benten Kozō in “*Shiranami Gonin Otoko* (The Five Thieves)” and as Seishin in “*Izayoi Seishin* (Izayoi and Seishin)” and Nakamura Kichiemon appeared playing the title characters in “*Shunkan*” and “*Kōchiyama*” and Danshichi in “*Natsu Matsuri Naniwa Kagami* (The Summer Festival in Osaka).” Kataoka Nizaemon clearly distinguished between the two contrasting villains Daigaku-no-suke and Taheiji that he played in

this classic which was revived in modern times, “*Ehon Gappō ga Tsuji* (A Picture Book of the Vendetta at Gappō-ga-Tsuji).” But he also showed his achievements in the important classical roles of Heiemon in “*Chūshingura*,” “*Sukeroku*,” and Gonta in “*Senbon Zakura*.” Bandō Tamasaburō showed the pinnacle of his art with his performance in “*Akoya*,” but he is also teaching the younger generation of *onnagata* female role specialists roles that he has made famous, teaching Nakamura Baishi, Nakamura Kotarō and Nakamura Kazutarō his signature piece “*Akoya*,” “*Osome no Nanayaku* (The Seven Roles of the Osome Hisamatsu Story)” in which an *onnagata* plays seven roles and the Shinpa classic, “*Taki no Shiraito*.”

In the next generation of actors, Nakamura Tokizō performed Masaoka in “*Meiboku Sendai Hagi*,” one of the most difficult roles for *onnagata*, for the first time, and also displayed excellent acting skills in roles like Omiwa in “*Imoseyama Onna Teikin*,” Iwanagahime in “*Nippon Furisode Hajime*” and Izayoi in “*Izayoi Seishin*.” Nakamura Jakuemon performed in such plays as “*Meoto Dōjōji*” and appeared as Shizu-no-Kata in “*Ii Tairō*.” In April, Nakamura Shikan held commemorative performances for his new acting name as a performance of “Konpira Kabuki” and in addition to showing his scale in historical plays with Kiyomori and Shunkan in “*Heike Nyogo no Shima*” and Matsuo in “*Terakoya*,” he also developed new roles as with his first performance of the priest Ryūtatsu who becomes a gruesome ghost in the 20th century play “*Kōdan Yomiya no Ame*.” Kataoka Ainosuke demonstrated his versatility with such roles as Watōnai in “*Kokusenya Kassen*” and Benten Kozō in “*Shiranami Gonin Otoko*.” In October, Ichikawa Udanji III commemorated his taking of this acting name with cele-

bratory performances at Shōchiku-za.

Among the middle group of mature actors, the activities of the new Matsumoto Kōshirō were the most striking, but Ichikawa Ebizō was also very active. He premiered three new plays, “*Nihon Mukashi Banashi* (Japanese Folk Tales)” in January and “*Sangoku Musō Hisago no Medetaya* (The Rise of Toyotomi Hideyoshi)” and “*Genji Monogatari* (The Tale of Genji)” in July. He also performed “*Narukami Fudō Kitayama Zakura* (Narukami and Fudō)” playing five of the major roles with fast changes. Onoe Kikunosuke made his first appearance as “*Kamiyui Shinza* (Shinza, the Barber),” a role for which his family is famous, and displayed his dancing abilities in “*Kisen*” and “*Bunya*.” Ichikawa Ennosuke presented the Super Kabuki II version of the popular manga “*One Piece*” at Shōchiku-za and Misono-za and at Kabuki-za, starred in “*Hōkaibō*.”

With regard to the young generation, actors in their 20’s and 30’s showed great growth in their artistic skills. First, Nakamura Kankurō and his brother Nakamura Shichinosuke appeared in memorial performances for their late father, Nakamura Kanzaburō XVIII, at Kabuki-za in October and at the Heisei Nakamura-za in November. They both appeared in major classical roles. Nakamura Kankurō played Tadanobu in “*Yoshinoyama*,” the white sake peddler in “*Sukeroku*,” Sanemori in “*Sanemori Monogatari*,” and Heiemon in “*Chūshingura*.” Nakamura Shichinosuke appeared as Ojō Kichisa in “*Sannin Kichisa*,” Agemaki in “*Sukeroku*,” and Okaru in “*Chūshingura*.” Onoe Matsuya played major roles in Asakusa Kabuki in January and at Hakata-za in February. Nakamura Kotarō played Princess Yuki in “*Kinkakuji*” and the title role in “*Akoya*.” Nakamura Kazutarō played the title role in “*Taki no Shiraito*,” and all seven roles in “*Osome no Nanayaku*.”

The National Theatre continues with its work of taking old and sometimes neglected kabuki plays and adjusting them for audiences today and performing them full-length rather than just famous acts. In January it put on “*Sekai no Hana Oguri Hangan*” with a troupe centered around Onoe Kikugorō, in October there was “*Heike Nyogo no Shima*” with a troupe centered on Nakamura Shikan, in November there was “*Na mo Takashi Ōoka Sabaki*” with a troupe centered on Nakamura Baigyoku, and in December, there was “*Zōho Futatsu Domoe*” with a troupe centered on Nakamura Kichimon. All of these productions showed the distinctive touch of the National Theatre and added scenes that have not been performed in a long time to create a new script. In June and July there was the “*Kabuki Kanshō Kyōshitsu* (Introduction to Kabuki)” to introduce kabuki to newcomers, especially students. In addition, in June there was a special version of this introduction with an English introduction on stage, English subtitles for the play and audio Earphone Guides in several foreign languages. This special version introduced kabuki to large numbers of non-Japanese.

At the Shinbashi Enbujō in August, there was a new kabuki version of the popular manga “*Naruto*” featuring the young stars Bandō Minosuke and Nakamura Hayato. Also, at Theatre Cocoon, which is devoted to modern and contemporary theatre, there was a production of the classic play “*Kirare Yosa* (Scarfacéd Yosaburō)” with a script in modern style and new direction. The production featured Nakamura Shichinosuke, Nakamura Baishi and Nakamura Senjaku.

There were two foreign tours of kabuki. In September as part of the “Japan Year 2018 in Russia, there was a tour of the Chikamatsu-za troupe led by Nakamura Ganjirō and Nakamura Senjaku. They

performed at the National Theatre in Moscow and the Bolshoi Theatre in St. Petersburg. The program was “Yoshinoyama” and “*Keisei Hangonkō*.” In September to commemorate the 160th year of friendship between Japan and France, as the main event of “Japonismes 2018” there were performances at the The Théâtre National de Chaillot with a program featuring Nakamura Shidō and Nakamura Shichinosuke in “*Kasane*” and “*Narukami*.”

As usual, Bunraku puppet theatre had five months of performances at the National Bunraku Theatre in Osaka and five months in the Small Theatre of the National Theatre in Tokyo. In Osaka, the January production commemorated the 50th anniversary of the famous narrator Takemoto Tsunatayū VIII and it also marked narrator Toyotake Sakihodayū taking the name, Takemoto Oritayū VI. In the matinee program, there was a “*Kōjō*” stage announcement and then in memory of Tsunatayū VIII, there was a performance of “*Sesshū Gappō ga Tsuji*” which was narrated by Tsunatayū VIII’s son Toyotake Sakitayū and Sakitayū’s student, the new Oritayū. The matinee program also included “*Hana Kurabe Shiki no Kotobuki*” and “*Heike Nyogo no Shima*.” The evening program featured “*Rōben Sugi no Yurai*” and “*Keisei Koi Bikyaku*.” The April program commemorated puppeteer Yoshida Kōsuke taking the name of Yoshida Tamasuke V. To commemorate his new name, the new Tamasuke performed the role of Yamamoto Kansuke in the “Kansuke’s House” scene of “*Honchō Nijūshikō*.” The program also included “*Michiyuki Hatsune no Tabi*” from “*Yoshitsune Senbon Zakura*.” The evening program featured a full-length performance of “*Hikosan Gongen Chikai no Sokedachi*.” In June there was “*Bunraku Kanshō Kyōshitsu* (Introduction to Bunraku)” with one

performance in the morning and one in the afternoon. After a short dance, “*Ninin Sanbaso*” there was a demonstration by the performers and a performance of “*Ehon Taikōki*.” On selected weekday nights, there was a version of this program aimed at adults and on June 16 at 2 PM there was a special version called “Discover BUNRAKU” with English subtitles. July featured the “*Natsu Yasumi Bunraku Tokubetsu Kōen* (Special Bunraku Performance for the Summer Vacation).” Program A was titled “*Oyako Gekijō* (Parent and Child Theatre)” and featured “*Urikohime to Amanjaku* (Urikohime and Amanjaku),” based on a folk tale, a demonstration of Bunraku including the opportunity for children to experience manipulating a Bunraku puppet, and “*Zōho Oeyama*” based on a fairy tale. Program B was titled “*Meisaku Gekijō* (Masterpiece Theatre)” and featured “*Sanjūsangendō Munagi no Yurai*” and “*Migawari Ondo*.” Program C was titled “Summer Late Show” and featured “*Shinpan Utazaimon*” and “*Nihon Furisode Hajime*.” In November, the matinee program featured “*Ashiya Dōman Ōuchi Kagami*” and “*Katsuragawa Renri no Shigarami*.” The evening program featured “*Chūjōhime Yuki Zeme*” and “*Onna Goroshi Abura no Jigoku*.”

At the Small Theatre of the National Theatre in Tokyo, in February, there was the continuation of the commemoration of the death of Tsunatayū VIII and the name taking of the new Oritayū and, as in Osaka, Program B featured the “*Kōjō*” stage announcement and “*Sesshū Gappō ga Tsuji*.” The other programs featured plays by Chikamatsu Monzaemon with “*Shinjū Yoi Gōshin*” in Program A and “*Onna Goroshi Abura no Jigoku*” in Program C. In May there was the name taking of Yoshida Tamasuke and the matinee program featured the new Tamasuke in “*Honchō*

Nijūshikō” to commemorate the name taking and followed it with “*Michiyuki Hatsune no Tabi*” from “*Yoshitsune Senbon Zakura*.” The evening program was a full-length performance of “*Hikosan Gongen Chikai no Sokedachi*.” In September, the matinee program featured “*Rōben Sugi no Yurai*” and “*Zōho Chūshingura*.” The evening program was a full-length performance of “*Natsu Matsuri Naniwa Kagami*.” In December there was an introduction to Bunraku with one performance in the morning and one in the afternoon. It opened with a short dance, “*Dango Uri*,” had a lecture / demonstration and a performance of the “*Terakoya*” scene from “*Sugawara Denju Tenarai Kagami*.” As in Osaka, there were also performances of this introduction aimed at adults and non-Japanese. In the evening, the performance featured younger performers in all the key roles and featured “*Kamakura Sandaiki*” and “*Date Musume Koi no Higanoko*.” The Bunraku troupe has a wide range of activities. In addition to the regular performances at the two National Theatres there are performances of just the narrative music without the puppets and many recitals featuring young performers studying major roles at both National Theatres as well as regional tours and performances in schools.

As in recent years, the performances of Bunraku in Tokyo almost always sell out. Gradually, audiences in Osaka are growing as well.

The leader of the group of *tayū* (narrators) is Toyotake Sakitayū, but he is not in the best of health. In January and February, to commemorate the death of his father Tsunatayū and his student taking the name of Oritayū he gave an excellent performance narrating a major part of “*Sesshū Gappō ga Tsuji*,” but other than that, he usually narrates short sections of lesser importance.

In his place, members of the next tier of narrators, Toyotake Rodayū and Takemoto Chitosedayū narrated major sections of plays displaying the strength of their artistic abilities. Rodayū narrated the “*Aburaya*” scene of “*Abura no Jigoku*,” the “*Kansuke Sumika*” scene of “*Honchō Nijūshikō*” and “*Heike Nyogo no Shima*.” Chitosedayū narrated the “*Yaoya*” scene of “*Yoigōshin*,” the “*Keyamura Rokusuke Sumika*” scene of “*Hikosan*,” the “*Nigatsudō*” scene of “*Roben Sugi*,” as well as “*Migawari Ondō*” and “*Chūjōhime Yuki Zeme*.” Also, the next younger group of central artists, Rosetayū and Oritayū are showing that they are growing into fine artists with rich voices on a large scale. Together with Rodayū, Rosetayū narrated the “*Kansuke Sumika*” showing his impressive power and also narrated major scenes like the “*Sabu Uchi*” scene of “*Natsu Matsuri*” and the “*Obiya*” scene of “*Katsuragawa*.” In addition to the play in the production commemorating his name taking, Oritayū narrated the “*Nagamachi-Ura*” scene of “*Natsu Matsuri*” and the “*Takatsuna Monogatari*” scene of “*Kamakura Sandaiki*.” The youngest generation of narrators like Toyotake Yoshihodayū, Takemoto Mutsumidayū and Toyotake Yasutayū are all starting to grow into fine artists. In April, the recently retired narrator Takemoto Sumitayū, who was active in Bunraku for 60 years, passed away.

The most senior shamisen player Tsuruzawa Kanji, who was recognized as a Living National Treasure, passed away in September. The other Living National Treasure, Tsuruzawa Seiji continues to give superb performances on the shamisen and Toyozawa Tomisuke shows his talent in *jidaimono* historical plays. Tsuruzawa Enza, Tsuruzawa Seisuke and Nozawa Kinshi all show their talents in a wide variety of plays. Among younger performers Tsuruzawa

Tōzō is growing in leaps and bounds in ability. In recent years, it has grown increasingly common for veteran shamisen players to team up with young narrators to train the next generation of artists.

The oldest puppeteer is Living National Treasure Yoshida Minosuke. Even though his appearances are limited due to old age, he continues to display the pinnacle of *onnagata* (female role) puppetry. Today, the main support of Bunraku puppet theatre comes from three puppeteers: Yoshida Kazuo, Yoshida Tamao and Kiritake Kanjūrō. Yoshida Kazuo has been recognized as a Living National Treasure and plays leading female roles. This year he performed such roles as Nagisa-no-Kata in “*Rōben Sugi*,” Okichi in “*Abura no Jigoku*,” Oryū in “*Sanjūsangendō*,” Osono in “*Hikosan*,” and Miuranosuke’s mother in “*Sandaiki*.” Tamao plays leading male roles. This year he performed such roles as Chōemon in “*Katsuragawa*,” Shunkan in “*Heike Nyogo no Shima*,” Rōben Sōzu in “*Rōben Sugi*” and Rokusuke in “*Hikosan*.” However, Kanjūrō is more difficult to classify. This year he performed such roles as Ohan in “*Katsuragawa*,” Danshichi in “*Natsu Matsuri*,” Yohei in “*Abura no Jigoku*” and Tamate Gozen in “*Gappō ga Tsuji*.” Kanjūrō plays roles male and female, young and old, good and bad, even comic roles. These three puppeteers smoothly divide up the major roles and are the center support of Bunraku today and give it life. Among younger puppeteers, Yoshida Tamaya tends to specialize in villainous roles and Toyomatsu Seijūrō mostly performs female roles while the new Yoshida Tamasuke performs male roles on a large scale. Among older performers, Kiritake Kanju and Yoshida Tamashi have grown in ability and among younger performers, Yoshida Tamaka and Yoshida Ichisuke have matured and are among the hopes for the future.

Mizuochi, Kiyoshi

Born in 1936 in Osaka. Graduated from Waseda University Faculty of Literature, specializing in Theatre. From 1970 he was in charge of the Theatre section for the Arts and Cultural News department of the Mainichi Shinbun and served as vice-chairman for that newspaper as well as having been a member of the Editorial board and also a special committee member before his retirement. Currently he is Affiliate Member of the Editorial Board. From the year 2000, he was a professor at J. F. Oberlin University, retiring in 2007 as Professor Emeritus. His writings include: *Kamigata Kabuki (Kyoto-Osaka Style Kabuki)*, *Bunraku*, *Heisei Kabuki Haiyū-ron (Essays on Kabuki Actors Today)* and others. In 2019, the Japanese Actors Association gave him a special award for his service to the arts.

(Translation: Mark Ōshima)

Musicals

Outstanding Original Musicals

Hagio Hitomi

The number of musicals presented in Japan is increasing every year. The musical scene in 2018 was even more exciting and richer in variety than ever before. One of the major reasons is the increase in the number of original works. In the past, musicals from the West End or Broadway that were successful and popular were translated and performed in Japanese and formed the mainstream of the Japanese musical theatre scene but recently, the number of original Japanese musical productions, which even includes 2.5-dimensional musicals, is increasing. The Broadway and West End musicals produced in Japan are also becoming more varied, ranging from big hits to small but unique works as well as old titles that have been rediscovered. This trend may be due to the fact that nowadays the audiences are seeking diversity fueled by the abundance of information that can be acquired from all over the world via the Internet almost simultaneously.

Three Challenging Premieres

A musical that appealed to a broad range of audiences, including those who were not musical fans, was SIS Company's *History of Japan (Nihon no Rekishi)*, which was written and directed by Mitani Kōki. The music was composed by Ogino Kiyoko and it was indeed a challenging production, as one thousand seven hundred years of Japanese history were portrayed as a musical performed by

only seven actors, namely, Nakai Kiichi, Katori Shingo, Sylvia Grab, Kabira Jay, Niuro Shinya, Miyazawa Emma and Akimoto Sayaka, who created quite a buzz, and therefore the show must have drawn the interest of people who usually do not go to musicals.

It was also a well-made production. The seven cast members embodied more than fifty characters through quick costume changes to depict Japanese history at a rapid pace and in a short time. Simultaneously, a family's story of three generations was also portrayed. Actually, the family's story formed the core of this musical. A family living in Texas presented in the opening scene reminded us of Brecht's *Mother Courage and Her Children* and added an implicit premise to the story. The two different worlds were connected through common sentiments or, in other words, musical numbers. Sadness and joy were turned into songs that transcended time and space. The production was put together like a typical musical.

Japanese history depicted through the changes of political power and a family history influenced by the economic changes overlapped, helping us realize that history is in effect a continuum of people's activities. In both narratives, light was shed on the characters' warm and cheerful feelings and therefore one may say that it was a musical about the celebration of life. The actors, led by Nakai Kiichi, were also talented and performed well. The music reminded us of many famous musical numbers and it almost felt like a pastiche of famous numbers.

Another notable work was *Ikiru* (literal translation: *To Live*), which was a musical adaptation of Kurosawa Akira's eponymous film released in 1952. The creative team consisted of Takahashi

Chikae, who wrote the script, Jason Howland, a Grammy Award winner who composed the music, and Miyamoto Amon, who directed the show. *Ikiru* was produced by Horipro Inc. that has premiered many foreign musicals translated into Japanese and has also turned the comic book titled *Death Note* into a musical (presented in 2015 and 2017). Apparently, Horipro is strategically targeting the international market.

The protagonist of *Ikiru* is a civil servant working for a town office. He has been following his daily routines spiritlessly but when he finds out that his days are numbered, everything changes and the story questions the meaning of life. The lead character was double cast and was played by Ichimura Masachika and Kaga Takeshi.

Another musical that was small in scale but left a strong impression was *DAY ZERO* (presented by CAT Productions). Contemporary themes were expressed powerfully through the performance. It is based on an American film with the same title (produced in 2007 and yet to be released in Japan). A few years were spent to create the production with Takahashi Chikae writing the script for the stage adaptation and Fukazawa Keiko composing the music.

The story is set in the U.S. in the near future, where military conscription has resumed and the qualifying age has been raised. Three characters, who have known each other from childhood, are drafted and their inner conflicts are portrayed in the drama. Through their conflicted feelings, which are about different things for each of them, it is revealed that they have not come face-to-face with the issues in their lives or the society and their sins of not having done anything to come to terms with those issues become

apparent. The setup and the theme of the musical fit the present trend of confrontation, which has become prominent all over the world. It is also a universal drama that makes us realise that life is finite. This musical has potential and should be revived after further refinement.

Original Epic Musicals

Knights' Tale and *Marie Antoinette* that were presented at the Imperial Theatre were large-scale original musicals produced by Tōhō Co., Ltd. Both were created through collaboration with foreign artists. International musical projects are not unusual nowadays, but these two musicals drew attention because in *Knights' Tale*, two stars, namely Dōmoto Kōichi and Inoue Yoshio, co-starred for the first time and in *Marie Antoinette*, brilliant performers such as Hanafusa Mari were cast.

Adapted from a story that was assumedly cowritten by William Shakespeare and John Fletcher (based on Geoffrey Chaucer and Giovanni Boccaccio's works), *Knights' Tale* was turned into a musical conceived and directed by John Caird. It was a comedy about two knights who were cousins, and they were on very good terms but ended up fighting over a woman. The ending of the original story was quite abrupt and full of contradictions but the focal points had been changed in the musical adaptation by incorporating a strong sense of feminism and therefore the story had a convincing happy end.

The creative team consisted of non-Japanese staff. The music was written by Paul Gordon, the set was designed by John Bausor, and the dance numbers were choreographed by David Parsons. A significant amount of money must have been spent on the

production as both the set and the music were even more extravagant than usual. Nonetheless, it felt somewhat strange that the creators got hung up on Japanese tastes. For instance, a band playing Japanese instruments was added to the orchestra and Japanese-style materials such as bamboos were used for the set.

Marie Antoinette that was presented in 2018 should be regarded as a remake version because the original production premiered in Japan in 2006 was produced with a new director (Robert Johansson). Based on the book and lyrics by Michael Kunze and the music by Sylvester Levay that were used in the premiere, alterations were made in the script, such as cutting some characters, changing the order of the musical numbers as well as adding new numbers. As a result, the structure of the story became much clearer and you might as well call it a new musical, since it underwent a number of transformations.

The story is based on Endō Shūsaku's novel and is founded on the confrontation between Marie Antoinette, the Queen of France, and Margrid Arnaud, who grew up in poverty and later on became an extremist of the French Revolution. In the old 2006 version (directed by Kuriyama Tamiya), more emphasis was placed on the violence and the chain of insanity. However, in the new version, the focus was narrowed down to the story between the two women and the theme of 'tolerance' came to the surface.

In the genre of original musicals, the Takarazuka Revue Company has a big presence in Japan. The company produces new musicals almost every month. One of them that drew attention in 2018 was *THE Poe Clan*. It was directed by Koike Shūichiro, who adapted a long-selling comic book by Hagio Moto. The naïve

sensitivity and aestheticism of the original comic book was reproduced tactfully through Takarazuka's casting.

MESSIAH: The Legend of SHIRŌ AMAKUSA (written and directed by Harada Ryō) was another impressive musical staged by Takarazuka. The company also produced a number of other musicals that included *A PASSAGE THROUGH THE LIGHT – Maximillian Robespierre, the Revolutionary* (written and directed by Ikuta Hirokazu) and *Company: Lessons, Passion, and Companionship* (written and directed by Ishida Masaya) among others, which dealt with all sorts of subject matters, and the versatility of Takarazuka was just as amazing as before. As a side note, *Romankatsugeki: Rurōni Kenshin* (literal title: *A Romantic Action - Kenshin the Wanderer*) (adapted from Watsuki Nobuhiro's comic book with the same title), which was premiered at Shimbashi Enbujō, was based on Takarazuka's musical with the same title that was premiered in 2016 (both productions were written and directed by Koike Shūichiro).

The other companies and groups that had been making efforts on creating original musicals were consistent and continued to produce new works. The Musical-za staged *Time Traveller*, the TS Musical Foundation mounted *Romāle ~ Roma wo Ikinuita Onna Carmen* (literal title: *Romale ~ Carmen, A Woman Who Survived as a Romani*) and the Musical Company It's Follies presented *Tōzakaru Neverland* (literal title: *Vanishing Neverland*). These were all new original works. Various production companies such as Watanabe Entertainment that presented *Marigold* have begun to produce original musicals as well.

The boom of 2.5-dimensional musicals deserves a mention here. They are musicals based on comic books and games. The term

has come into usage since the Japan 2.5-Dimensional Musical Association was founded in 2014. *Musical: Tōken Ranbu* is an extremely successful work in this genre that exceeds the popularity of *Pretty Guardian Sailor Moon: The Super Live* and *The Prince of Tennis: The Musical*, which had come about beforehand. It also toured to Paris in 2018.

The main focus of 2.5-dimensional musicals is to accurately represent the characters in the original story. In other words, they are popular because of the fans who are enthralled by the cute characters and therefore most of the audiences do not overlap with those of regular musicals such as Broadway musicals. However, this genre is broadening the scope of musicals and through further development, it might help to enliven the whole musical scene.

A Variety of Translated Musical

The translated version of an epic musical that was premiered in Japan this year was *Mary Poppins* (co-produced by Horipro, Tōhō, Umeda Arts Theatre and TBS). London's musical producer Cameron Macintosh and Disney that has also been producing successful shows on Broadway, joined hands and premiered *Mary Poppins* in London, which later opened on Broadway. Based upon the film (1964) adapted from a story written by Pamela Travers, famous musical numbers (lyrics and music by Richard M. Sherman and Robert B. Sherman) were used in the lively and large-scale stage adaptation (originally directed by Richard Eyre, co-directed and choreographed by Matthew Bourne), which included the use of magic and flying. The Japanese cast consisted of Hamada Megumi, Hirahara Ayaka and other members, who performed really well and overall it was a satisfactory show. Above all, the

flying sequence was longer than in the other cities where the show was presented and it was quite overwhelming.

Amongst the premieres of Broadway musicals, *Fun Home ~ The Tragicomedy of a Family* left a fresh impression. The musical won the Tony Award in 2015 and it is based on Alison Bechdel's autobiographical graphic novel. It is the very first Broadway musical with a lesbian character set as the main character. The Japanese version did not have repercussions nor left a strong impression compared to the original Broadway version but it was made into a powerful production through Ogawa Eriko's succinct direction. Other translated musicals that originally came from either Broadway or the West End were *Bullets Over Broadway*, *The Bridges of Madison County*, *Amélie*, *Ghost*, *On Your Feet* and *Something Rotten!* among others. Some of them were for the most part not successful in the city where they originated from.

There were also musicals such as *Woman of the Year* and *City of Angeles* that had already been premiered in Japan twenty to thirty years ago and were rediscovered. *Rogers/Hart*, staged for the first time in Florida in the U.S. in 1997, and *Midnight Diner (Shinya Shokudō)*, translated from a Korean musical that was adapted from a Japanese comic book series, were also amongst the new works presented this year. The producers of Japanese musicals seem to be very keen on searching for new shows, which may be why the number of original musicals are increasing.

Hagio, Hitomi

Hagio Hitomi is a film and theatre critic. She started her career as a newspaper journalist and has written reviews for Tokyo Shimbun as well as column series and articles for musical magazines. She has written books such as *Musical ni Tsurete itte* (literal title: *Take me to the musicals*), *Les Misérable no Hyakunin* (literal title: *A Hundred People of Les Misérable*) and others. She has also edited and written *Broadway Musical, Tony shō no Subete* (literal title: *All about Broadway Musicals and the Tony Awards*), *Hajimete no Musical Eiga: Hagio Hitomi no Besto Selekushon 50* (literal title: *Your First Musical Film: Top 50 Selected by Hagio Hitomi*) and others.

(Translation: Sumida Michiyo)

Contemporary Theatre

An Ageing Japan Reflects a Bewildering World

Yamaguchi Hiroko

Japanese society is facing a grave crisis as its population continues to age and the birthrate falls. Reflecting this situation, a major current has emerged in Japanese theatre that explores the issue of ageing.

The forerunner for this trend was Saitama Arts Theater. Starting with the establishment of Saitama Gold Theater by artistic director Ninagawa Yukio in 2006 for performers aged 55 and above, the venue shone a light on the relationship between the elderly and theatre. Following Ninagawa's death, the theatre has maintained its focus on performing arts created by older practitioners, staging *Wareware no moromoro – own stories* (*Wareware no moromoro*) in spring 2018, conceived and directed by Iwai Hideto from the experiences of Saitama Gold Theater members. In autumn, the venue invited companies from the UK, Singapore and Australia to take part in the inaugural World Gold Theater, a festival including a symposium and performances such as *The Imaginary Invalid* (adapted and directed by Nozoe Seiji from the original by Molière) featuring 738 seniors. Another part of the festival lineup was *Night Never Gets Darker* (*Yomichi ni hi wa kurenai*), a 'wandering theatre' performance that was staged while audiences walked around the Urawa area. It dealt with a man who

returns to his hometown after a long time and, as he searches for someone he knows suffering from dementia, must come to terms with the place where he grew up as well as confront the deaths and the advancing ages of the people he knew since childhood. It was written and directed by Sugawara Naoki, an actor and caregiver who runs a company called OiBokkeShi (a name comprising Japanese words meaning 'old', 'senile' and 'death') that is based in Okayama. Sugawara has attracted attention nationally for linking care work with theatre, receiving commissions from theatres and local governments, and developing a practice that combines workshops with creating new performances.

Plays exploring the theme of ageing followed one after the other. Maeda Shirō wrote and directed *ok, so long. (Un, sayonara)*, a new play whose protagonists were old women. Performed by young female actors without wigs or special makeup, their acting revealed a keenly felt richness from the withering minds and bodies of the characters, alongside the sorrow of the twilight of human lives.

For Shingeki, where both the audiences and actors are getting older, ageing is a particularly familiar subject. Seinenza staged *Comfort Ward (Anraku-byōtō)*, directed by Isomura Jun and written by Shirai Keita from the novel by Hahakigi Hōsei, which examined end-of-life medical care. Gekidan Dora's *Tofu Coffee (Otōfu kōhī)*, written by Shimori Roba and directed by Aoki Gō, and Haiyūza's *The Time of Our Planet (Warera no hoshi no jikan)*, written by Suzuki Satoshi and directed by Sato Tetsuya, both portrayed nursing homes for the elderly. They depicted a harsh reality with a nonetheless cheerful touch.

The Contemporary World, as Seen in Translated Plays

Stagings of translated plays also yielded many superb results. From war to terrorism, religion and immigration, contemporary drama sharply extracted the reality of a world continually divided and gripped by violence, while classics formed a mirror that reflected our present times.

Terror, written by German author Ferdinand von Schirach and directed by Mori Shintarō, made a particularly strong impact. It portrays the aftermath of a terrorist takeover of an airliner which was directed towards a football stadium. The air force major who shot the plane down and caused the deaths of 164 passengers is the defendant in a murder trial. Is he guilty or innocent? The verdict is decided in a vote by the audience, who act as the jury for the trial. In the tense courtroom drama atmosphere, the audience must confront and consider a reality in which terrorism is rampant. Of the twenty-one performances in Japan, a guilty verdict was reached on eleven occasions and a not-guilty verdict at the remaining ten performances; when staged overseas, the verdict is apparently not-guilty ninety per cent of the time. These results, too, form an indication of our reality that is illuminated by theatre. Mori also directed the Japanese premiere of *The Silver Tassie*, a play by the Irish dramatist Seán O'Casey about the fate of young men sent to fight in the First World War. Ninety years on, the play's portrayal of the tragedy and futility of war remains raw.

Directed by Kamimura Satoshi, *Littoral* by the Lebanese-Canadian playwright Wajdi Mouawad was a mysterious story of a son travelling with his father's dead body in search of somewhere to bury him. Following the strange route taken by the father and son, the audience encountered the deep scars left by civil war in a

region that appears to be the Middle East, as well as the gravity of each individual life that is frequently buried beneath the weight of history.

Written by Ismaël Saïdi and directed by Setoyama Misaki, *Djihad (Jihad)* was the story of three young men who travel to Syria from Belgium to take part in what they believe is a holy war. The process by which seemingly ordinary and jocular second-generation immigrants join the extremist organisation Islamic State conveyed to the full the dilemmas faced by the world in which we live today.

Kuriyama Tamiya's production of *The Children* by the British dramatist Lucy Kirkwood dealt with the choices made by three researchers who used to work at a nuclear power station that was damaged by an earthquake and tsunami. Though the play is set in Britain, it was inspired by the 2011 Fukushima nuclear disaster. How should adults face up to their responsibility for both an immediate crisis and the future? This immense question resonated across national borders.

Shirai Akira's staging of *Ballyturk* by the Irish playwright Enda Walsh told the story of two men living in a room at an undisclosed location and the arrival of a third man into their lives. An absurdist play open to a number of different interpretations, it reflected the chaos of the world that we do not understand.

Frequently staged masterpieces were also revived in fresh ways that asked trenchant questions about the contemporary world.

In Kuriyama Tamiya's production of Jean Anouilh's *Antigone*, the dispute that raged lucidly between Aoi Yū's Antigone and Namase Katsuhisa's Creon became an allegorical conflict and confrontation between the laws of the nation-state and the dignity of

the individual. In a staging of Henrik Ibsen's *Hedda Gabler*, also directed by Kuriyama and with Terajima Shinobu in the title role, the frustration felt by the protagonist was relevant to our present times as another example of the problems women face in their lives. Directed by Nagatsuka Keishi and starring Kazama Morio, the revival of Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* left a big impression as a drama portraying how we are trapped, unable to respond to change as society's former values collapse all around us.

Expressing Social Dilemmas

Among new Japanese plays, powerful examples stood out that brought an awareness of social problems to the fore.

Written and directed by Nagai Ai, *The Air Ver. 2: No One Shall Write* (*Za kūki ver.2 daremo kaite wa naranu*) was the second in a series of plays dealing with the media. After the first play, 2017's *The Air* (*Za kūki*), which depicted the team behind a news show at the mercy of conjecture by the channel's bigwigs towards the wishes of the political party in power, this time the play contrasted the National Diet 'club' of political news reporters with online news media reporters to form a portrayal of how the media should act toward authority. Though incorporating comical elements aplenty, not least the caricature of an editorial writer for a major newspaper proud of being on close terms with the prime minister, the play was an acerbic denunciation of reality.

The nuclear power plant accident that occurred in 2011 is an issue that continues to unfold within our lives. Based on copious research, Tani Kenichi has started his *Fukushima Trilogy* (*Fukushima sanbusaku*) in an attempt to tackle this problem from its origins. The first part, *1961: Sun Rising in the Night* (*1961-nen: Yoru ni*

noboru taiyō), which he wrote and directed, depicted how the passion of a scientist aiming for the peaceful use of nuclear energy as well as dreams of regional redevelopment led to the decision to construct a nuclear power plant in Fukushima Prefecture.

In *When Large Flakes of Snow Dance* (*Botanyuki ga mau toki*), the Fukushima-based Takagi Tohoru portrayed the lives of a husband and wife immediately after the start of the nuclear crisis, taking refuge in their home near the power plant. It was staged in three separate versions by different directors attached to Seinenza (Kuroiwa Makoto, Itō Masaru and Saitō Rieko).

The Day the Atom Came (*Atomu ga kita hi*), written and directed by Shimori Roba, shuttled between 1950 and 2040 to depict both the first nuclear reactor in Japan and the nuclear policy of the near future.

The pairing of Furukawa Takeshi's scripts and Hisawa Yūsuke's directing continued to reflect on the Second World War and the Japanese. In *Sing a Song* (*Shingu a songu*), the singer protagonist based on Awaya Noriko embodied a spirit of resistance to the oppression of war. *Heritage* (*Isan*) explored Unit 731, a unit in the Imperial Japanese Army that conducted human experimentation in China. Shortly before the performances of *Heritage*, Furukawa and Hisawa also staged a related play, *Documentary* (*Dokumentarī*), dealing with the HIV-tainted blood scandal caused by a pharmaceutical company established after the war by doctors who were formerly members of Unit 731.

Written and directed by Setoyama Misaki, *Me and War* (*Watashi, to sensō*) imagined a near future in which the Japanese go to war, confronting the question of how we can think of war as our own problem through a story about the mental trauma suf-

ferred by returning soldiers.

Against a backdrop of premieres appearing one after the other like paints abundantly applied to an artwork, the 144th play by Betsuyaku Minoru, *Oh, Even So, Even So: The Dumb Waiter of Many Orders* (*Aa, sore nanoni, sore nanoni – Chūmon no ōi ryōri shōkōki*), particularly stood out. Directed by Manabe Takashi, it conjured up an increasingly confusing yet dryly humorous world in which there lurked infinitely deep fear. With its lightness of touch, this play felt immensely broad in scope and profound.

Fresh Starts by New Artistic Directors

Many popular and capable companies reached turning points this year.

Keralino Sandrovich commemorated twenty-five years since he launched his company Nylon100°C with a revival of his 2012 epic *Century of Secrets* (*Hyakunen no himitsu*) and premiering *Testis* (*Kōgan*), which he likewise wrote and directed. For his group KERA MAP, he wrote and directed another new play, *Nuns* (*Shūdōjotachi*), a powerful work about a fictional religion that offered a sincere portrayal of faith, persecution and salvation.

Counting numerous well-known figures among its ranks, not least its director, Matsuo Suzuki, the playwright Kudō Kankurō, and such diverse actors as Abe Sadao, Arakawa Yoshiyoshi, and Hiraiwa Kami, the company Otona Keikaku marked its thirtieth year with a commemorative exhibition, ‘Sanjussai’ (literally, Thirty Festival), looking back over its past activities through photography and video screenings. For Bunkamura, Matsuo also staged a major reworking of *Mankind Bankruptcy* (*Ningen gohasan*), a play that he wrote and directed originally in 2003, slightly retitled as *Mankind*

Starting Again (in Japanese with a different yet homonymic final Kanji character) and converted into a large-scale piece.

The Kyoto-based company Europe-Kikaku marked its twentieth anniversary by wowing audiences with alternating stagings of two plays both written and directed by Ueda Makoto: the 2001 play *Summer Time Machine Blues* (*Samā taimumashin burūsu*), a science fiction comedy that is one of its major works and was also made into a film, and a new sequel, *Summer Time Machine Once More* (*Samā taimumashin wansu moa*), set fifteen years after the original.

Ogawa Eriko took over from Miyata Keiko as the artistic director of the New National Theatre, Tokyo. The new season kicked off in October with a production of *The Misunderstanding*, written by Albert Camus and directed by Inaba Kae, a young member of Bungakuza. While not overtly glamorous as endeavours, fresh ideas are reinvigorating the institution, from holding auditions for all roles and the Kotsu Kotsu Project, a low-key yet dedicated attempt to develop new plays over a one-year period.

The programme for the large-scale Japanese culture event Japonismes 2018, which was held in France under the auspices of the Japanese government to commemorate 160 years of friendship between Japan and France, included many contemporary theatre plays, such as *Avidya – The Ignorance Inn* (*Jigokudani onsen mummyō no yado*), written and directed by Tanino Kurō, *In the forest, under cherries in full bloom* (*Nisesaku sakura no mori no mankai no shita*), written and directed by Noda Hideki, *Throw away Your Books, Let's Get onto the Streets* (*Sho o suteyo machi e deyō*), adapted for the stage and directed by Fujita Takahiro, *Mahabharata – Nalacharitam* (*Mahābārata – Naraō no bōken*), directed by Miyagi Satoshi, and

Pratthana – A Portrait of Possession (Purātanā: Hyōi no pōtorēto), adapted and directed by Okada Toshiki. Iwai Hideto's Gennevilliers version of his *Wareware no moromoro – own stories*, staged with local people, including amateurs, also attracted much attention.

Finally, the director and long-time head of Shiki Theatre Company Asari Keita passed away in July at the age of eighty-five. He established the concept of the long run in Japan with musical productions, and, while often seen as a shrewd businessman who cultivated a massive troupe comprising 1,300 cast and crew members as well as over 3,000 performances per year, he also worked tirelessly to build a foundation for theatre culture in Japan through prudent regional performances and continuing to develop shows aimed at children, and was passionate about directing non-musical productions at the end of his life. He was a giant who leaves behind a great legacy, having bolstered postwar theatre in Japan from a unique standpoint.

Yamaguchi, Hiroko

Reporter for the *Asahi Shimbun*. Born in 1960, she graduated from the Department of Science at Ochanomizu University. In 1983, she joined the *Asahi Shimbun* newspaper, working at its Tokyo and west Japan (Fukuoka) branches, and Osaka head office. She works mainly as a reviewer and reporter on cultural news, in particular theatre. She has served on the paper's editorial board and as an editorialist. She co-wrote *Ninagawa Yukio's Work* (Shinchōsha).

(Translation: William Andrews)

Passion and Hard Work in an Age of Fewer Children

Yokomizo Yukiko

While children's and youth theatre continues to be hard hit by reduced numbers of children and the resulting economic consequences, there are some signs that the 'Fundamental Law for Cultural Arts' implemented in June 2017 and the plan to move key departments of the National Cultural Agency from Tokyo to Kyoto will prove to be an encouraging support. And moreover, as the Tokyo 2020 Olympics approaches, preparations for the International Theatre Festival for Children and Young Audiences are reaching a high pitch.

069

Threats to Opportunities for Children to See Theatre

Performances of theatre in schools as part of the education programme are decreasing every year. One effect of the reduction in the number of children is that schools do not have the capacity to have theatre troupes come and perform and must therefore forego these opportunities. This leads to a vicious circle, where the income of children's theatre companies from performance decreases, and it becomes increasingly difficult to keep a troupe going.

There was a move towards creating a government ministry for the arts. There is a group in the National Diet working for the creation of this ministry, and with 136 Diet members from all parties at the general meeting on December 5, 2018 there was a unanimous

decision to recommend the creation of an arts ministry in 2020. This was especially significant considering that among the aims of this ministry was 'guaranteeing the opportunity for children to see one artistic performance a year', and the fact that it was passed unanimously. In the 2018 budget 107.7 billion yen was allocated for this, an increase of 3.3 per cent.

The Regional Tour of Children's and Youth Theatre sponsored by the Japan Arts Council, which is intended for children living outside the big cities, was held for the fifty-ninth year. In the spring semester there were eight theatre companies and in autumn semester there were fourteen. The Tour of Children's and Youth Stage Arts, organised as part of the Strategic Project for the Encouragement of the Creation of Artistic Culture, sponsored by the Japanese National Cultural Agency, had twelve theatre troupes touring throughout Japan, including islands and other remote areas.

Preparations Progress for the ASSITEJ World Congress

Preparations are reaching a high pitch for the twentieth ASSITEJ World Congress / International Theatre Festival for Children and Young Audiences in 2020, which is being organised by the Japan Centre of ASSITEJ. Shimoyama Hisashi, producer of the *ricca ricca*festa* in Okinawa, has been appointed artistic director of the International Theatre Festival for Children and Young Audiences 2019. The conference is scheduled to use the Tokyo Metropolitan Theatre as the main venue and will be held from May 14-24 2020, inviting around thirty works from abroad. On February 19-25 2018, the Asia TYA Festival was held at venues such as the National Olympics Memorial Youth Center, as a kind of pre-event for the World Congress. There were ten theatre companies

from seven foreign countries. The pieces presented included *The Flea and the Ant* (*Nomi to ari*) from Georgia, dramatising a famous folk story, and *When Everything was Green* (*Subete ga midori datta koro*) from Israel, which was a puppet play with no dialogue that showed the relationship between nature and human beings and the destruction of the environment. From Japan, Gekidan Nakama presented *Space Battleship SORA* (*Sora no muragō*), and Company It's Follies presented *The Day the Little Letters 'Tsu' Disappeared* (*Chiisai 'tsu' ga kieta hi*). There were a total of forty-six pieces presented, including ten pieces of 'baby theatre' aimed at audiences aged zero and up. At the Asian TYA Meeting, twelve countries participated, showing the depth of interest.

Theatre Festivals Flourish in the Summer

Most theatre festivals are concentrated in the summer vacation. One large international festival is the *ricca ricca* festa* International Theater Festival OKINAWA for Young Audiences (July 22–29 Naha, July 24–29 Ginoza). There were a total of twenty-seven pieces from twelve countries. There was particular interest in four pieces from Scotland, *White*, *Cinderella*, *Whiteout* and *Night Light*, and three pieces by theatre troupes from Novgorod and St. Petersburg for the 'Russia Year in Japan'. There were also ambitious pieces like *Strangers*, which was a co-production by Japan and the Goethe-Institut Tokyo. Kazama Morio presented his one-man show *Peace* for the first time in Okinawa.

The Great Theatre Exposition for Children 2018 (July 27–August 1, National Olympics Memorial Youth Center) was formerly known as the Forum for Children to Encounter the Stage Arts, but it has already been twenty years since this name change. There were

fifty pieces with fifty-two performances. Among them, the most unusual was the children's theatre committee from the Haiyūza Theatre Company who presented *Goldfish (Kingyo)*, a play on the theme of money. There were many activities including symposiums and a play area, and it attracted over 10,000 parents and children.

The Summer Vacation Children and Youth Theatre Festival (July 21–August 12, Space Zero, Puppet Theatre Puk and other venues) featured nineteen groups with twenty-eight performances. Among them was the Zenshinza Theatre Company presenting *I am a Stinky Trashman (Kuzūi kuzuya de gozaru)*. 21st Century Theatre from Kitakata (August 3–6) was held for the nineteenth time. There were twenty-six venues including Kitakata Plaza, with seventy-six troupes and 116 performances. The programme was full of variety including *Kitakata yose* (vaudeville theatre) sponsored by the Rakugo Kyokai, puppet theatre, plays and pantomime. 8,562 people attended, combining their participation with sightseeing. Saku City in Nagano Prefecture held the Kid's Circuit (August 3–5) with twenty-three performances in seven institutions.

Tokyo theatres also had festivals with unique characteristics. The Setagaya Children Project 2018 (July 21–September 1) at the Setagaya Public Theatre was organised by the artistic director Nomura Mansai and had a unique programme, including Hino Terumasa's *Jazz for Kids* and Ide Shigehiro's dance company idevian crew's *Exhaust Pipe (Haikikō)*. At the TACT/FESTIVAL 2018 (June 29–July 1), held at the Tokyo Metropolitan Theatre where Noda Hideki is artistic director, *Les moutons* by the Canadian troupe Corpus has already become a regular highlight of the festival. In the plaza in front of the theatre Tanaka Min poured his soul into the Butoh dance *Place-dance (Baodori)*.

The Nissay Theatre Family Festival was held for the twenty-sixth time. On the fifty-fifth anniversary of the theatre's opening, it provided the opportunity for parents and children to watch first-class performances together in the luxurious theatre designed by Murano Tōgo. The performances were first-rate this year as well. It featured a collaboration between the puppet theatre troupe Hitomiza and contemporary dance, *Elisa and the White Swan Princes* (*Erisa to hakuchō no ōjitachi*) (July 28, 29), and a concert of classic music with a story, *Aladdin and the Magic Lamp* (August 4, 5) with music by the New Japan Philharmonic. For the first time in five years, the programme included *Nissay Kabuki for Parents and Children* (August 10–12). The programme featured a demonstration, the play *The Sword Thief* (*Tachi nusubito*) with Bandō Hikosaburō and Bandō Kamezō, and a dance, *The Wisteria Maiden* (*Fuji musume*), featuring Kataoka Takatarō. The festival also featured the Star Dancers Ballet company with the ballet *Dragon Quest* (August 24–26).

At the Kanagawa Arts Theatre (KAAT) in Yokohama, the KAAT Kids' Programme (July 20–August 26) featured pieces fitting the tastes of artistic director Shirai Akira, including *Alice in Wonderland* (*Fushigi no kuni no arisu*) (July 20–22), directed and choreographed by Moriyama Kaiji, who also starred in it, and *Gretel and Hansel* (August 18–26, script by Suzanne Lebeau and directed by Gervais Gaudreault). The story is different from the famous *Hansel and Gretel*.

2018 Best Three in Children's and Youth Theatre

- ACO Okinawa, *Children of the Sea* (*Umi no kodomotachi*) (written and directed by Chong Wishing) is a play without words. It has a

sad sound as the performer walks around playing the *sanshin* and singing the theme song. The three actors playing the children were superb mimes and dancers. Without any text, the three children play happily, but they start playing 'war' in a way that evokes the war in Okinawa. This is a piece that can be understood all around the world.

- Shadow Play Theatre KAKASHIZA, *The Wizard of Oz (Oz no mahō tsukai)* (original by L. Frank Baum, script by Hanawa Mitsuru, directed by Hanawa Mitsuru and Gotō Kei). This play used many projections with parts that can be moved projected on a screen to evoke the scenes in a way only possible with shadow puppets. It was an innovative production that also used *Hand Shadow ANIMARE*.
- KAZENOKO Theatre Company, *Scrum and Crash: Children's Second Plan is Ready* (script by Tanaka Tsutomu, directed by Nakajima Ken), a play that seriously examines the children of today. Five good friends put on a play at a school assembly. After all kinds of conflicts and disappointments, the play is performed without a problem. This play examines what friendship should be and what it really is.

Gekidan Nakama has presented Samuil Marshak's *The Woods are Alive (Mori wa ikite iru)* (original title: *Twelve Months*) at the end of every year since 1959, and this year it passed over 2,000 performances. From 2017, it has been newly directed by Suzuki Tatsuo from the Zenshinza Theatre Company, and the relationship of the gods of the twelve months has become very clear. Theatrical group EN's *Children's Stage* has continued since 1981 and this thirty-seventh production featured a new play, *The Emperor's New Clothes (Hadaka*

na ōsama) (written by Kuniyoshi Saki, directed by Gotō Ayano). Modern theatre troupes that are usually intended for adult audiences are also working hard to produce children's theatre as well.

World Puppet Festival

This year, the Iida Puppet Festa 2018 (August 3–12) marks the fortieth year since Iida City in Nagano Prefecture became a puppet theatre city. It was extremely lively, with puppet troupes from eighteen countries from the six continents of the globe and twenty-nine pieces from various regions of Japan, with a total of 300 theatre troupes from inside and outside Japan. There were sixteen traditional puppet troupes from Japan, including the Hachioji Kuruma Ningyō Nishikawa Koryū Troupe and the Shōnai Dewa Ningyō Shibai. There were performances that charged admission and free performances at 165 venues within Iida City and its neighbouring towns. This is a great success story of how puppet theatre has invigorated a town.

In 2019, the Puppet Theatre Puk will be commemorating ninety years since its founding. The 2018 season was planned as a preview of the actual commemorative year, and there were twenty-eight plays with 385 performances. Puk participated in all festivals, including the Iida Puppet Festa. There are seventy-five members in the troupe and the performers were divided into three or four groups that could all perform separately. Despite being ninety-four years old, Ruth Stiles Gannett, the author of the original story of one of Puk's most famous plays, *My Father's Dragon* (*Erumā no bōken*), came to Japan on July 26 in conjunction with Puk's performance of the play (August 2–5, Kinokuniya Hall). For over thirty years Puk has performed this dramatisation written by

Kawajiri Taiji and staged by Munakata Masato. This time there was a new staging by Shibasaki Yoshihiko, with choreography by pantomime artist Onodera Shūji and art by Maya Petrova, who lives in Bulgaria, making this classic be reborn as a new play. *Cat's Rent a Paw (Neko no te kashimasu)* (original by Miyamoto Tadao, script and direction by Inoue Sachiko) is a new play that shows the adorable and strongly self-reliant life of a stray cat named Sutemaru. *The Story of the Seagull and the Gang of Tomcats (Kamome ni tobu koto o oshieta doraneko no monogatari)* (original by Luis Sepúlveda, script and direction by Katya Petrova) was a joint creation with the Bulgarian Sofia Puppet Theatre and was presented at the Sofia Puppet Fair in Bulgaria in September. There were also well received puppet plays for adults, including Inoue Hisashi's play *Cheerful Thirties, Falling Apart Forties (Ukauka sanjū, chorochoro yonjū)* (directed by Inoue Sachiko), and modern versions of Aesop's fables by Tanabe Seiko, *The Promise...* (*Yakusoku...*) and *The Goldfish Has Escaped (Kingyo ga nigeta)* (produced by Gomi Tarō, script by Shibasaki Yoshihiko and directed by Hayakawa Yuriko).

2018 Best Three in Puppet Theatre

- Puppet Theatre Puk, *The Story of the Seagull and the Gang of Tomcats (Kamome ni tobu koto o oshieta doraneko no monogatari)*. A seagull soaked in oil lays an egg, and a black cat raises the chick and eventually teaches the bird how to fly. A story that teaches the preciousness of life and how to live together.
- Hitomiza, *Clear, with Occasional Pigs (Hare tokidoki buta)*. The original children's story by Yadama Shirō has become a stylish stage production. With the melodies of Bossa nova, Noriyasu's

diary full of nonsense becomes a heartwarming comedy possible only with puppet theatre.

- Alfa Theatre (Czech Republic), *The Three Musketeers*. Staged at the Puppet Theatre Puk on August 10 and 11, and afterwards touring twelve cities in Japan from Okinawa to Hokkaido, and with over thirty performances. This production showed the story of how d'Artagnan is born in a French countryside town and together with the three musketeers comes to solve all kinds of problems. The story was told rhythmically and with a fast tempo that is only possible with puppet theatre.

The O Fujin Prize for Children and Youth Theatre is given to a female theatre professional for long-time contribution to children's and youth theatre, and the twenty-eighth prize was awarded to Onagi Tamiko of Puppet Theatre Puk. She has also been the assistant chairman of UNIMA (Union Internationale de la Marionnette) and its steering committee. The prize was awarded for her achievements in international exchanges in puppet theatre.

Yokomizo, Yukiko

Yokomizo Yukiko is a theatre critic, executive director of the Japan Theatre Association, a councilor for Tomin Gekijō and a member of Kabuki Circle's planning committee. After working as editorial staff at the cultural section of Jiji Press Ltd., she held posts in the screening committee of the Arts Festival sponsored by the Agency for Cultural Affairs, the Japan Arts Council's Theatre Committee, and has given lectures at Nihon University College of Art. She is also a member of the Dance Critics Association, Saitama Prefecture's Writers' Association and the International Theatre Institute. She has translated *Practical Stage Makeup* (joint translation) and written *Actors Talk About Their Dreams* (*Yume kataru yakushatachi*), etc. In 2019, the Japanese Theatre Association gave her a special award for her services to the arts.

(Translation: Mark Ōshima)

Japanese Classical Dance

Female Dancers Reaffirm their Roots to Find New Possibilities

Hirano Hidetoshi

In the modern age of Japan's performing arts, due to national cultural policy, the cultural forms that had been developed in Japan from ancient times to the Edo period on the basis of cultural influence of Asia changed completely. Now cultural pioneers were performing artists who studied in Europe and America.

The project of reevaluating the work of the pioneers of Western dance in Japan, their ideals, their achievements and their personalities and approaching it both from the standpoint of academic research and from the standpoint of the dancers that created these works through symposiums and workshops has been given the name "Dance Archives in Japan." Since 2014, the New National Theatre, Tokyo has produced performances called "Dance Archives in Japan" with the co-sponsorship of the Contemporary Dance Association of Japan. Inspired by this, the "*Buyō Nenkan* (Dance Art in Japan Yearbook) 2017" published by the Japan Ballet Association included a "Panel Discussion on the Project of Dance Archive Performances Open to the Public."

With respect to *Nihon Buyō*, which is one of the traditional performing arts, the National Theatre, which is an entity under the administration of the *Nihon Geijutsu Bunka Shinkō Kai* (The Japanese Arts Council), conducts activities like maintaining recordings of dance performances, but under the auspices of another

government body, the Bunkachō (Agency for Cultural Affairs), considers the preservation and protection of the heritage of tangible materials in the same way as intangible cultural treasures so that the approach is not unified. Treating a body of cultural products as a heritage is like locking them up and preserving them in a storehouse, but treating them as an archive means both preserving materials related to past performances, but also preserving them in performances in the present, in a way that often means referring to documentary material. This is a process that occurs constantly in Japanese classical dance when a dance created in the past is recreated in the present. So I believe that the term “archiving” is appropriate to describe what happens in Japanese classical dance.

Umemoto Rikuhei and the Stream of Musical Culture from *Kengyō* Blind Musicians

When thinking about the kinds of traditional Japanese performing arts that continued to exist even after the introduction of European and American performing arts in the modern age, often the music of the *kengyō* blind performers is overlooked. From ancient times blind men have specialized as musicians and belonged to guilds where the highest rank was *kengyō*. *Kengyō* musicians played the koto and the kind of chamber music that came to be known as *sankyoku*, with koto, shamisen (also called *sangen*) and either the bowed *kokyū* (which looks like a miniature shamisen) or shakuhachi. The core of the classical repertory of music for koto, which includes pieces that have singing as well, was created by these blind *kengyō*. The musical roots of the music of *kengyō* lies in such stage performances as *gagaku* court music and dance and the classical *noh* and *kyōgen* theatres, as well as such

folk performances as *dengaku*, *fūryū* and *shishi-mai* lion dances as well as *shōmyō* Buddhist chanting. *Kengyō* musical culture began with these blind musicians, but in the Edo period, the physical expression of *kengyō* music gave birth to “*jiuta* (songs of Kyoto and Osaka)” and “*jiuta mai* (dance with *jiuta*).” This music could also be performed by blind male musicians, but also became closely associated with the geisha districts of Kansai. There is much debate over what is the best overall name for this genre, but under the name of “Kamigata Mai,” the Agency for Cultural Affairs has designated it an intangible cultural heritage and is working towards the preservation of this art form, but these efforts do not amount to an actual establishment of an archive for Kamigata Mai.

There are several schools of Kamigata Mai, but they all draw on elements created in the Edo Period (1603 – 1868) and earlier (like the music of the *kengyō*), centered on the geisha districts of Kansai in the modern period and their development and social structures are intimately associated with the distinctive cultural and social history of Kansai. One school of Kamigata Mai, Inoue-Ryū, has been recognized by the Agency for Cultural Affairs separately as well as “*Kyōmai* (dances of Kyoto).” Inoue-Ryū is exclusive to the Gion geisha district in Kyoto and while it can be performed in many places, it is only practiced by people connected to that one geisha district. Under the third head of Inoue-Ryū, Inoue Yachiyo III (1838 – 1938), dances, which had been created as entertainments for the intimacy of the banquet rooms of the geisha districts also grew into stage performance featuring the women of the geisha districts first with the “*Miyako Odori*” performances featuring geisha from Gion as dancers and musicians.

The second head of the Umemoto-Ryū, Umemoto Senshō

learned from the example of Inoue-Ryū and in Meiji 15 (1882) began a similar performance in Osaka featuring the geisha of that city. Yoshimura-Ryū has its roots in the dances for the *zashiki* banquet chamber of Kyoto and in the Taisho Period (1912 – 1926), became established in the geisha districts of Osaka. All three of these schools – Inoue-Ryū, Umemoto-Ryū and Yoshimura-Ryū – fundamentally have nothing to do with kabuki and rather, should be thought of as being part of flow of *kengyō* musical culture.

Each of these schools of dance is centered on the geisha districts. The community of each of these schools is a social structure with an *iemoto* who heads the school, and then the teachers of dance and their students. *Jiuta* and the associated dances, *jiuta mai*, originated in the early Edo period and came to be supported by these communities within the geisha districts. Since both lessons and performances in the banquet chamber were a part of daily life, that meant that in the past and to a great extent in the present, these communities were a world where both creation of the art and transmission of the art were a part of daily life, rather than being focused on rare performances that would be an extraordinary occasion. The physical expression of Kamigata Mai, both in music and dance, is the product of an archive, which is maintained within the bodies of these communities where both training and performance are a part of daily life.

This is shown clearly by the emergence of Umemoto Rikuhei, the third head of the Umemoto school of dance. When Rikuhei was 21, at the recommendation of his father, Senshō, the second head of the Umemoto school, Rikuhei became the teacher at the Takarazuka Revue Company of Umemoto style dance and western dance. He wrote many scripts which he then choreographed and

staged for the Takarazuka productions. He was also absorbed in dance research and he always maintained that in education, Japanese traditional dance must be presented on equal footing with western dance. This valuing Japanese dance and western dance equally and Rikuhei's spirit remain alive within the Takarazuka Revue Company today. (from "*Nihon no Shintai Hyōgen – Ongaku · Buyō · Engeki* [Japan's Physical Expression – Music · Dance · Theatre]," the 179th installment of the series in the 70th volume, number 8 issue of "*Nihon Buyō*.")

Two Shining Examples of the Aesthetics of Galapagos Evolution: Kamigata Mai and Suodori

Inoue Yachiyo III created the community of the Inoue-Ryū school and the "Miyako Odori" of Kyoto's Gion geisha district at the dawning of *Nihon buyō*'s modern age. Her spirit is carried on by the present head of the school, Inoue Yachiyo V. Inoue Yachiyo danced "*Yukari no Tsuki* (The Moon of Love)" (*Mai no Kai – Keihan no Zashiki Mai* [Kamigata Dance Recital – The Dances of the Banquet Chambers of Kyoto and Osaka], November 23, Small Theatre of the National Theatre). This is a dance that she had choreographed herself 10 years ago. Her steps were light and deft and the piece perfectly expressed the quiet and intimate feelings of love between a man and a woman realistically and vividly. At that same recital, for the first time, Yamamura Tomogorō, the 6th head of Yamamura-Ryū school of dance performed dances to Kamigata *hauta* that he had learned from Yamamura Ai, "*Gekosuberakashi*," and "*Saigyō*." This showed how entertaining the witty dances of the archive of Kamigata Mai can be. Unlike other schools of Kamigata Mai, Yamamura-Ryū began as choreographers for kabuki. But its

main function is as the dance school for the geisha of Osaka.

In recent years, dancers of Kamigata Mai have been very active in introducing their art to a larger audience. These performers include Yoshimura Chihiro with her *Bekkai*, and Kanzaki En, who belongs to Kanzaki-Ryū which split off from Yoshimura-Ryū school and Izumo Yō who split off from Kanzaki-Ryū school teaming up together in the *Hana no Mi Kai* (representative: Ōtomo Seijō). This shows that Kamigata Mai is not a heritage; it is an archive.

In Tokyo, unlike the schools of Kamigata Mai, the influence of kabuki has been very strong. In the Edo period, dance was practiced and taught by kabuki choreographers, kabuki actors and female dancers called “*Okyōgen-shi*” who specialized in teaching dance to the women serving in the mansions of samurai lords. In the modern period, the dances that they did formed the core of what is done by the modern schools of *Nihon buyō* like Nishikawa, Fujima, Hanayagi and Bandō schools. But during the Edo period, apart from the licensed kabuki theaters, there was the Yoshiwara licensed brothel district, which had its own distinct culture. The dance to the New Year’s piece “*Hokushū*,” which appeared in the Bunsei period (1818 – 1830) was choreographed by Hanayagi Jusuke, the first head of the Hanayagi school of dance, for the Yoshiwara geisha. This dance created for geisha in Edo is as brilliant a product of the Galapagos evolution as Kamigata Mai. Hanayagi Mariko performed this dance in the “*Hanayagi Mariko no Kai*” (November 24, Small Theatre of the National Theater). She received the Excellence Award in the Arts Festival sponsored by the Agency for Cultural Affairs over a decade ago for her performance of this dance, but her art has deepened and matured and that gave power and warmth to her depiction of the people and

customs of the Yoshiwara pleasure quarter.

Dances like this, designed for the banquet chambers of the pleasure quarters, provided a format for performance in the modern period outside of the kabuki theater. “*Suodori*” means to perform a dance without stage costume, stage sets or props. It is done in formal kimono using only a dance fan as a prop. In the late Meiji period, the “*zashiki no odori* (dances for the banquet chamber)” were renamed “*suodori*,” and became a form of stage performance that could be the specialty of Japanese classical dancers and also serve as a test of their ability.

As particular examples of the beauty of *suodori*, the performances by Fujima Etsuko in her recital, “*Keishō Kai* (September 2, Small Theatre of the National Theatre) of the Nagauta piece “*Nankō*” and the new Nagauta composition, “*Hioi no Michi*” (choreography by Hanayagi Juraku II) represented a very high achievement.

The Daring of Female Dancers to Explore their Roots and the Discovery of New Beginnings

Hanayagi Mariko and Fujima Etsuko used white make-up in their *suodori*. This is related to the fact that when female dance teachers began performing *suodori* in the Taisho period, they wore white make-up. The meaning of *suodori* is that these dance teachers were showing their everyday faces in the non-everyday context of the stage. But most female dancers of that time were also geisha and so, for them, their everyday faces in the context of their work were faces wearing white make-up, what would be non-everyday for most women then and now, most classical Japanese dancers as well.

In 2018, for the first time, Geimaru-za, a group of the in

Japanese classical dance from the Tokyo University of the Arts held a recital (August 24, Nihonbashi Kōkaidō). The group began in 2007, but this performance of the Nagauta dance “*Funa Benkei* (Benkei in the Boat)” looked back to the beginnings of *suodori* by having a set like the kabuki one of a copy of the bare stage of the classical *noh* theater. This piece is based on a famous *noh* play that shows general Minamoto no Yoshitsune fleeing Kyoto. In the first half he must say farewell to his lover Shizuka Gozen, in the second half he is attacked by the ghost of Tomomori, a general of the Heike clan that Yoshitsune helped to defeat. The *shite* main actor plays Shizuka Gozen in the first half and the ghost of Tomomori in the second half, while the other major role is Yoshitsune’s retainer warrior priest Benkei, who in the first half must persuade Shizuka Gozen that she cannot join them on this dangerous journey and in the second half fights off the ghost of Tomomori with prayers and magical spells. Despite these very masculine characters, this staging used a picture of an ancient pine as background like the *noh* stage, and all the dancers were women. This was truly the most extreme form of *suodori* since dancers did not wear wigs or white stage make-up but by doing so, the staging could find the fundamental attractive qualities made possible by *suodori* like dance teachers normally do in the everyday context of the stage. As the ghost of Tomomori, Fujikage Shizuhisa had the dashing charm of an actor of male roles in Takarazuka, while the dancer playing Benkei, Hanayagi Ōhisui, had a clear grasp of what the role of Benkei must do on stage, and thought how to do that without the help of stage costume and make-up to perform the role and to overcome the barrier of a woman playing a male role. All of the female dancers shared this clear sense of what had to be done in

presenting this piece and of the hurdles to presenting it as pure *suodori*. In this experiment in returning to the roots of *suodori*, grappling with what would seem like very intractable challenges, I could feel the sense of responsibility and determination of these dancers and the new possibilities that this experiment uncovered.

At the “Tokyo Mizuki Kai Kōen” (September 9, Large Theatre of the National Theatre) the Sōfūgaku piece “*Omoi Takigawa* (lyrics by Tatsui Takenosuke, singing and shamisen composed by Kiyomoto Shiyō, percussion composition by Tōsha Roei)” choreographed by Mizuki Yuka contrasted a dancer with white stage make-up and one without and this pointed up the female character with white make-up (Mizuki Yuka) and accurately brought out the intentions of the writer. The author Tatsui was inspired by the poem by Emperor Sutoku in the *Hyakunin Isshu* (A Hundred Poems by a Hundred Poets) collection, “Though the swift flow will be divided by a rock, I believe that it will come together again in the end.” He took the idea of the flow of a river coming together again and interpreted it as a woman waiting to be reunited with her love and wrote a text full of word plays and expressing this theme through the changing of the four seasons. The text was witty and playful, but difficult to understand totally. Mizuki understood the composition very well and choreographed it so that the waiting woman (Mizuki) was performed with white make-up while another female dancer was without white face make-up and acted as a kind of chorus that very effectively supported the role of the waiting woman bringing out the contours of the dance beautifully.

The Activities of Single Dance Artists Lose their Lustre

The start of a Japanese classical dancer begins when they can

stand independently as an artist even though they usually belong to a particular school of dance. To this end, recitals by individuals have been extremely important and until around the 1980's were a glittering arena of creativity. But in recent years, the flow of activity has changed and instead of recitals by an individual artist or even by members of a particular school of dance effort is concentrated on the various performances produced by the *Nihon Buyō Kyōkai* (Japanese Classical Dance Association) and the National Theatre where dancers from different schools appear together. This is also probably related to the fact that the number of masters who can teach the members of the Japanese Classical Dance Association has been drastically reduced. There is an urgent need to investigate what the exact causes of this trend are, how the members of the association are being trained and how dancers throughout Japan actually live and work today.

NHK Enterprise and related groups sponsored the “*Gei no Shinzui* (The Essence of Art)” series of recitals that were televised and now that has been replaced by the “*Koten Geinō o Mirai e – Shikō no Gei to Keishōsha* (Leading Traditional Performing Art to the Future – The Highest Level of Art and the Successors to It).” As part of this series, there was a recital of the Onoe school of dance (August 29, Large Theatre of the National Theatre). This brought together people from the kabuki world and the students of Onoe school dance from the geisha world and members of the ordinary public. This event made a place for the Onoe school among the five major schools of Japanese classical dance in Tokyo: Nishikawa, Fujima, Hanayagi, Bandō and Wakayagi.

With regard to this point, the heads of these major schools of dance dominate the board of directors of the Japanese Classical

Dance Association and direct its activities. One of the major activities of the Japanese Classical Dance Association is its annual recital in February (February 17, 18, Large Theatre of the National Theatre, part of the Tomin Geijutsu Festival [Tokyo Performing Arts Festival]). In the past, this was largely a venue for the heads of dance schools and their successors and other dancers prestigious within their schools to perform before their patrons. Now the Classical Dance Association is trying to make this a performance with the interests of the audience in mind, instead of just the performers. However the selection of dances performed and the emphasis in casting on heads of dance schools and rewarding dancers, who have long been active in the Classical Dance Association, suggests that there needs to be a serious re-examination of how things are really carried out and whether this is the best way to carry out the mission of the Classical Dance Association to raise the artistic level of its rank-and-file members and to broaden the audience for Japanese classical dance.

This year marks the second time of “*Nihon Buyō Mirai-za* (Japanese Classical Dance Theatre of the Future),” a presentation of new pieces. The dance was “Carmen 2018” (June 22 – 24, Small Theatre of the National Theatre) and it was a reworking of the dance presented in 2003, “*Basara no Onna – Karumen 2003* (The Basara Rose Woman – Carmen 2003).” It had the feeling of a tragic Shinpa play. It had the strong touch of the director Hanayagi Suketarō. However, it is not clear that this is a piece that will connect to the future. By connecting to the star system of the kabuki world it was full of topics for publicity, but for the ordinary members of the Classical Dance Association, it was a performance that made them spectators rather than a part of the creative process.

It is Time for Innovation in National Cultural Policy for Japanese Classical Dance

Last year in October, the National Cultural Agency eliminated the wall between the two main branches of activity, the Cultural Section and the Cultural Properties section and made the main section of invigorating the culture of regions the main axis of activities. This is the time for the production department of the National Theatre to innovate as well. It is time to eliminate the barrier between the kabuki division and the “*Dentō Geinō* (traditional performing arts)” (*chūsei geinō* [medieval performances], *hōgaku* [Japanese traditional music], *hōbu* [Japanese traditional dance], *minzoku geinō* [folk performing arts]), unite them around the core of the physical expressive techniques that the traditional performing arts share and then to plan performances and other activities that will be based in specific regions of Japan and produced together with that region.

With this in mind, some of the activities at the National Theatre have been a little different from usual. Two projects involved collaborations between the production sections devoted to *buyō* classical dance and *hōgaku* traditional music, “*Dentō Geinō no Miryoku: Oyako de Tanoshimu Buyō · Hōgaku* (The Attractions of Japanese Traditional Performing Arts: Classical Japanese Dance and Traditional Music for the Whole Family)” (July 7, Small Theatre of the National Theatre) and a performance at the National Theatre produced by the Agency for Cultural Affairs, “*Meiji 150 Nen Kinen: Buyō · Hōgaku de Yomigaeru Tōkyō no Meiji* (Marking the 150 Years since Meiji: Bringing Meiji Period Tokyo Back to Life Through Japanese Classical Dance and Traditional Music)” (Furuido Hideo, program concept and explanatory lecture,

October 6, Small Theatre of the National Theatre). On the other hand, a performance organized as *buyō* could be equally thought of as belonging to kabuki. The “*Henge Buyō* (Fast Change Dances)” (May 26, large hall of the National Theatre) featured dances created in kabuki in the late Edo period with series of dances featuring a single star playing several different characters. This is a subset of the “Kabuki Buyō” which is a genre that has been established as an intangible National Treasure. This performance featured a reconstruction of “*Nanae Zaki Naniwa no Iezuto* (Seven-Fold Flowering of a Souvenir of Osaka)” one of these series of seven dances. If this were to be produced not only by the *buyō* section but in conjunction with the kabuki section, this would indeed be an exploration of the aesthetic of this mode of physical expression.

Topics

Among the activities of individual dancers, Nishikawa Minosuke’s performance of the Jiuta “*Chongare Ikkyū*” choreographed by Hanayagi Shigeka won the Art Encouragement Prize from the Agency for Cultural Affairs. Hanayagi Shigeka (b. 1926) is one of the pioneers in creating *buyō* strongly influenced by Modern Dance. Moreover, in the Nishikawa Kai (April 22, Large Theatre of the National Theatre), Minosuke revived an example of the large-scale, leisurely 18th century style of dance called “Tenmei Buri” with “*En Musubi Edo no Asahina* (Bonds of Love; Asahina in Edo).” In the Agency for Cultural Affairs National Arts Festival, two younger dancers received the award for excellence: Hanayagi Shūe for the Itchū Bushi version of “*Dōjōji*” (October 16, Kioi Small Hall) and Yamamura Wakayūko for the Jiuta piece, “*Yodogawa* (The Yodo River)” and the Nagauta piece “*Shizu Hata Obi*” (October 18,

National Bunraku Theatre). In the joint recital by Hanayagi Tamaito and Izumi Yūki (October 27, Tamayū Kai, Small Theatre of the National Theatre), the *suodori* performance of the Kiyomoto piece, “*Yoshinoyama*” impressed with the strength of their ideals as masters of *buyō*, while the new piece, “*Sansan Ara*” was eye riveting and was reminiscent of the creative work of *buyō* artists like Hanayagi Shigeka and Hanayagi Teruna (1929 – 2005) who were pioneers in fusing Modern Dance and *buyō*. Also, while I had thought that there was no one to preserve and transmit the works of Hanayagi Teruna, it is indeed a happy occurrence that Teruna’s composition “*Kokū no Yuki* (Snow in the Empty Sky)” (November 21, performance by Shūdan Nihon Buyō 21, Small Theatre of the National Theatre) was splendidly brought back to life.

While there are many performances of Japanese Classical Dance abroad, one event of note is that in early December, Living National Treasure Inoue Yachiyo V performed in London and Edinburgh. This marks the first performances of *Kyōmai* by itself abroad.

Hirano, Hidetoshi

Nihon buyō (Japanese classical dance) critic. Born in 1944 in Sendai and graduated from the theater division of the literature department of Waseda University majoring in kabuki. Worked for a publishing house as an editor for such periodicals as “Okinawa Performing Arts,” the quarterly journal “Folk Performing Arts,” the monthly magazine, “Japanese Music and Classical Dance.” As a critic, his interest is in investigating the art of physical expression. He is a member of advisory committees for the Japanese Cultural Agency and the Society for the Advancement of the Arts in Japan. In 2016, his book “*Critique: History of Japanese Physical Expression – Ancient, Medieval and Early Modern Period*” (Nihon Buyō-sha) was published.

(Translation: Mark Ōshima)

Ballet

The World of Japanese Ballet Celebrated the 200th birthday of Marius Petipa: Maintaining Vigor against Hardship

Urawa Makoto

Globally in 2018 the trend to prioritise national self-interests became prominent and brought and intensified various problems in the field of international relations, domestic politics, economy, society and, especially, the natural environment. Japan suffered from frequent natural calamities such as earthquakes and torrential rains, along with searing heat, caused by climate change. Whilst political and economic uncertainty continued, Japanese media had more interest in the upcoming 2020 Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics than in arts and culture; contemporary arts in particular experienced hardship in many aspects.

It is against this backdrop that I will examine the consequences for Japanese ballet.

The number of performances by small and middle-sized companies certainly decreased slightly. Yet there were no big changes in the activities of the largest companies, nor in the number of invited foreign ballet troupes, due to each company's inventive management and promotional efforts combined with the support of a solid core of ballet aficionados. The growing number of universities and high schools that offer courses on ballet and performing arts in general must also have had a positive effect. On

the other hand, a practice typical for Japan – there has been an increase in dancers who still have an active stage career to open their own studios and teach ballet students, precipitated by dancers' motivation to safeguard their own future economic well-being. This phenomenon, together with the declining birth rate and the decreasing number of children learning ballet, due to economic disparity and other educational pressures, have led to fiercer competition in attracting students. Consequently, each ballet company and school are experiencing management hardship.

Next, I will review the Japanese ballet in 2018, focusing on venues and pieces.

First, let me discuss the situation with the performance venues. In Japan, in general the location of ballet companies and their activities are concentrated in metropolitan areas. However, except for the National Ballet of Japan, the majority of the private companies are not associated with a particular theater where they can freely rehearse and performs. Therefore, their immediate task is to secure a performance venue and thus the availability of venues significantly impacts the companies' activities. The number of theaters that can host such performances has been decreasing every year. Some theaters closed for financial reasons; others were converted into commercial buildings or hotels for higher profits, or were sold. These phenomena affected not only private theaters, but also public ones, which had been severely assessed for uses of taxpayers money. In addition, the number of active theaters is decreasing due to earthquake proofing renovations and rebuilding of old facilities.

For example, Aichi Prefectural Art Theater of Aichi Arts

Center in Nagoya, the sole opera-house theater in the Chubu area, has been renovated. Its main theater hall has been on recess since April 2018. Due to its recess, regionally influential ballet companies such as Matsuoka Reiko Ballet and Sumina Okada Ballet that had held annual performances there had to postpone their performances this year or to change content in order to perform at a different venue.

On the other hand, new theaters have opened their doors. Sapporo Community Plaza with Sapporo Cultural Arts Theater “hitaru” with 2,300 seats opened in October 2018. Nonetheless, Nitōri Culture Hall (formally called Hokkaido Kōsei Nenkin Kaikan) closed at the end of September 2018, therefore the number of theaters in Sapporo, Hokkaido, remains the same. The Sapporo Community Plaza’s mission is to foster theater staff who will support independent and creative activities in the future. It has already planned to periodically host the National Ballet of Japan. In November 2018, as one of the series of opening performances, the National Ballet staged *Swan Lake*.

The availability of performance venues affects all the stage arts in Japan, including opera. However, a new trend in the relationship between a ballet company and a theater has become noticeable. In November 2018, K-BALLET COMPANY headed by Artistic Director Kumakawa Tetsuya signed a franchise contract with the Bunkamura Orchard Hall in Shibuya. Kumakawa himself has been the artistic director of this hall since 2012, yet only now did his ballet company enter such a contract, which is the first of its kind – between a private ballet company and a private hall, although there have been franchise contracts between private ballet companies and public theaters or universities previously.

Tokyu Bunkamura, Inc., the manager of Orchard Hall, is a part of Tokyu Corporation, a major developer in the area owning other cultural facilities. Focusing on ballet activities, those two companies will cooperate for cultural promotion and advancement of theater arts in Shibuya ward. K-BALLET COMPANY has already had made an ally with TBS (Tokyo Broadcasting System), a mass media corporation. I would like to keep my eye on how this private ballet company will develop in our country.

Next, I would like to talk about the works.

2018 marked the 200th birthday of the French dancer and choreographer Marius Petipa. Called “the emperor of classical ballet,” he choreographed the three major works set to Tchaikovsky’s music, as well as many others, which have been regularly performed by numerous ballet companies. Commemorating the anniversary, the Tokyo Ballet produced *Petipa Gala* focusing on pas dux duet of small pieces and parts of big pieces such as *Dance of the Hours* from *La Gioconda*, *The Kingdom of the Shades* from *La Bayadère*, *Raymonda*, *The Talisman* and others. Whether the name “Petipa” was in the title or not, his works were more frequently performed this year. Especially *Swan Lake*; all its acts were staged by several Russian ballet companies, and the John Cranko version was played by the Stuttgart Ballet. *Swan Lake* was also performed by more than a dozen Japanese companies throughout Japan, particularly in the Tokyo metropolitan area. Most of them were re-staged pieces from their repertoires, but at the same time there were three newly directed and choreographed versions: the one that Vladimir Malakhov created for top Japanese dancers; the one that Asada Yoshikazu, the recipient of the 2018 Chieko Hattori

Award for distinguished active dancer, produced and played the main role; and the one that Noma Kei of Noma Ballet Company in Osaka directed and re-choreographed. Whilst paying respect to Petipa's original choreography, the three productions added unique and intriguing ideas in their directions, and thus enriched Japanese *Swan Lake* stage in 2018. Furthermore, Léonard Tsuguharu Foujita, the world-famous artist of Japanese origin who mostly worked in France, designed the stage sets for the Japanese premiere of *Swan Lake* in 1946. His original drawings were found. Based on them, the Tokyo City Ballet reconstructed the stage sets and celebrated its 50th anniversary with a performance of *Swan Lake* that gained significant public attention. Regarding *Nut Cracker*, the International Ballet Academia premiered its collaborative work between Japan and Mongolia, and more than 10 companies performed their original interpretations around the end of the year as in previous years. *Sleeping Beauty* is a long monumental work and for this reason is not staged frequently. The version, which the Jinushi Kaoru Ballet Company newly produced at its 30th anniversary of foundation performance, was highly praised as it both kept the grace of the original classics and interweaved minute dramatic content. As for *Raymonda*, the Japan Ballet Association staged for the first time Eldar Aliev's reconstruction, while Asami Maki Ballet and several other companies reproduced the work.

As regards new works, especially pieces that feature several acts, their production requires considerable funding and time, while hiding risks about the quality of the work and whether it would attract spectators' attention. Under the severe budgetary constraints for the performing arts and the media's lack of interest, such new works tend to be produced less. In Tokyo, however, some

noteworthy new works, new productions, and replays of masterpieces have been staged recently. The National Ballet of Japan joined forces with the Australian Ballet to present choreographer Christopher Wheeldon's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (music by Joby Talbot) based on the famous story by Lewis Carroll. This work was originally created for the Royal Ballet.

The National Ballet of Japan will have a new artistic director, Yoshida Miyako, a former principal of the Royal Ballet who will succeed the current director, Ōhara Noriko, from the 2020 / 2021 season.

Concerning the original works of Japanese choreographers, firstly I would note Itō Noriko of Momoko Tani Ballet company. Since November 2016 she was dispatched by the Agency for Cultural Affairs to La Scala Milan in Italy. As a report of her trainee program, her work *I Pagliacci* that was premiered and highly acclaimed in 2015, and a new work, *HOKUSAI*, about the world-widely recognized Ukiyo-e Painter Katsushika Hokusai, were staged. As a result, Momoko Tani Ballet was awarded the Excellence Prize at the National Arts Festival of the Japanese Agency for Cultural Affairs. Choreographer Shinohara Seiichi who continues to create narrative ballet featuring in the main cast the Japanese representative dramatic ballerina, Shimomura Yurie, remounted in his new production the revision of *AN'AIKH Fate: Notre-Dame de Paris*, which was premiered with Sasaki Michiko Ballet Company in Osaka. The dramatic direction and choreography of the new piece were highly acclaimed, together with the excellent performance by Shimomura as Esmeralda, Sasaki Dai as Quasimodo and the other dancers. NBA Ballet Company staged the Japanese début of choreographer Lynne Taylor-Corbett's

musical-style ballet *The Little Mermaid*. Asami Maki Ballet Tokyo company restaged *ASUKA*. Kumakawa from K-BALLET Company continues to perform *Cleopatra*, his masterpiece premiered in the previous year.

The noteworthy dancer is Morishita Yōko of Matsuyama Ballet Company, who is world famous with her long and distinguished career. She danced in *Nut Cracker* in November and December at the 70th anniversary of the foundation of Matsuyama Ballet Company and School. She is scheduled to dance the main parts in a new version of *Swan Lake* in February 2019, as well as in *Giselle* in March and *Sleeping Beauty* in May. Within only six months she appears as the main lead in these three major ballets set to Tchaikovsky's music and *Giselle*. As she is soon to be 70 years old, her presence is unbelievable and exceptional.

Other Tokyo based companies such as Inoue Ballet Company, Noriko Kobayashi Ballet Theater, Ballet Chamble Ouest, and Star Dancers Ballet company produced their repertoires.

Concerning other areas than the Tokyo Metropolitan, in addition to the ones that I already mentioned above I would like to add some other noteworthy activities.

Kobe's Sadamatsu-Hamada Ballet company steadily produces all acts of classical pieces as well as modern creative works. As the 30th anniversary of commencement of its creative work recital, it presented thirteen original pieces that represented each period in the past, including Director Sadamatsu Tōru's *The Age of Anxiety* set to Leonard Bernstein's music of 40 years ago. The company received the Excellence Prize at the National Arts Festival of the Japanese Agency for Cultural Affairs. In Osaka, the Sasaki

Michiko Ballet Company re-staged after a long time *the Fountain of Bakhchisarai* that was highly acclaimed. Sapporo Buyōkai, which continues original and innovative activities, re-worked choreographer Chida Masako's *Carmina Burana* that received the Grand Prize at the National Arts Festival of the Japanese Agency for Cultural Affairs in 1998 in Tokyo. Together with the newly designed arts and lighting, the new production had a big success as part of the series of opening performances of the Sapporo Community Plaza with Sapporo Cultural Arts Theater "hitaru."

Japan continued to actively invite numerous foreign ballet companies and dancers: *the 15th World Ballet Festival 2018* in which the top dancers gathered from all over the world, Hamburg Ballet and the Stuttgart Ballet from Germany, Mariinsky Ballet from Russia, and also small groups or world-famous ballet schools.

The large number of ballet competitions were still held, and new ones were added. However, out of 100 competitions both large and small all together in Japan, some were cancelled, or competition periods were shortened due to a decrease in participants.

Urawa, Makoto

His autonym is Ichikawa Akira. He was formerly a professor in the Faculty of Business Administration and Corporate Culture at Shōin University. He works as the advisor to the Association of Theaters and Halls in Japan. As a dance critic, Urawa has written articles for newspapers and magazines, and has also held positions in various committees such as the committee for the Agency for Cultural Affairs. He has also worked as a member of the jury for a number of dance competitions.

(Translation: Satō Michiyo)

Contemporary Dance and Butoh

Investment Toward the Future Bearing the Arts of the Next Generation

Tsutsumi Hiroshi

As we will see, 2018 was the year which clearly showed that the Japanese public support system for art and dance should be re-examined. The current Japanese theatre system has partially remained the same as that of the pre-modern Edo period. A theatre producer (*zamoto*) and an artistic director (*zagashira*) do not belong to the same organization. Therefore, to the artists, theatres are not the work place. They are usually the place where the artists need to sell their art. Some public theatres in Japan have employed artistic directors as in advanced western countries, but it does not necessarily mean that those theatres provide space for creative work of other artists. Also, the number of funding organizations is extremely low. Only the performers who have been evaluated highly and achieved highly are able to receive a subsidy, therefore many cannot maintain their activities. While theatre and ballet are better accepted by the public, contemporary dance is considered a difficult art form for people in general to understand. As a consequence, it attracts a smaller-sized audiences, and it tends to get a critical reputation as the art form with poor funding results.

The NPO Japan Contemporary Dance Network (JCDN) had had their projects funded under the *Program for Nurturing Upcoming Artists Leading the Next Generation* by the Agency for

Cultural Affairs ever since the start of JCDN's founding preparatory activities 20 years ago. However, the number of the JCDN's funded projects decreased year by year, and all contemporary dance projects including their own were turned down in 2018. Funding decision makers assigned by the Agency are mostly in the field of ballet. Artists in the field of contemporary dance do not have any unified organization, and consequently the field itself has been excluded from governmental funding. It seems that a more adverse wind is blowing against contemporary dance, which used to enjoy better times. But is that really so? I will examine in more details below.

Contemporary Dance: Still Nomadic

Noism at Ryutopia Niigata City Performing Arts Center is the only contemporary dance company that has residential status in a public theatre in Japan. Their three-year contract expired at the time of the Niigata city leadership change, and the involved parties, especially Noism's fans and supporters, worried whether the contract would be renewed. The artistic director Kanamori Jō presented *Mirroring Memories* (*Mirroring Memories – Sore wa tōtoki hikari no gotoku*) – an omnibus form of scenes from his past productions, as well as a remembrance of his teacher, Maurice Béjart. This work was highly acclaimed; its final scene symbolically indicated the dances as inheritances succeeded to future generations.

The company's representative work, *NINA—materialize sacrifice* (*NINA—busshitsuka suru ikenie*), featured a young dancer who took over the main part from the original cast: the vice-artistic director Iseki Sawako who did not appear on stage. On the other hand, in *ROMEO & JULIETS*, Iseki appeared as Rosaline, a

role missing in Shakespeare's original script, and her presence ensured drama together with actors of SPAC (Shizuoka Performing Arts Center), trained with the Tadashi Suzuki method. As a consequence, Iseki received the 38th Nimura Dance Award and Kanamori received the 60th Mainichi Art Award. Niigata city is in the process of extending Noism's contract to the end of August 2020. However, even in public theatres, contemporary dance remains nomadic, similarly as when Kanamori used to work for various dance companies in Europe.

Dance festivals are also nomadic in Japan. Yokohama city produces *Dance Dance Dance @ YOKOHAMA 2018 (DDD@Yokohama)* once in three years. Yokohama city does not have any venue specifically built for contemporary theatre and dance. For this very reason, they constructed special temporary open-air stages near the port, utilized alternative spaces, and also presented the programs with Kanagawa Arts Theatre. Co-artistic directors of DDD@Yokohama were Kondō Ryōhei, the chair of Condors, and Dominique Hervieu, the artistic director of the Lyon Dance Biennale. This year *Japonismes 2018* was held in France, and numerous French artists and companies were invited to Japan, while Tokyo Gegegay toured for about two months in France. Condors, as it did in the previous years, again produced many works in 2018: *Double Fantasy*, *18TICKET*, and the national tour to celebrate Kondō's fiftieth birthday, *START ME UP*. In *DDD@Yokohama* they also presented special performances: *Fly Me to the Moon*, and Kondō's repertoires titled *Kondō Ryōhei Yokohama GALA*.

Dance Biennale *Dance New Air 2018 (DNA)* was held. This biennale used to be organized as a festival of Aoyama National Children's Castle that included Aoyama Theatre and Aoyama Round Theatre. After the Castle's closure it is held in spaces close to Aoyama.

Dance festivals in Japan seemed to have diverse competitive programs, but in fact they offered many restaged works. In *DNA* Kuroda Ikuyo restaged *Last Pie* commissioned by Noism and premiered in 2005 with her dream team. Kuroda also revived *Last Pie* in another non-genre dance competition, *NEXTREAM21*. Kino Saiko revived a lecture performance *Dance Becoming Physical Education? (Dance wa taiiku nari?)* that reviewed the history of modern Japanese dance which developed along with the physical education. In *Yokohama Dance Collection 2018* Mikuni Yanaihara's Nibroll revived their work *Coffee* premiered in 2002. In September DAZZLE headed by Hasegawa Tatsuya restaged *Pinocchio's Lie (Pinocchio no Uso)*, which premiered in April 2018. Dance companies do not have the budget nor rehearsal space for new works, but they continue producing good-quality pieces albeit quickly in a short term.

Upon reviewing the above, Saburo Teshigawara and Noism stood out, as they have their own bases for their activities, create new works, and tour in and outside of Japan. The Japanese contemporary dance world must examine the ways in which the artists can keep producing new works with high quality, and restage them as repertoires.

Invitations from Concert Halls

In 2018 Teshigawara worked mostly overseas. He choreographed new works both at the Centre Chorégraphique National – Ballet de Lorraine in France, and the Acosta Danza in Cuba. He directed Rameau's opera *Pygmalion* in Sweden, and directed and performed *Symphonie Fantastique* by Berlioz at *Biennale de la Danse Lyon (Lyon Dance Biennale)* with the National Orchestra of Lyon. In Japan he presented *Shirabe* with musician Miyata Mayumi who plays the traditional wind instrument *sho*, Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire* with Soprano Marianne Pousseur, and a series of studio performances including new works called *Update Dance*. The reasons why Teshigawara has been highly active are that those in the classical music world aiming at reactivation of their works would offer him opportunities, and that he would collaborate with musicians as well as direct operas.

Some classical music concert halls have aspirations to widen their audience with programs for communities and families. Especially in 2018, some engaged contemporary dance choreographers. Sumida Triphony Hall, where New Japan Philharmonic is based, made a theatrical piece to the music of Stravinsky's *The Firebird* in *Sumida Summer Concert 2018 – Chance to Play*. Suzuki Yukio was selected as the choreographer, director and dancer, and he performed with open auditioned Sumida Residential Dancers and the orchestra. Tokyo Metropolitan Symphony Orchestra and Tokyo Metropolitan Theatre employed Kondō Ryōhei and Condors and produced *TOKYO MET SaLaD MUSIC FESTIVAL 2018*, and held workshops to enjoy music through dance. At the *Hokutopia International Music Festival 2018* in Tokyo, Onodera Shūji directed

Monteverdi's opera *The Return of Ulysses to his Homeland* (his first opera direction). His company Derashinera revived *La Traviata* and Dostoevsky's *The Double*. Also, Onodera was active in directing newly produced works such as: *Slope (SHA-MEN)* featuring the ballet dancer Shutō Yasuyuki, and Contemporary Noh Theatre Series 9: *The Tale of the Bamboo Cutter (Taketori)*. Moriyama Kaiji directed Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, the opera with new direction coproduced and toured nationwide in public theatres across the country as their national collaborative project. It was performed in Toyama, Tokyo, and Kumamoto in 2018.

Fantasia in Street Performances: From Restricted to Encouraged

A trend is noticeable in street performances being produced and popularized thanks to external factors, unrelated to artists' intentions. In the past butoh and street shows used to be restricted, but now are recommended and even organized by the municipalities, as part of their endeavors to promote local culture and stimulate local economy. Therefore, the situation has drastically changed.

Sankai Juku recreated their representative work from the 1980's *Unetsu - The Egg Stands out of Curiosity (Tamago wo Tateru Kotokara)*, followed by *Kumquat Seed (Kinkan Shōnen)*. Amagatsu Ushio did not perform due to his poor health, yet his continuous themes: life, death, regeneration are universal and never look faded. Also, The Japan Foundation organized Sankai Juku's first tour to China this year.

Dairakudakan premiered *Crime and Punishment* as a program

of The New National Theatre in Tokyo. On the other hand, the unit Golden's gains popularity with golden powdered bodies in street performance festivals across the country.

D-soko Theater in Nippori, Tokyo, produced series of performances called *Dance ga mitai! 20 (Want to See Dance! 20)* in the theme of Hijikata Tatsumi's book *the Ailing Dance Mistress (Yameru mairime)*, which also attracted the attention of the academic world. Seven choreographers including Itō Kim, Yukio Suzuki, and Kuroda Ikuyo challenged this original butoh text with their various new approaches. Kasai Akira of the butoh founder's generation danced *Hijikata Tatsumi Phantom Landscape (Hijikata Tatsumi genfūkei)* based on his own memory of Hijikata's *Masseur (Amma)* created in Hijikata's mid-career period.

Tanaka Min performed his site-specific improvisation *ba-odori* in *TACT/FESTIVAL 2018* at The Tokyo Metropolitan Theatre. The audience enjoyed watching his improvisational dance of scattering tap water with a hose during the record-setting intense heat of this last summer.

Gilyak Amagasaki, the legendary street artist, who lives on gratuities for his performances, staged a triumphant show to celebrate his eighty-eighth birthday and the 50th anniversary of his street performing career, despite his critical illnesses: Parkinson's disease and spinal canal stenosis. About 2000 people watched his annual autumn performance in Shinjuku, applauding warmly the outstanding work of this veteran.

Creativity at International Level

I stated that contemporary dance is nomadic. On the other hand, dance is the shared language in the world through the medium of the body; it easily transcends countries and genres and makes interaction and creative activities possible. Although public funding support is insufficient, collaborations between artists are increasing, which provides fertile soil for conceiving outstanding works at international level.

Kitamura Akiko continued the Asian co-produced project, *Cross Transit*, and compiled *vox soil (Tsuchi no myaku)* focusing on the cross-cultural understanding through the medium of the body.

Iwabuchi Takiko's Dance Theatre LUDENS revived *Trifles* and premiered *EXTEMPORANEOUS* as an international co-produced project with Iñaki Azpillaga of *Ultima Vez*, and demonstrated their high level of creativity.

Terada Misako danced *Trilogy* choreographed by Jung Young Doo, Tsukahara Yūya, and Marcelo Evelin, the diversity of her expressive power was impressive.

Hasegawa Maiko and Sakata Mamoru's Tarinof dance company co-produced *KURURI* with the French art unit Mobilis-Immobilis. Together with the traditional *nagauta* musician Kineya Saki, they created dense space where bodies, voices, music and visual images overlapped.

Moriyama Mirai premiered *SONAR* in collaboration with Jon Filip Fahlstrøm and Oikawa Junya at *DDD@Yokohama*. It was an experimental improvised performance of contact with the stand-

ing audience.

The dancer of outstanding activities this year was Yuasa Ema, formerly of The Netherland Dans Theater (NDT). She joined the director Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui's restaging tour of *PLUTO*, featuring male actor and dancer Moriyama Mirai. Then, as *DNA*'s pre-performance Yuasa premiered a site-specific performance, *enchaine*, and later appeared in the female lead in Mats Ek's *Juliet and Romeo* in Houston, Texas, and in Kōchi prefecture she restaged her solo dance *HOME* directed by pianist Mukaiyama Tomoko, who is based in the Netherlands. She also joined the tour *GAKA*, literally meaning 'noble song'.

GAKA world-premiered on the outdoor stage at the Oerol Festival on the island of Terschelling in the Northern Netherlands. After its revival at the Museum of Art in Kōchi, the work it was performed in front of the setting sun on the shore of Kōzushima island, Tokyo. The director Mukaiyama, who comes from the sacred Kumano area in Wakayama, explored the possibility for a contemporary ritual. She conceived this piece based on her childhood experience of being excluded, as a female, from the local traditional rituals enacted only by men. Yamada Un and her company danced while skilfully playing various musical instruments then Yuasa entered and presented a mystical solo dance transformed into *raihoshin* (a visiting deity). At the end, the *kagura* performer Kanzaki Tomoki, from a Shinto priest's family of the Nagasaki Gotō islands, rang the sacred bells (*kagura suzu*) to see the deity off to the ocean in the dusk. This dance as an offering was a rare performance of communicating with Nature.

Yuasa also taught together with Kojiri Kenta at the *Saitama Dance Laboratory* vol.1 that Saitama Arts Theatre started as an educational program to further train performers and promote cultural activities. The event attracted many young dancers with a ballet background and experience in creating contemporary dance pieces. Workshops and individual shows were held but especially impressive was the group choreography *solos*, composed and directed by Yuasa - an overwhelmingly high-quality piece that one cannot imagine they finished in only 10 days.

This program was a dream project of the theatre producer Satō Maimi. Since the 1980s, Satō has introduced numerous leading world-class artists to Japan. While she worked for Kanagawa Arts Foundation, she also helped to establish ASK (Artists' Studio of Kanagawa) for educational programs of theatre staff and performers. Artists who had participated in ASK are Yanaihara Mikuni who later had formed Nibroll, Iwabuchi Takiko of LUDENS, Hirai Yūko who later joined Dumb Type, and others. In addition, Sato held Philippe Decouflé's workshops on the dates when theatres and their other facilities (e.g. rehearsal room) were closed for maintenance. Itō Kaori who participated in them, now resides in Paris after dancing in pieces of Decouflé. Itō presented *I Dance Because I Do not Trust Words* (*Watashi wa kotoba wo shinjinainode odoru*) at Saitama Arts Theatre and toured nationwide. She also made a new duet with Moriyama Mirai *Is it worth to save us?*. It can be said that Satō's works in Kanagawa has borne the artists of the next generation.

Time for the Theatres to Bear the Artists and Repertoires

If theatres become places for creation, not just for performances, we are investing in the future. As in Satō's examples, we now encounter pieces and talents that were borne out of many other long-term efforts in public theatres.

ZA-KOENJI Public Theatre Dance Award is a project that selects pieces presented at the annual creative dance competition *Artistic Movement in Toyama* and provides the participants with the opportunity to polish their works with the help of the theatre staff and to stage them. Some of these artists then went on to win awards at *Yokohama Dance Collection* choreography competitions.

Theatre X (cai) produced *International Performing Arts Festival 2018* and organized a series of workshops by the visiting director Nina Dipla for the preparatory process of a new work. The result was the group dance performance *Kaguya: Conversation with the Moon*, a wonderfully coherent piece, born under Dipla's guidance.

SPAC worked with the choreographer Merlin Nyakam, and presented their two new pieces at *Tokyo Festival 2018: The Sky is Measured by Wings (El cielo se mide por alas)* was performed by junior and high school children from Shizuoka SPAC-ENFANTS; as well as its adult counterpart *Stay Dreaming, (Adult version of Yumemiru Chikara)* with auditioned female Japanese performers all over fifty-five years old.

Tsujimoto Tomohiko and Shimaji Yasutake made the dance unit KARADA, and its founding performance *Foot (Ashi)*. They were also among the founding members of Noism. Later, Tsujimoto joined Cirque du Soleil and after that became a choreographer.

After Noism, Shimaji danced in the Forsythe Company, and then made the dance unit Altneu with ballet dancer Sakai Hana. I already reviewed Kuroda Ikuyo's several revivals of her piece *Last Pie* this year. Overall, it could be said that Noism has successfully nurtured excellent artists and borne repertoires.

In other words, the past investment finally has borne fruit. And those previous investments that the Japanese contemporary dance world dared to make regardless of the strong adverse wind against it now support its current activities. As in Saitama Dance Laboratory mentioned above, the Japanese contemporary dance scene already has world-class choreographers and skilled performers. If public resources could justifiably be allotted, and if theatres can be secured as places for artists' creation, an original competitive performance content at international level can be easily produced. If public resources cannot be allotted, it is only because of defective government policies and the malfunctioning of the public art support system. It is time for following wind, not more adverse wind. It is time for following wind, not more adverse wind.

Tsutsumi, Hiroshi

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(Translation: Satō Michiyo)

Television Dramas

Multiple Layers of What People Are Thinking About and their Diverse Values Depicted in Television Dramas

Nakamachi Ayako

Ossan's Love and *Unnatural*

– Original Television Dramas Engaging the Viewers

Nowadays, people watch audiovisual works not only on television but also through internet devices such as smart phones, tablets and computers. Under these circumstances, original television dramas drew attention and left a strong impression.

Ossan's Love (TV Asahi) was one of the most successful television dramas aired in 2018. The title means love affairs between middle-aged men and the phrase became a buzzword. The viewer comments on social networking sites developed into a social phenomenon. The huge number of catch up views on the internet and the number of followers on the official Twitter and Instagram accounts were much talked about as well. Haruta Sōichi (played by Tanaka Kei) works at the Second Tokyo Sales Office of Sky Real Estates and one day the department director Kurosawa Musashi (played by Yoshida Kōtarō) confesses his love for him. Haruta suggests to Maki Ryōta (played by Hayashi Kento), who has been transferred from the head office, that they should become roommates and Maki also takes a fancy for him. Kurosawa's single-mindedness, Maki's sensitivity and Haruta's confusion were

portrayed through the actors' bold choices in their acting, which turned them into lovable characters. How they interacted with the people around them created a warm atmosphere and the way things turned out (in other words, how their feelings intertwined) were frustrating or sometimes surprising, and moments of enthrallment were sprinkled everywhere. The charm of this drama was developed due to the feelings of the characters and the portrayal of their relationships as well as the newness of how the story evolved. (The script was written by Tokuo Kōji, produced by Kijima Sari, directed by Rutō Tōichiro, Yamamoto Daisuke and Yuki Saito). *Ossan's Love* won several prizes of the Tokyo Drama Awards 2018, namely the Grand Prize of the Series Drama category, the prize for Best Performance by an Actor (Tanaka Kei) and the prize for Best Performance by an Actor in a Supporting Role (Yoshida Kōtarō). The drama was broadcast almost simultaneously in Taiwan, Hong Kong and South Korea, only a few days after it was aired in Japan.

There were a few other dramas about love that attracted attention and they were all based on original stories. In *Half Blue* (*Hanbun, aoi.*) (NHK, written by Kitagawa Eriko), aired as a Morning Drama Series (*asadora*) in 2018, the portrayal of the romantic feelings between the heroine Nireno Suzume (played by Nagano Mei) and her friend from childhood Hagio Ritsu (played by Satō Takeru) drew attention. *Don't Forget Me* (*Dairen-ai ~ boku o wasureru kimi to*) (TBS, written by Ōishi Shizuka) was about the love between a doctor (played by Toda Erika), who had early-onset Alzheimer's disease, and a novelist (played by Muro Tsuyoshi), who is her secret idol. The tension that was created from not being able to tell what was going to become of the couple provided a fresh

topic and through their performances, the cast were able to capture and deliver the subtleties of a relationship between a man and a woman, which made the drama appealing.

Unnatural (TBS) was an original drama about crime investigation. In recent years, television dramas about crime, especially detective dramas that conclude in one episode, have become a standard for popular serial dramas and many of them have been turned into long series. Although *Unnatural* is not a detective drama, it takes place at a laboratory where autopsies of unnatural deaths are conducted. In Japan, it is said that eighty percent of unnatural deaths are not anatomised and this rate is the lowest among leading nations. A forensic autopsy physician named Misumi Mikoto (played by Ishihara Satomi), who works at an imaginary laboratory, is the only survivor of a family that committed suicide. Her associate Nakadō Kei (played by Iura Arata) conducted an autopsy on his lover, who was murdered, and he had been suspected in the past of concealing evidence. The drama covered relevant subject matters such as the cover-up of healthcare-acquired infection, the feelings of people around those who were infected and how the protagonists encountered the situation. Making full use of the format of investigation dramas and incorporating massive amounts of information, this drama made us think about many things and also portrayed at multiple levels the different positions of people involved in the event. (The serial drama won several prizes at the Tokyo Drama Awards 2018, namely the prize for Excellent Series Drama, the prize for Best Performance by an Actress (Ishihara Satomi), the prize for Best Screenplay (Nogi Akiko), the prize for Best Director (Tsukahara Ayuko), the Special Award (the production team), the Theme Song

Award (Yonezu Kenshi's *Lemon*) as well as the Galaxy Award for the Best Drama of the Month in March 2018 and the Grand Prize in the Television Drama category of the 44th Hōsō Bunka Foundation (HBF) Prize).

Thought-provoking and Multi-layered Human Drama

The Invisible Cradle (*Tōmei na yurikago*) (NHK), which aired under NHK's Drama 10 series, was not only a youth drama portraying the heroine's naivety and indecision with fresh sensitivity, but also a medical drama. Back in the summer of 1997, Aota Aoi (played by Kiyohara Kaya), who studies nursing at high school, starts working part time as an assistant nurse at a small antenatal clinic by the sea. It is her first-ever part-time job. She witnesses an abortion and also childbirth for the first time in her life. She meets a woman who disappears right after her delivery. A mother-to-be that decides to deliver her child although she knows there is a risk of losing her eyesight because of diabetes. A newborn baby abandoned in front of the clinic and the mother of the baby, who is still a junior high school student. In this drama, plenty of time was taken to thoroughly depict what the protagonist went through instead of rushing to tell the pros and cons of what happened at the clinic or to reach a resolution in some way or another. Numerous close-ups of the heroine's face left a strong impression. Accurately but subtly, the camera captured the time she spent thinking about the things that had happened right in front of her eyes. Various things could be speculated through her expressions. The adults around her, who were watching over her, added several levels to the portrayal, which is a method often used in television dramas. The director of the clinic, who is called Yui Tomohiro (played by

Seto Kōji), and the nurses, namely Mochizuki Sayako (played by Mizukawa Asami) and Sakaki Mie (played by Harada Mieko), face the expecting mothers from their different stances and watch over the heroine. The drama was based on a girl's comic book (by Okita Bakka) titled *The Invisible Cradle* (*Tōmei na yurikago ~ sanfujinka-iin kangoshi minarai nikki*) published by Kōdansha. Nevertheless, in the television drama adaptation, we were able to follow how the characters felt, and the different perspectives that were added to one incident owed much to Adachi Naoko's script, the actors' performances and the direction. (The drama (directed by Shibata Takeshi and others) won the Grand Prize of the (73rd) Agency for Cultural Affairs National Arts Festival Award 2018 and also the Galaxy Award for the Month of September 2018).

The Diversity of Values Portrayed in TV Dramas

If *Ossan's Love* could be called a unique love story, you may say that *Stepmother and Daughter's Blues* (*Gibo to musume no blues*) was a unique family drama. The story is about the ten years spent between a woman and a girl who becomes her step daughter because her father got remarried. What was unique was how the purpose of the marriage was depicted. Miyamoto Ryōichi (played by Takenouchi Yutaka) lost his wife three years ago and he is suffering from stomach cancer. He wants someone to look after his daughter called Miyuki (played by Yokomizo Naho and Kamishiraishi Moka), who goes to primary school, and asks Iwaki Akiko (played by Ayase Haruka), who is a competent career woman that he happened to meet at his workplace, to marry him. He does not have relatives to rely on. Akiko accepts his proposal because she is feeling a desire for human company at that time. She

chooses to nurture a family relationship by succeeding Ryōichi's responsibility of child rearing. During the first half of the serial, we see Akiko making great efforts to keep up with the housework and bringing up her daughter while continuing her work and trust is developed between her and Miyuki, who had been opposed to her. Half way through the serial drama, Ryōichi passes away. During the latter half, Miyuki, who has become a senior high school student, thinks about what would be the best for her mother when she is choosing what to do after she graduates from high school. Their relationship becomes that of a true family and they grow through their relationship as a family. No matter how it started, as they live together and care for one another, they find each other precious and irreplaceable, and they can develop together. Through portraying such kinds of love romance and a family relationship, the drama provided fresh topics and at the same time it suggested relationships that lead to the diversity of values.

Suspense Dramas and Single Dramas Now

A long time has passed since regular slots for two-hour dramas were removed. Currently, most of the single two-hour dramas are special episodes of serial dramas, dramas to commemorate key stations' anniversaries or dramas produced on a regular basis (usually only one drama per year) by local stations. With regard to anniversary dramas broadcast in 2018, there was *Ranhansha (Scattered Reflection)* to commemorate the fifty-fifth anniversary of the opening of Nagoya Broadcasting Network Mētele, *The Wife Who Nurtured a Genius ~ The Love Between an Internationally-recognized Mathematician and His Wife (Tensai o sodateta nyōbō ~ sekai ga mitometa sūgakusha to tsuma no ai)* to commemorate the sixtieth anniversary of the opening

of Yomiuri Telecasting Corporation (script written by Hayashi Makoto and directed by Ochiai Masayuki) and others. *Ranhansha* (script written by Naruse Katsuo and directed by Ishii Yūya) was a mystery drama worth watching, with a chain of small sins and lack of morals leading to a death. A small child was trapped under a roadside tree that had fallen to the ground, and dies. Looking at the topics dealt with in each episode, such as oversight in government management, subcontractor's responsibilities, pedestrian breaches of etiquette and claims made through civil movements, they may seem like topics dealt with in gossip shows on television but bigger themes about lack of imagination, crimes committed unconsciously and morals were brought to the surface.

As for *The Wife Who Nurtured a Genius*, it was a drama about a mathematic genius called Oka Kiyoshi (played by Sasaki Kuranosuke) and it was portrayed through the eyes of his wife Michi (played by Amami Yūki). The world of mathematics, which is difficult to depict on the screen, was shown through projected images using CGI and other methods to portray the state of the genius, who is not understood by the people around him, and also the people who support him. For instance, in the opening scene, Michi says, "It's fun because he thinks about 'things that don't exist' as though 'they do exist' ", and it has a pleasant ring.

In regard to single dramas, many dramas using subject matters based on historical facts were produced. Feature dramas titled *A Country Which Exists Nowhere* (*Doko ni mo nai kuni*) (NHK), *Haruko's Doll* (*Haruko no ningyō*) (NHK), which was a special version of the late Hayasaka Akira's *Hana henro* series, a feature drama titled *Town of Evening Calm, Country of Cherry Blossoms* (*Yūnagi no machi, sakura no kuni*) (NHK) and *NHK Special:*

Unsolved Crimes File No. 07 (Mikaiketsu jiken file. 07 keisatsuchō chōkan sogeki jiken) were among them. The challenge was how to dramatise historical incidents and how to draw out messages that were relevant to today's society.

New Attempts to Sell Japanese TV Dramas Overseas

One of the Japanese television dramas that were introduced abroad this year was *Confidence Man JP* (Fuji Television, script by Kosawa Ryōta, planned by Narikawa Hiroaki) and it deserves a special mention. It was remade in China and Korea at the same time, the original Japanese version was broadcast in Southeast Asian countries immediately after its run in Japan, and the Japanese version was sold to eighty-two countries and regions so that it will be broadcast overseas. The word 'JP' in the title means Japan, but while the original Japanese version was still being planned, plans for the *Confidence Man KR* project for Korea and the *Confidence Man CN* project for China were already being made. It was sold based on a style in which the original script for the television drama was sold, which opened up the possibility of a new way to export Japanese television drama besides the existing way of remaking dramas that had already been broadcast in Japan. Three confidence tricksters, namely Dāko (Nagasawa Masami), Boku-chan (Higashide Masahiro) and Richard (Kohinata Fumiyo) disguise themselves in a bold way to defraud a huge amount of money from big names in various fields. They quickly learn the relevant expertise to enter their worlds and effortlessly deceive big names who are entangled in a labyrinth of greed. It is a comedy of this sort. (*Confidence Man JP* won the Tokyo Drama Award for Excellent Serial drama in 2018 and the Monthly Galaxy Award for

July 2018).

The number of television dramas remade internationally is increasing. Remakes of foreign dramas aired in Japan in 2018 included remakes of American dramas such as *Cold Case 2 - The Door of Truth* (*Kōrudo kēsu: shinjitsu no tobira 2*) (WOWOW), *SUITS* (Fuji Television, remade in Korea as well) and also a remake of a Korean drama titled *Good Doctor* (Fuji Television, also remade in the U.S.). *Woman* (2013, Nippon TV, written by Sakamoto Yūji) was remade in Turkey under the title *KADIN (WOMAN)* (FOX Turkey, 2017-2018) and won the Special Award for Foreign Drama at the Tokyo Drama Awards 2018.

Nakamachi, Ayako

Nakamachi Ayako is a professor at Nihon University College of Art. She is also a member of the Reviewing Committee of the National Arts Festival of the Agency for Cultural Affairs, and a member of reviewing boards for various awards related to broadcasting, such as serving as the Vice Chairman of the Tokyo Drama Awards of the International Drama Festival in Tokyo. She has written reviews of television dramas, mainly in newspapers such as 'This Line from That Drama' (*Ano dorama kono serifu*) in the Nikkei Newspaper and 'Antenna' in the Yomiuri Shimbun. Her published works include *21 Quotable Lines in Japanese Television Dramas* (*Nippon no terebi dorama nijūichi no meiserifu*) (published by Kōbundō).

(Translation: Sumida Michiyo)

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Developments in Japan and Overseas



Developments in Japan and Overseas

Remembering Asari Keita: A Master Living in the Irrational Contradictions of Art and Business

Uchida Yoichi

Asari Keita, the founder of Shiki, Japan's largest theatrical troupe, the man responsible for spreading the cultures of musicals throughout Japan, died on July 13, 2018 due to malignant lymphoma at the age of 85. He was a giant among postwar theatre artists who had a huge influence on society. He was well connected

throughout the political and business world, and in addition to directing the opening and closing ceremonies for the 1998 Nagano Winter Olympics, he was also instrumental in making the establishment of the New National Theatre of Japan possible. On September 18, two months after his death, there was a memorial gathering for him at the Imperial Hotel in Tokyo and 3,000 people came to pay their respects.

Asari Keita was born in Tokyo on March 16, 1933. His father Tsuruo was one of the founders of the Tsukiji Shōgekijō (Tsukiji Little Theatre), an early stronghold for the modern theatre movement, and his great uncle was the famous kabuki actor Ichikawa Sadanji II. Sadanji II was not only famous in kabuki, he also was one of the early pioneers of the Shingeki modern theatre movement and worked with the writer and director Osanai Kaoru to found Jiyū Gekijō (Freedom Theatre). When the Shiki troupe built its own theater in the Hamamatsu-chō area of Tokyo, it named the theatre for straight plays “Jiyū Gekijō” due to this family connection to the very start of the modern theatre movement in Japan.

Asari first got involved with theatre when he was at the Keio Senior High School. His English teacher was the rising dramatist Katō Michio and under his influence he participated in the drama club together with Hayashi Hikaru (later to become a composer) and Kusaka Takeshi (later to become an actor). After going into the French Literature Department of Keio University in July 1953, he established the Shiki theatre troupe as a joint theatre troupe for students from Keio University and Tokyo University. There were ten members at its founding. They were strongly influenced by Katō Michio and his ally Akutagawa Hiroshi (who was an alumnus of Keio University) and made their banner performing translations

of plays by French dramatists like Jean Giraudoux and Jean Anouilh who were searching for new ways of living. They followed the suggestion of Akutagawa in naming the troupe. Shiki means “four seasons” but in French is also used to mean “greengrocer” and suggested that the troupe would offer up the freshest products of the changing seasons.

Their premiere production in 1954 was Anouilh’s “*Ardèle ou la Marguerite* (Ardèle; The Cry of the Peacock)” and legend has it that there were 150 people in the audience. During the war, Katō Michio had written a poetic drama, “*Nayotake*,” based on the ancient classic “*Taketori Monogatari* (Tale of the Bamboo Cutter),” but he was so pure that faced with the rough reality of post-war Japan, committed suicide shortly before the establishment of the theatre troupe. This left a deep impression on the troupe. Katō had felt despair at Shingeki modern theatre in Japan. The Shiki troupe maintained a policy of plays with the message that “life is worth living,” and repeatedly performed Katō’s play, “*Omoide o Uru Otoko* (The Man who Sold Memories).”

During the political times of the early 1960’s centered on the Anpo protests over the Japan-America Security Treaty, Shingeki modern theatre was strongly directed toward socialist realism by



Ardèle; The Cry of the Peacock

the Japanese Communist Party. In opposition to this, in 1955, Asari wrote a manifesto, “*Engeki no Kaifuku no Tame ni* (For the Restoration of Theatre)” where he violently criticized this. He laid down the gauntlet by saying

that he had not been moved by any Shingeki production after the time of the Tsukiji Shōgekijō and after condemning realistic 19th century plays, praised Greek tragedies and French classical theatre.

Asari's view of theatre was that just as with Greek tragedies, theatre is something that can transcend the oppositions of individuals in society, but to manifest itself, this transcendence must be embodied in some kind of action. People live with the irrationality that they are meaningless in society and are fundamentally isolated. He wanted to find a kind of joy that could relieve the torment of this state of things.

“Theatre is a giant purifying festival that is held to make people recognize the joy of living, that would suck out the evil blood that builds up in life and will make them feel the worth of living.” (from Asari Keita, *Asari Keita no Shiki, Chōjutsushū 1* [The Four Seasons of Asari Keita, Collected Writings Volume 1]: *Engeki no Kaifuku no Tame ni* [For the Restoration of Theatre]” Keio University Press, 1999.)

In terms of acting, directing methods and the production system, in all things, Asari maintained the ideals he held at the beginning. In the first period of the Shiki troupe, there was an emphasis on having new plays written. There was even a connection to two giants of the avant-garde theatre world. Asari had the up and coming writer Terayama Shūji write, *“Chi wa Tatta Mama Nemutte Iru* (Blood Sleeps Standing Up)” and was a strong influence on Kara Jūrō. Kara thought of Asari as an older brother and his plays can almost be considered variations on the productions of Shiki, for example, Giraudoux's *“Ondine.”* This point must not be overlooked when thinking about the theatre of the 1960's.



Premiere of *Blood Sleeps Standing Up* © terayama world



Photo from article on Terayama's debut in the theatre world as the author for *Blood Sleeps Standing Up* (from his own scrapbook) © terayama world

As a director, Asari Keita created stylish productions with all excess pared away in collaboration with designer Kanamori Kaoru and lighting designer Yoshii Sumio. These productions were faithful to the “Three Unities” of classical French theatre: the unity of time, place and action, and placed special value on poetry and music in order to achieve a cleansing of spirit with the urge to go to that which is innocent and spotless. Representative productions along these lines include those of Anouilh’s “*Antigone*” and

“*L’Alouette* (The Lark),” Giraudoux’s “*Ondine*,” “*Intermezzo*” and “*La guerre de Troie n’aura pas lieu* (The Trojan War will not Take Place),” Fukuda Tsuneari’s translation of Shakespeare’s “*Hamlet*,” Takeda Taijun’s “*Hikarigoke* (Luminous Moss)” and Mishima Yukio’s “*Rokumeikan*.”

The key characteristic of these productions is Shiki’s distinctive acting style. In the postwar period, Shingeki took as its standard the “natural acting” favored by Kishida Kunio with the idea of a pure theatre that can express fine gradations of psychology. As opposed to this, Asari placed less emphasis on “psychology” than he did on the physical actions used to express this psychology. The main feature was clear elocution that would concretely express the feelings behind an action. This is what came to be called “Shiki

bushi (Shiki declamation),” which was a way of describing it that Asari violently disliked. This is a method of vocal delivery that was based on methods of breathing, treatment of vowels and phrasing and insisted that the voice should be produced not from the throat but from the stomach; the two feet are opened to shoulder width, the body’s center of gravity brought low and then in this position the voice is to be produced by breathing from the diaphragm. First, vowels are created with the feeling of yawning and then consonants are added. This technique of vocal delivery is intended to direct consciousness at the breaks in a sentence, which are the places where a performer can breathe and avoids a flat, monotonous way of speaking.

The actor Hira Mikijirō was trained in modern acting techniques in the Haiyū-za theatre troupe by Senda Koreya, but even he became a guest member of the Shiki troupe and received special training in Asari’s vocal techniques. It is said that he practiced a play by Mishima Yukio by making a script that only had the vowels. When this technique is used by an inexperienced performer the result can seem exaggerated and overdone and stiff and unnatural. But with experienced actors, this technique can be very effective and produces the best results. This was true not only with Hira, but with founding member Kusaka Takeshi



The Lark © Norihiko Matsumoto



Luminous Moss



Ondine

and younger performers like Kaga Takeshi, Ichimura Masachika, Ishimaru Kanji and Hamada Megumi. The actors of the Shiki company even taught classes in elementary schools around Japan in how to speak Japanese beautifully.

Asari Keita believed in action and he was also excellent in business management. A theatrical troupe cannot survive just on the search for pure art. It must maintain a group of people and it must put on productions. As his motto, Asari took the words of Louis Jouvet, the French theatre man that he revered, “a shameful sublimity, humiliation with greatness” as he aimed to make his troupe economically self-sufficient. The existing Shingeki modern theatre troupes relied on the money brought in by appearances by popular members of the troupe on television and commercials. But this often led to feelings of unequal treatment and conflict within the troupe and could lead to the end of the group by emphasizing economics rather than art. Asari thought this made theatre troupes “economic slaves of the advertising industry” and aimed for the economic independence of modern theatre. The solution eventually came in the form of long-runs of musicals, but one can probably say that Asari was very fortunate that the prosperity of the “bubble economy” of the second half of the 1980’s made it easier to find corporate support.

Even as early as 1971, in the magazine “Teatro” in a piece

called “*Gekidan no Keiei to Soshiki* (The Organization and Management of a Theatre Troupe),” Asari could discuss his ideas about how a theatre troupe should be structured based on his experience. In terms of the number of members a troupe should have, he overturned the common wisdom and said that having actors make up just a quarter of the troupe was about right. The rest of the troupe should be made up of technical staff like art and lighting designers, production staff, sales and publicity staff and in addition instructors to train new actors. In order to make this plan a reality, the management of the Shiki troupe was forced to constantly face very severe challenges. The managers, producers and backstage staff trained by Asari now are a major source for the people running public and commercial theatres all over Japan.

Asari loved to tell the story that when the Nissei Gekijō (Nissay Theatre), Japan’s first modern theatre opened in 1963, Hirose Gen, the president of the Nissei Insurance Company (Nippon Life Insurance Company: Nissay), asked him to be an official in the management of the theatre. When he thought that there should be a theatre in the Shibuya area of Tokyo, Asari went with his friend Ishihara Shintarō to appeal directly to Gotō Noboru, the Group Chief of the Tōkyū Group. Gotō brushed them off, saying that “with the state of the Japanese economy today, we have no time to waste with your fun and games.” But Gotō heard about Hirose’s plan to open the Nissay Theatre and he was actually the person that introduced Asari and his associates to Hirose. When Asari met Hirose he said, “Let’s create the best theatre east of the Suez Canal!” He then worked to bring the Berlin State Opera and the Broadway musical “*West Side Story*” to perform in Japan and in so doing he could study how the modern stage arts were put

together and the business end of running a theatre in these countries. There is even the legendary episode that Asari appealed directly to Tanaka Kakuei, then the Minister of Finance, to get an exception made on the severe restrictions on how much foreign exchange could be taken out of Japan.

Asari first established a connection to the political world by taking advantage of the fact that the father of Mizushima Hiroshi, one of the founding members of the troupe, had been close to former Prime Minister Satō Eisaku in the Ministry of Railways before the war. Asari used that connection to become a home tutor teaching how to speak beautiful Japanese. There were risks in getting so close to politics, but Asari probably considered it as just one of the “shameful sublimities.” Asari’s connections to the government can be exemplified by his role in staging the Hinode Sansō summit between Prime Minister Nakasone Yasuhiro and Ronald Reagan, the so-called “Ron-Yasu talks” where Nakasone hosted Ronald and Nancy at his rustic villa outside Tokyo, serving tea by a country hearth. The redecoration of the villa and design of the costumes was all handled by technical staff from Shiki. When the campaign to build a National Theatre finally resulted in a theatre only for the traditional performing arts, leaving out such genres as modern theatre and opera, Asari went directly to Prime Minister Satō and arranged for a funded study group to be organized. This is one of the things that eventually led to the opening of the New National Theatre of Japan.

But Asari Keita also endangered the New National Theatre of Japan project and shook up the modern theatre world as well. So, when the New National Theatre used the tactic of selling the air rights above the theatre to fit plans to redevelop the Hatsudai area

in Shibuya Ward, Asari was furious. When there were plans to make it a palace for opera with Ozawa Seiji as artistic director, Asari withdrew from the project. He fought with Sasaki Tadatsugu of the Japan Performing Arts Foundation, who is famous as a producer for ballet, over Sasaki's proposal to increase the number of seats in a commercial theatre way of thinking. The two argued furiously with Asari presenting proposal after proposal, frustrated at the inability of the theatre world to reach a consensus on a plan. Asari also was frustrated at the modern theatre world and criticized dependence on government subsidies as making it like domesticated livestock and pulled Shiki out of the *Nihon Gekidan Kyōgikai* (Association of Japanese Theatre Companies). But all the same, it is also true that without Shiki, there would probably be no New National Theatre of Japan today.

But what made Asari Keita's work as a producer known to the general public is probably his introduction of open ended long-runs for musicals, which he first achieved in 1983. The only way to make a stage performance economically viable is to have either a repertory system or a long-run system. However, in Japan in the big theatres the custom of having runs of one month was strongly established and with the existing star system it would be difficult to retain actors in one production for longer periods of time. With "Cats" as the first production, Asari introduced hits from America and England, making it possible to have a production system centered on works, rather than stars. Then he double and triple cast the plays and, instead of the established theatre buildings, constructed temporary theatres on unused land. This was what first made long-runs possible in Japan. It could even be said that Asari probably got the idea of having a temporary building for the Cats

Theatre by looking at the success of his friend Kara Jūrō performing avant-garde theatre in his distinctive red tent. After the success of “*Cats*,” Asari worked with Andrew Lloyd Weber to create long-running productions of musicals like “*The Phantom of the Opera*” and “*Aspects of Love*” and he worked with Disney for such productions as “*The Lion King*” and “*Beauty and the Beast*.” Shiki also came to build temporary theatres for these musicals all over Japan. But at the same time, Shiki built the Jiyū Gekijō (Freedom Theatre) in the Hamamatsu-chō neighborhood of Tokyo and intermittently produced straight plays by Anouilh and Giraudoux more or less making a repertory system work as well. For the production of theatre in Japan, the existence of Shiki has been revolutionary. In the future, the question of what kind of productions will be staged in the new theatre made possible by the redevelopment of the Shibaura area of Tokyo will present an opportunity for Asari’s successor as president of the company, Yoshida Chiyoki, to show what he can do.

Ultimately, Asari Keita’s legacy to the theatre world is in his development of musicals, which can be seen as an extension of his acting technique emphasizing voice production, and the establishment of the “*Meisaku Gekijō* (Classics Theatre)” and its successor “*Kokoro no Gekijō* (Heart Theatre)” made possible by the support of Nissay. Asari’s experience there bringing “*West Side Story*” to Japan showed that musicals had as much artistic quality as opera and realizing this in Japan became one of the goals of Shiki. The Tōhō production company subsequently became Shiki’s rival in producing long-runs of musicals and this quickly raised the level of musicals in Japan.

Asari aimed at creating new musicals and this goal remained

unfulfilled, with the exception of plays for children. However, three original musicals took this challenge head on. “*Ri Kōran*” about the Japanese Yamaguchi Yoshiko who became a movie star in China under this name, “*Ikoku no Oka* (On the Hill in a Foreign Land)” and “*Minami Jūji Sei* (The Southern Cross)” were three original musicals that as a set all took up the theme of World War II directly. In particular, “*Ikoku no Oka*,” which takes its title from the popular song by composer Yoshida Tadashi, detained in Siberia by the Russian Army at the end of WWII, captures the prayers of the Japanese people in the midst of the cruel tragedies of war and is a masterpiece worthy of being polished and refined and being performed again and again.

The “Nissay Meisaku Gekijō” series, offering high quality performances of music and theatre to children in the setting of a top-class venue, the Nissay Theatre, has been presented for 50 years, beginning with the year following the opening of the theatre. In that time, it has staged performances free of charge to nearly 8 million elementary students from all over Japan. This program has



On the Hill in a Foreign Land © Masanobu Yamanoue

provided the first contact with theatre for an astounding number of people.

Asari Keita was a charismatic player who fought the good fight, living in the midst of the irrational contradictions of art and business.

Uchida, Yōichi

Cultural journalist. Born in Tokyo in 1960. In 1983, he graduated from the Department of Political Science of Waseda University and started working for the Nikkei newspaper. As a cultural journalist he has covered theatre, art and music and has repeatedly reported on the cultural activities of private companies with the Japan Mecenat Association for Corporate Support of the Arts and government cultural policy. A book he edited, "*Nihon no Engekijin Noda Hideki* (Noda Hideki: Japan's Man of Theatre, Hakusuisha)" and his most recent work, "*Kaze no Engeki: Hyōden Betsuyaku Minoru* (The Theatre of Wind: A Critical Biography of Betsuyaku Minoru, Hakusuisha)" won the AICT prize for theatre criticism from the International Association of Theatre Critics. Other books include, "*Gendai Engeki no Chizu* (Map of Contemporary Theatre)" and "*Kiki to Gekijō* (Crisis and Theatres), both published by Bansei Shobō, "*Kaze no Tenshudō* (The Basilica of the Wind)" from Nihon Keizai Shinbun Shuppansha, and "*Aruhi Totsuzen, Izoku ni Natta: Hanshin Daishinsai no 10 Nen* (That Day, We Suddenly Became the Bereaved Family: Ten Years After the Great Hanshin Earthquake)" from Hakusuisha.

(Translation: Mark Ōshima)



Asari Keita (1933-2018)



Wareware no moromoro ©KOS-CREA / Courtesy of The Japan Foundation

Developments in Japan and Overseas

An Interview with Mr. Kobayashi Yasuhiro of the Performing Arts Section, Secretariat for *Japonismes*, The Japan Foundation On the influence of *Japonismes 2018* in Presenting Traditional to Cutting-Edge Performances

Katsura Mana

Japonismes 2018: les âmes en résonance was a large-scale festival held from July 2018 to February 2019, mainly in Paris, to

commemorate the 160th anniversary of the signing of diplomatic relations between Japan and France. The programme that was designed to convey the diversity of Japanese culture consisted of a variety of events such as exhibitions, films, projects introducing lifestyles and others.

As for the performing arts section, there were thirty-six projects, which included traditional arts such as Kabuki, Bunraku and Noh, as well as contemporary plays and dance performances. A 2.5-Dimensional musical, which is a genre derived from comics, animations and games, and the first concert in Europe of a virtual reality singer named Hatsune Miku were also amongst them. Highly spectacular shows such as *In the forest, under cherries in*



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HATSUNE MIKU EXPO 2018 EUROPE
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Production by Crypton Future Media, INC.

full bloom (Nisesaku sakura no mori no mankai no shita) (*1), which was written and directed by Noda Hideki, and *Mahabharata – Nalacharitam (Mahābārata – Naraō no bōken, i.e. Mahabharata – The Adventures of King Nala)* (*2), directed by Miyagi Satoshi, were presented as well. There was also a Japanese-Thai collaboration project titled *Pratthana – A Portrait of Possession (Purātānā: Hyōi no pōtorēto)*, based on a novel written by the Thai writer Uthis Haemamool, which was adapted and directed by Okada Toshiki and performed by Thai actors.

How were the various projects selected? And what did the audiences find out about Japanese theatre? Mr. Kobayashi Yasuhiro, who has lived in France for many years, was in charge of the Performing Arts Section, Secretariat for *Japonismes 2018* in the Japan Foundation and I asked him about the event.

The performing arts programme consisted of various productions ranging from traditional performing arts, contemporary theatre and combinations of both. He explained the selection process.

‘The programme was put together according to two basic policies. One of them was to have a thorough exchange of views with the French counterparts, as it was a project to commemorate 160 years of the amicable relationship between France and Japan. To serve that purpose, we invited programme directors from theatres in France to watch some shows in Japan.

The other policy was to present shows that were not likely to be performed under normal circumstances. In terms of the number of Japanese performing arts that have been shown in France in recent years, Paris by far exceeds other cities. With such

a history and context in mind, we decided to set a policy to work on special projects that were not possible in Japanese-French exchange projects of the past.'

Kinoshita-Kabuki's *Kanjinchō* Sharing the Issue of 'Borders' with the Audience

Were there any productions on which the programme directors from various French theatres had split opinions?

'Each theatre decides the programme based on its own unique policy. Therefore, it is no surprise that they want to present different types of shows. However, the directors of each theatre did not discuss among themselves to determine the programme for *Japonismes 2018*. They made their decisions based on whether the work was appropriate for their theatre. For instance, Mr. Serge Laurent, the director of the live performance department of the Centre Pompidou saw Kinoshita-Kabuki's *Kanjinchō* (*4) in Japan and had his mind set on inviting the company to Paris.'

Kanjinchō is a Kabuki play about Minamoto no Yoshitsune, who has incurred the rage of his elder brother Minamoto no Yoritomo, and his servants, including Benkei, trying to pass through a checkpoint. It portrays the servants' loyalty to their master. The leader of the troupe Kinoshita Yūichi and the director Sugihara Kunio reconstructed the classical play by making 'borders' the key factor. How did the French audience see the production that had an American actor cast as Benkei and also incorporated dance and rap?



Kanjinchō ©Yusuke KINAKA / Courtesy of The Japan Foundation

‘The production attracted support that exceeded our expectations. The *Japonismes* Secretariat assumed that the show would be compared with traditional Kabuki. However, we got an impression from the audience’s reaction that it was actually the theme of the play that touched their hearts. It might be because of the current border problems across the globe, which is also relevant to France.’

The Nomura Family’s Kyōgen *Sambasō* Showing Tradition Inherited Across Three Generations

Nomura Mansaku, Nomura Mansai and Nomura Yūki danced the same role in *Sambasō*, *divine dance* (弖), which was another project in which modernity was added to tradition. It was developed based on the production that was premiered at the Guggenheim Museum in New York in 2013 under the title *Divine Dance ‘Sambasō: Kami hisomi iki’* (*‘Where the Kami Lurks’*), for



Sambasō, divine dance ©KOS-CREA /
Courtesy of The Japan Foundation

which Sugimoto Hiroshi designed the scenery and costumes. Originally a traditional dance to pray for the productiveness of grain, *Sambasō* was lit differently from the way it would be when presented on the stage of a Noh theatre, and the costumes and scenery designed by Sugimoto Hiroshi had 'Lightening-Field' patterns on them.

'I think it was the first time in which three generations of the same family took turns and danced the same piece. The idea of passing on an artistic skill as well as the bloodline from parent to child is unusual for the French. The significance of succeeding tradition was conveyed through

the performances and it was meaningful in this respect as well.'

Did the audience focus on the differences in the performances due to the actors' ages and personal qualities, and become interested in the hereditary system in the arts?

'I explained to some French people about the hereditary system and some of them responded that it was a totally

different notion to what they were used to. Nevertheless, they were genuinely moved about the fact that something was being passed on for many years.'

Niwa Gekidan Penino's *Avidya – The Ignorance Inn*

Leaving a Strong Impression Both Visually and Spiritually

Although the works had different content and were performed at different venues, did any of them have an extremely good response?

'Avidya – The Ignorance Inn (Jigokudani onsen mummyō no yado) ^(#6), which was presented by Niwa Gekidan Penino led by Tanino Kurō, had been receiving significant interest beforehand. The troupe presented two works, namely *Avidya – The Ignorance Inn* and *The Dark Master*, but both of them were set in a situation that the French people had not been exposed to. French people are alien to a hot spring inn located in a lonely mountain village or a diner in downtown Osaka. Nevertheless, the subtle changes in the characters' feelings came across. Therefore, I thought it didn't matter very much whether the play was set in a culture that the local people were familiar with as long as the changes in the characters' psychology got through.'

A metaphysical layer was added to the actors' physical expression. In *Avidya – The Ignorance Inn*, we got a glimpse of the changes in society due to modernisation through the puppeteer and his son, the guests staying at the inn for a hot spring cure, and also the employee. The small voices of the people who were marginalised due to economic development were entwined in the

piece, which was also invited to Paris two years ago.

‘The French people were shocked at the local customs and let out a cheer when the set revolved. Some people couldn’t get inside the venue, so Marie Collin, who is the artistic director of dance, theatre, and visual arts for the Festival d’Automne à Paris (The Paris Autumn Festival), requested us to bring it back to Paris.’

Eroticism could be felt through the elaborate scenic and costume design as well as in the actors’ movements, which reminded me of the freak shows that Terayama Shūji advocated should be reinstated.

‘It’s true that the production had an eerie atmosphere like the Grand Guignol. You could enjoy both black humour and intellectual excitement in the play.’

Avidya–The Ignorance Inn ©Yurina Niihara / Courtesy of The Japan Foundation



As a side note, the Maison de la culture du Japon à Paris, where Terayama's renowned work titled *Throw away Your Books, Let's Get onto the Streets* (*Sho o suteyo machi e deyō*) ^{(*)7} that was directed by Fujita Takahiro was presented, is the largest facility run by the Japan Foundation outside Japan, and Terayama's film with the same title (1971) was screened at the same venue prior to the performance.

The Japanese and French Collaborating in Dance Projects and Readings

Is it worth to save us? ^{(*)8}, choreographed by Itō Kaori and Moriyama Mirai, who both work internationally, and a contemporary dance work titled *Triple Bill #1*, which was produced with the co-operation of La Biennale de la danse de Lyon, were among the collaborations between Japan and France ^{(*)9}, and they were presented in both countries.

Moreover, *Blue Sheet* by Ameya Norimizu and *Before We Vanish* (*Sanpo suru shinryakusha*) ^{(*)10} by Maekawa Tomohiro were translated into French and broadcast on the radio as reading performances.

'Both plays had tremendous impact as radio dramas through the detailed directions and the young actors' passionate performances.'

According to the person who was in charge of the reading performances, there is a possibility that the French translations of the plays will be published and also that other works by Ameya Norimizu and Maekawa Tomohiro will be presented on stage. The

good news reminded me how excited I was when it was announced at the summit meeting between the leaders of France and Japan that *Japonismes* was going to be hosted in Paris, as it made me look forward to new types of expression by the theatre people of both countries. I believe that by creating productions that gave us the chance to think about what the two countries have in common or about the mutual differences, through the collaboration of the staff and actors to celebrate the 160th anniversary, the bilateral tie must have become even stronger.

‘Only four out of the thirty six productions were joint productions and one may argue that there could have been more. Meanwhile, we tried to introduce new projects to France that matched the French theatres’ programme policies, which became the top priority of our mission.’

Iwai Hideto and French Actors Creating the Gennevilliers Version of *Wareware no moromoro*

A theatre project created through a collaboration between Japan and France was *Wareware no moromoro (nos histoires...)* (the Gennevilliers version of *Wareware no moromoro – own stories*, i.e. *All Kinds of Things About Us*) ^(*11) that was written and directed by Iwai Hideto, who leads a company called hi-bye. Daniel Jeanneteau, the director of Théâtre de Gennevilliers, was moved when he saw the Tokyo version of the same play by hi-bye back in 2016 and decided to invite the project. Four out of the seven cast members were professional actors and the remaining three were amateur actors from in Gennevilliers in the suburbs of Paris, where many immigrants and socially vulnerable people live.

'The French government has set a policy to create facilities such as theatre centres in areas where people struggling socially and financially live, in order to fill in the social and economic disparity. It is based on a concept to share the power of culture with people of various levels of society and it was realised by inviting Iwai Hideto, who is a theatre practitioner with a unique talent. In Japan, the issues around immigration are not talked about as often or seriously as they are in France. That is why to have worked on a project covering the issue at such a locale became a very meaningful example for both French and Japanese theatres.'

In *Wareware no moromoro*, the cast perform their own experiences which they had written in the script, and since its premiere in 2010 (ENBU Seminar), Iwai Hideto and the local people of various regions have been collaborating to create new pieces. When you compare the Tokyo version and the Saitama version (2018) that was performed by the actors of the Saitama Gold Theater, whose average age was nearly eighty years old, both the content and the quality of the acting was different. However, the reality of the people concerned became the backbone of the drama with laughter and tears, and it was that which both productions had in common.

The actors talked about the unfair public system and family rifts in the Gennevilliers version, and the content was heavy and serious. However, when you read the local reviews, you could tell that the words of the cast members who have been suppressed by poverty, discrimination, sexual assault and other hardships, coupled with the director's humorous approach, had reached the audiences.

'This was one of the comments given by the people working at the theatre venue. 'We did not have the opportunity to have a heart-to-heart talk with people who were unemployed or with illegal immigrants, but Mr. Iwai Hideto, who has a great personality, drew out the delicate pains from the participants, going beyond the barriers due to different walks of life.' Being an artist from a different culture also helped him to interact smoothly with the people who had pain in their souls. This was also an unexpected but a delightful achievement.'

The National Budget, Education...the Difference in the Cultural Environments of France and Japan

In an essay carried in TV Bros., Iwai Hideto wrote about the 'luxurious' environment for creating the Gennevilliers version of the play. In Japan, even for productions that take time to translate and require dialogue among the participants, working under privileged circumstances is very rare.

On page fourteen of 'Research and Study on Other Countries' Cultural Policies' (2017), which is listed on the website of the Agency for Cultural Affairs, it is written that the culture-related budget for 2017 was 485.1 billion yen in France and 104.3 billion yen in Japan. It means that the per capita culture-related budget was 7,568 yen in France and 819 yen in Japan. Why is there such a big difference between the two countries?

'According to this comparison, the culture-related budget per head in Japan is approximately one tenth of that in France. The general public's mindset towards culture is part of the reason. To take theatre as an example, it seems that the French

people share in common the sense that 'theatre performance presented under a public framework are assets shared by the citizens and should be developed through everyone's public money'. Compared to the French, the Japanese lack the awareness that supporting performing arts publicly is public property. Many Japanese people think that theatre is a form of entertainment that people go and see for fun and that people should pay for the tickets if they have extra money to spend. In other words, they do not see it as a problem that there are people who cannot afford to see works of art.'

Do you think that the Agency for Cultural Affairs is the public agency that might be able to rectify the current situation?

'Having a small culture-related budget means that the significance of culture is not widely recognised. Without changing this trend, it would be difficult to simply increase the budget. Through raising my children in France, I began to understand that the French people are passionate about providing children with chances to appreciate art from a very young age because to some extent they have a common understanding that art can have a significant influence on people's lives.'

As if to return the courtesy to *Japonismes 2018*, President Emmanuel Macron has proposed to have a big event in Japan to introduce French culture. As the relationship between the two countries becomes closer and deeper through these exchange programmes, perhaps the trend of developing culture - including theatre - will come to stay in the Japanese government and education system.

'I hope that people working in the theatre field in both countries will continue to co-operate with each other. The Gennevilliers version of *Wareware no moromoro*, which was created over time, is a really good production. I would like it to be presented in various parts of the world and it would make me happy if the Japanese audiences get to see it, too.'

(The interview was held on January 17, 2019 at Kissa Sakaiki.)

*1 *In the forest, under cherries in full bloom (Nisesaku sakura no mori no mankai no shita)* directed by Noda Hideki **Period:** September 28–October 3, 2018 (no performance on October 1) **Venue:** Théâtre National de Chaillot **Organised by:** The Japan Foundation, Théâtre National de Chaillot, Tokyo Metropolitan Theatre (Tokyo Metropolitan Foundation for History and Culture), NODA · MAP **Written and directed by:** Noda Hideki

*2 *Mahabharata – Nalacharitam (Mahābārata – Naraō no bōken)* directed by Miyagi Satoshi **Period:** November 19–25, 2018 (no performance on November 22) **Venue:** La Villette **Organised by:** The Japan Foundation, La Villette **Co-organised by:** SPAC-Shizuoka Performing Arts Center **Text by:** Kubota Azumi and Miyagi Satoshi

*3 Contemporary Theatre Series: *Five Days in March* re-creation and a Japanese-Thai collaboration project *Pratthana – A Portrait of Possession* directed by Okada Toshiki **Period:** October 17–20, 2018 (*Five Days in March* re-creation), December 13–16, 2018 (*Pratthana – A Portrait of Possession*) **Venue:** Centre Pompidou **Organised by:** The Japan Foundation, Centre Pompidou **Co-organised by:** Tokyo Metropolitan Theatre (Tokyo Metropolitan Foundation for History and Culture), Festival d'Automne à Paris

Five Days in March re-creation **Produced by:** chelfitsch, KAAT Kanagawa Arts Theatre **Adapted and directed by:** Okada Toshiki

A Japanese-Thai collaboration *Pratthana – A Portrait of Possession* **Produced by:** The Japan Foundation Asia Center, precog co., LTD., chelfitsch **Funded by:** The Saison Foundation **Adapted and directed by:** Okada Toshiki **Based on the original novel by:** Uthis Haemamool

- *4 Contemporary Theatre Series – Kinoshita-Kabuki *Kanjinchō* Supervised and Revised by Kinoshita Yūichi, Directed and Designed by Kunio Sugihara

Following its premiere in 2010, *Kanjinchō* was redirected and redesigned by Kunio Sugihara and remounted in 2016. **Period:** November 1-3, 2018 **Venue:** Centre Pompidou **Organised by:** The Japan Foundation, Centre Pompidou **Co-organised by:** Tokyo Metropolitan Theatre (Tokyo Metropolitan Foundation for History and Culture) **Supervision and revision by:** Kinoshita Yūichi **Direction and stage design by:** Sugihara Kunio **Produced by:** Kinoshita-Kabuki

- *5 *Sambasō, divine dance* performed by Nomura Mansaku, Nomura Mansai and Nomura Yūki, and *The Blind One who Admires the Moon (Tsukimi zatō)* performed by Nomura Mansaku and Nomura Mansai, designed by contemporary artist Sugimoto Hiroshi **Period:** September 19-25, 2018 (no performance on September 23) **Venue:** Théâtre de la Ville - Espace Cardin **Organised by:** The Japan Foundation, Théâtre de la Ville **Co-organised by:** Odawara Art Foundation, Festival d'Automne à Paris **In co-operation with:** Setagaya Arts Foundation, Setagaya Public Theatre **Composition and set design:** Sugimoto Hiroshi

- *6 Contemporary Theatre Series: *The Dark Master* and *Avidya – The Ignorance Inn* directed by Tanino Kurō **Period:** *The Dark Master* September 20-24, 2018, *Avidya – The Ignorance Inn* September 25-29, 2018 **Venue:** T2G - Théâtre de Gennevilliers **Organised by:** The Japan Foundation, Théâtre de Gennevilliers - centre dramatique national **Co-organised by:** Tokyo Metropolitan Theatre (Tokyo Metropolitan Foundation for History and Culture), Festival d'Automne à Paris **Produced by:** Niwa Gekidan Penino

The Dark Master **Based on the comic book by:** Karibu Marei (story) and Izumi Haruki (drawings) **Adapted and directed by:** Tanino Kurō

Avidya – The Ignorance Inn **Written and directed by:** Tanino Kurō

- *7 Contemporary Theatre Series: *Throw away Your Books, Let's Get onto the Streets* directed by Fujita Takahiro **Period:** November 21-24, 2018 **Venue:** Maison de la culture du Japon à Paris **Organised by:** The Japan Foundation **Co-organised by:** Tokyo Metropolitan Theatre (Tokyo Metropolitan Foundation for History and Culture), Festival d'Automne à Paris **Originally written by:** Terayama Shūji **Adapted and directed by:** Fujita Takahiro

- *8 Contemporary Dance: *Is it worth to save us?* by Itō Kaori and Moriyama Mirai **Period:** December 18-20, 2018 **Venue:** Maison des Arts de Créteil **Organised by:** The Japan Foundation, Maison des Arts de Créteil **With the co-operation of:** The Ministry of Culture – DRAC Île-de-France, BNP Paribas Foundation, Le Centquatre-Paris **Choreographed and performed by:** Itō Kaori and Moriyama Mirai **Produced by:** Company Himé **Co-produced by:** Maison des arts de Créteil, KAAT Kanagawa Arts Theatre
- *9 *Triple Bill #1:* A French-Japanese collaboration project for hip-hop dance **Period:** September 18-November 14, 2018 **Venue:** Théâtre National de Chaillot, Biennale de la danse de Lyon etc. **Organised by:** The Japan Foundation, Biennale de la danse de Lyon, Théâtre National de Chaillot, Centre Chorégraphique National de La Rochelle/Cie Accrorap **Co-produced by:** Biennale de la danse de Lyon, Théâtre National de Chaillot, Dance Dance Dance @ YOKOHAMA 2018, Centre Chorégraphique National de La Rochelle/Cie Accrorap **Produced in co-operation with:** PARCO **Choreography:** Kader Attou – a new piece titled *Yōso (Éléments)*, Jann Gallois – a new piece titled *Reverse*, Tokyo Gegegay – *Tokyo Gegegay's High School*
- *10 Contemporary Theatre Series: Readings of *Blue Sheet* by Ameya Norimizu and *Before We Vanish (Sanpo suru shinryakusha)* by Maekawa Tomohiro **Date:** September 22, 2018 **Venue:** Théâtre de la Ville – Espace Cardin **Organised by:** The Japan Foundation, Théâtre de la Ville **Co-organised by:** Tokyo Metropolitan Theatre (Tokyo Metropolitan Foundation for History and Culture) **In co-operation with:** Maison Antoine Vitez, Centre for International Theatrical Translation
- *11 Contemporary Theatre Series: *Wareware no moromoro (nos histoires...)* concept and directed by Iwai Hideto **Period:** November 22-December 3, 2018 **Venue:** T2G - Théâtre de Gennevilliers **Organised by:** The Japan Foundation, T2G - Théâtre de Gennevilliers **Co-organised by:** Tokyo Metropolitan Theatre (Tokyo Metropolitan Foundation for History and Culture), Festival d'Automne à Paris **In co-operation with:** quinada

Kobayashi Yasuhiro

A staff member of the Japan Foundation. He has worked for a total of eleven years at Maison de la culture du Japon à Paris, where he produced stage productions. For two years starting from 2006, he was involved in the 'UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN)' at the UNESCO Secretariat in Paris. He is currently the overall supervisor of the stage production programme of *Japonismes 2018* as the head of the Performing Arts Section, Secretariat for *Japonismes*. He is also in charge of the stage production programme of *Japan 2019* that will be held in the U.S. from March to December 2019.

Katsura Mana

A dance and theatre critic. A member of the International Association of Theatre Critics (AICT/IATC). A Research Fellow at the Tsubouchi Memorial Theatre Museum, Waseda University and also a lecturer at the Graduate School of Humanities of Gakushūin University. She previously worked as an editor for BRUTUS magazine and books including Ōsugi Ren's *Gembamon* published by Magazine House, Ltd. She currently contributes to various media, continuing to explore the relationship between art and society through all kinds of performing arts from classical to experimental pieces. She has been visiting numerous international festivals since the early 1990s and also writes art reviews.

(Translation: Sumida Michiyo)

紛争地域から生まれた演劇シリーズ
Theatre Born in
Conflict Zones series

— since 2009 —

The Theatre Born in Conflict Zones series is a response to the Theatre in Conflict Zones project organized by the ITI headquarters and Cultural Identity and Development Committee.

Launched in 2009, it has now introduced 24 plays from various countries and regions around the world, conveying the raw reality of conflict zones and attracting great interest in the local theatre scene.



**Scripts of plays in the
Theatre Born in Conflict Zones series (2019)**

Common Ground by Yael Ronen (Israel/Germany)

This is War by Hannah Moscovitch (Canada)

2015 *Ballad of the Burning Star* by Nir Paldi (U.K./Israel)
Burqavaganza by Shahid Nadeem (Pakistan)

2016 *Madmen and Specialists* by Wole Soyinka (Nigeria)
Ismail at Isabel by Rody Vera (Philippines)
Before Dinner by Yaser Abu Shaqra (Syria)

2017 *White Rabbit, Red Rabbit* by Nassim Soleimanpour (Iran)
Djihad by Ismaël Saïdi (Belgium)

2018 *Khail Taiha (Lost Horses)* by Adnan Alaoda (Syria)
Lilac Duhaa (Death in the Era of Da'ish) by Ghannam Ghannam (Jordan/Palestine)

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ITI Japanese Center accepts new submissions for plays in the Theatre Born in Conflict Zones series. Please contact us at mail@iti-j.org.

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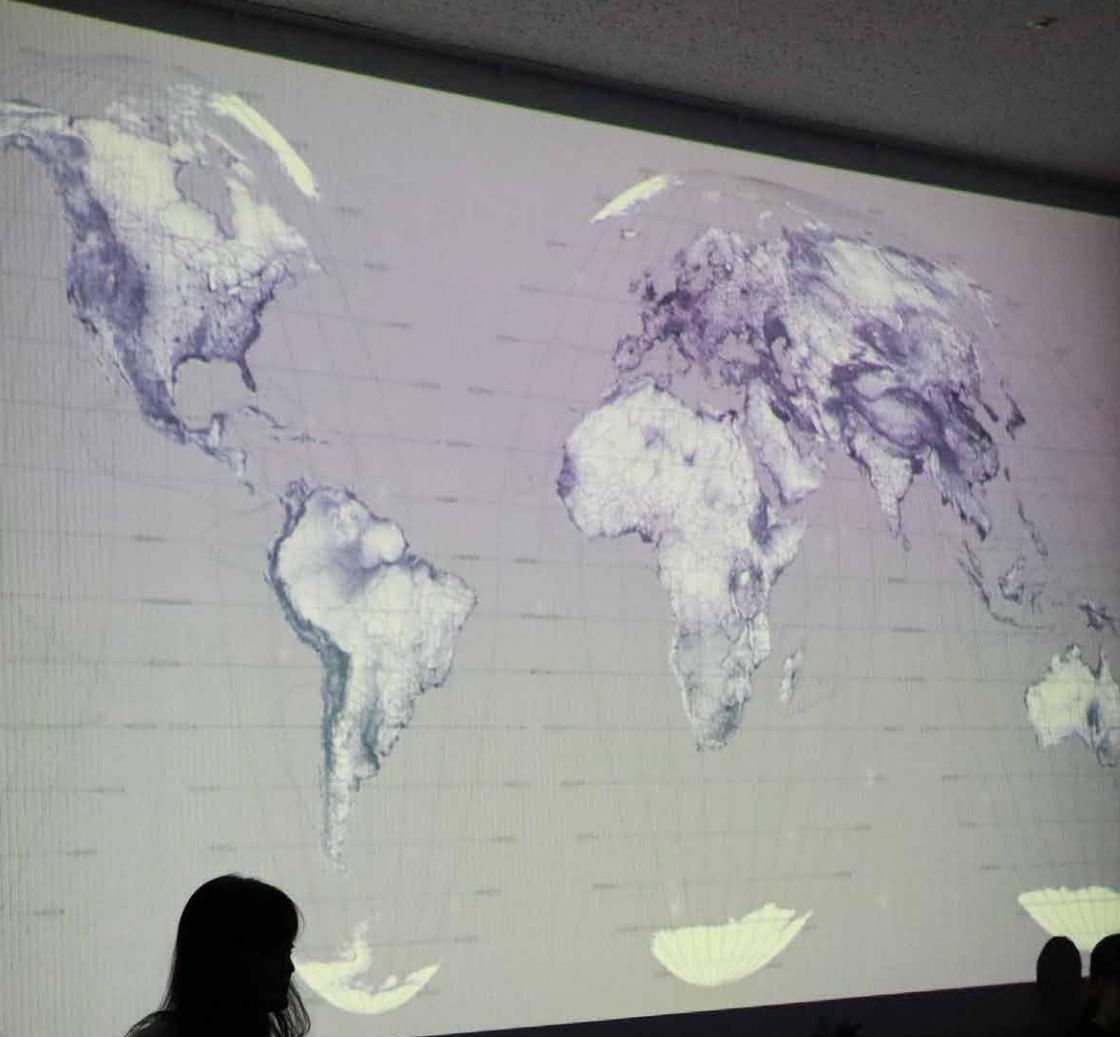
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SPECIAL FEATURE
'Theatre Born in Conflict Zones 10'



This Is War / (from the front) Master Corporal Tanya Young (Yoshino Misa) and Sergeant Stephen Hughes (Hori Genki)

Special Feature

A Report on 'Theatre Born in Conflict Zones 10' Two Plays from Germany and Canada Linked to Conflict Zones – *Common Ground* and *This Is War*

Niino Morihito

The International Theatre Institute (ITI) is an international NGO under the umbrella of UNESCO and its national sections are actively engaged in a project called 'Theatre Born in Conflict Zones' that is conducted under UNESCO's theme of 'Arts and Peace-making'. In response to the theme, the Japanese Centre has

been working on the 'Theatre Born in Conflict Zones' series since 2009 and the Tokyo Metropolitan Theatre joined the project as its co-organiser in 2012.

This year marked the tenth anniversary of the series and a play by Yael Ronen, who is an Israeli playwright based in Germany, and a play by a Canadian playwright called Hannah Moscovitch were introduced through readings. Besides numerous panels displayed outside the venue, talk sessions were held after each reading which helped the audience to deepen their understanding on how and why the plays were written and the backgrounds of the conflicts. The event was held from December 13 to 15, 2018 at Atelier West on the first basement level of the Tokyo Metropolitan Theatre. Each reading session was almost a full house and the project was very well received.

<< Reading >>

Common Ground

Written by Yael Ronen (Israel/Germany) & Ensemble

Translated by Niwayama Yuka

Directed by Koyama Yūna (Kaminari Strangers)

Cast: Shimoyama Takashi (Kaminari Strangers), Kobayashi Aya, Kurashita Honami, Matsumura Ryōta (Kaminari Strangers), Nonoyama Takayuki (Haiyūza Theatre Company), Kikkawa Kayo (Theatre Echo) and Mai

Sound: Ozaki Hiroyuki

Projection: Kaminokado Takahiro

Supervisor: Shiba Nobuhiro

Accent Coach: Alma Okajima

Speakers: Dec. 13 - Alma Okajima, Niwayama Yuka, Koyama Yūna
Dec. 16 - Shiba Nobuhiro, Koyama Yūna



Yael Ronen ©Esra Rotthoff

Yael Ronen was born in Israel in 1976 and after studying directing in New York and Tel Aviv, she started working in the world of theatre as an assistant director at Tel Aviv's Habima Theatre, where her father served as artistic director. Regarded as a promising young director who would be responsible for the next generation of Israeli theatre, she was commissioned by Theatre der Welt (a theatre festival held in Halle, Germany) to write and direct *Third Generation (Dritte Generation)*, which was co-produced by Habima Theatre in Tel Aviv and Schaubühne in Berlin, and through this project she was thrust into the spotlight in Europe. Since autumn 2013, she has been based in Germany.

In *Third Generation*, actors who were around thirty years old expressed their anger and criticism with brutal frankness about the reality of Palestine that has reached a deadlock, but they also added some humour. As the play got a great response in various parts of Europe, the Japanese Centre of the ITI decided to introduce the play in 'Theatre Born in Conflict Zones 4' held in 2012, and then in November 2018 it was performed in Japanese at Saitama Arts Theater. Moreover, Yael Ronen's *Winter Journey (رحلة الشتاء Winterreise)* was presented at the reading series of contemporary German dramas held at the German Cultural Centre (Goethe Institut) in July 2018. It was through these projects that

Common Ground / Mateja (Kurashita Honami) and Leila (Mai), both from Bosnia



Common Ground / Aleks (Matsumura Ryōta) and Vernesa (Kobayashi Aya), both from Serbia





Common Ground / (from the right) Niels: a German (Shimoyama Takashi) and Aleks (Matsumura Ryōta) from Serbia



Common Ground / (from the left) Dejan (Nonoyama Takayuki) from Serbia, Leila (Mai) from Bosnia and Orit (Kikkawa Kayo) from Israel

she came to be known in Japan as well.

Common Ground (premiered in 2014 in Germany) portrays the trauma of people who have experienced the Bosnian War. In addition to a German actor and an actress from Israel, who works in Germany, five actors from the former Yugoslavia (comprised of two actors, an actress from Serbia and two actresses from Bosnia) appear in the play using their real names. All of them have travelled to the former Yugoslavia, and while they reenact their trips on stage, they comment on how difficult it is to overcome the past linked to war and they also talk about hope. The theatrical framework of *Common Ground* is based on restaging what they saw, heard and experienced in Bosnia using playlets and skits.

The reading was held on a simple stage setting with a few chairs lined up in a row. At times, the actors mentioned above gave simple explanations. Maps and videos as well as the characters' family trees were projected on the back wall of the venue. The creative staff of the staged reading tried to make it easy for the Japanese audience to understand the complicated political, racial and religious background of Yugoslavia. It was striking that the actors spoke in Yugoslavia's local language several times and also sang in the local language. Despite the fact that they could only rehearse for a short period of time, which is usually the case for readings,



the actors tried hard to make the incidents that happened in the Balkan Peninsular familiar to the Japanese, who live far away, and I think that their efforts bore fruit and the crucial part of the play got through accurately to the audience at the reading.

For instance, the episode in the original play of the actors visiting an old village in Bosnia is probably the most impressive scene that represents the heart of this work. In this village, there used to be a Serbian concentration camp during the war and it is said that there is now a monument inscribed with the names of the victims who were killed there. The father of one of the two actresses from Bosnia was killed in this camp. The actress found the name of her father inscribed on the monument. The other actress's father used to be a managerial staff at this camp and he now works in the world of politics. She had not contacted her father for a long time, but she managed to find her father's phone number and talked with him over the phone for a brief moment.

The relation between the fathers of the two actresses was that of a perpetrator and a victim at the concentration camp. The two actresses, though they had reasons making it difficult to forget or to forgive, worked together to create the play *Common Ground* (i.e. shared land).



Hannah Moscovitch

The original play unfolds with the actors from Israel and Germany intertwining with the five performers from the former Yugoslavia, who are inseparable from the vivid memories of the past. When the actors in Tokyo read the play and delivered their words emphatically in Japanese, the venue was filled with the richness and depth of the original play that involved the Balkans, Germany, Israel and Palestine. However, this richness and depth is inextricably linked to the suffering of the young generation who cannot escape from the war. Through the reading, not only did we feel the joy of being able to encounter the voices of the people concerned come through but we also experienced the pains of war that will continue for several generations to come. This reading provided a valuable time for the audience.

<< Reading >>

This Is War

Written by: Hannah Moscovitch (Canada)

Translated by: Yoshihara Toyoshi

Directed by: Ikuta Miyuki (Bungakuza)

Cast: Kameda Yoshiaki (Bungakuza), Teuchi Takamori and Hori Genki (Saitama Next Theatre), Yoshino Misa (Bungakuza)

Speakers: Dec. 14 - Hirose Yoshikazu, Yoshihara Toyoshi, Ikuta Miyuki

Dec. 15 - Ōtori Hidenaga, Ikuta Miyuki

The frank truth of what happened to Canadian soldiers who were sent to Afghanistan between 2007 and 2008 was portrayed in the other play titled *This Is*



This Is War/ Private Jonny Henderson (Kameda Yoshiaki) and Master Corporal Tanya Young (Yoshino Misa)



This Is War / Private Jonny Henderson (Kameda Yoshiaki) is responding to interview questions from journalists



This Is War / (from the left) Sergeant Stephen Hughes (Hori Genki) and Sergeant Chris Anders (Teuchi Takamori)



This Is War / (from the left) Sergeant Chris Anders (Teuchi Takamori), Private Jonny Henderson (Kameda Yoshiaki), Master Corporal Tanya Young (Yoshino Misa) and Sergeant Stephen Hughes (Hori Genki)

War (premiered in 2013 in Canada), which addressed the reality of peacekeeping activities in conflict zones. It was written by a Canadian playwright called Hannah Moscovitch (born in 1979), who is known as the author of *East of Berlin* (presented in Tokyo by Natori Office in February 2015 and July 2017).

Four soldiers, namely Master Corporal Young, Sergeant Hughes, Sergeant Anders (medic) and Private Henderson appear in the story. Master Corporal Young is a female soldier. In a hostile environment, where temperatures soar to nearly fifty degrees Celsius, the soldiers are leading a communal life and are expected to maintain strict discipline. Traumatized from fighting with the Taliban, they are just waiting for an excuse to leap at each other's throats as they spend their days. The Canadian troop that they belong to are participating in a joint operation with the Afghan National Army,

but many soldiers, including Private Henderson, are injured due to fierce attacks such as suicide attacks by the Taliban's child soldiers. Sergeant Hughes decides that the Canadian army should retreat but the Afghan National Army continues the counter-Taliban operation single-handedly and cuts off water from over 160 Taliban soldiers, who have entrenched themselves. However, as the bodies found in the camp included those of women and children, the incident eventually develops into an international issue and the four soldiers are bombarded with questions from the press when they return to their country.

The reading was carried out in a simple setting with three music stands placed on stage. As each of the four actors responded to interviews from the media, which almost seemed like an official hearing, they recalled the events that took place from the night before they went into action up until the wounded private was carried to a field hospital. The events that occurred in Afghanistan were gradually reenacted through each soldier's flashback scenes. Through the reenactment, the fact that both Sergeant Hughes and Private Henderson were in love with Master Corporal Young and that they had fallen into a tangled love triangle became apparent. Their relations would probably have become more sexually suggestive if the play was performed as a staged production, but the four actors added gestures and delivered their lines with excessive anger and anxiety, which conveyed the closed and skewed nature of the army.

The master corporal must have been made a woman because there are actually many Canadian women who join military service. In the talk session after the reading, an audience member pointed out that the play lacked the perspective that the Taliban

were also humans. The play brought to life the contradictions and difficulties of the expeditionary forces' missions that were supposed to bring peace to disputed regions.

Niino, Morihiro

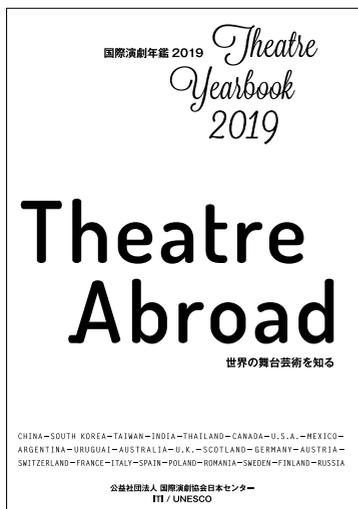
Niino Morihiro was born in 1958 and is the former President of the Japan Centre of International Association of Theatre Critics (AICT/IATC). He translates plays and studies the theatre of German-speaking countries. He has written a number of books, including *Theatre City Berlin* (*Theaterstadt Berlin*) and *Shittechosii kuni doitsu* (literal title: *Germany, A Country I Want You to Know About*). He has translated *Postdramatic Theatre* (*Postdramatisches Theater*, joint translation), Dea Loher's *The Final Fire* (*Das letzte Feuer*), Joachim Gauck's autobiography *Winter in Summer, Spring in Autumn, Memoirs* (*Winter im Sommer, Frühling im Herbst. Erinnerungen*), among many others. He has also translated Yael Ronen's *Third Generation* (*Dritte Generation*) and others. He has received the 2nd Yūshi Odashima Drama in Translation Award. He is also a professor at Rikkyō University.

Common Ground © Hosaka Megumi
This Is War © Ishizawa Chieko

(Translation: Sumida Michiyo)

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World Theatre Day Message by Carlos Celdrán

164

Theatre in Asia and Africa

- China** Signs of Documentary Theatre ————— Tamura Yoko
- South Korea** Theatrical Diversity and Antipathy Towards Older Generations ————— Lee Seung-gon
- Taiwan** A Year of Dynamic Change ————— Yu Fang
- India** Theatre as a Means of Confronting Society ————— Tsurudome Satoko
- Thailand** Defying Infrastructure Problems, Silver Linings Revealed in International Collaborations and Interdisciplinary Approaches ————— Pawit Mahasarinand

Theatre in the Americas and Oceania

- Canada** Memories of the First World War, 100 Years After the Armistice ————— Kanzaki Mai
- U. S. A.** Unfinished Feminism: What is the Constitution of the United States to Me? — Tonooka Naomi
- Mexico** Theatre Beyond Walls ————— Yoshikawa Emiko
- Argentina / Uruguay** Gender and the Performing Arts in South America ————— Kariya Hiroko
- Australia** Stage Adaptations of Australian Literature ————— Sawada Keiji

Theatre in Europe

- U.K.** Bureaucracy and Representational Power ————— Motohashi Tetsuya
- Scotland** Scottish-Japanese Connections Through Theatre, and a Socially and Historically Engaged Theatre Scene ————— Nakayama Kaori
- Germany / Austria / Switzerland** Tolerance at a Crossroads, Unrestricted Transgression ————— Hagiwara Ken
- France** Returning to the Problem of Diversity ————— Fujii Shintaro
- Italy** A Theatre as an Open Religious Place? ————— Yamanouchi Haruhiko
- Spain** From Hyperrealism to Comedy and the Fantastic ————— Tajiri Yoichi
- Poland** Pride Overcoming Struggles ————— Iwata Miho
- Romania** Tsuruya Nanboku IV's The Scarlet Princess: A Romanian Take on a Kabuki Classic ————— Shichiji Eisuke
- Sweden** New Works Revealing Hopes for the Future ————— Komaki Yu
- Finland** Contemporary Theatre in Finland: Disruption and Expanding Fields — Hanna Helavuori
- Russia** The World Cup and Festivals ————— Shinozaki Naoya

Developments in Japan and Overseas

- Looking Towards the Next 130 Years of Shinpa ————— Goto Ryuki
- Inheriting Classical Performing Arts ————— Hosho Kazufusa
- 'Detours' Revealing Another Side to the City: *McDonald's Broadcast University* and *Tokyo School Excursion Project* ————— Takayama Akira (Interviewed by Soma Chiaki)

Overseas Tours Report

- Why Did a Japanese Artist Stage a Story About Africans in Paris?
Léonora Miano's *Révélation Red in Blue* trilogy, Directed by Miyagi Satoshi ————— Yokoyama Yoshiji

Special Feature: "Theatre Born in Conflict Zones 10"

- Review: Is This War? Hannah Moscovitch's *This is War* ————— Seki Tomoko
- Review: *Common Ground*: Forgiveness Breaking the Chains of Hatred ————— Sugiyama Hiromu

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国際演劇年鑑

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— since 1972 —

ITI is an NGO under the umbrella of UNESCO
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お電話予約は東宝テレサーチへ **03(3201)7777** 営業時間
午前9:30～午後5:30

東宝株式会社演劇部

〒100-8415 東京都千代田区有楽町1-2-2 東宝日比谷ビル11階 TEL03(3591)1211

詳しくは東宝ホームページをご覧ください。

東宝演劇

検索



NHK – Japan's only public broadcaster

Fair, impartial and accurate news coverage.

High quality programming of all kinds.



International services

Delivers domestic and international information to the world on TV, radio, and the internet.



NHK WORLD-JAPAN

English-language television channel broadcasting up-to-the-minute news and programs that showcase Japanese culture and society.

nhk.jp/world

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Develops new broadcasting technology and creates the future of broadcasting.



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Enables digital TV broadcast to be closely integrated with internet-based content.



8K (Super Hi-Vision)

Next-generation broadcast media with extremely fine pictures at 16 times that of current HD, and multichannel sound system.

NHK (Japan Broadcasting Corporation)

TOKYO 150-8001 JAPAN TEL +81-3-3465-1111

www.nhk.or.jp/corporateinfo/

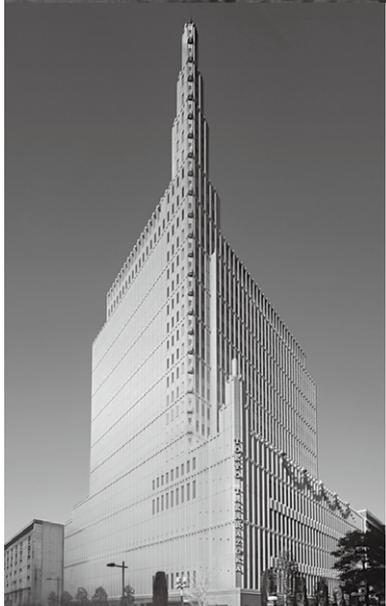


宝塚 歌劇

阪急阪神東宝グループ



TAKARAZUKA REVUE



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阪急宝塚駅下車(水曜定休)

Hankyu Corporation
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お問い合わせ

Tel. **0570-00-5100**
(10:00~18:00)

※一部の携帯電話・IP電話等からはご利用いただけません。

宝塚歌劇公式ホームページ

<https://kageki.hankyu.co.jp/>

夢と感動のステージへ…
宝塚友の会がご案内します!

一般前売に先立ち最も早くチケットをお買い求めいただけます。
入会申込書のご請求・お問い合わせは

Tel. **0797-85-6801**
(10:00~17:00/水曜定休)



人と都市から始まる舞台芸術祭

フェスティバル / トーキョーは、東京で開催される国際的な舞台芸術フェスティバルとして、多様な価値が出会い、互いを刺激しあうことで新たな可能性を拓く場となることを目指しています。

Festival/Tokyo is an annual performing arts event that presents work from a wide range of cultures, generations, and styles.

<https://www.festival-tokyo.jp/>

フェスティバル / トーキョー実行委員会

Festival/Tokyo Office

e-mail : toiawase@festival-tokyo.jp

F/Tの最新情報をお届けするメールニュースを配信！ぜひご登録ください。

<https://www.festival-tokyo.jp/18/mailnews.html>

国際舞台芸術ミーティング in 横浜 2020

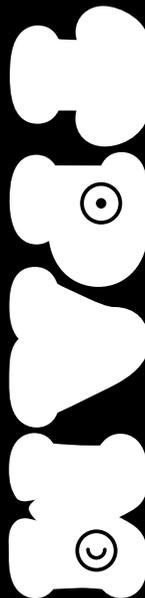
Performing Arts Meeting in Yokohama 2020

TPAM(ティーバム、国際舞台芸術ミーティング in 横浜)は、同時代の舞台芸術に取り組む国内外のプロフェッショナルが、公演プログラムやミーティングを通じて交流し、舞台芸術の創造・普及・活性化のための情報・インスピレーション・ネットワークを得る場です。TPAM 2020は2020年2月8日[土]~2月16日[日]に開催予定です。

最新情報は www.tpam.or.jp まで!

TPAM (Performing Arts Meeting in Yokohama) is a space where professionals from various places in the world who explore the possibility of contemporary performing arts exchange through performance and meeting programs to gain information, inspiration and network for the creation, dissemination and vitalization of performing arts. TPAM2020 is planned to be held Sat 8 – Sun 16 February, 2020.

Please visit www.tpam.or.jp for the latest information!



The Retreat (work-in-progress open workshop)
By Thanapol Virulhakul at TPAM2019
Photo by Hideto Maezawa

A REAL THEATER OF THE PEOPLE BY THE PEOPLE FOR THE PEOPLE in TOKYO :

TOMIN GEKIJO

WHAT MAKES UP A THEATER?

Playhouses, performers and the audience. But what is indispensable?
TOMIN GEKIJO thinks that people are.

TOMIN GEKIJO has no playhouse or troupe of actors, but does possess a permanent audience, the number of its members amounting to about 20 thousand today.

EACH HAS HIS OWN TASTE

TOMIN GEKIJO organizes 4 series: THEATER, KABUKI, SHINGEKI and MUSIC. Their programs are selected by project committees composed of well known specialists and representatives among the members. Particularly in the theater series, members can choose among about 50 different plays a year according to their own tastes.

TOO EXPENSIVE OR NOT, THAT IS THE QUESTION

Once having paid membership fee, which costs 1000 Yen for an individual member, members can enjoy many programs with season tickets discounted 40 or 50%.

HEAVEN CREATES A MAN NEITHER ABOVE NOR UNDER A MAN

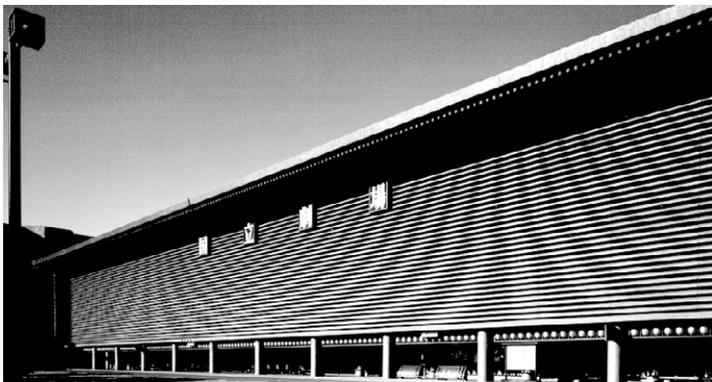
said an ancient opinion leader Yukichi FUKUZAWA. TOMIN GEKIJO has succeeded in keeping this principal by establishing an audience system which consists in distributing booked seats by a rotation system.

WHAT DOES TOMIN GEKIJO MEAN?

TOMIN means a citizen of Tokyo and GEKIJO a theater. Under the generous support of the Tokyo Government and the Japan Theater Promoters Guild, it also makes possible "Theater going at half-price" for Tokyoites.

TOMIN GEKIJO, a new audience organization, aims at an open theater and actively seeks contacts with foreign theaters.

TOMIN GEKIJO : 5-1-7 Ginza Chuo-ku Tokyo 104-8077 Japan Phone : 03-3572-4311



The National Theatre presents
the traditional performing arts of Japan:
Kabuki, Bunraku, Buyo, Hogaku, Noh, Engei, etc.



NATIONAL THEATRE

THE LARGE HALL, THE SMALL HALL, THE ENGEI HALL

Telephone reservation: 03-3230-3000 (Ticket Centre)

4-1 Hayabusa-cho, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 102-8656 Tel. 03-3265-7411

NATIONAL NOH THEATRE

4-18-1 Sendagaya, Shibuya-ku,
Tokyo 151-0051
Tel. 03-3423-1331

NATIONAL BUNRAKU THEATRE

1-12-10 Nipponbashi, Chuo-ku,
Osaka 542-0073
Tel. 06-6212-2531

NATIONAL THEATRE OKINAWA

4-14-1 Jitchaku, Urasoe City,
Okinawa 901-2122
Tel. 098-871-3311

伝統が今日に生き明日につながる松竹演劇



歌 舞 伎 座

東京都中央区銀座4-12-15

03-3545-6857(営業)

新 橋 演 舞 場

東京都中央区銀座6-18-2

03-3541-2606(営業)

サンシャイン劇場

東京都豊島区東池袋3-1-4

03-3987-5281<代>

大 阪 松 竹 座

大阪市中央区道頓堀1-9-19

06-6214-2211

京 都 南 座

京都市東山区四條大橋東詰仲之町

075-561-1155

松竹株式会社

演劇本部

東京都中央区築地四丁目一番一号
電話(五五五〇)・五七三(演劇製作部)



Japanese Centre
of
International Theatre Institute