



国際演劇年鑑 2023

Theatre
Yearbook
2023

Theatre
in Japan

日本の舞台芸術を知る

NOH and KYOGEN – KABUKI – BUNRAKU – MUSICALS – CONTEMPORARY
THEATRE – CHILDREN'S and YOUTH THEATRE – JAPANESE CLASSICAL
DANCE – BALLET – CONTEMPORARY DANCE and BUTOH – TELEVISION DRAMAS

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 2023

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Foreword

The Japanese Centre of International Theatre Institute is a public interest incorporated foundation and belongs to the international network of National Centres and professional organizations in approximately eighty countries and regions that constitutes the International Theatre Institute (ITI), which is a non-governmental organization under the umbrella of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

The preamble of the UNESCO Constitution begins with the famous phrase “since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defenses of peace must be constructed.” Article 3 of the standing rules of the Japanese Centre of International Theatre Institute stipulates that the purpose of the Centre is “to contribute to the development of culture and realization of peace in Japan by deepening mutual understanding and facilitating the creation and exchange of theatre and dance based upon the purpose of the UNESCO Constitution.”

The Japanese Centre has published the *Theatre Yearbook* since 1972. Starting from 1997, it has been published in two parts: “Theatre in Japan” (English version) for readers outside Japan and “Theatre Abroad” (Japanese version) for domestic readers. The yearbook has been published online since 2014.

Also funded by this program, we have staged readings every year since 2009 to introduce remarkable plays from around the world as part of our research activities to promote international theatrical exchange. In 2022, we continued the “Theatre Born in Conflict Zones” series for the fourteenth consecutive year, this time featuring a play by a Ukrainian author. Unfortunately, as members of the team caught COVID-19, the reading had to be canceled, but the script will be published in Japanese translation for the first time at the same time this yearbook is published.

Although we are still seeing waves of infection in this, the third year of the COVID-19 pandemic, signs that the world is moving toward recovery are also apparent. On the other hand, Russia’s onslaught against Ukraine continues and chaos reigns across the globe, against the backdrop of new movements emerging in the countries referred to as the Global South.

I believe this last year has been one in which members of the theatre community have asked themselves a fundamental question: what can the performing arts do in the unstable times of the 21st century? This year’s *Theatre Yearbook* features many contributions demonstrating the ways in which members of the global theatre community have explored this question.

Thus the publication of the *Theatre Yearbook* has laid a firm foundation for activities that seek to gain knowledge of the relationship between Japan and the world, to deepen mutual understanding by positioning Japan within the global network, and to realize cultural development and peace.

We look forward to your continued support and cooperation with the activities of the Japanese Centre of ITI in the years to come.

March 27, 2023

In commemoration of World Theatre Day

Nagai Taeko
President

Japanese Centre of International Theatre Institute

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«Editors' Notes»

- The articles in this publication report on the performing arts in Japan from the previous calendar year.
- Names are presented in the respective style of their country/region of origin. For Japanese names, the order is family name, followed by given name. The names in the contributor profiles are presented with a comma and in the following order (except for individuals with only one name): family name, given name.
- Titles for traditional Japanese performing arts (Noh, kyogen, kabuki, bunraku, Japanese classical dance, etc.) are presented in the following order: *Japanese title (English Title)*.
- Other titles of works are presented in the following order: *English Title (Japanese title)*.
- The English play titles, theatre venue names, and other formal names are the official ones or, when no official English name is available, newly translated for this publication.

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**Shots from the Performing Arts in Japan
in 2022**

Noh and Kyogen



Special Project Performance [Rediscover Noh and Kyogen] Kyogen **Hakamasaki** (*A Hakama Pair Becomes Two*) Okutsu Kenichiro, Nomura Matasaburo, Okutsu Kentaro (from L to R) Photo provided by National Noh Theater



Special Program of Noh Performance [Rediscover Noh] **Kamo Monogurui** (*The Madwoman of Kamo*) Kanze Kiyokazu Photo provided by National Noh Theater



"All-Japan Noh Caravan!" in Toyota *Hanaikusa (The Battle of Flowers)* Photo: Harada Shinji



Revival Noh Viewing Program *Awade-no-mori (The Labyrinthine Forest)* Daughter: Kato Shingo, Monk: Komuro Tomoya, Merchant (father): Yasuda Noboru Photo: Shingu Yumi

Noh and Kyogen



Yokohama Noh Theater The 2nd "Three Old Women" Program *Higaki - Ranbyoshi* Otsuki Bunzo
Photo: Ogata Misako, provided by Yokohama Noh Theater



Theatre performance in Tokyo
Dojoji - Hyoshi-nashi no kuzushi Mikata Shizuka
Photo: Maejima Yoshihiro



Shibuya Noh 2nd night **Nonomiya**
Uzawa Hikaru Photo: Ishida Hiroshi



Ancestor Festival: The 300th Anniversary of the Birth of Nomura Manzo | Kyogen Furu **Chichi-no-jo fuyu yorozu-no-shiki**
Photo: Akasaka Kumi

Kabuki

Sukeroku yukari no edozakura
(*Sukeroku: Flower of Edo*)
Ichikawa Danjuro Hakuen ©Shochiku



Yoshitsune senbonzakura,
Kawatsura Hogen yakata
(*Yoshitsune and the Thousand Cherry Trees,*
The Mansion of the Priest Kawatsura)

Onoe Kikugoro

Photo courtesy of the National Theatre





Yoshitsune senbonzakura, Tokaiya
(*Yoshitsune and the Thousand Cherry Trees*, act 2)
Kataoka Nizaemon ©Shochiku



Furu amerika ni sode wa nurasaji
(*The Rains of America Will Never Dampen My Sleeves*)
Bando Tamasaburo ©Shochiku

Kabuki



Toryu Oguri hangan (The Modern Story of Oguri Hangan) Ichikawa Ennosuke (L) and Ichikawa Emiya (R) ©Shochiku



Yoshitsune senbonzakura, Kawatsura Hogen yakata (Yoshitsune and the Thousand Cherry Trees, The Mansion of the Priest Kawatsura) Onoe Kikunosuke Photo courtesy of the National Theatre

Bunraku



Musume Kagekiyo Yashima nikki (The Blind Kagekiyo in Exile) Takemoto Chitosedayu (L) and Toyozawa Tomisuke (R)
Photo provided by National Bunraku Theatre



Hana no Ueno homare no ishibusi (The Self-Sacrifice of Otsuji) Toyotake Rodayu (L) and Tsuruzawa Seisuke (R)
Photo provided by National Bunraku Theatre

Bunraku



Genpei nunobiki no taki (The Nunobiki Waterfall) Takemoto Shikorodayu (L) and Tsuruzawa Tozo (R)
Photo provided by National Bunraku Theatre



Kanjincho (The Subscription List) Yoshida Tamasuke, Kiritake Kansuke, Yoshida Tamaka (from L to R)
Photo provided by National Bunraku Theatre



Morimura Kiritake Ningen (Human) Joruri Project *Shin kyoekitan (New Strange Tale of a Mirror Reflection)* Morimura Yasumasa (R) and Kiritake Kanjuro (C) Photo provided by the Executive Committee of Morimura Kiritake Ningen Joruri Project ©Fukunaga Kazuo



Bunraku muso keishoden (Bunraku Dreams: A Tale of Succession) *Ninin Sanbaso (Two Sanbasos)* Yoshida Tamanobu, Yoshida Minohisa, Yoshida Tamaka (behind the fan), Yoshida Tamayuki, Yoshida Tamao (from L to R) ©Katsura Hideya

Musicals



Hairspray Toho Co., Ltd. Photo provided by Toho Theatrical Division



The Boy and the Beast Shiki Theatre Company Photo: Abe Akihito



Guys and Dolls Toho Co., Ltd. Photo provided by Toho Theatrical Division

Musicals



Before the Flood It's Follies Photo: Iwata Eri



Tokyo Love Story HoriPro Inc. Photo: Tanaka Aki

Contemporary Theatre



hana—1970, The Day Koza Burned HoriPro Inc. Photo: Miyagawa Maiko, provided by HoriPro Stage



Waiting at Rycom Kanagawa Performing Arts Theatre (KAAT) Photo: Hikiji Nobuhiko

Contemporary Theatre



Katabui, 1972 Theatre Office Natori and ACO Okinawa Photo: Sakauchi Futoshi



May 35th P-Company Photo provided by P-Company



Tales of Poverty Komatsuza Photo: Miyagawa Maiko



Leopoldstadt New National Theatre, Tokyo Photo: Miyagawa Maiko

Contemporary Theatre



The Ghost Is Here Parco Stage Photo: Miyagawa Maiko, provided by Parco Theater



The dodo falls Takumi Theater Company Photo: Okamoto Naobumi

Spirited Away Toho Co., Ltd.
Photo provided by Toho Theatrical Division



Harry Potter and the Cursed Child TBS and HoriPro Inc. Photo: Miyagawa Maiko, provided by TBS and HoriPro Inc.

Children's and Youth Theatre



La feuille les feuilles La Strada Company, at Kitakata 21st Century Theatre 2022 Photo provided by La Strada Company



The Twin Stars: Chunse and Pose's Big Adventure in the Sky (Futago no hoshi Chunse to Pose no daiboken) Studio Polano, at the 50th Summer Holiday Children's and Youth Theatre Festival Photo: Studio Polano

Uncle and the Big Tree

Theatre Company Nanja Monja,
at the 2022 Great Exhibition of
Performing Arts with Children in Kofu
Photo provided by Theatre Company Nanja Monja



Rudolf the Black Cat Gekidan Tanpopo, at Kids Circuit in Saku 2022 Photo provided by Kids Circuit in Saku

Children's and Youth Theatre



Eleven Hungry Cats La Clarté Puppet Troupe, at the 29th Children's Theatre Festival in Kishiwada
Photo provided by La Clarté Puppet Troupe



Beauty and the Beast Theatrical Group EN Photo: Morita Kozo

Japanese Classical Dance



Shotaro no Kai
Aya no Tsuzumi (The Damask Drum)
Hanayagi Shotaro
Photo provided by Hanayagi Shotaro Buyo Kenkyu Jo



Onoe Kikunojo no Kai
Yamata no Orochi
Onoe Kikunojo
Photo: Kato Takashi

Japanese Classical Dance



Maki no Kai **Kurokami (Black Hair)** Shida Maki Photo: Shingu Yumi, provided by Ryukyu Buyo Choyo School



81st Tamamikai, Gojo Tamami Recital **Orphée** (from L to R) Nakamura Kyozo (Perséphone), Gojo Tamami (Orphée) and Fujikage Shizue (Eurydice) Photo: Video Photo Saito

Ballet



Les Misérables Tani Momoko Ballet Photo: Haneda Tetsuya



Fukagawa Hideo version of *Don Quixote* Theatre de Ballet Company Photo: Okamura Masao (Osaka Tes)

Ballet



ASUKA Asami Maki Ballet Photo: Shikama Takashi



25th anniversary of New National Theatre **Giselle** (new version) National Ballet of Japan Photo: Shikama Takashi



La Bayadère Tokyo Ballet Photo: Yoshikawa Koujiro



Cinderella Jinushi Kaoru Ballet Company Photo: Obana Aoi (Office Obana)

Contemporary Dance and Butoh



Starting Over Condors Photo: HARU



What Cagliostro Dreamed in the Castel Sant'Angelo Kasai Akira / Tenshi-kan Photo: bozzo



End Dairakudakan Photo: Kawashima Hiroyuki



Opera **Orpheus and Eurydice** Teshigawara Saburo (production, choreography)
© Hotta Rikimaru / New National Theatre, Tokyo

Contemporary Dance and Butoh



Oni NoismxKodo Photo: Murai Isamu, provided by Niigata City Performing Arts Center Ryutopia



Opera *Einstein on the Beach* Hirahara Shintaro (direction, choreography) Photo: Kato Hajime



세월 (Sewol) Kedagoro Photo: Kusamoto Toshie



Good Cow-ken Suichu-megane∞ Photo: Maezawa Hideto

Contemporary Dance and Butoh



I Can/Can't See You From Here Now Kurata Midori (direction, composition),
organized by Daimaruyu SDGs ACT5 Executive Committee, bench Co. Photo: Kato Hajime



Formula Moriyama Mirai x Nakano Nobuko x Ella Rothschild Photo: Hirabayashi Takeshi

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**The Japanese Performing Arts
in 2022**

Noh and Kyogen

The New Found in the Old

Oda Sachiko

The “New” Found in *Fukkyoku* Revival Pieces

Noh, as a classic drama, has always explored types of “newness” while emphasizing its traditions and their transmission. One of these is *fukkyoku*. *Fukkyoku* are revivals of noh plays, some of which had been performed again in the Edo period but whose performances had ceased and were removed from the repertory (also known as *haikyoku*—pieces no longer performed, or *bangai noh*—pieces that are not part of the repertory). In a narrow sense, such noh pieces that have been revived since the 1950s came to be called *fukkyoku noh*, and their number had reached 85 by the end of 2005 (*Nogaku Daijiten* [Noh Encyclopedia], Chikuma Shobo Publishing). The method for these revivals is usually based on the existence of an old script and references to old production information to which new composition (*fushitsuke*) and new choreography (*katatsuke*) are created. The most important thing is that the work considered has historical significance and an attractive quality in the present and second is the introduction of new elements in the piece’s directing and acting. It can be said that the unique quality of revivals is the mixture of the old and the new, as well as the contradictory vectors of the old and the new. In recent years, along with the increase in the number of revivals and the number of groups working on them, the methods for creating such revivals have also diversified. In particular, the *ko-enshutsu joen* or “old-style performances” (the provisional name that refers to the re-staging of past performing styles that have been discontinued and also includes current noh plays), which have become popular since around 1985, have an affinity for exploring the newness in oldness, which tends to be associated with revivals. Below, I would like to take a look at the revivals of 2022 and give an overview of the

current state of *fukkyoku* (listed in order of title, date, location, organizer, and comments).

Kamo Monogurui (The Madwoman of Kamo)

(July 28 and 30, the National Noh Theatre, Monthly Theme: A Genealogy of Madness in Noh Plays, Special Program of Noh Performance, Rediscover Noh)

Since its opening in 1983, the National Noh Theatre has produced new works, revivals, and old-style performances, and this program is its biggest event of the year. What is noteworthy is the thorough outreach and publicity for the event. In addition to a gorgeous leaflet and pre-performance commentary by Amano Fumio, who supervised the project, the extensive pamphlet includes the script of the performance with a modern Japanese translation, commentary and discussion, contributions by the *shite* (main actor) Kanze Kiyokazu and others, as well as the Aoi Matsuri-zu Byobu (Aoi Festival Design Folding Screen) by Nishimura Nantei. A special public lecture was also held on July 4 with demonstrations. Information dissemination and pre-performance learning programs have become common for other revivals, which compensate for the fact that they are “premieres.” The performance was filled with the enthusiasm and passion of the *shite*, and new innovations were developed, especially in the dance. There may be pros and cons to the rather excessive costuming and acting, but it is certainly a revival and an example of free creation that is not bound by the strict principles of traditional performance. In fact, *Kamo Monogurui* is not a *haikyoku* (a discontinued piece); it is a current piece in the Hosho, Kongo and Kita schools. This performance by the Kanze school revived the nearly extinct first half, and the eclectic script relied on the *utaibon* (chant book) of the Komparu school lineage while incorporating a chant that has been handed down in the Kanze school as *rangyoku* (short solo sections from older *bangai* pieces that often have unusual chant characteristics). The manner in which the script was created and the new staging of the piece gave it a quality quite unlike the conventional characteristics of revival pieces.

Hanaikusa (The Battle of Flowers)

(October 5, Toyota City Noh Theater, Nohgaku Performers' Association, Toyota City Cultural Promotion Foundation)

This is part of the All-Japan Noh Caravan program developed by the Nohgaku Performers' Association. Based on the original work by Kanze Nagatoshi (1488?–1541?), the last noh playwright of the Muromachi period, this *furyu* noh (a piece that generally features spectacle or show-like characteristics), where the spirits of different flowers divide into two groups and compete for superiority, is similar in manner to the battle stories of the Muromachi period civil war tales. Although it is a small piece, it has historical significance and charm. It was also good to adopt the *ai-kyogen* from what was apparently a later piece, *Konomi-araso*i (*The Battle of Fruits and Nuts*). The script is a blending of the oldest book of play texts, *Kanze Motoyori-bon*, and its revised version from the Edo period. The direction follows the revised version. In this way, the recent trend is to not always use the original text as the first priority but instead search for ways to create the best performance with each revival and re-performance. In 2019, Kongo Hisanori revived the noh *Susuki* (revised and re-performed at the National Noh Theatre on September 23), which is another such ambitious revival.

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Awade-no-mori (The Labyrinthine Forest)

(November 12, Nagoya Noh Theater, Revival Noh Viewing Program, co-sponsored by the Nagoya Noh Promotion Association)

Kanze school *shite* actors Kato Shingo, Hasegawa Haruhiko, and Komuro Tomoya and Izumi *kyogen* school actor Okutsu Kentaro formed a group in 2021 and have performed the revival *Wada-sakamori* and other renditions of Soga pieces. *Awade-no-mori* is an old work written before 1456. It is thought that it may have been created by Komparu Zenchiku (1405–1470?). The story is about a father who can see his deceased daughter after burning special incense that is said to bring back the spirits of the dead.

The piece is characterized by novel developments, such as when the father and daughter stay in the same inn yet are unaware of each other, the daughter dying on stage and her body being buried, and the daughter appearing in a cloud

of smoke. What is eye opening is that this type of noh has parallels to *mugen* (phantasm) noh. There are few documents from which to base the production, so the direction and choreography is quite original, and the movement of the actors probably needs further refinement. The text was created by noh researcher Ikai Takamitsu and is based on the 1686 *Sanbyaku-ban-bon* text collection.

Kyogen *Hakamasaki* (A Hakama Pair Becomes Two)

(March 25 and 26, National Noh Theatre, Special Project Performance, Rediscover Noh and Kyogen)

This is a postponed performance that was originally scheduled for March 2020. The new script by Nomura Matasaburo (script, direction, and *shite*) combines the plot described in the oldest kyogen book, *Tensho Kyogen Bon*, along with research on Edo period paintings. While the popular play *Futari-bakama* depicts the slapstick comedy of two people sharing one *hakama* (trouser-skirt) by splitting it in half, *Hakamasaki* splits only one side of the *hakama* and unfolds it to make it look like two connected *hakama*. Although described as a revival or reconstruction, it has a strong creative side, yet it is meaningful relative to the current piece *Futari-bakama*.

The above-mentioned revivals, which started with respecting the original texts of the pieces, have created new direction and performances, thus moving the vector toward that of creation. Old scripts are no longer necessarily the most important aspect of a revival. Partial revisions have been seen for some time, but there was also the completely new kyogen *Hakamasaki*. The 2021 performance of *Tsuna* may be the first such example from noh (revised and re-performed this year on December 9). The program, titled Reconstructing Creative Noh, used a new script created by researcher Nishino Haruo that was based on notes from the late Muromachi period while consulting the later performances of *nagauta* and *kabuki*. Performances that make use of old records of noh and kyogen as starting points for creations will likely continue to increase in the future. What is necessary is to clarify the purpose of the performance, leave a record of the history of creating the revival, and actively critique such works. The work of the dramaturg, who oversees the whole, will also become increasingly important.

The Power of Otsuki Bunzo

One of the leaders in the noh world in recent years is Otsuki Bunzo (Kanze school *shite* actor who was born in 1942), whose highly dignified and consistent performances have led him to develop a wide range of activities at the Otsuki Noh Theatre in Osaka, where he is based. Since the 1980s, he has been actively working on revivals and performing old-style productions. This year he had many performances one after the other of such difficult pieces as *Eguchi*, *Motomezuka*, and *Teika*. The *ranbyoshi* variant of the difficult *Higaki* (May 7) made me realize the latent power Otsuki places on both tradition and innovation. The performance, from April to June at the Yokohama Noh Theater, was titled Three Old Women and was one of the *kikaku* (designed) performances, where three master actors performed *Obasute*, *Higaki* and *Sekidera Komachi*, which is considered the three most profound pieces of noh. *Higaki* is the story about the ghost of an old woman from Higaki, who was once a *shirabyoshi* dancer who took pride in her beauty, who continues to draw water with a hot iron bucket. It is a difficult piece with many *naraigoto* (secret teachings). And an old style performance is employed that incorporates a *ranbyoshi* variant (a special *shirabyoshi* or stamping technique) within the *jo-no-mai* dance. Otsuki's acting is dispassionate without emphasizing an "old woman" character or a thematic "pain of hell" but instead entrusts the dramatic expression to the chorus (the chorus head is Umewaka Rosetsu). The scene that had a strong impact was in the middle of the dance (the *oroshi* or slowdown in the second dan) in which the dancer leaned against the left pillar at the front of the reed hut to take a rest while looking upward diagonally for a long time. The angle of the mask looking up at the sky and the appearance of standing with the body pressed firmly against the pillar was extremely unusual, but it conveyed realistically the loneliness of the *shite* thinking about her long life. It seems that Otsuki chose this passage as the key point of *Higaki* and expressed it in a bold way that no one had ever previously attempted. In general, this writer has previously had the impression that Otsuki's performances easily hide passionate emotions and strong dramatizations with meticulous and stylish choices of masks and costumes and a delicacy of movements. But *Higaki* was a superb performance envisioned by Otsuki, where beauty

and dramatic quality both resonated clearly.

Noh Actors Who Carry the Future

The 44th Kanze Hisao Commemorative Hosei University Nohgaku Prize was awarded to Mikata Shizuka (Kanze School *shite* actor who was born in 1966), who has drawn the strong attention of audiences as one of the most energetic actors in the noh world. He is based in Kyoto and is the organizer of the group Theatrenoh. For the 44th Theatrenoh performance held in Tokyo (July 2, National Noh Theatre), there was an excellent showing of the *Dojoji* variant *Hyoshi-nashi no kuzushi*, which was postponed in 2020. Mikata's performance had clear character portrayal and expressive intention with little ambiguity. His words and movement perfectly created the inner expression of the *shite*, making it much like watching a modern dialogue play. He made full use of this characteristic in *Dojoji*, where the physical acting is constructed to create a thrilling play. After the gripping *ranbyoshi* section, with its drawn-out, sporadic beats, the *Kyu-no-mai* dance was attacked with an unmatched speed. It was followed in the second half by the *Inori* prayer dance featuring the *shite* wrapping his collapsed shoulders around the *shite* pillar, which seemed to express intense regret. Despite very little *shite* chanting, Mikata made full use of high and low pitches, strong and soft chants, and timing spaced freely to express inner feelings. Even if you are unfamiliar with noh, Mikata's performance certainly generates excitement and perhaps is even too stimulating. There is bound to be more that will unfold.

Uzawa Hikaru (Kanze School *shite* actor who was born in 1979), who belongs to Tessenkai, gave a youthful and vibrant portrayal of the eternally unsatisfied soul of the main character (September 2, Shibuya Noh second night) in her first performance of *Nonomiya*. Uzawa's distinct characteristic is her careful crafting of each movement. Her use of the mask stands out, and her gaze at the brushwood fence and *torii* gate is heartfelt. Her individuality could be seen in the flow from the *jo-no-mai* to the *ha-no-mai*, which captured a frenzy of sadness. The venue, the Shibuya Cerulean Tower Noh Theatre, has only about 200 seats, which helps convey the delicate expressions of the mask, along with the breadth of the actors. Perhaps, noh was originally a type of theatre that fitted into

such an intimate space. The coexistence of Mikata and Uzawa, who both carry the future of noh, demonstrates the depth of expression in noh, with these contrasting pieces and styles of performance.

● *Yorozukyogen* sponsored *Ancestor Festival: The 300th Anniversary of the Birth of Nomura Manzo I* (October 16, National Noh Theatre) received the Grand Prize for the 77th Agency for Cultural Affairs Art Festival. The performance, with a colorful diversity of guests and pieces, was characterized by various innovations and new ideas. The kyogen *furyu Chichi-no-jo furyu yorozu-no-shiki* is a playful new work with a new direction by Manzo IX, with the theme of the Manzo family's saké. Meanwhile, Man (born in 1930), who performed the kyogen *Kenbutsu-zaemon*, has a strong voice that, as in the past, takes my breath away. Manzo, who has recovered from illness, launched the *Manzo no Kai* on his birthday, December 23, last year. The program's freshness, which discards ambition, is pleasing, and it demonstrates the quality of warmth. The program is scheduled to be held on the same day every year, and this year was its second iteration.

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●The *Nohgaku Times*

The *Nohgaku Times*, a monthly newspaper about the world of *nohgaku*, will cease publication after the February 2023 issue. Published by Nohgaku Shorin (founded by Maruoka Katsura in 1907), which publishes books related to noh, the *Nohgaku Times*, since its first publication in March 1952, has for over 70 years published noh and kyogen news, including information on performances and stage reviews, from across all schools of noh. It has also been a first-class source that traced the history of *nohgaku* after World War II. I am humbled by the sense of mission of successive company owners who disregarded profitability yet continued to publish. There is no end to the voices of lament for its suspension, which is said to be the result of poor sales of chant books and other factors due to the pandemic.

●Describing the World of Noh during the Pandemic

The movement to record the ripples and effects of the pandemic has been

remarkable. Since March 2020, the *Nohgaku Times* has provided real-time information on cancellations, postponements of performances, the various responses in the world of noh, as well as online information. The Department of Intangible Cultural Heritage of the Tokyo National Research Institute for Cultural Properties launched a website titled *New Coronavirus and Intangible Cultural Heritage* and made *A Report and Discussion by Traditional Performing Arts Performers and Related Parties* in September 2020. It continues to conduct extensive surveys and reports on all aspects of performing arts. In addition, symposiums and reports using Zoom were held by the Musashino University Noh Research Archives, the Gakugeki Gakkai Society of Music and Drama, and the Nohgaku Gakkai Society of Nohgaku and were published in the same year in each organization's bulletin. This year for the 70th anniversary of The Nogami Memorial Noh Theatre Research Institute of Hosei University, a special exhibition titled *Crisis and Noh - How We Accepted and Overcame It* was held by the HOSEI Museum (September 2022–January 2023). While tracing the response of the world of noh in the face of natural disasters and wars through exhibitions, symposiums, and booklets, the Institute took up the booklet *Corona disaster and Noh*. The booklet, to be published in September, outlines the trends before and after the declaration of a state of emergency and specifically introduces the voices of noh performers and their online activities. The above records convey the ingenuity, effort, solidarity and cooperation of noh performers who faced this crisis. Through these activities, one feels the nurturing of new connections between creators and recipients, such as online activities and crowdfunding.

●Various Awards

New member of the Japan Art Academy

—Nomura Mansaku, Izumi School Kyogen actor

Holder of Important Intangible Cultural Property (being recognized as an individual is equivalent to being a Living National Treasure)

—Otsubo Kimio, Hosho School Noh actor

Person of Cultural Merit

—Yamamoto Tojiro, Okura School Kyogen actor

43rd Matsuo Entertainment Awards Grand Prize

—Nomura Mansai, Izumi School Kyogen actor

Oda, Sachiko

She is a researcher of noh and kyogen and has a doctorate from the Graduate Department of Literature, Hosei University. Her main areas of research are noh, the performance history of Kyogen and research into classical works. Oda's activities combine research and performance activities, including theatre criticism, lecturing, commentary, and dramaturgy for revival noh and ancient performing practices.

(Translation: Richard Emmert)

The Name-taking Ceremonies for Ichikawa Danjuro and the Achievements of the Next Generation

Yanai Kenji

The impact of the pandemic

From the beginning of 2022, the implementation of measures to control the spread of COVID-19 saw multiple reports of infections and close contacts at different theatres, leading to frequent performance suspensions and changes to casts and productions. During the August run of performances at the Kabuki-za, for example, the infection of several performers led to major and widely reported cast changes to *Tokaido dochu hizakurige Yajikita returns* (*Yajirobe and Kitahachi on the Tokaido Highway Returns*) and a new play, *Shinsengumi* (*The New Brigade*), based on the historical manga by legendary artist Tezuka Osamu. For the remainder of the year, the pandemic seemed to take one step backward for every step forward, but national restrictions gradually began to be eased, and in August, the Kabuki-za was able to return to virtually a full house. Since the Kabukiza Theatre Special Program on October 31, even the distinctive *kakegoe* calls from the back of the house were permitted to make a limited return.

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Ichikawa Danjuro XIII's name-taking ceremony

Performances to mark Ichikawa Ebizo's succession to the most important name in Edo kabuki, Ichikawa Danjuro XIII Hakuen, finally began at the Kabuki-za in November and December. Originally, they had been scheduled to take place from May to June 2020 but were postponed due to the outbreak of the pandemic. Danjuro put in confident, graceful performances as Benkei in *Kanjincho* (*The Subscription List*) and Sukeroku in *Sukeroku yukari no edozakura* (*Sukeroku:*

Flower of Edo) in November. In December, he tackled Sukeroku once again, this time along with the *Oshimodoshi* (demon-queller, a traditional Ichikawa speciality) role in *Kyoganoko musume Dojoji* (*The Maiden at Dojoji Temple*). Audiences had the increasingly rare opportunity to watch him performing with actors from his own generation, with Matsumoto Koshiro as Togashi and Ichikawa Ennosuke as Yoshitsune in *Kanjincho* and Onoe Kikunosuke as Agemaki and Onoe Shoroku as Ikyu in November's *Sukeroku*. These performances did an excellent job of highlighting the talents of the next generation.

Danjuro's nine-year-old son, Ichikawa Shinnosuke VIII, appeared in *Uiro uri* (*The Medicine Peddler*) in November, as well as making his first (and the youngest ever) attempt at the role of Kumedera Danjo in *Kenuki* (*The Tweezers*) in December. Appearing alongside him, to the great delight of audiences, was his sister Ichikawa Botan.

Mature performances by veterans

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It was also a great year for audiences to savour anew the brilliant skills of the veterans of the kabuki stage.

Onoe Kikugoro's performances as Raiko in *Tsuchigumo* (*The Earth Spider*) at the Kabuki-za in May and as Yoshitsune in act four of *Yoshitsune senbon zakura* (*Yoshitsune and the Thousand Cherry Trees*) at the National Theatre in October were both remarkable, fully satisfying examples of the richness of Kikugoro's art. He also brought splendour and dignity to his appearances in the leading male roles of Inuyama Dosetsu in *Nanso satomi hakkenden* (*The Saga of Eight Dogs*) at the National Theatre in January, and Kudo Suketsune in *Uiro uri* at the Kabuki-za in November.

Kataoka Nizaemon announced that he would be performing for the final time the role of Tomomori in the Shipping Office and Daimotsu Bay scenes of *Yoshitsune senbon zakura* at the Kabuki-za in February. Tomomori has long been one of Nizaemon's signature roles, one where he successfully fused the stylization of the puppet theatre with a tangible sense of reality. His portrayal of Kouchiyama in *Kumo ni magou Ueno no hatsuhana* (*The First Flowers of Ueno*) at the Kabuki-za in March was unfortunately interrupted by illness, but he brought a

clean lucidity of form and impressive power to the role. His Yuranosuke in act seven of *Kanadehon chushingura* (*The Treasury of Loyal Retainers*) at the same theatre in September was also distinctive.

Bando Tamasaburo played one of his signature roles at the Kabuki-za in June, the geisha Osono in *Furu amerika ni sode wa nurasaji* (*The Rains of America Will Never Dampen My Sleeves*). The combination of Tamasaburo's beauty, his exquisite delivery of the wordy dialogue, and guest appearances by many actors from Gekidan Shinpa (a troupe that specializes in early 1900s stage melodramas) made this a great success. In December he appeared as Agemaki in *Sukeroku* at the Kabuki-za. He looked as gracefully gorgeous and his dialogue was as accomplished as ever, but it was his portrayal of Agemaki's warm affection for Sukeroku's mother, Manko, that brought an additional dimension of emotional colour to his wonderful performance.

Nakamura Jakuemon demonstrated to the fullest his abilities, heady with brilliance and eroticism, in the roles of Shizuka Gozen in *Yoshitsune senbon zakura* in January, Princess Yuki in *Kinkakuji* (*The Golden Pavilion*) in May, and Okaru in act seven of *Kanadehon Chushingura* in September (all at the Kabuki-za). He is steadily gaining ground in these types of lead *onnagata* roles.

Nakamura Baigyoku's nomination as a Living National Treasure was confirmed, while Matsumoto Hakuo was awarded the Order of Culture. The chanter Takemoto Aodayu was awarded the Japan Art Academy Prize, making him the first Kabuki-za chanter to have been granted this honour.

The work of the next generation

The generation of actors born in the 1970s has begun to pick up more leading roles, giving audiences a sense of this being a real moment of transition for kabuki.

The deep sense of emotional expressiveness and fullness that Ichikawa Ennosuke invested in his portrayals of Tadanobu in *Yoshitsune senbon zakura* in January and of Yoshitsune in *Kanjincho* in November, both at the Kabuki-za, was impressive. He also brought his talents to bear in the shortened versions of several plays that were created for the three shows per day format at the

Kabuki-za, performing in *Shin sangokushi Kan'u hen* (*The New Records of Three Kingdoms: The Volume about Guan Yu*) in March, *Tennichibo Ooka seidan* (*The Case of Tennichibo from The Judgments of Ooka*) in April, and *Toryu Oguri Hangan* (*The Modern Story of Oguri Hangan*) in July.

This year Onoe Kikunosuke provided a strong testament to his energy and commitment, performing in both the classics and new works. He demonstrated impressively solid technique in major roles from the puppet theatre repertoire, including his role of Moritsuna in *Moritsuna jinya* (*Moritsuna's Battlecamp*) in March at the National Theatre, and the three roles he played in *Yoshitsune senbon zakura* at the same theatre in October (his performance in these roles was cancelled at the start of the pandemic two year ago) He also showed off his accession to roles that his family have long excelled in, including Inaba Kozo in *Nezumi kozo Jirokichi* (*The Story of the Thief Nezumi Kozo Jirokichi*, Kabuki-za, February), the spider spirit in *Tsuchigumo* (Kabuki-za, May), and Sogoro in *Sakanaya Sogoro* (*Sogoro the Fishmonger*, Hakata-za, June). In July at the Kabuki-za, he performed in a revised version of *Kaze no tani Nausicaä* (*Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind*), a new play first staged in 2019. September at the Kabuki-za saw the first memorial performance for Nakamura Kichiemon II, who passed away last year. The performances featured a well-received performance by Kikunosuke in *Fujito*, a play authored by Kichiemon under the name Matsu Kanshi. Kichiemon was also, of course, Kikunosuke's father-in-law.

Onoe Shoroku's acting is coming along in leaps and bounds, and this year he was awarded the Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology's New Faces Prize. He portrayed a handful of larger-than-life roles this year, including Matsunaga Daizen in *Kinkakuji* in May, Matsuomaru in *Kurumabiki* (*Pulling the Carriage Apart*) in June, Matsuomaru in *Terakoya* (*The Village School*) in September, all at the Kabuki-za. In October, he also produced and acted in *Arakawa Judayu*, a dramatization of one of the popular *koshaku* (oral tales) linked to *Kanadehon chushingura*. This production was awarded the Otani Takejiro Award for the unusual skill with which it adapted an oral narrative to the stage.

Matsumoto Koshiro put in an ingenious performance as Sakichi in *Arakawa*

no Sakichi (Sakichi of Arakawa) at the Kabuki-za in April. In August he attracted favourable notices as Aoki Sadajiro in the very infrequently performed *Ansei kibun Tsukuda no yorashi (Strange News in the Ansei Era: Night Storm at Tsukuda)*. His exchanges with Nakamura Kankuro as Kamiya Genzo succeeded in producing a very real sense of tension.

Nakamura Kankuro provided an excellent and invigorating performance as Lord Okura in *Ichijo Okura monogatari (The Tale of Ichijo Okura)* at the Kabuki-za in January. His Tennichibo in February at Theatre Cocoon was a masterpiece that perfectly captured the character's naivety and fearlessness. Kankuro also mounted performances by the Heisei Nakamura-za theatre in the grounds of Sensoji temple in Asakusa in October and November to mark the 180th anniversary of the founding of the theatre district of Saruwakamachi.

Nakamura Baishi put in some graceful performances, including his Kagaribi in *Moritsuna jinya* in March, and his Princess Sarashina in *Momijigari (Maple Viewing)* in July, both at the National Theatre. Equally striking was the rare sense of antiquity and generosity that he brought to the role of Taira no Koremori in the Sushi shop scene from *Yoshitsune senbon zakura* at the National Theatre in October.

Onoe Ukon and Bando Minosuke brought a youthful freshness to their portrayals of Benten Kozo and Nango Rikimaru in *Benten musume meo no shiranami (The Five Thieves)* at the Kabuki-za in May. They are definitely two young actors to keep an eye on. Minosuke also put in a strong showing as Umeomaru in *Kurumabiki* at the Kabuki-za in June. In the same play, Nakamura Kazutaro's Kamigata-style (the Kyoto and Osaka area) Sakuramaru left an equally strong impression. In June at the Kabuki-za, Ichikawa Somegoro's portrayal of the lead role of Tokugawa Nobuyasu (the son of the shogun Tokugawa Ieyasu) in *Nobuyasu* attracted much attention. While it only enjoyed a brief run, *Natsu matsuri Naniwa kagami (The Summer Festival in Osaka)* at the Shochiku-za in Osaka in September with Kataoka Ainosuke was well performed and overflowed with Kamigata atmosphere.

As the pandemic receded and audience confidence returned, many actors resumed mounting independent performances. Enthusiastic shows were put on

by Nakamura Tsurumatsu (June), Nakamura Kyozo and Nakamura Ichō (also June), Nakamura Takanosuke (July), Nakamura Baigyoku and his students (August), Onoe Ukon (August), and Kamimura Kichiya and his students (September). At the National Theatre in May, the venerable Zenshinza troupe staged *Kakitsubata iro mo edozome – Oroku to Gantetsu (Oroku and Gantetsu: Even the Irises are Dyed Edo Purple)* as a memorial for the 33rd anniversary of the death of their founder, Kawarazaki Kunitaro V (1909-1990). It was the first performance of the play for 41 years.

The end of the road for *Engekikai*; rebuilding the National Theatre

The monthly kabuki magazine *Engekikai* ceased publication with its April issue, published on March 3. The reasons given were its aging readership, the shift of the publishing industry towards digital, and lack of new readers.

Rebuilding plans for the National Theatre in Tokyo's Hanzōmon were published, and a series of farewell performances began in September. The theatre will close in late October 2023, with all three of its theatres earmarked for demolition. Construction of a new theatre building that will include a hotel and restaurants will then begin, with the theatres scheduled to reopen in autumn 2029. In the meantime, performances will continue at other venues around Tokyo, possibly including the New National Theatre and the National Noh Theatre.

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Obituaries

Bando Takesaburo V passed away on June 17. An *onnagata* actor, he brought a rich flavour of Kamigata to his performances of middle-aged characters like Oen in *Fuingiri (The Courier for Hell)*, or older women such as Oko in *Hikimado (A Diary of Two Butterflies in the Pleasure Quarters)*. He also occasionally performed male roles, lending them a distinctive depth. Takesaburo played an important role in the revival of Kamigata kabuki, both through the revivals of older plays in his independent Bando Takesaburo no Kai productions and as a teacher at the Shochiku Kamigata Kabuki Academy.

On June 23 we also lost Sawamura Tanosuke VI. Tanosuke brought a dignified art to his portrayals of female characters including Koman in *Sanemori*

monogatari (*The Tale of Sanemori*) and Sakae Gozen in *Meiboku Sendai hagi* (*The Precious Incense and Autumn Flowers of Sendai*). The scope of his art was broad, and he excelled in both *sewamono* (contemporary life plays) wife roles like Ohama in *Sakanaya Sogoro* and old woman roles including Nagisa in *Kokusenya Gassen* (*The Battles of Coxinga*). He was also valued for his skill in performing Edo *wagoto* roles, including the clerk Chushichi in *Kamiyui Shinza* (*Shinza The Barber*) and Soga no Juro in *Ya no ne* (*Sharpening the Arrow*). For many years he trained upcoming actors at the National Theatre's Kabuki Actor Training Programme and was recognized for his efforts by being named a Living National Treasure in 2002. Tanosuke was also known as a fan of sumo wrestling, serving as a member of the Yokozuna Deliberation Committee, the lay body that recommends wrestlers to sumo's highest rank.

On January 19, Kineya Jogu, the *nagauta* shamisen player and leader of the Kikugoro Troupe's musical ensemble, passed away.

Yanai, Kenji

Following a period at the National Theatre, he currently teaches at Meiji University. He holds a doctorate in literature and specializes in the history of Japanese performing arts with a focus on kabuki. His books include *Meiji kiwamono kabuki: Sora tobu godaime Kikugoro* (*Sensational Meiji-period Kabuki: Kikugoro V Flying Through the Air*, Hakuuisha Publishing), *Chabudaigaeshi no kabuki nyumon* (*An Introduction to Kabuki Shocking Enough to Overturn the Dinner Table*, Shinchosha Publishing). He regularly reviews kabuki for The Tokyo Shimbun newspaper.

(Translation: Alan Cummings)

Bunraku

The Birth of Three New Stars / Young Performers' Heroic Efforts

Kameoka Noriko

054 The year 2022 was the third successive year that the theatre world was forced to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic. The seats available for sale at each performance have returned to their pre-pandemic levels, but audiences have yet to come back to the theatres. Theatre audiences are traditionally older, and as had been feared, it will take some time to break the habits of the past few years and tempt these customers back to the theatres. Of course, it is not only bunraku that has been affected. From noh to kabuki, the entire traditional theatre world continues to suffer from the effects of the pandemic. Theatre workers become infected or are identified as close contacts, leading to frequent cancellations of performances and cast changes. It has proved extremely difficult to eradicate infection in the theatre environment entirely. While different policies have been trialled, including requiring cast members to vacate the theatre as soon as their performance is over, transmission can still occur during rehearsals and performances. COVID-19 has still not run its course.

In the middle of this ongoing crisis, however, there was a glimmer of good news. From the April performances at the National Bunraku Theatre in Osaka, three chanters were newly elevated to the rank of *kiriba gatari* – those chanters with sufficient talent to take on a play's key climactic act. The chanters in question were Toyotake Rodayu, Takemoto Shikorodayu, and Takemoto Chitosedayu. They were also the first new chanters to be accorded this honour in thirteen years since Living National Treasure Toyotake Sakitayu.

To mark the occasion, Rodayu performed the Gappo's House scene from *Sesshu Gappo ga Tsuji* (*The Tale of Tamate Gozen*) with Takezawa Seisuke on

shamisen. Shikorodayu, meanwhile, was accompanied by Takezawa Sosuke, on lead shamisen, as he chanted Shizuka Gozen in the Journey with a Drum scene from *Yoshitsune senbon zakura* (*Yoshitsune and the Thousand Cherry Trees*). Chitosedayu was accompanied by Toyozawa Tomisuke in his performance of the Hyuga Island scene from *Musume Kagekiyo Yashima nikki* (*The Blind Kagekiyo in Exile*). The performance provided an ideal showcase for the differing characters of each chanter's art: Rodayu's passion and pure soulfulness, Shikorodayu's stirring brilliance, and Chitosedayu intimate approach to the fate of a proud, isolated warrior. Shikorodayu's scene was sung by five chanters (*kakeai*), so it wasn't a true *kiriba gatari* performance. However, in the special summer vacation performance in Osaka, he got the chance to shine alone in Kamiya Jihei's Home scene from *Shinju ten no Amijima* (*The Love Suicides at Amijima*). To the accompaniment of Sosuke's shamisen, Shikorodayu's chanting brought a profound depth to this contemporary life play. At the same show, Rodayu and Seisuke performed an energetic, impressive Shido Temple scene from *Hana no Ueno homare no ishibumi* (*The Self-Sacrifice of Otsuji*).

The August 20 *Bunraku sutoruri no kai* puppet-less performance at the National Bunraku Theatre featured the three new stars competing against each other in dramatic scenes from *jidaimono* history plays. Chitosedayu with Tomisuke on shamisen tackled the rarely performed Sakai Village scene from *Gotaiheiki shiraishi banashi* (*The Vendetta by Two Sisters*), while Rodayu and Seisuke performed the Sodehagi *saimon* scene from *Oshu Adachigahara* (*The Rebellion of the Abe Clan*), and Shikorodayu with Tsuruzawa Tozo tackled the Kurosuke's House scene from *Genpei nunobiki no taki* (*The Nunobiki Waterfall*). The three stars performed together again in another puppet-less performance at the National Theatre in Tokyo in October. The scenes were different, but audiences got to experience the grit and determination of these chanters who will lead bunraku in the years to come.

Unfortunately, chanter and Living National Treasure Toyotake Sakitayu struggled with his health this year and was unable to perform for several months. Fans were worried when he missed both the latter half of the April (April 18 onwards) programme in Osaka and the whole May programme in Tokyo,

performances that were supposed to celebrate his being named a Person of Cultural Merit last autumn. However, fears were allayed somewhat when Sakitayu made a strong return at the summer vacation performance in Osaka. He performed the Yamatoya scene from *Shinju ten no Amijima*, and his rich, exquisite chanting was quite the thing to behold. His presence can really make all the difference to the impact of a performance. At the moment his chanting is truly exquisite, bringing together the highest levels of technique and dignity with an unerring sense of theatre. So it was worrying that he was again absent during the November shows, but we hope that he will make a return to the stage sometime in 2023.

In Sakitayu's absence, it was his pupil Takemoto Oritayu who stepped into the breach, standing in for his teacher's scenes and demonstrating his own skill. He added those scenes to the ones that had originally been allocated to him, so it must have been exhausting but we can hope that it can also fuel his growth as a performer. The best example of what he was able to accomplish was his Benkei in *Kanjincho* (*The Subscription List*) in the November programme in Osaka. To be honest, I always feel that the bunraku *Kanjincho* plays somewhat flat in comparison to the drama that kabuki's human actors can invoke in the same play. To make things even more challenging, this bunraku version was being performed at the same time as a kabuki version was being staged at the Kabuki-za in Tokyo, starring Ichikawa Ebizo in the Benkei role as part of the name-taking ceremonies for his succession to Ichikawa Danjuro XIII Hakuen. Two versions of *Kanjincho* in the same month signalled a true competition between bunraku and kabuki. The bunraku version normally uses the title *Narhibiku Ataka no shinseki* (*The New Barrier Gate at Ataka*), but for this performance it was titled *Kanjincho*, hinting at the dimension of competition from the bunraku side.

However, this version of *Kanjincho* was a real triumph. The cast included some of the spirited young mainstays of the theatre, with Oritayu as Benkei, Toyotake Yasutayu as Togashi, and Takemoto Kosumidayu as Yoshitsune. On the puppets, Benkei was manipulated by Yoshida Tamasuke, Togashi by Yoshida Tamashi, and Yoshitsune by Kiritake Montomi. Normally, it is only the chief puppeteer who shows his face, but for this performance the puppeteers who

controlled Benkei's left arm and feet also went unmasked and provided a deeply committed performance. The chanters, musicians, and puppeteers all put their heart and soul into it, creating a performance that blazed with a new heat and light. Especially notable was Oritayu, who in addition to this play stood in for his teacher Sakitayu in the comical *Wakigahama hobiki* scene from *Ichinotani futaba gunki* (*Chronicles of the Battle of Ichinotani*). Yasutayu dug his teeth into the lines that Oritayu threw at him, and listening to his chanting was like watching sparks fly. Tamasuke was making his first attempt at Benkei, a role that he had long dreamed of. The force that he brought to the role was frightening, truly inhabiting Benkei's desperate extremity of loyalty. The theatre also acted decisively in reducing the price of the most expensive seats for the *Kanjincho* section of the programme to 2500 yen halfway through the run. Those seats are normally sold at 5500 yen, so it was an excellent bargain for customers new to bunraku or those returning to the theatre. Osaka audiences have always been primarily drawn by word of mouth, with numbers increasing towards the end of the run, and this was definitely the case with *Kanjincho*. Everyone can admire the art of veteran performers, but spirited performances like this by younger stars will draw in new audiences.

Many other performances linger in the memory. In November's *Shinju yoigoshin* (*Love Suicides on the Eve of the Koshin Festival*), Chitosedayu and Tomisuke performed the Ueda Village scene and Toyotake Rosetayu and Tsuruzawa Seiji the Greengrocer scene. It was a high-quality performance, with the chanters creating a nuanced portrayal of the characters' wavering emotions, while puppeteers Yoshida Tamao as Hanbei and Kiritake Kanjuro as Ochiyo created a pair of beautiful lovers.

The quality of Tamao's work over the past few years has been eye opening. He manipulated Matsuomaru in the Village School scene from *Sugawara denju tenarai kagami* (*Sugawara and the Secrets of Calligraphy*) at the New Year's performances, and Shunkan in *Heike nyogo no shima* (*The Priest in Exile*) in February, and both were performances of grace and scale that succeeded magnificently in presenting the characters' inner pain and loneliness. Amongst the other puppeteers, Yoshida Kazuo's performances of Tamate Gozen in *Sesshu Gappo ga Tsuji*

in February in Tokyo, and Osan in *Shinju ten no Amijima* breathed life into roles that his master, the late Yoshida Bunjaku, had excelled in. Kiritake Kanjuro's Oharu in *Shinjuten no Amijima* and his Sodehagi in *Oshu Adachigahara* in the September show in Tokyo demonstrated outstanding talent in their presentation of the characters' inner lives.

Kanjuro is well known for the breadth of his talents and has long designed the illustrations used on the stamps available at bunraku performances. This year he both wrote and directed a new play for the summer vacation programme called *Suzu no ne (The Tinkle of a Bell)*. It was a charming, simple story about a *kappa* water sprite and a fox that delighted children who were seeing bunraku for the first time.

There were a string of independent shows put on by the younger performers in spite of the dangers created by the pandemic. In particular, I'd like to draw attention to the performances put on by the chanters, which were less about their own artistic growth and more about shrinking the distance with the audience to let them experience the full power of live *gidayubushi* chanting. I didn't manage to make it to all of these shows, but the list included Toyotake Yoshiodayu and Tsuruzawa Enjiro performing the Amagasaki scene from *Ehon taikoki (A Picture Book of the Taiko Hideyoshi)*, Minorikai, April 29 at Sennichitei, Osaka, and May 4 at the Nago no kai in Tokyo); Toyotake Yasutayu and Tsuruzawa Seiko performing the Kurosuke's House scene from *Genpei nunobiki no taki* (July 3 at Art Hall Timbre in Nara); and Kosumidayu and Seiko performing the Skylight scene from *Futatsu chocho kuruwa nikki (Diary of Two Butterflies in the Pleasure Quarters)*, October 21, small hall at the National Bunraku Theatre). This final performance was part of a double bill with the rakugo comedian Shofukutei Shikaku. These were all strong attempts at plays that these young chanters only get to perform at these kinds of events.

We must not forget the second annual *Bunraku muso keishoden (Bunraku Dreams: A Tale of Succession)* event, which was organized by mid-rank performers and held on August 6 at the National Bunraku Theatre. It began last year at puppeteer Yoshida Tamasho's instigation and involved something that could never happen at a regular performance: master puppeteers and their young

students, all of whom had around ten years of training under their belts, performing equal roles. The first event in 2021 attracted a lot of attention and was a huge success. Building on their experiences the previous year, in 2022 the younger performers again pooled their talents to create the programmes and think up the returns for the crowdfunding campaign for the show. This year saw the students playing the lead puppeteer roles (i.e. the head and right arm), while their teachers and senior students took on the left arm and feet respectively. This was something you would never see at a regular performance and it attracted large crowds.

There was another really fascinating performance in February at the Nakanoshima Museum of Art in Osaka. It was a collaboration between the contemporary artist Morimura Yasumasa and the puppeteer Kanjuro under the title *Ningen joruri (Human Joruri)*. During the performance, Morimura became a puppet and was manipulated by Kanjuro. Morimura is best known for his self-portraits where he dresses up as historical figures or subjects of famous paintings by artists, such as Van Gogh, and this time he became a bunraku puppet. For the performance, a new play called *Shin kyoeikitan (New Strange Tale of a Mirror Reflection)* was written. It is about a master dollmaker called Kyojuro and a *kyo ningyo* doll that he creates by reflecting the body of a beautiful woman in a mirror. Morimura played the *kyo ningyo* reflected in the mirror, and after the performance he declared that he didn't understand the need for any dividing line between contemporary art and classical performance. The performance itself opened new expressive possibilities for bunraku.

The year 2022 marked the 150th anniversary of the naming of the Bunraku-za troupe. Performances at the National Bunraku Theatre and the National Theatre in Tokyo from April onwards all carried a special commemorative text. The name the company now uses was originally the name of a playhouse in Osaka, which was taken in turn from Uemura Bunrakuken I, an entrepreneur who ran a puppet theatre troupe. On March 1, the performers attended a memorial service at Enjo-in Temple in Osaka's Tennoji district which houses Bunrakuken's grave. As well as praying for the success of the upcoming performances, Shikorodayu and Tsuruzawa Enza performed a puppet-less version of a section of the

Retirement Cottage of the Old Bamboo Cutter scene from the revival of *Yamato-uta taketori monogatari* (A Japanese Poem of the Tale of the Bamboo Cutter), a play originally written by Bunrakuo.

Finally, it was announced that the National Theatre in Tokyo, bunraku's home away from home, will close at the end of next October for reconstruction. A brand new theatre on the site is due to open in 2029. Bunraku has begun a series of performances to bid farewell to Japan's first national theatre. During the six years before the new National Theatre opens, the plan is to stage bunraku performances at various theatres around the capital.

Kameoka, Noriko

Special reporter and editor of the cultural section of the Osaka head office of the *Sankei Shimbun* newspaper, responsible for coverage of Japanese traditional performing arts. Joined the newspaper in 1990. In addition to theatre reviews and interviews, she also writes the ongoing columns *Riken no ken* (*Seeing Yourself from the Outside*). Has published several books, including *Bunraku zanmai* (*Devoted to Bunraku*) and *Yume: Heisei no Tojuro Tanjo* (*Dream: The Birth of a Heisei Tojuro*), and the jointly authored *Umewaka Rokuro ke no shigei* (*The Consummate Art of the Umewaka Rokuro Family*).

(Translation: Alan Cummings)

Fighting Against the Pandemic

Hagio Hitomi

In 2022, the confusion of the COVID-19 pandemic had already entered the third year. Nevertheless, the number of performances in the musical world increased as though the pent-up energy and gloomy mood was released all at once. Still, there were a number of cases in which the performances had to be cancelled or suspended due to the pandemic. On the other hand, several original musicals were produced one after another and they proved the underlying strength of the Japanese musical world.

International Companies Were Back Again and Some Large-Scale Musicals Were Cancelled

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During 2022, the musical world was brave to take risks and worked toward presenting shows while cautiously checking on the situation. International companies visiting Japan were the productions that were the most severely impacted by the pandemic. However, they got going, starting with *Singin' in the Rain* that toured to Japan in February. It was a UK production and when you saw the scene in which the lead Adam Cooper was singing and dancing in the pouring rain, it felt as if a ray of hope was shining through the clouds. The production was full of the spirit not only to revive performances in Japan but also to protect theatre culture by getting through the pandemic.

American companies such as *RENT* and *A Chorus Line* as well as *Chicago*, *Broadway Christmas Wonderland* among others that were also from the US toured to Japan in 2022. Although the number of visiting companies had decreased compared to the peak period, they were coming back step by step and it was one of the signs that the musical world was trying to overcome the global pandemic.

Large-scale Japanese musical productions opened one after another as well. *Miss Saigon* and *Elisabeth* were revived at the Imperial Theatre after they were inevitably cancelled in 2020. Both musicals are very popular and the tickets were referred to as “Platinum Tickets” as they were very difficult to get hold of. However, in both productions, much to the dismay of the ticket holders, the performances frequently had to be cancelled when the cast got infected with coronavirus or when they were bound by quarantine rules.

It is true that the actors playing the main characters are a big draw for popular musicals. In the future, however, the productions should be steered in a direction that makes it possible to continue performances infallibly through a clearly defined system that makes more use of understudies (covering a certain role) and swings (covering several roles). Some people go to a musical because they want to see a box-office star but there are also many people who want to experience the work itself. Especially when it comes to musicals that tour to several cities around Japan, there must be many local audiences who are excited to see the show for the first time. There are, however, an increasing number of productions that are now covered by understudies and/or swings due to the prolonged pandemic.

The performances of many productions were cancelled a number of times due to the pandemic and it was most disappointing to the fans and the company of *Man of La Mancha* starring Matsumoto Hakuo that it played only seven times. Hakuo has been playing the title role since 1969 when his stage name was Ichikawa Somegoro. The production was known Hakuo’s “final appearance” in *Man of La Mancha* and it was originally planned to play for about a month. Thank goodness the producers made an exceptional decision to revive it in 2023 as there were so many people who were heartbroken because they missed the show.

The Premiere of High-Profile Musicals and Resuming Postponed Productions

Hairspray and *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat* were two epic musicals that premiered in Japan after two years. Although international

companies of both musicals had toured Japan in the past, it was the first time they were presented with Japanese casts.

The revival of *Hairspray* was a delightful surprise because the starring actress, Watanabe Naomi, now lives outside Japan and she returned to be in the show. She was just right for the heroine and it was difficult to imagine anyone else playing the role. The characters in the musical overcome and rise above all sorts of discrimination based on reasons such as gender, race and physical appearance, and it was striking that the Afro-American characters were played without putting on dark makeup. The decision on the makeup was made due to a request from the Broadway producers. How to express different races with a Japanese cast is probably going to be one of the next challenges for Japanese musicals.

Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat is one of Andrew Lloyd Webber's earlier works and Yabu Kota, who belongs to the talent agency Johnny & Associates, starred in the production. The musical opened at last two years after the originally-planned date. But, surprisingly, there was only a small audience. It was probably because there was a higher ratio of audience members that are Johnny's fans who are younger than the regular musical fans, and the situation during the pandemic must have made it difficult for them to "go on an expedition" to see Johnny's idols perform.

Japan premieres of foreign musicals were also produced consistently although smaller in number than they used to be. The Off-Broadway musical *The View Upstairs* depicting gender discrimination was interesting as it fits with the times. *Be More Chill* was the Japanese-cast version of the musical that was premiered on Broadway in 2019. It is a drama about high schoolers who are coping with life's problems and it seems that the worldwide hit of the musical numbers helped spur the Japan premiere.

I did not expect that *Flower Drum Song* and *Bye Bye Birdie* would be premiered in Japan. (*Flower Drum Song* was presented by the Takarazuka Revue Company at Bow Hall in 1992 and is therefore not strictly the Japan premiere.) Both musicals premiered on Broadway over fifty years ago and in Japan they were produced by small-and-medium size or emerging production companies

instead of major or long-established ones. The emerging production companies are the ones that are likely to discover and present more buried musicals in the future.

Incidentally, there was an interesting phenomenon of two productions of *The Fantasticks* “competing” with one another. The latest version is called *The Fantasticks–Boy Meets Boy*, which was rewritten by Tom Jones who wrote the original libretto and lyrics, and right after it was presented by a small production company, Toho Co., Ltd., presented *The Fantasticks* for the first time in fifty-five years. One was a gender-free version and the other was the original version. Both productions were impressive and the strong appeal of the musical got through.

The most fruitful musical produced in 2022 was probably *Guys and Dolls*. It is a popular musical that premiered on Broadway in 1950 and has been revived in Japan several times by Takarazuka Revue Company and Toho Co., Ltd. since its Japan premiere by Takarazuka in 1984. This time, the version produced by Toho was updated by Michael Arden, who is currently the hottest director on Broadway. The scenic designer Dane Laffrey made full use of the stage mechanisms of the Imperial Theatre and designed an effective set that helped to create a fun-filled production.

A certain number of Korean musicals are presented in Japan every year nowadays although they are small in number. *Ludwig: Beethoven The Piano* was the most memorable production among the Korean musicals that were premiered in Japan this year. It was a pity, however, that the libretto was not well written although the music was enticing as is often the case with Korean musicals.

A Wide Variety of Original Musical Produced One After Another

One of the features of the Japanese musical world in 2022 was, in short, the drastic increase of original musicals. For many years, the Japanese musical world has aspired to and called for the need of original musicals. The Japanese have been cultivating their capacity for creativity and while the number of original musicals increased, the pandemic brought about pseudo isolation from other countries and spurred the increase of original works.

Shiki Theatre Company premiered the long-awaited *The Boy and the Beast*

(*Bakemono no ko*), which was due to run for about a year. Based on a popular animated film directed by Hosoda Mamoru, Takahashi Chikae wrote the play-script, Fuki Harumi wrote and adapted the music and it was directed by Aoki Go. Toby Olié, who had also worked on Shiki's *A Robot in the Garden*, designed and directed the puppets. It is easy to imagine how hard it must have been to work with international staff during the pandemic but the production overcame those difficulties and opened a new chapter for the theatre company.

Le Petit Prince (The Little Prince) was indeed a very appealing stage production. It is a musical adaptation of the popular novel by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry. It was originally made into a musical by Ongakuza Musical company in 1993 and has been revived several times. This time it was produced by Toho Co., Ltd. Doi Yuko, who played the prince when it was premiered in 1993, played the same part again in the Toho version and it was amazing to see her timeless performance.

Currently, over half of the musicals that are presented in Japan are original musicals including existing works like *Le Petit Prince*. They might not have reached the level of translated foreign musicals in terms of the size of audience and performances. However, if you count Takarazuka Revue Company's works, which are mostly original musicals, the original Japanese musicals probably exceed foreign musicals both in the size of audience and performances.

Out of the works by Takarazuka Revue Company, *Never Say Good Bye -The Footsteps of Lovers* and *The Great Gatsby*, which were updated and revived after a long interval, were the productions that shone out. Another production that left a strong impression was *The Pleiades in the Blue (Sokyu no Subaru)*. It is a musical adaptation of Asada Jiro's novel and had eighty-seven cast members in total, which is only possible with a big theatre company like Takarazuka.

As there were so many original musicals and many of them ran for only a short period of time, it is quite difficult to cover them all. I have, nevertheless, basically covered the main works and those that received attention, and will now mention a few works that had a strong impact. First of all, *Women of the Night (Yoru no onna tachi)* was Nagatsuka Keishi's first musical. Nagatsuka wrote the play-script and directed the musical, which is based on Mizoguchi Kenji's film with the same title (released in 1948), and it was performed with a unique cast.

Before the Flood (Kozui no mae) produced by The Musical Company It's Follies was a remarkable production. The musical, which is considered to be Izumi Taku's major work and is included in the company's repertoire, was newly directed by Uyama Hitoshi and presented for the first time in twenty-five years. It is based on John Van Druten's play *I am a Camera*, which was adapted from Christopher Isherwood's novel *Goodbye to Berlin* (just like *Cabaret*, which was also based on Druten and Isherwood's works) and it was adapted into a story about Japanese people living in Dalian in China just before the Second World War. I was struck with wonder because both the music and the drama withstood the test of time.

As with the movie with the same title, the musical *Slumdog Millionaire* is based on the novel *Q&A. Your Lie in April (Shigatsu wa kimi no uso)* is a musical adaptation of a comic book that was made into a movie. The musical *Tokyo Love Story* somewhat took me by surprise. Although the comic-book TV drama series with the same title was popular during the bubble economy period, I could not help asking: why now? It may be part of HoriPro Inc.'s strategy to expand its activities in Asia along with *Fist of the North Star (Hokuto no ken)*, which was premiered in 2021 and revived soon afterwards in 2022. This is merely speculation, though.

It was a bit shocking when I heard that the Imperial Theatre, which is regarded as the musical hall of fame, will be closed for a while from 2025 to be rebuilt. The passing away of the actor Takarada Akira, who played a pioneering role in the world of Japanese musicals, was also sad news. As I recall, El Gallo in *The Fantasticks* was one of the successful roles he played in musicals. Although there were all sorts of sad news and incidents during the year, the Japanese musical world had entered a new phase and it was one thing that gave me hope in 2022.

Hagio, Hitomi

Hagio Hitomi is a film and theatre critic. She became a critic after working as a newspaper journalist. Besides writing a column series on musicals in The Asahi Shimbun, she writes reviews on films and theatre for other newspapers. She is the author of *Take Me Out to the Musical! (Myujikaru ni tsuretette!)* (Seikyusha, 1992) and *Your First Musical Film Selected by a Professional: Hagio Hitomi's Top 50 (Puro ga eranda hajimete no myujikaru eiga: Hagio Hitomi besuto serekushon 50)*. She is also on the selection committee of awards such as the Yomiuri Theater Awards, the Kikuta Kazuo Theatre Awards and the Matsuo Performing Arts Award.

(Translation: Sumida Michiyo)

Contemporary Theatre

50 Years after Reversion—Reflecting on Okinawa, Japan, and the World

Yamaguchi Hiroko

In February 2022, Russia invaded Ukraine. Images of women and children fleeing and destroyed city areas thrust the reality of war before our eyes. In December, the Kishida administration signaled a large-scale reinforcement of Japan's defense capabilities in response to the increasingly tense security situation in the surrounding region. The restrictive security measures that have been in place since the postwar era are approaching a major turning point.

068 **New Plays Examined Okinawa's History and Reality**

In 2022, a year of turbulence in Japan and the world, Okinawa marked the fiftieth anniversary of its reversion to Japan.

At the end of World War II, one in four residents of Okinawa Prefecture lost their lives in a fierce land war. Following Japan's defeat, Okinawa was placed under the occupation of the United States government. The majority of American military facilities in Japan remained concentrated in the prefecture after the 1972 reversion, and to this day they continue to impose burdens and dangers on Okinawans. A number of plays exploring the history and contemporary reality of Okinawa were presented in 2022. The following is a look back at these productions in chronological order of performance.

hana—1970, *The Day Koza Burned* (*Koza ga moeta hi*), written by Hatasawa Seigo and produced by HoriPro, depicts one night in the life of a bar manager (Hana is the bar's name) and her family. In a riot that occurred in 1970 in Koza (now Okinawa City), Okinawans burned the vehicles of military personnel out of anger over inequitable handed down in cases of road accidents and crimes

perpetrated by American service members. Set against the backdrop of the riot, the play brings together various thematic elements including wartime and postwar hardship, anticipation of Okinawa's reversion, the insensitivity of mainland Japanese, and the fear experienced by American soldiers soon to be sent to war in Vietnam. Kuriyama Tamiya, who has long been holding workshops in Okinawa, directed the play with a deep sense of empathy and anger over irrational realities.

The theatre company Mum & Gypsy, led by the young playwright/director Fujita Takahiro, planned and produced the play *Light house* (which Fujita wrote and directed) in collaboration with Naha Cultural Arts Theater NAHart. Fujita started making frequent trips to Okinawa when he wrote and directed *cocoon*, a play about the "Himeyuri students" (based on the book by Kyo Machiko) which premiered in 2013. In structuring *Light house*, Fujita connected themes that had made an impression on him in Okinawa—wartime memories, construction of new bases, people's ways of life—through the motif of water. In summer, *cocoon* was also performed in locations throughout Japan.

Gekidan Chocolate Cake, a theatre company whose productions portray war on a foundation of historical fact, presented six plays in a single performance titled *To Surviving Descendants—Six Works on War (Ikinokotta shisontachi e, senso rokuhen)*. One of the plays, Furukawa Takeshi's new work, *Gama* (directed by Hisawa Yusuke), shed light on individual experiences of the Battle of Okinawa through the depiction of various people—female students, a teacher, soldiers—sheltering together in a cave (*gama*) amid fierce combat.

Kanagawa Performing Arts Theatre (KAAT) commissioned a dramatic play from Okinawa-based playwright Kaneshima Takuya, and together with director Tanaka Maiko and staff spent over a year creating its production of Kaneshima's *Waiting at Rycom (Rycom de mattoku)*. In the story, a magazine writer named Asano, who lives in Kanagawa Prefecture, happens by chance to go to Okinawa to research the trial that followed the 1964 killing of an American soldier (and injury of another soldier) by young Okinawans. In the course of his research, Asano discovers that one of the defendants in the trial was his wife's grandfather. Enmeshed in a world that mysteriously combines past and present, Asano is

confronted with the modern history of Okinawa—symbolized by the fact that the location of the former American military Ryukyu Command (RyCom) and related facilities is now the site of a large shopping mall that has retained the name Rycom. Theatregoers were deeply affected by the sense of anger and questioning (“So Okinawa is ‘Japan’s backyard,’ is it?”) that resonated from the play’s deft and at times humorous storytelling.

Katabui, 1972, written and directed by Naito Yuko, is a joint production of Theatre Office Natori (Tokyo) and ACO Okinawa. Set in the living room of a sugar cane farming family on Okinawa’s main island, the play takes a close look, based on the writer’s meticulous research, at the six-month period before Okinawa’s reversion. *Katabui* is the word for an Okinawa summer weather phenomenon in which one location is clear and sunny while heavy rain falls just a short distance away. Through the portrayal of postwar Okinawa from a domestic perspective, and the conversations of family members who respect one another’s views while disagreeing about the reversion and military bases, various questions quietly expand in scope and connect with the present.

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On the Freedom to Speak

In Russia, a new law imposes a maximum penalty of fifteen years for the dissemination of “false information,” and media outlets and SNS have been strictly regulated. In Hong Kong, which reverted to China twenty-five years ago, restrictions on discourse are becoming increasingly severe, and even include a ban on events memorializing the Tiananmen Square massacre of June 4, 1989. The “society where people can’t speak freely” is expanding.

P-Company presented the Hong Kong play *May 35th*, written by Candace Chong Mui Ngam (Japanese translation by Maggie Chan and Ishihara Nen) and directed by Matsumoto Yuko. The main characters are an elderly Beijing couple whose son died in the Tiananmen Square massacre. Wishing simply to commemorate their child in the square, they plan an action that will put their lives at risk. This illness-afflicted couple’s strength inspires awe, while the system that crushes their hopes inspires horror.

These are by no means “other people’s problems.” Theatre company

Komatsuza's production of *Tales of Poverty (Bimbo Monogatari)*, written by Inoue Hisashi and directed by Kuriyama Tamiya, is set in 1934 in the unoccupied home of economist Kawakami Hajime, who was then in detention under the Peace Preservation Law. The conversation of the women who gather there illuminates the heaviness of "discussion" and the hardships inherent in women's lives—a thread that runs through every generation. In this production, the work conveyed a stronger sense of lived reality than it did at the time of its premiere in 1998.

Nitasha presented its signature work, *The Men Who Made Us Sing (Utawasetai otokotachi)*, which premiered in 2005. Written and directed by Nagai Ai, the play was performed with a new cast. It's set at a metropolitan high school that, on the morning of its graduation ceremony, receives a directive from the city government to have everyone sing "Kimigayo" (Japan's national anthem). What ensues in this "hilarious tragedy" is a clash of positions and opinions among the school's principal, who wants the ceremony to proceed without a hitch; a social studies teacher who objects to the city's order; and the music instructor charged with piano accompaniment. It has been more than twenty years since this issue was intensely debated, but the reality depicted in the work is shockingly contemporary. The young teachers who sneer at and unhesitatingly try to thwart those expressing the minority view brought to mind the state of discourse today, with the addition of a new layer of ominousness.

In the Theatre Cocoon production *Hiroshima Django*, written and directed by Horai Ryuta, the day-to-day routine of a Hiroshima oyster processing plant is overlaid with a "Western." Within its colorful, abundantly fantastical entertainment, the play addresses the cruelty of peer pressure, the types of conditions that can easily give rise to autocracy, and the courage of people who fight against these situations.

Artistic Directors' "Second Chapter"

–The New National Theatre, Tokyo's Thoroughgoing Programs

It has been twenty-five years since the opening of the New National Theatre, Tokyo. There has been an increase in the number of public theatres as well as an

expansion of the artistic director system. What could be called this system's second chapter has begun. In April 2022, director/actor Shirai Akira became the artistic director of Setagaya Public Theatre in Tokyo. Shirai invited choreographer/dancer Kondo Ryohei (who in the same period assumed the artistic directorship of Saitama Arts Theater), Nagatsuka Keishi of Kanagawa Arts Theatre (KAAT), Ogawa Eriko of the New National Theatre, Tokyo and others to take part in multiple discussions (held in front of audiences) that revisited the role of artistic directors. A series of symposia is also taking place at Matsumoto Performing Arts Center in Matsumoto, Nagano Prefecture, in advance of the retirement in spring 2023 of Kushida Kazuyoshi, who as artistic director has been at the helm of the theatre for the past twenty years. The movement towards thinking more deeply about the relationship between society and theatrical productions/theatres is gaining momentum.

The New National Theatre, Tokyo, where Ogawa Eriko serves as artistic director, undertook thoroughgoing personnel training and other programs, actively engaging young creators. Fourteen young people took part in the two-year playwriting workshop held by the theatre in cooperation with Britain's Royal Court Theatre. A play that emerged from this workshop, Sugai Ei's *My Month* (*Watashi no ikkagetsu*), was performed in a production directed by Inaba Kae. Osawa Yu, who directed Yokoyama Takuya's play *Beaching at Dawn* (*Yoake no yorikujira*), was one of the participants in the theatre's KOTSU-KOTSU Project, which researches theatrical works without presupposing that they will be performed. Other accomplished performances include Friedrich Dürrenmatt's *The Visit/Der Besuch der alten Dame* (translated by Koyama Yuna; directed by Gonohe Marie), which blends flights of fancy, twisted comedy and the horrors of peer pressure; and Tom Stoppard's *Leopoldstadt* (translated by Hirota Atsuro and directed by Ogawa Eriko), depicting the destinies of four generations of a Jewish family from the end of the 19th century to the period after World War II.

Women Made a Strong Impression

It was a year in which female creators and women-focused themes made a strong impression.

The work of directors was especially remarkable. Not only in *My Month* (*Watashi no ikkagetsu*) at the New National Theatre, Tokyo, but also in Office Cottone's production of Friedrich Dürrenmatt's *Der Mitmacher* (translated by Masumoto Hiroko) and Parco Stage's production of Abe Kobo's *The Ghost Is Here* (*Yurei wa koko ni iru*), director Inaba Kae vividly demonstrated the significance of presenting "this specific play at this specific time." Gonohe Marie showed outstanding skill in a production of *Venus in Fur* (scenario by David Ives, and translation by Jo Kayoko), as did Ikuta Miyuki in the Fernando Arrabal play *The Architect and the Emperor of Assyria* (translated by Tanokuchi Seigo). All three directors are affiliated with the theatre company Bungakuza. Their colleague, the veteran director Matsumoto Yuko, impressively interpreted the Bungakuza production of Akimoto Matsuyo's dramatic play *Manila mizuhoki*, which considers Japan's expansion in Asia beginning in the Meiji Era and women who engaged in prostitution in foreign countries.

Tokyo Engeki Ensemble's production of Ishihara Nen's *Fragments of Women* (*Kanojotachi no danpen*), directed by Komori Akiko, approached issues of women and society through the subject of abortion medication. The theatre company Good Distance's production of Oiwa Mari's play *Sitting with the Moon* (*Tsuki to suwaru*), directed by Nishiyama Mizuki, dealt sensitively with the issue of isolation in large cities while considering a murder case in which a homeless woman was killed.

Translated foreign plays included SIS Company's productions of two vivid works by female writers—American playwright Paula Vogel's *The Mineola Twins*, directed by Fujita Shuntaro, and British writer Lucy Kirkwood's *The Welkin*, directed by Kato Takuya (both translated by Jo Kayoko).

Among the plays by young male writers, Kato Takuya demonstrated his exceptional writing and directing skills in *Already Silent* (*Mohaya shizuka*), a detailed depiction of shifts and gaps in a couple's communication about the decision to go through pregnancy and childbirth; and *The dodo Falls* (*Dodo ga rakka*

suru), a level-headed examination of friendship. Another work that drew considerable attention was Haiyuza's production of Yokoyama Takuya's *A Cat Becomes a Lion* (*Neko, shishi ni naru*). Directed by Manabe Takashi, the play shines a light on the problem of middle-aged and elderly shut-ins. Impressive productions of works by veteran writers/directors included Iwamatsu Ryo's *The Blue Sky Is a Proof of Regret* (*Aozora wa kokai no akashi*) and *Crank In!*, penetrating examinations of people's mysterious inner worlds; Keralino Sandorovich's tenderhearted masterpiece *Shibiregumo*; and Matsuo Suzuki's *The World of Tsudaman* (*Tsudaman no sekai*), in which individual desires overlap with war.

Faith in the Power of Theatre

While nearly all of the large-scale productions performed at commercial theatres were musicals, two non-musical plays became major hits.

Toho's production of *Spirited Away* (*Sen to Chihiro no kamikakushi*) was a stage adaptation by John Caird (with co-adaptor Imai Maoko) of Miyazaki Hayao's animated film masterpiece. Caird also directed. In the story, a ten-year-old girl named Chihiro becomes lost in a mysterious world and is employed in a bathhouse frequented by gods and spirits. In the flying scenes the actors held Chihiro aloft, while fantastical characters and spirits were portrayed through a combination of actors' bodies, puppets, and masks. The resulting production was elaborately inventive, skillful, and dynamic, while at the same time successfully communicating a handmade warmth.

A succession of magical worlds unfolds in the stunning HoriPro/TBS production of *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child*, adapted by Jack Thorne from J.K. Rowling's original story and directed by John Tiffany (translation by Odashima Koshi and Odashima Noriko). This production, too, creates breathtaking visual effects through ingenious concepts based on the combination of actors' bodies and technology. The script, which revolves around the parent-child relationship, is outstanding as well. This is the first non-musical play ever to aim for an indefinite run in Japan.

While various policies including audience limits have been relaxed, the COVID-19 situation continues to harm the theatre industry, with performance

cancellations being announced on a daily basis.

Amid these troubles, Mitani Koki—who recently received acclaim for his script of the NHK historical drama *The 13 Lords of the Shogun* (*Kamakura-dono no jusan-nin*)—returned to the theatre as writer/director of *The Show Must Go On* (a revised version of the SIS Company production that premiered in 1991). This comedy vividly portrays a theatre director and ensemble who overcome a series of calamities and succeed in putting on a play. In fact, an extraordinary situation arose in the actual production when four actors in succession were forced to take leaves of absence for reasons including injury and COVID-19, and Mitani stepped in and performed each of their roles. It's said that life imitates art, and Mitani's perseverance truly embodied the spirit of the play's title. If there's a possibility, you have to keep going. This real-life scenario was imbued with faith in the power of theatre and faith in the audience.

Yamaguchi, Hiroko

Reporter for the Asahi Shimbun. Born in 1960, Yamaguchi joined the Asahi Shimbun newspaper in 1983. In the course of her career, she has worked in its Tokyo, West Japan (Fukuoka), and Osaka offices as a reviewer and reporter in the field of cultural news, with a particular focus on theatre. She has also served on the newspaper's editorial board and as a culture and media editorialist. Yamaguchi is a part-time instructor at Musashino Art University and Nihon University. She is co-author of *The Work of Ninagawa Yukio* (*Ninagawa Yukio no Shigoto*) (Shinchosha, 2015).

(Translation: Valerie Frasier)

Children's and Youth Theatre

The Revival of Summer Festivals in the Wake of the Pandemic

Ota Akira

The green shoots of recovery seemed to be appearing little by little in the world of children's and youth theatre in 2022. For two long years, not only theatre performances but also entrance and graduation ceremonies and many other school events had to be postponed because of COVID-19. I am sad to think that children's recollections of their school life during the pandemic will be dominated by memories of days spent wearing masks and using hand sanitizer. Amid this situation, teachers changed tack in their response, and it did seem to become easier to hold theatre performances in schools. However, COVID-19 continues to spread nonetheless. Whereas early 2020 saw audience members testing positive and performances being shelved to prevent the spread of infection, today we see a growing number of performances being canceled or postponed due to performers and artists falling ill. While the barriers to staging performances might be lower, one has to say that difficulties continue.

Some creative groups are starting to speak up about having to stage inefficient performances, as the government's vague criteria about the COVID-19 countermeasures required of schools and children, and the decision to leave matters up to local governments mean performers are forced to accommodate venues and even response measures that differ from one performance to another. In particular, where avoiding closed spaces, crowded places, and close-contact settings has been a condition of performing I have heard that giving two performances a day has become the norm, with groups compelled to perform three times or even more in some cases. But despite the increased number of performances for a single visit, the performers, unfortunately, do not receive any

additional compensation in their fees, so creative groups continue to be placed at a disadvantage. In this sense, therefore, the increased number of performances cannot necessarily be said to show that we are currently seeing a recovery.

The Revival of Summer Festivals

One major topic in the world of children's and youth theatre at present is the revival of summer festivals. Performing arts festivals for children are held at a number of locations across the country every summer. The pandemic affected them in varying ways, with some being stopped completely while others continued online or in a scaled-down form. We are now starting to see the return of festivals with in-person audiences. Accordingly, I would like to showcase the children's and youth theatre festivals held in Japan this year.

The Japan Union of Theatrical Companies for Children and Young People held the 50th Summer Holiday Children's and Youth Theatre Festival (Natsuyasumi jido seishonen engeki fuesuteibaru) (July 23–August 1; Kokumin Kyosai coop Hall / Space Zero). This festival took place for many years at Tokyo Metropolitan Children's Hall in Shibuya, but following the hall's closure in 2012, the event moved to its current venue at Space Zero. Organized by creative groups, the festival sees participating organizations working together on arrangements, including shared leaflets and other advertising activities. It is an event that children in the metropolis look forward to every year, with many school groups enjoying the performances.

Also known as the International Theater Festival Okinawa for Young Audiences, *ricca ricca*festa* (July 23–31; Cultural Arts Theater and other venues) began life as the Kijimuna Festa, held primarily in Okinawa City, but has changed its name and venue as it has grown into an international festival. The 2021 event took place in January of that year, when the overseas performances were staged remotely only, but this summer saw eight productions brought to Japan from other countries. Many of the productions invited to participate were those originally due to take part in the 20th ASSITEJ World Congress but which were unable to be staged in Japan, and there was a palpable sense of joy at being able to watch them live in person.

The 2022 Great Exhibition of Performing Arts with Children in Kofu (Kodomo to butaigeijutsu daihakurankai 2022 in Kofu) (July 29–August 1; Kofu Civic Hall) saw Kofu City welcome a festival that was, until the year before last, held annually at Tokyo's National Olympics Memorial Youth Center. This marked the second time the festival had been held outside Tokyo, following its hosting in Sendai last year, when the Tokyo Olympics meant the center was unable to be used and the festival organizers took the decision to make it an event hosted in a different part of Japan each year. With Kofu City serving as the co-organizer and neighboring local governments also providing support and cooperation, the festival received ample publicity and the sight of so many children at the venue left a lasting impression. In addition to watching performances, hands-on experience was also a key theme, and the workshops and other spaces where people could try new things attracted a lively crowd. Next year's festival will be held in Niigata.

078 In Fukushima, Kitakata 21st Century Theatre 2022 (August 5–7; Kitakata Plaza and other venues) made a long-awaited return to being held at multiple venues this summer, after being significantly scaled down last year. It was the first large-scale edition of the festival since the core executive committee members had made way for a younger cohort the year before last, when the event marked its 20th anniversary. What was especially striking was the excellent balance achieved in the event's running, with creative groups, local government, and local citizens coming together to deliver what can only be described as the very ideal of a festival in a provincial city. I will never forget the committee's original chairperson saying when founding this festival, "I was a full-time farmer and couldn't go to other places to attend festivals. That's when I realized that we should set one up in our own backyard." One hopes that the next generation will maintain this spirit of determination and go from strength to strength.

Following its cancellation last year, Nagano's Kids Circuit in Saku 2022 (August 5–7; Cosmo Hall and other venues) this year saw a number of performances sell out almost as soon as tickets went on sale. While this festival does not have a very long history, it was clear that the citizens of Saku had been looking forward to the event.

The final mention goes to Osaka's Children's Theatre Festival in Kishiwada (August 18–21; Kishiwada Namikiri Hall), which was held for the 29th and, I am told, final time this year. This is a compact festival where one can see all the productions in a single day at Namikiri Hall. Typically, for a city with Osaka's merchant heritage, audience members get 500 yen back if they stay to watch three performances. Another distinctive feature of the event is that all performances are followed by a talk session. Rather than the audience discussing their thoughts on what they have just watched, the main purpose of these sessions is for performers and artists who have been watching them to talk about the performance in order to inform future creative endeavors. I am sure a number of theatre companies have been able to fine tune their productions as a result of these sessions. Sadly, this year sees the curtain fall on the theatre festival in Kishiwada, but I gather a Kansai-based festival will continue with a shift of location to Kobe's Nada ward next year.

One festival that, unfortunately, was canceled again this year was the Iida Puppet Festa 2022 (August 4–7). Making the call on whether to cancel performances is very tricky, and a lot depends on the mood of the local government and the public in a particular area because festivals are large in scale and involve a lot of coming and going by people. But I also got the impression there was a growing sense that it is precisely at times like this that we need festivals. It would be fair to say that efforts by those on the front line to stage performances after establishing proper guidelines, taking great care and not pushing things too far made the summer of 2022 a very hot and exciting one in the world of children's and youth theatre.

Public Support Facilitating Encounters with the Performing Arts

Let us now return to the topic of theatre performances in schools. As outlined above, one would have to say that theatre performances organized by schools have still not returned to their pre-pandemic state. However, in light of this situation, the Agency for Cultural Affairs implemented the Restoring Opportunities for Children to Appreciate and Experience Culture program. Funded from the FY2021 supplementary budget, this program focused on holding performances

and workshops for children unable to engage with the performing arts due to the large number of events canceled as a result of the pandemic. It evolved out of another program implemented in the last fiscal year entitled Supporting Opportunities for Children to Appreciate and Experience Culture and features two approaches: the program selection approach, under which schools can choose from a list of productions suggested by the Agency for Cultural Affairs; and the school-initiated approach, under which schools can choose for themselves which productions they arrange. The school-initiated approach, in particular, offers a substantial level of freedom, providing public funding from the Agency for Cultural Affairs for productions chosen by schools, without the conventional constraints of having to choose from a predetermined list. The high level of interest in this program was demonstrated by the number of applications, which exceeded expectations.

Tokyo Metropolitan Government also implemented a similar program. The Make Children Smile Project offered children the opportunity to watch performances and talks and to engage in hands-on activities at their schools. Via a number of umbrella organizations, creative groups proposed productions and programs, with schools choosing which ones they wished to implement. What was groundbreaking was the fact that the Japan Union of Theatrical Companies for Children and Young People took on the work of performing arts administration. Many of the schools applying had never hosted performances before, so I cannot help but hope that this project's achievements will bear more fruit in years to come.

Such public support reduced the financial burden on schools and increased the number of performances given by creative groups, thereby more or less enabling the latter to make up for the performances they had lost. In addition to these economic effects, the performances brought creative groups into contact with the views of both children and their teachers. At many of the schools where my own theatre company performed, the teachers in charge of organizing the performances often said that they had been looking forward to the show or that they had enjoyed the performance even more than their students, which made me keenly aware of the need for theatre performances in schools. It occurred to

me that, along with the appeal of the stage itself, the timeless sight of children watching the stage encourages the adults who chose the performance. At this point, there are many concerns about performances in schools in the coming fiscal year, with bookings few in number or coming with conditions attached. However, those on the front line are looking forward to seeing how the new programs implemented during the pandemic develop.

Outstanding Remakes and Nonverbal Productions

Finally, I would like to introduce a number of productions that I saw this year.

Theatrical Group EN's *Beauty and the Beast* (*Kireichan to kedamono*) (written by Nicholas S. Gray, translated by Kikuchi Shoichi, adapted by Tanikawa Shuntaro, and directed by Komori Mimi) is a remake of an earlier production of this classic fairy tale previously performed under the more formal Japanese title *Bijo to yaju*. Box seats for children were available for the first time in quite a while, and the whole performance was suffused with the joy of performers and crew alike delighted to be back in action. The young man who served as the narrator was an outstanding character who played a major supporting role by engaging with the children in the audience and who helped to supplement words and scenes that children might have missed in this dialogue-heavy play. Even small children could enjoy this production right through to the end as a result.

La Strada Company's *La feuille les feuilles* (directed by LONTO) featured a guest appearance from musician Xymox in addition to two members of the company. This nonverbal tale is warm, comforting, and enjoyable to the end. It is a production in which audience members of all ages will warm to the three performers; everything about this play conveys a stylish impression, from the music and the set design featuring autumn leaves that seem to dance as they fall to the costumes and the gestures of the performers.

ART in Asibina's *Grandpa Gonzo Goes to Town* (*Gonzo-jiisan machi wo iku*) & *Paper Party* (directed by Kano Yudai) is a double bill of nonverbal productions. Drawing upon this theatre company's expertise in games using paper, *Paper Party* creates a tale that audiences can enjoy with peace of mind. But at the end of the day, the other production outclassed it for entertainment value. The artistry

in this performance lies in using nonverbal techniques to create an understanding with the audience about what is happening on stage while slightly shifting it as the play progresses. The children's anticipation grows with each successive scene as their expectations are met or defied. Reminiscent of a high-quality skit, it is a production that the whole family could enjoy.

While one can predict that the situation in 2023 will remain tough, I believe artists are keen to appear in front of children and lift their spirits with good humor, through good times and bad. There are many other things I could write about but space does not allow. As such, I would like to conclude this round-up with my hope that as many productions and as many artists as possible will have the opportunity for encounters with children in the coming year.

Ota, Akira

Since joining Tokyo Engeki Ensemble in 1996, he has produced most of the company's productions. He has given many lectures and workshops as the director in charge of developing human resources at Japan Union of Theatrical Companies for Children and Young People. In 2004, he studied at the youth theatre department (Unga Riks) of Sweden's National Touring Theatre (Riksteatern) for a short period under the Agency for Cultural Affairs Program of Overseas Study for Upcoming Artists. Among his other positions, he is currently Representative of the Japan Baby Theatre Network and vice chairman of the Japan-Korea Theater Communications Center.

(Translation: Eleanor Goldsmith)

Glimpses of the Wave of New Japanese Classical Dancers

Hirano Hidetoshi

1. Hanayagi Shotaro III, Onoe Kikunojo III, and Shida Maki

It's no exaggeration to say that the five members of the Goyokai (including the three who are directors at Buyo Kyokai), Nishikawa Minosuke, Hanayagi Motoi, Yamamura Tomogoro, Hanayagi Juraku and Fujima Ranko, are at the top of the Japanese classical dance world. But last year, the activities of three other dancers who are approaching the pinnacle of these five were particularly striking.

The first dancer that I would like to feature is Hanayagi Shotaro III. In *Shotaro no Kai* (April 2, Cerulean Tower Noh Theatre), she performed the Ichu piece *Matsukaze* (*The Pining Wind*), based on the classical Noh play, and the Nagauta piece *Aya no Tsuzumi* (*The Damask Drum*), also based on a Noh play. In a recital by dancers at her school, *the 61st Ginreikai* (October 2, National Theatre, Small Theatre), she played the poet-priest Saigyō in the Nagauta piece *Shigure Saigyō* (*Saigyō in the Autumn Rain*) (the courtesan Eguchi was played by Hanayagi Rikasen) and Hanjo no Mae in the Kiyomoto piece *Sumidagawa* (*The Sumida River*), (The boatman was played by Hanayagi Suketaro.) In these dances, she fully displayed the unique qualities of a female Japanese classical dancer. In the male role such in *Aya no Tsuzumi* she exuded strength of character, and as Saigyō in *Shigure Saigyō*, she fully became the role.

Next, I would like to discuss Onoe Kikunojo III. Like Fujima Kanjuro VIII, he is one of the most active choreographers that is creating new dances for kabuki theatre. Although it has been 11 years since he took the name of Kikunojo, this year for the first time he had his own recital, *Onoe Kikunojo no Kai* (September 3, National Theatre, Large Theatre). He performed two dances with the

choreography of Onoe Kikunojo I (1910–1964), the Itchu Bushi piece *Shojo* (*The Sake Loving Water Sprites*) (original choreographic plan by Onoe Kikunojo I and choreographed by Onoe Bokusetsu), playing the Shojo spirits together with kabuki actor Onoe Matsuya and Onoe Bokusetsu as the sake seller Kofu, and the Gidayu piece *Cho no Michiyuki* (*The Lovers Reborn in Hell as Butterflies*), playing the role of Sukekuni while the role of his lover Komaki was played by kabuki onnagata Onoe Kikunosuke. In addition to these two classical dances, there was also a new piece, Sosaku Nagauta *Yamata no Orochi*, based on the ancient myth of the god vanquishing the eight-headed serpent. Kikunojo played the eight-headed serpent Yamata no Orochi to the narration of Onoe Matsuya. This performance showed that Kikunojo is a dancer on a scale far above the other young dancers of his generation, and I look forward to seeing how he will contribute to the Japanese classical dance world in the future.

The third dancer I would like to feature is Shida Maki, the second head of the Choyo School of Ryukyu Buyo. For *Maki no Kai* (September 16, Cerulean Tower Noh Theatre), she performed classical dance for the female characters (*onna odori*) *Nuhwa Bushi*, Sosaku *Kunnohra* and Sosaku *Kurokami* (*Black Hair*), choreographing a new dance in the style of Ryukyu Buyo to a piece of Japanese classical music. She has a well-deserved reputation for performing classical dances for female characters, but with *Kurokami*, she created a new dance in the form of a classical dance for a female character and used that colorful figure to squeeze out a deep and wide range of feelings of women that I felt represented a breath of fresh air for Japanese classical dance. The dance had a feeling of combining Japan and Okinawa, and I believe that it was like a cord connecting Japanese classical dance and Ryukyu Buyo.

I would like to list some of the dancers and the pieces that they performed that were special achievements last year. Among classical dances, Izumi Shoyo performed the Kiyomoto piece *Bunya* (The 6th Shoei Kai, March 12, National Theatre, Small Theatre) with highly polished dance artistry. Nishikawa Yuko created a piece carrying on the achievements of Hanayagi Shigeka with *Tagitsu* (*Turbulent Water*) (Yuko no Kai, Hanayagi Shigeka director and choreographer, November 22, National Theatre, Small Theatre). The appearance of Hanayagi

Motoi in the piece as well brought new life into it, which was extremely moving. Among new pieces, Gojo Tamami's Sosaku's *Orphée* (81st Tamami Kai / Gojo Tamami Recital, written, directed and choreographed by Gojo Tamami III, October 13, National Theatre, Small Theatre) was particularly excellent. There was a perfectly balanced collision of the understanding of the roles and expressive powers of the three main performers playing Orphée (Tamami), Euridice (Fujikage Shizue) and Persephone (kabuki *onnagata* Nakamura Kyotae) that brilliantly created a space where the worlds of the living and the dead could struggle against each other. Fujima Kiyotsugu has long been focused on creating the art of *onnagata* for Japanese classical dance, and his activities through the year were particularly impressive. In his own dance Senju Kai (April 17, National Theatre, Large Theatre), he performed a work which he not only wrote but also produced, choreographed and directed, *Yamato-Hime Gojunko – Yamato-Hime to Sada Yakko* (*The Journey of Princess Yamato – Princess Yamato and Sada Yacco*), which juxtaposed the journeys of the mythical Princess Yamato from the ancient chronicles with the world travels of Sada Yacco (1871–1946), known as the first actress in modern Japan. At the *Buyo Onnagata no Kai* (July 24, National Theatre, Small Theatre), which he organized and produced, he danced the Nagauta piece *Kishu Dojoji*. And in another of his own recitals, *Hanatsugu Kai in Tokyo* (November 1, National Theatre, Large Theatre), he performed an original dance for which he wrote the lyrics and created the choreography for a dance version of Mizukami Tsutomu's novel (and famously directed by Shinoda Masahiro in the 1977 film) *Hanare Goze Orin*, which is about a blind female traveling musician. The way he equally emphasizes the creation of new works and a search for techniques of *onnagata* that are unique to Japanese classical dance is quite wonderful.

2. Performances to Say Farewell to the First National Theatre

The National Theatre was built in 1966, and since it will close in a year for rebuilding, this year's performances are dedicated to saying farewell to the first National Theatre building. As part of this, on September 23, the National Theatre presented its 170th performance of Japanese classical dance in the Large Theatre with the *Buyo Meisaku Shu I* (*Masterpieces of Traditional Japanese Dance I*). The

program began with the Kiyomoto piece *Shiki Sambaso* (*Okina with the Flowers of the Four Seasons*), with Onoe Bokusetsu as the Okina, Onoe Yukari as the Senzai and Onoe Kikunojo as the Sanbaso. Second was the Gidayu piece *Oshichi*, with Inoue Yasuko as the girl prepared to burn down the city of Edo for the sake of love. Third was the Tokiwazu piece *Awa Mochi* (*The Millet Dumpling Peddlers*), with Nishikawa Senyoichi as Kinehachi, Bando Tomona as Ousu, Mizuki Sensho as a *torioi* female street musician, Fujima Toka as a woman from an archery stall, Hananomoto Kotobuki as a peddler of *fukujuso* spring blossoms and Nishikawa Shinsho as a peddler of *yomena* greens. The program concluded with the Nagauta piece *Kurozuka* (*The Black Mound: The Demoness of the Adachi Plain*), with Hanayagi Juraku as Yukei Ajari, Hanayagi Genkuro as the mountain priest Yamatobo, Hanayagi Suzuhiko as the mountain priest Sanukibo, Hanayagi Jutaichiro as the luggage porter Tarogo and Hanayagi Motoi as the old woman Iwate who is actually the demoness of the Adachi plain.

086 The performance assembled the top veteran dancers, and they were all appropriately cast, for a stable, dependable program. However, although the performance was billed as *Masterpieces of Traditional Japanese Dance*, only the first piece, *Shiki Sanbaso*, could be said to be pure Japanese classical dance. The other two dances originated in the kabuki theatre and required acting skills as well as pure dancing ability. Hanayagi Motoi in *Kurozuka* has acting skills to rival kabuki actors, but the same is not necessarily true for the other dancers in the program. I think that one of the key challenges for the National Theatre will be to plan programs that will make clear the essential differences between kabuki dance and Japanese classical dance.

Another performance in the farewell series was the National Theatre's 171st classical dance performance with *Mai no Kai - Keihan no Zashiki Mai* (*Traditional Kyoto-Osaka Dance*) (November 26, Small Theatre). The first part of the program beginning at 12 p.m. presented the Jiuta pieces *Neya no Ogi* (*Fan of the Bedchamber*) by Yoshimura Yukari, *Hayafune* (*The Swift Boat*) by Yamamura Waka, *Miyako Junitsuki* (*Twelve Months in Kyoto*) by Umemoto Sensho, *Yashima* based on the Noh play about the ghosts of the battles between the Genji and Heike clans by Inoue Mameka, the Kamigata Uta piece *Fumitsuki* (*The Seventh*

Month) by Umemoto Umesakuya and the Jiuta piece *Kigisu (The Pheasant)* by Yoshimura Kisho and Yoshimura Teruyuki. The second part of the program beginning at 3.30 p.m. presented the Jiuta pieces *Cha Ondo (The Tea Dance)* by Yoshimura Nao, *Kantan*, based on a Noh play about a man who experiences all the glories of the world in a brief dream and awakens to the emptiness of worldly success by Inoue Yasuko, *Naniwa Junitsuki (Twelve Months in Osaka)* by Yamamura Tomogoro, the Kamigata Uta piece *Kiri no Ame (Misty Rain)* by Umemoto Umekinhana and the Jiuta pieces *Masazuki (The New Year)* by Yamamura Hikari and *Tamatori Ama (The Diving Girl Retrieves the Jewel)* by Inoue Yachiyo based on a Noh play about a girl who brings back a precious jewel from the undersea palace of the dragon god for the sake of her son but at the cost of her life. There were representatives of all the major schools of Mai presenting a wide range of things to enjoy, with Yoshimura Nao from the Yoshimura school displaying a fresh charm. The Umemoto school was represented by its head Umemoto Sensho (the dance name of Kabuki actor Kataoka Ainosuke), Umemoto Umesakuya and Umemoto Umekinhana, showing that its tradition is being properly transmitted to the next generation. Yamamura Tomogoro from the Yamamura school skillfully conveyed the light and easygoing feeling of the city of Osaka, and Yamamura Hikari evoked the felicitous atmosphere of New Year through a loving couple. Inoue Mameka from the Inoue school served as a fine example of the art of a Gion *geiko*, and Inoue Yachiyo's dance could be said to be sheer perfection and was very profound.

In addition to these two programs, to commemorate the 55th anniversary of its opening, the National Theatre produced *Suodori no Sekai (Traditional Japanese Dance without Adornment)* (March 5, Small Theatre). Although much of the repertoire of Japanese classical dance comes from kabuki theatre, the most distinctive type of dance might be *suodori*, where the dancer performs without a stage set or costume and expresses everything in a formal kimono with minimal props except, most importantly, a dance fan. This means that the performer must express everything through pure dance movement. In this presentation, the use of mime in kabuki dance was explained, and then they showed how it is transformed in *suodori*. For a presentation titled *Suodori no Sekai*, this emphasis on

kabuki dance could hardly be said to have focused on the essence of *suodori*. It is sad that this was such a missed opportunity. Also, it presented *Hanagata – Meisaku Buyo Kansho Kai (Star and Masterpiece Traditional Japanese Dance Performance)* (July 23, Small Theatre), and all the dances were originally from kabuki. It's almost as though the producers at the National Theatre believe that Japanese classical dance consists only of kabuki dance, which if true would be extremely unfortunate. They must emphasize the unique qualities of Japanese classical dance much more.

3. Performances Sponsored by the Buyo Kyokai

Like the previous year, the major dance recital of Buyo Kyokai (Japanese Classical Dance Association), scheduled for February 19–20 in the Large Theatre of the National Theatre, was canceled due to the pandemic. But Buyo Kyokai did produce three performances. It sponsored *Nihon Buyo – Sono Tasai na Hyogen (The Diverse Expressions of Nihon Buyo)* (October 21, Kanze Noh Theatre) and *Todoke Asu e – Keisho no Wadachi – Nihon Buyo Koen (Classical Japanese Dance Recital – Bring the Path of the Transmission of Tradition for the Sake of Tomorrow)* (October 12, National Theatre, Small Theatre). Then, to feature a new work, as the fifth presentation of Mirai-za – “Sai,” it presented *Ginga Tetsudo 999 Hitori no Shonen no Saichi no Monogatari (Galaxy Express 999 – The Story of a Boy’s Wisdom)* (June 3–5, National Theatre, Small Theatre).

In the performance at the Kanze Noh Theatre, the geisha of the Shinbashi district appeared and gave a simple introduction to the songs and dances of the geisha districts and dance movements. Then there were two pieces by Japanese classical dancers, *Yoichi no Dan – Sosaku Kyogen Gakari (Yoichi’s Verse: Creative Kyogen Opening)*. The choreography was by Onoe Bokusetsu, the music was composed by Handa Junko and the flute and percussion was arranged by Tosha Rosen. The dancers were Hanayagi Genkuro, Nishikawa Senshigero and Hanayagi Shue. The program also featured Onoe Yukari in *Fuji Musume (The Wisteria Maiden)*. In the performance at the National Theatre, Small Theatre, the main piece was *Odetta Ultimate Love – from Swan Lake*, choreographed by Hanayagi Tokijukyo. There were also two rare Nagauta pieces choreographed by

Hanayagi Suketaro, *Kanjaku Keisei* (The Courtesan), a portrait of a courtesan based on the version originally performed by kabuki actor Nakamura Kanjaku and *Futatsu Domoe* (*The Double-Swirled Crest*). The pieces were performed by groups of female dancers. I was very happy that both performances inspired hope for the future.

The new piece was a staging of Matsumoto Leiji's famous comic. I imagine that it was intended to show the contemporary relevance of Japanese classical dance. But I find that I must agree with what the designer of Japanese gardens Tatsui Takenosuke wrote in the monthly *Nihon Buyo* (v. 78, no. 8): "After watching it, it made me think that I had even less of an idea of the image that present day dancers have of Japanese classical dance than before. It even made me think that maybe the best thing would be to just take Japanese classical dance and dismantle the whole thing." I believe that the problem is probably that contemporary classical dancers are trying for expressions that are the total opposite of the techniques that they have been taught. I can't help but think that they have discarded the goal of totally expressing the lyrics of the music with their entire bodies.

4. Activities of Veteran Classical Japanese Dancers

At the *Onoe Kikune Momoju o Iwau Kai* (Recital to Celebrate Onoe Kikune's 100th Year) (July 21, Kioi Small Hall), Onoe Kikune and Onoe Bokusetsu danced the Tomei piece *Kono Kimi* ('My Lord,' - the Japanese title uses a poetic word for bamboo) in choreography by Bokusetsu. Even though there were no stage costumes or adornments of any kind, the two performers had a unique presence. They evoked the bamboo of the title vividly, suggesting their straight and upright lives and careers as dancers over long years.

There was a recital of *suodori* on April 18 at the Small Theatre of the National Theatre to commemorate the recognition of Nishikawa Senzo as a Person of Cultural Merit. Senzo danced *Matsu no Midori* (*The Green of the Pine*). His use of the dance fan was extremely precise and careful and seemed to express his long years of devotion to Japanese classical dance and his passion for dance itself. This is something unimaginable in the West.

5. As Always, Many Commemorative Recitals Were Produced by Dance Schools

There were many recitals put on by schools of dance including the following: *Shosei Fujima Murasaki Jusan Kaiki Tsuizen – Sandaime Fujima Murasaki Shumei Hiro Murasaki-ha Fujima-Ryu Buyo Kai* (Fujima School Murasaki Branch Dance Recital Commemorating the Thirteenth Anniversary of the Death of Fujima Murasaki I and the Name Taking of Fujima Murasaki III) (January 30, National Theatre, Large Theatre), *Nidaimo Saruwaka Kiyokata Sanju Kinen Dai 74 Kai Saruwaka Kai* (Recital Commemorating the 80th Year of Saruwaka Kiyokata II – The 74th Saruwaka Recital) (April 23, National Theatre, Large Theatre), *Hossoku 70 Shunen Kinen Dai 58 Kai Seiha Wakayagi-Ryu Teiki Koen* (58th Regular Recital of the Seiha Wakayagi School Commemorating the 70th Anniversary of its Founding) (August 20, National Theatre, Large Theatre), *Bando Kai Soritsu 100 Shunen Kinen Kai* (Recital Commemorating the 100th Anniversary of the Bando Kai) (September 17–18, National Theatre, Large Theatre), *Wakayagi Ryota Aratame Wakayagi Kichiryozo Nabirome Koen Wakayagi Kai* (Wakayagi School Recital Commemorating the Name Taking of Wakayagi Ryota to Wakayagi Kichiryozo) (November 20, National Theatre, Small Theatre) and *Shichisei Nakamura Shikan Junen-Sai Jakusei Kai* (The Jakusei Recital Commemorating the 10th Anniversary of the Passing of Nakamura Shikan VII) (November 27, National Theatre, Large Theatre). Among them, particularly noteworthy was Fujima Murasaki I's granddaughter Fujima Sawako taking the name Fujima Murasaki III as a Japanese classical dancer. She commemorated this by dancing the Nagauta piece *Kyoganoko Musume Dojoji* (The Girl at Dojoji Temple) and by playing Shizuka Gozen in the Kiyomoto piece *Michiyuki Hatsune no Tabi* (The First Birdsong of Spring) with her older brother Fujima Takahiko, who took the name of Fujima Kakeru on this occasion, as Tadanobu. This was the birth of a star, who is both an actress and a Japanese classical dancer, and we can expect great things from her in the future.

6. Fresh Shoots for the Future in Groups of Young Dancers

Fresh shoots could be seen in *Reimei no Kai* (New Dawn Group) (January 29,

Nihonbashi Koukaido), featuring dancers from the school of Fujima headed by Fujima Kanemon, Fujima Yukihiko, Fujima Hirotaro, Fujima Toyohiko and Fujima Naozo, and in *Dai Yonkai Soten Koen (4th Blue Sky Concert)* (August 24, Tsukishima Shakai Kyoiku Kaikan), featuring the same Fujima Naozo together with Hanayagi Kiina and collaborating with traditional musicians. The first performance focused on developing the techniques of *suodori*, while the second sought to find the appeal of Japanese classical dance through connections with a wide variety of traditional performing arts. The fact that Fujima Naozo is a member of both these groups promises great things in the future.

Also, there were performances by veteran artists like Hanayagi Sonokisuke's *Nihon Buyo Taku no Tsudoi* (March 6, National Theatre, Small Theatre), the *6th Hanayagi Tamaito / Izumi Yuki Recital Tamayu no Kai* (November 8, National Theatre, Small Theatre) and Nishikawa Zuisen's *Toki no Kai* (November 13, Cerulean Tower Noh Theatre). These performances had the high level of technique and creativity that is worthy of artists with their experience. You could say that these are the people keeping the Japanese classical dance world alive today.

7. Topics

In 2021, Nishikawa Senzo was recognized as a Person of Cultural Merit, but this year, there were no appropriate candidates for the Agency for Cultural Affairs Art Award or New Face Award from the world of Japanese classical dance. In part, this is due to the rise of ballet in Japan, but it can also be said that this is because Japanese classical dance, here including Ryukyu Buyo and regional traditional performances, has not gone far enough in finding the essence of the Japanese way of using the human body for artistic expression. In 2022, Futabakai of Yamamura school dance won the prize for excellence in the National Arts Festival. From next year, the Arts Festival Prize will no longer be awarded. This marks the end of the role of this prize.

Hirano, Hidetoshi

Nihon buyo (Japanese classical dance) critic. Born in 1944 in Sendai and graduated from the theatre 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*, and the monthly magazine, *Japanese Music and Classical Dance*. To explore the art of physical expression, he became a critic and is a member of advisory committees for institutions, including 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 Buyo-sha) was published.

(Translation: Mark Oshima)

Living with COVID-19 and Supporting Ukraine

Urawa Makoto

Pandemic Hits Small- and Medium-Sized Companies Hard

In 2022 we entered the third year of the pandemic, and we now understand more about the virus. As the vaccine take-up improved and people became more resistant to the virus, fewer and fewer people became gravely ill. Some of the strict COVID-19 restrictions were lifted during the second half of the year. Although COVID-19 cases hit a record high in the summer, people were beginning to embrace life with COVID-19.

The shortening of the quarantine period and the easing of close contacts rules had a huge positive impact on the ballet world and on society as a whole. On the other hand, the number of COVID-19 cases reached a total of twenty-nine million nationwide by the end of the year. It was common for ballet dancers to get COVID-19, but most performances were not cancelled.

The overall number of productions is now getting close to pre-COVID-19 times, especially in metropolitan areas. Producers revised their COVID-19 measures for the second half of the year. More and more companies stopped asking audience members for their names and addresses. But almost all of them continued to ask people to take their temperatures, sanitize their hands and wear masks. Audiences were also requested to leave venues in orderly groups after shows.

Despite the easing of restrictions, organizers still had to pay for the extra staff members and materials necessary for COVID-19 measures. This hit small- and medium-sized companies hard, financially. They had to put up with strict regulations for over two years, and some lost students along the way. They have not yet recovered from this huge blow. Established companies are more likely to

get public support from government bodies, such as the Agency for Cultural Affairs and the new COVID-19 scheme AFF (Arts for the future!) 2. However, small- and medium-sized companies are less likely to get this kind of support, and many of them are having problems organizing showcases for their students.

Japanese Ballet World Shows Support for Ukraine

Russia's invasion of Ukraine in late February was one of the most shocking events of last year. For most of the 20th century, Ukraine was part of the Soviet Union, and Kyiv Ballet was very popular in Japan. Moreover, many Russian and Ukrainian ballet dancers visited Japan to perform as guest dancers, and some even stayed to make Japan their home. Also, many Japanese dancers trained in ballet schools in Russia. Japan has always had a strong connection with ballet dancers in Donetsk as well as Kyiv. The Russian and Ukrainian dancers who are currently in Japan must be feeling uneasy, but they are continuing to perform as usual.

I wonder how Japanese ballet companies have reacted to this war.

Japanese ballet dancers made no distinction between Ukrainian and Russian dancers before the war broke out. But the mayhem caused by the invasion of Ukraine by Russia has had a huge impact and created confusion in the Japanese ballet world. Male Ukrainian ballet dancers are fighting in the war (and I have heard that some have died), and female dancers have been forced to flee the war zones. Many Japanese dancers showed their support for these Ukrainian dancers in various ways.

For example, Kusakari Tamiyo, the former principal dancer at Asami Maki Ballet Tokyo and who is now more active in theatre, hosted a charity concert. She had been a frequent guest performer for Ukrainian ballet companies in the past. As the artistic director, she gathered top-class Japanese ballet dancers from inside and outside Japan for her charity concert entitled "BALLET GALA in TOKYO." Some companies have supported and collaborated with Ukrainian dancers who have fled to Japan. Okamoto Rumiko asked a Ukrainian dancer and refugee to perform in her charity concert for Ukraine and invited her to talk about her still raw experiences of events in her country. In Osaka, ballet dancer

Hariyama Emi produced a charity concert entitled “One Heart 2022.” These charity concerts were held all over the country.

The Kyiv Ballet (National Opera of Ukraine) which was in limbo due to the war was able to perform in Japan thanks to Terada Nobuhiro’s great efforts. Terada is originally from Kyoto and danced with the company over many years. Dancers who managed to get out of Ukraine toured Japan from July to August with “Kyiv Ballet Gala 2022.” Terada, who was assistant artistic director of the company at that time, became artistic director in December, succeeding Elena Filipieva, who is well known in Japan. The company changed its name to The Ukrainian National Ballet and came back to Japan to do a full production of *Don Quixote* in December.

Stand-Out Trends of 2022

I would like to look at the Japanese ballet scene as a whole. As I mentioned previously, the ballet industry is slowly getting back on its feet, thanks to the great efforts of all the ballet companies and dancers. I have already pointed out a number of times in this column that Japanese ballet companies are based in and mainly perform in densely populated areas, such as Kansai, Chubu and especially Tokyo. This tendency has become even stronger since the pandemic. We can now see a widening resource gap between large and small companies, both inside and outside these regions.

Particular trends became apparent in 2022.

First, there were more performances in concert or gala form with fewer dancers that contained short pieces, such as solos and pas de deux. We used to have festivals featuring top dancers in the past, but now we have more variety. This is because it has become difficult for a foreign company to put on a full production due to the pandemic. That is why a few main dancers were chosen to come to Japan and dance short pieces. Second, more and more Japanese dancers have become prominent overseas, and they would gather during the off season and give performances in Japan in not only Tokyo but throughout the country.

This type of production must have a strong theme or a clear objective. The charity concert for Ukraine was one good example. “Special Gala; Scenes du

Ballet (Ballet no jokei)” attracted a lot of attention. This was a tribute to maestro Fukuda Kazuo, who turned 90 this year and has established his status as a ballet conductor in Japan. Various ballet companies that have worked with him contributed to the production. And “Ballet Espoir,” produced by the ballet dancer Kyoto Yuichiro, focused on a new generation of dancers living in Japan. The visual imagery accompanying the dance performance left a strong impression.

Some companies presented ballet pieces by deceased choreographers. This is very rare in Japan. This year we had Theatre de Ballet Company, based in Nagoya and led by Tsukamoto Yoko, present the Fukagawa Hideo version of *Don Quixote*, which had a distinct atmosphere of its own. Tani Momoko Ballet presented *Les Misérables*. It was choreographed and directed by Mochizuki Norihiko, the former artistic director of the company. Asami Maki Ballet Tokyo revived *ASUKA*, the last piece conceived by the late Maki Asami. K Ballet Studio, based in Osaka, presented Yagami Keiko’s renowned contemporary ballet piece two years in a row. But these companies were simply repeating repertoire that they had already been done in the past. It would be ideal to have a system that enables other companies to present classic pieces simply by following some necessary procedures.

More and more theatres around the nation are being rebuilt or refurbished due to aging or to make them earthquake resistant. This year, Mielparque Hall (formerly Tokyo Yubin Chokin Kaikan), the much-loved concert hall where many ballet productions and competitions were held, closed its doors. Most ballet companies do not have their own venues, and it has now become more difficult to find a space to perform.

Since the pandemic, ballet companies have been streaming their performances in various ways. We will have to wait a bit longer to see whether this trend continues.

A Busy Year for The Tokyo Ballet and a Fresh Start for Asami Maki Ballet Tokyo

Now I would like to mention some ballet companies that stood out this year.

It was Yoshida Miyako’s third year as artistic director of New National

Theatre, Tokyo. The theatre marked its 25th anniversary this year and premiered a new version of *Giselle* directed by Yoshida Miyako to kick off the 2022/2023 season. This piece was meticulously structured as well as being orthodox. The gorgeous set design suited the National Theatre well. The theatre is attracting good audiences and is trying to increase the number of performances for both classic and contemporary pieces. However, this might require some reorganization.

The Tokyo Ballet was one of the most active companies during COVID-19. Its principal dancer, Ueno Mizuka, has transformed the concept of a ballerina in Japan with her dynamic style. In 2022, she played the lead roles in the classics *Swan Lake*, *Don Quixote*, and *La Bayadère* and showed off her everlasting talent. This was her last performance in classical repertoire. The company premiered *Romeo and Juliet*, choreographed by John Cranko, and also presented *Béjart Gala*, marking forty years since the company first performed his piece *Bolero*.

K-Ballet Company led by Kumakawa Tetsuya revived *Carmen* and *Cleopatra* with a fresh cast, both pieces choreographed by Kumakawa. It also kicked off a new project *K-BALLET Opto* with a show “Petit Petit Petit” featuring three short contemporary pieces, including one choreographed by Mori Yuki.

As mentioned, Asami Maki Ballet Tokyo, which lost its founder last year, presented *ASUKA* as well as *Notre Dame de Paris* choreographed by Roland Petit, a new beginning for the company. Matsuyama Ballet Company featured Morishita Yoko, who is in her mid-70s, as the lead dancer, as usual. Her extraordinary charisma shined through as she played the lead role in all of its full-length productions.

Kawaguchi Yuriko, from Ballet Chambre Ouest, danced *Tatyana* for the last time; it was a very moving experience. Noriko Kobayashi Ballet Theatre commemorated its 50th anniversary. Companies such as the already mentioned Tani Momoko Ballet, The Inoue Ballet Foundation, Tokyo City Ballet, Star Dancers Ballet, and NBA Ballet Company were all very active and presented new works and new interpretations.

Yamato City Ballet led by Sasaki Mika is attracting a lot of attention these days. She produced an anthology series featuring various choreographers as well

as *The Glass Slipper*, choreographed by Homan Naoya, which is a contemporary interpretation of *Cinderella* and set in the contemporary apparel industry. It created a major buzz.

Japan Ballet Association, which serves the Japanese ballet scene, presented the Japanese premiere of *La Esmeralda* in March. It was choreographed by Yuri Burlaka, who mainly used Zoom to communicate with the dancers. The association uses Zoom for various purposes as a COVID-19 measure.

Sadamatsu-Hamada Ballet Stands Out in Kansai and Chubu

Ballet companies based in the Kansai and the Chubu regions are gradually getting back on their feet. The one that stood out the most this year was Sadamatsu-Hamada Ballet, based in Kobe, Hyogo Prefecture. It presented a full version of the classic, *Copélia, Creative Dance Recital 33, The World of Ballets Russes (Ballets Russes no sekai)* as well as a contemporary version of their much-loved signature show *The Nutcracker*. The company, which is very progressive, commissioned a young outside choreographer to re-interpret the piece. Ballet Company West Japan, which marked its fifth anniversary this year, is also making itself known on the ballet scene.

In Osaka, Jinushi Kaoru Ballet Company presented a double bill featuring two full-length classical productions with young as well as veteran dancers, just like the previous year. This year, its *Cinderella* was full of fresh new ideas, and its *Giselle* featured the ballet dancers Ono Ayako and Okumura Kosuke from National Ballet of Japan. It was a return for Okumura Kosuke who started his career with Jinushi Kaoru Ballet Company. Homura Tomoi Ballet Company, with its long history, is still progressing steadily, commissioning Shinohara Seiichi to choreograph *Cleopatra*. Noma Ballet Company, Kitayama Onishi Ballet Company, Company Deco Boco, and Michiko Sasaki Ballet Studio are all busy while taking necessary COVID-19 measures.

The Agency for Cultural Affairs is preparing to relocate to Kyoto (scheduled to be finalized in March 2023), but most ballet companies in Kyoto have not fully recovered from COVID-19. Ryuko Arima Ballet, which managed to stay afloat, presented *Romeo and Juliet*.

The two major companies in the Nagoya region, Ochi International Ballet and Matsuoka Reiko Ballet, simply did their annual showcases and did not take on any large-scale productions. However, Sumina Okada Ballet School and Setsuko Kawaguchi Ballet continued to present new works, as usual. Theatre de Ballet Company, which marked its 40th anniversary this year, presented “Autumn Ballet Gala Concert 2022,” combining a contemporary piece with short classic pieces, as well as *Don Quixote* choreographed by the late Fukagawa Hideo.

Tokoiriya, based in Okinawa and led by Midorima Ryoki, presented a piece inspired by old Okinawan traditions at Naha Cultural Arts Theater NAHArt in February. It also performed in Tokyo in spring and autumn, as it did the previous year.

It was still difficult to invite foreign artists to do a full production in the first half of the year. Nevertheless, dancers from The Stuttgart Ballet came to Japan in March and from The Royal Ballet in July. But these were both galas featuring a few top dancers. From autumn, things got slightly better; The Houston Ballet presented *Swan Lake*; Les Ballets du Monte Carlo presented *The Taming of the Shrew*; and as previously mentioned, The Ukrainian National Ballet presented a full ballet production.

While ballet competitions are coming back to life all over the country, some have cancelled or simplified the award ceremonies in order to survive the pandemic.

Urawa, Makoto

His real name is Ichikawa Akira. He is a former professor of the faculty of Business Administration and Corporate Culture at Shoin University and a former advisor for the dance sector of The Association of Public Theaters and Halls in Japan. He has contributed to various newspapers and magazines as a dance critic. He is a long-time committee member for the Agency for Cultural Affairs as well as other bodies. He has also been on the judging panels of various dance competitions and awards.

(Translation: Ishikawa Mai and Donncha Crowley)

Contemporary Dance and Butoh

A New Perspective on Reality from a Growing Pandemic-Era Dance Scene

Tsutsumi Hiroshi

The COVID-19 pandemic that began in 2020 continued to rage in 2022, with a sixth, seventh, and eighth wave of infections coming during the year. The Omicron variant of the virus, though less potent, proved highly contagious, and the performing arts continued to suffer from cancellations and delays. Amid this turmoil, in February, Russia launched a military invasion of Ukraine. In the deeply interconnected ballet world, large numbers of Japanese ballet dancers and students returned from both countries. Refugees were accepted and charity performances held. In the world of contemporary dance, which has fewer such connections, only Condors responded to the global situation in real time.

In June, Condors premiered *Starting Over*, a work inspired by the John Lennon song of the same name. The work begins with troupe leader Kondo Ryohei standing before a crucifix playing peacefully with birds and a dog, but this is followed by a scene of invading soldiers. The work relativized the situation in the US and Japan to the realities of the Ukraine invasion and awakened its audience anew to the peace they shared, resonating with many. Having accepted a post as artistic director of the Saitama Arts Theater, Kondo also brought a breath of fresh air by staging two of his own productions there, *Born on a Planet with Dance 2022* (*Dansu no aru hoshi ni umarete 2022*) and *Genre Cross* (*Janru kurosu*).

Major Works Reexamining Today's World

Notwithstanding the paucity of works directly depicting the pandemic or war, there were many major works that sought to reexamine the current situation that

artists face.

It has been around half a century since Kasai Akira opened his dance studio, Tenshi-kan (“House of Angels”), and the history of Kasai’s company can be divided into two periods, separated by the time he spent in Germany. This year, Kasai premiered a joint production featuring both members from the first period (including Yamada Setsuko, Omori Masahide, Yamazaki Kota, and Sugita Josaku) and the second period (including Kasai Reiji, Kasai Mitsutake, Asami Yuko, Uemura Naoka, Sakurai Ikuya, Noguchi Izumi, Kujirai Kentaro, and Sadakata Makoto), titled *What Cagliostro Dreamed in the Castel Sant’Angelo (Rogoku Tenshi-jo de Kariosutoro ga mita yume)*. The work is built around the idea that eighteenth-century swindler Cagliostro, when imprisoned on suspicion of political crimes, dreamed not of social or political revolution but rather a revolution to create a new relationship between humanity and the natural world—dance. The work also references Peter Weiss’s play *Marat/Sade*, and no doubt Kasai also saw an overlap between Weiss’s work and his own struggle for “the ideals of human rights.” Kasai poured his heart and soul into the performance, dancing like a man possessed and astonishing audiences.

Dairakudakan, led by Maro Akaji, also celebrated fifty years since its founding in 1972 with two new works presented in rapid succession: *End (Owari)* and *Beginning (Hajimari)*. These connected works portray the universe as a place where destruction and birth repeat in cycles, and Butoh performers appeared in the guise of such cosmic mysteries as dark matter, phantom energy, and white and black holes. *End* depicted a contracting universe being drawn into a black hole, while *Beginning* reversed this story, showing matter being ejected from a white hole and expanding to create new galaxies. The sheer audacity of anthropomorphizing the hidden mysteries of the universe and seeking to express such vast motifs with the body richly stimulated the audience’s imagination, creating a spectacle that gave full expression to the magnetism and humor of Butoh.

However, Maro’s imagination had more to offer. At the end of both productions, the entire cast donned light blue suits and performed a dance routine while

singing *La la la Sapiens (Ra ra ra sapiens)*, an original pop song in the style of Imawano Kiyoshiro. Against a repeated refrain of “La, la la, la la, Sapiens,” performers interjected lines like “Where are you going?” “What are you doing?” “Dancing,” and “Until the end of time.” The lyrics were by Maro himself and closed the work with the intimation that humanity would not last until the universe’s end.

Teshigawara Saburo saw his rare genius recognized anew by the world. He was selected to direct the New National Theatre’s new production of Gluck’s baroque opera *Orpheus and Eurydice (Orfeo ed Euridice)*, and his limpid, profound aesthetic was visible in everything from choreography and sets to costumes and lighting, drawing rapturous applause. The production wove together Suzuki Masato’s conducting; the casting of Laurence Zazzo as Orfeo, Valda Wilson as Euridice, and Miyake Rie as Amore, goddess of love; and an ensemble of dancers (Sato Rihoko, Alexandre Riabko, Takahashi Joe, Sato Shizuka) symbolically expressing the characters’ inner worlds. Sato’s dance, which toyed with space and light like the very spirit of Euridice, intertwined organically with the orchestration and singing, sometimes leading the on-stage action as if to amplify the music.

The round stage, which floated in darkness like a great white dish, and the white lily set design made a strong impression. The lighting changed as the story progressed, differentiating between overworld and underworld, and the tale of love transcending even death was depicted simply, with smooth abstraction.

Also this year, Teshigawara began his new “Drawing/Dance” series, in which he dances with projections of his own drawings, with the premiere of *In Search of Lost Lines (Ushinawareta sen o motomete)*. The “Update Dance” series featured Sato’s premiere of her new solo dance *Forest of Confession (Kokuhaku no mori)*, in which she used a kind of poetry of the body to evoke a phantasmagorical world accompanied by a text she wrote herself.

Teshigawara also received the Golden Lion for Dance at this year’s Biennale di Venezia, becoming the first Japanese artist to win this honor. He was also recognized by the Japanese government as a Person of Cultural Merit.

Kanamori Jo's Noism ("Noism Company Niigata," the Niigata City Performing Arts Center Ryutopia in-house dance company) delved into the history and culture of Niigata, premiering a double feature themed around *oni* (a kind of Japanese ogre or demon) in their first full collaboration with Kodo, the taiko performing arts ensemble based on Sado Island.

The first of the two works, *Les Noces de Madame Chrysanthème* (*Okiku no kekkon*), combined Stravinsky's ballet piece *Les Noces* with Kanamori's unique interpretation and direction. Based on Pierre Loti's novel *Madame Chrysanthème*, also an influence on Puccini's opera *Madame Butterfly*, the work depicted the "local marriage" of Pierre (Geoffroy Poplawski), a French naval officer visiting Japan in the early Meiji period, and Okiku or "Madame Chrysanthème" (Iseki Sawako), a prostitute from Nagasaki's licensed quarters. Okiku and the other Japanese characters dance like dolls, critically addressing Western orientalism. At the same time, the work also portrayed the inner *oni* nature driving the Japanese to banish and kill foreigners, and the pigtailed Iseki transfixed with a performance that concealed a steel core within apparent sweetness.

The second work, *Oni*, was a new piece commissioned from contemporary composer Harada Keiko on the theme of Niigata and performed with Kodo. The story follows a group of three mountain ascetics led by En no Gyoja (Yamada Yuki) who cross to Sado Island and encounter the prostitutes that live there. It transpires that a nun named Seion has opened a licensed quarter on the island. Harada's music was reserved but exquisite. It experimented with organic reverberations, putting various aural sensations to use with instrumentation that included not just large and small taiko drums but also a hanging gong, a chanchiki handgong, and even the breathing of the performers. This was new territory for the members of Kodo, who rose to the challenge as performers. For Noism, too, these were works that took the culture and history of Niigata as their theme as they explored and embodied the *oni* that lurk within us all.

Hirahara Shintaro unveiled a new production of Philip Glass's opera *Einstein on the Beach* for the 50th anniversary of Kanagawa Kenmin Hall. This work, which premiered with the 1976 production directed by Robert Wilson, has been called

the world's first example of a "theatre of images," being made up of multiple fragmentary motifs relating to the life of gifted astrophysicist Albert Einstein. Fear of nuclear war was high at the time of its composition, and the title was inspired by Nevil Shute's science fiction novel *On the Beach*, which depicted the aftermath of a nuclear war. Hirahara reflexively illuminates these historical circumstances from a contemporary perspective, establishing as characters historical figures who lived life in their own way, such as Michel Foucault and Frieda Kahlo, and shackling the Statue of Liberty's ankles. A giant vinyl sheet is used to evoke the 3/11 tsunami, the Fukushima nuclear accident, and pollution of the ocean by radioactive materials. The result was a powerful piece of theatre that hinted, nearly half a century after the work's debut, that the world is once again in a nuclear and human rights crisis.

Doubting Dance and Viewing Reality with Critical Eyes

Work by female artists from the relatively young Millennial generation also attracted attention this year. What these artists have in common is doubts about dance as it currently exists and the determination to achieve a new understanding of reality on their own terms.

Kedagoro, led by Shimojima Reisa, premiered the new work 세월 ("Sewol" in Hangul). The choice not to include a Japanese pronunciation or translation of the title suggests intent to problematize. This ambitious work deals directly with the capsizing and sinking of the eponymous passenger ferry off Korea in 2014, depicting the extreme circumstances of the passengers caught up in the disaster. However, it does not recreate the incident itself in detail. Orange platforms are piled on the stage; when the dancers descend from them, the set collapses, while the order "가만히 있어" (*Gamanhi iss-eo*, "Don't move") issues intermittently from loudspeakers overhead. Then a bizarre dance in unison takes place as the song 짜라빠빠 (Jja-ra-bba-bba), famous in Korea, is repeatedly played. The song "Dokdo Is Our Territory," known from territorial disputes with Japan, is also used. Some scenes include movements like fitness drills, including push-ups, pair handstands, and breath-holding.

Shimojima has employed a creative method that places near-cruel burdens on the bodies of performers to release a series of works. Based on the idea that “dance’ is one method of interpreting the world,” she runs repeated experiments with the human body as apparatus, blithely uninfluenced by existing dance aesthetics. Instead of providing dances for audiences to watch, she uses dance as a tool to draw audiences in and think about society together. By critically addressing social incidents that she could not have known directly and ensuring that those audiences bear witness to the circumstances as well, she creates opportunities to recognize and consider truth.

Shimojima’s past work includes *Monkey in a Diaper* (*Omutsu o haita saru*, 2017), about Asahara Shoko of the Aum Shinrikyo cult, and *Sky* (2018), about the violent purge within the United Red Army. This year also saw a new tour of her work *Because Kazcause* (*Bikozu Kazukozu*, 2021), a work about Fukuda Kazuko, who murdered a hostess in Matsuyama and then underwent plastic surgery to evade detection.

Nakagawa Ayane’s troupe Suichu-megane∞ premiered *Good Cow-ken*. Right from the beginning, all seventeen members use the full theatre space as a venue for fierce behavior set to punkish, frenzied rock music. Eventually performers begin to leap from the mezzanine or threateningly grip kitchen knives in concert as the work transitions to a performance that evokes ideas of harming oneself and others, suicide by jumping, and suffocation. The motifs are simple movements, but the sense of irritation and frustration comes through painfully clearly. With a focus on “the physicality of humans moved to suicide,” the work depicts humans imprisoned by death.

Nakagawa began learning ballet and classical Japanese dance in early childhood and strives to fuse the two styles into a hybrid creation amid the dilemma of being torn between them. At the same time, Nakagawa also turns a critical eye toward contemporary society. At least 20,000 people kill themselves each year in Japan, and recent years have seen an increase in murder-suicides and incidents of indiscriminate murder. Life is hard, filled with irritations and frustrations; how do we tame our unstable selves, which threaten to explode at any time? A

contemporary critical awareness and sensibility made a forthright appearance in this performance.

Kurata Midori premiered a new work titled *I Can/Can't See You From Here Now* (*Ima koko kara, anata no koto ga mieru/mienai*) (organized by Daimaruyu SDGs ACT5 Executive Committee and bench Co.). For this initiative, she sought participants from among those working in Otemachi, Marunouchi, and Yurakucho in the heart of Tokyo, and turned an entire floor of an office building in Yurakucho into a venue for performance. At first glance, the composition may resemble a docudrama, but it is in fact more like post-drama theatre. One by one, the participants speak, as if introducing themselves. All kinds of people are present, and the social realities arising from diversity manifest themselves. Individual standpoints thought to be non-individual are presented in close-up. Why do people live? Why do they work? This work increased the resolution with which we cognize the world.

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Kurata has a history of creating works based on coming face-to-face with people as they really are, including patients at drug addiction rehabilitation clinics and aging residents in regional areas. She has successfully completed many projects by pursuing the possibilities of dance expressing the matters that arise in such encounters as fiction.

Dance Ecosystems Gradually Expanding Amid the Pandemic

Even as the pandemic wreaked havoc on live theatrical performances, more residencies to support artists and opportunities to restage pieces were seen.

At the Toyohashi Arts Theatre PLAT (Toyohashi, Aichi Prefecture), a dance residency program open to applications from the public has run continuously since 2017, and has become a space for many artists to create and present their work.

After its opening was postponed due to the pandemic, Dance Base Yokohama (DaBY), changed its initial plans to offer expanded support for artists, including a residency program. In 2022, the resulting repertoire was repackaged as a “performing arts selection” for a seven-city national tour.

The Yokohama Dance Collection’s competition established two new prizes

after the pandemic to support artists with residency programs at the Kinosaki International Arts Center (KIAC) and Architanz.

Yokohama Red Brick Warehouse No. 1 started its new choreographer system in 2022, with Umeda Hiroaki appointed for a two-year term.

Competitions and festivals in various locations remained valuable opportunities for young artists in particular to receive evaluations and achievements and to have their works restaged. Each restaging is an opportunity to polish the work further.

In this context, the activities of actor and dancer Moriyama Mirai attracted particular attention. Moriyama, a native of Kobe, was invited to the creative program at the Kiito Design and Creative Center Kobe, where he collaborated with neuroscientist and cognitive scientist Nakano Nobuko on the experimental work *Formula*. Probing into the topic more deeply, they brought in choreographer Ella Rothschild and embarked on a national tour. Moriyama expanded the project further and devised ways to share the work more deeply, such as by curating works from top creators in multiple fields to turn the entire venue, including the lobby, into a kind of exhibition space.

A suggestion from Moriyama also resulted in the establishment of the Artist in Residence Kobe (AiRK) program. Because there were no accommodation facilities at Kiito, the program sourced operational funds through crowdfunding in order to provide free accommodation so that its artists could concentrate on creative activities. In the future, the goal is to use AiRK as a starting point for collaborations with the city's art and culture institutions that will enrich the system and further facilitate creativity. The City of Kobe has appointed Moriyama main curator of the Kobe Re:Public Art Project, which aims to attract tourists to the city using public art.

One final headline from this year: Ito Kaori was selected as director of TJP, the National Dramatic Center of Strasbourg-Grand-Est. For a Japanese artist to become director of a public theatre in France is an outstanding achievement. One can only wait eagerly to see what kinds of collaborations with Japan will be possible.

Tsutsumi, Hiroshi

Born in 1966 in Kawasaki. Graduated in theatre studies at the Department of Literature at Bunka Gakuin. Worked as an editor for art, entertainment, theatre, and dance magazines before going freelance. Has covered a wide range of performing art genres, including small theatre, *shingeki*-style (modern realism) theatre, underground (Angura) theatre, commercial theatre, traditional theatre, and dance scenes. Has served as a selection committee member for the Toyota Choreography Award and on the juries of the Guardian Garden Theatre Festival and the SAI International Dance Festival. Edited *The Flying Dangoro Party in the Sky: "Rebirth of Acharaka"* (*Sora tobu kumo no ue Dangoro ichiza: "Acharaka saitanjo"*), *Performing Arts in Germany Today*, and Peter Brook's *The Road to "Battlefield,"* among other works.

(Translation: Matt Treyvaud)

Looking beyond the Pandemic

Ota Shoichi

New Endeavors Amid a Return to Origins

One trend among the television dramas of 2022 was a return to origins.

Take NHK's serial drama *Come Come Everybody* (*Kamu kamu evuribadi*). Some 90% of the many serial dramas NHK has broadcast since 1961 have featured a female protagonist, and early series in particular often told the life story of a woman who had experienced war. *Come Come Everybody* implicitly acknowledged these origins of the “morning drama” as a form.

However, it also demonstrated innovation in following three generations of mothers and daughters instead of a single heroine. Combined with the masterful foreshadowing and payoff of scriptwriter Fujimoto Yuki, this created a serial drama of a type that is seldom seen—a tale of intertwined fates that spanned a full century and stirred genuine emotion in viewers (48th Hoso Bunka Foundation Prize: Incentive Award—Program, Television Drama, Scriptwriting Award—Fujimoto Yuki; Tokyo Drama Awards 2022: Series Drama Award for Excellence, Best Supporting Actor—Odagiri Joe, Scriptwriting Award—Fujimoto Yuki; 60th Galaxy Awards: Award—Television, first half of year).

Skilled depictions of complex interpersonal relationships were also on display in *The 13 Lords of the Shogun* (*Kamakura-dono no jusan-nin*), this year's taiga drama. NHK's taiga dramas have brought the lives of warriors and other figures from Japanese history to the screen since 1963. For this entry in the series, Mitani Koki's screenplay stayed true to the recorded facts of history while filling in the blanks with flights of imagination, spinning a rich human drama around the struggle for supremacy that is the origin of the taiga drama form.

Making protagonist Hojo Yoshitoki (Oguri Shun) a cold and calculating

antihero rather than the often-seen idealistic dreamer also added a fresh touch. The superb pacing, with comical scenes woven seamlessly into the series of historical tragedies, heightened the sense of maturity, demonstrating a *terminus ad quem* of the “Mitani screenplay.”

What these works shared in common was an attempt to find new possibilities for drama amid a return to origins. In their approach to this, they threw the current realities of Japanese society into relief. Indeed, the intent to recapture the everyday that is the point of origin for our lives, and discover new drama there, was another commonality shared by some the finest works of 2022.

Crime Shown as Continuous with the Everyday

That intent was readily visible, for example, in dramas that depicted the relationship between crime and everyday life. When an extraordinary event like crime rears its head amid what had seemed to be a peaceful everyday existence, what drama can be found there? Works posing this question to their viewers attracted attention in 2022. This facet was visible in dramas like the much-discussed *Don't Call It Mystery (Misuteri to iu nakare)* (Fuji TV) starring Suda Masaki, but I will discuss two in particular here.

The first was *Ishiko and Haneo: You're Suing Me? (Ishiko to Haneo: Sonna koto de uttaemasu?)* (TBS) in which a lawyer and a paralegal (Nakamura Tomoya and Arimura Kasumi, respectively) buddied up to explore the unexpected human dramas behind the cases handled by their legal office. Clients arrived with minor issues that could arise anywhere, such as disagreements over in-app fees for smartphone games, but as our heroes traced the threads toward resolution, hidden snarls in relationships and surprising motives on the part of the parties involved came to the surface. This was an appealing work, further elevated by Tsukahara Ayuko's refined direction (60th Galaxy Awards: Incentive Award—Television, first half of year).

By contrast, the central crime in *Love with a Case (Hatsukoi no akuma)*, (NTV) was a string of gruesome murders. This heightened the contrast with the everyday life woven by the four highly individual actors Hayashi Kento, Nakano Taiga, Matsuoka Mayu, and Emoto Tasuku, which contained all the romance

and friendship of a coming-of-age tale. However, these two worlds were not separated but existed on a continuum. This drama's Japanese title literally means "the demon of first love," and it did indeed contain both of those elements. Sakamoto Yuji's screenplay was fresh as always, with memorable lines and exchanges that bound together these two worlds representing opposite extremes.

A Drama Urging Self-Reflection by the Television Industry

One work that sought to depict the relationship between society and crime from a slightly different angle was *Elpis: Hope or Disaster (Erupisu: Kibo, arui wa wazawai*, Kansai TV).

When television news announcer Asakawa Ena (Nagasawa Masami) learns that a prisoner sentenced to death for serial murder may have been falsely convicted, she starts working on the story with her director Kishimoto Takuro (Maeda Gordon). The two uncover new evidence and draw nearer to the truth but are frustrated by political pressure and their network's eagerness to comply with the unspoken demands of the powerful.

It is extremely rare for a prime-time commercial television drama to take the problems of the judicial system as its theme. In doing so, while also putting television news reporting and even television itself on the chopping block, *Elpis* felt fresh and razor-sharp. It demonstrated a perspective that urges critical self-reflection by the television industry and, and posed a sincere question: "How deeply can drama delve into the contradictions and problems of society?"

Critical to the realization of this vision was, I gather, the role of Sano Ayumi, who was also producer of *Teen Regime (Junanasai no teikoku*, NHK) (60th Galaxy Awards: Incentive Award—Television, first half of year), in which a seventeen-year-old boy chosen by AI struggles to become the ideal politician to reverse the decline of a regional city in a waning near-future Japan. Watanabe Aya's screenplay for *Elpis* skillfully blends in the romance between Asakawa and political reporter Saito Seiichi (Suzuki Ryohei) and entertaining elements like Kishimoto's development beyond his sheltered upbringing, creating a social suspense drama that was more than rewarding.

Elpis surely created a stir in the world of television dramas, where

stereotyped works that seek solely to entertain constitute the mainstream. It was a deeply meaningful attempt to broaden the possibilities of the form.

Coming to Terms with the Pandemic

Years after the initial outbreak, the COVID-19 pandemic continues to shake our everyday life to the core. This naturally raises the question of how television dramas are addressing the pandemic as a kind of “extraordinary turned everyday.”

Ultimately, however, dramas have tended to avoid facing that question directly. Admittedly, there have been “remote dramas” in which actors and staff avoided close contact by filming separate segments that were edited into a unified story. Some of these works were superb. But most television dramas only reflected the impact of COVID-19 on our lives at the most superficial level.

By contrast, *Your Stuff Is Here* (*Anata no butsu ga, koko ni*, NHK) was a work that fixed its gaze directly on the question of what the pandemic means for our lives.

Nimura Sawa plays the protagonist, a single mother who works at a cabaret club. When she loses that job due to the pandemic, she finds new work as a delivery driver. Having no existing connection to this industry, her unfamiliar new duties cause her difficulties and lower her spirits.

Your Stuff Is Here vividly depicted other aspects of daily life that have been changed or exacerbated by the pandemic. The *okonomiyaki* restaurant owned by the protagonist’s parents found itself in straitened circumstances as customers stopped coming. The delivery recipients around the city faced difficulties too. One had work cancelled due to COVID-19. Another treated the protagonist and other delivery drivers coldly, refusing even to meet them in the entranceway out of fear she would transmit the disease to her unwell husband.

The program showed how the pandemic creates a despairing sense of being trapped at every turn. However, as the protagonist interacted with her colleagues and clients—sometimes clashing with them, sometimes solving problems together—she found her own salvation. In short, this was a drama about people isolated by the pandemic gradually reclaiming the human connections they had

before (60th Galaxy Awards: Award—Television, first half of year).

The Essence of Communication

Another television drama that made us rethink this meaning of “connection”—or, put another way, what communication is—was *silent* (Fuji TV). *silent* is the story of a love affair between its two young protagonists, but at its root lie universal questions transcending the romantic frame: What does it mean for two people to communicate? What is it to understand each other?

Aoba Tsumugi (Kawaguchi Haruna) and Sakura So (Meguro Ren) had a relationship in high school before becoming estranged from each other. When they encounter each other again years later, So has become hearing-impaired due to illness. Tsumugi and So, however, are not the absolute center of the story; the work placed great emphasis on depicting their relationships with the friends and family around them, including a woman who has had a hearing disability from birth, played by Kaho. At times, these characters were presented in as much detail as the lead protagonists.

This approach brings the diversity of communication into view. Instead of a simple “hearing/not hearing” opposition, So lost his hearing partway through life and knows both worlds. Characters interact with each other using a range of methods, including spoken, sign, and written language. Naturally, this brings complications, making life difficult and communication challenging at times. On the other hand, the moments when those barriers are surmounted and mutual understanding is achieved give hope to carry on. What this work teaches us is the universal essence of communication—the fact that it goes both ways.

It is suggestive that a work like *silent* appeared in 2022 amid the ongoing pandemic. While it does not address COVID-19 directly, its story does feel like a metaphor for a future world in which we put pandemic-induced isolation behind us and move toward becoming a continuum once more. What can be read from this is a vision of a post-COVID age—a gaze that looks beyond the pandemic.

In Closing

This year also saw many other worthy dramas, including *The Two Who Do*

Not Love (Koi senu futari, NHK), which explored different ways to be a family through the shared life of an aromantic and asexual couple; *Shizuka and Papa (Shizuka-chan to Papa*, NHK), a domestic comedy about a deaf single father and his daughter, who has always helped him with communication, learning to let each other go as she prepares to marry; *Lost Man Found (Hirowareta otoko*, NHK), a biographical drama about real-life actor Matsuo Satoru in which some of the actors in his story are played by themselves; *If My Wife Became an Elementary Student (Tsuma, shogakusei ni naru*, TBS) in which a widowed husband and his daughter are visited by his late wife, who has borrowed the body of an elementary student; and *Hey, Handsome!! (Oi hansamu!!*, Tokai TV), a domestic drama about the day-to-day life of a cantankerous father and his three daughters who have terrible taste in men.

In 2022, the relationship between television dramas and social media also became a topic of discussion. Viewers took to social media to discuss their “interpretations” of works, and trending “review and evaluation meeting” tags brought together doubts about how characters were depicted or stories were progressing. This is certainly a valid way to enjoy the genre. On the other hand, I hope we can also recall how many television dramas like the ones described above were created this year—works that moved us deeply and afforded realizations that cannot be put into words.

Ota, Shoichi

Sociologist and writer. Writes on topics including television and postwar Japan, comedy, idols, and dramas. His books include *An Almost Complete History of Writers for Broadcast (Hoso sakka hobozenshi*, Seikaisha Shinsho, 2022), *On Mizutani Yutaka (Mizutani Yutaka-ron*, Seidosha, 2021), *Provocative TV Tokyo, Lovable TV Tokyo (Semeteru Tele-To, ai sareru Tele-To*, University of Tokyo Press, 2019), and *Kohaku Uta Gassen and the Japanese People (Kohaku Uta Gassen to Nihonjin*, Chikuma Sensho, 2013). committee member for the television category of the Association of Broadcast Critics' Galaxy Awards.

(Translation: Matt Treyvaud)

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Developments in Japan and Overseas
in 2022

Developments in Japan and Overseas

Creating stages amidst war

Interviews with the directors of three Ukrainian theatres

Interviewer: Marina Kotelenets

(Director of the All-Ukrainian Public Organization “Ukrainian League of Authors”)



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On March 16, 2022, less than a month after the Russian invasion of Ukraine, there were reports that Russian forces had bombed the Donetsk Academic Regional Drama Theatre in Mariupol, killing many people. At the time, the destroyed theatre was being used as a refugee shelter.

While Russian theatre researchers have been using the Internet to share the voices of Russian theatre artists, the situations of Ukrainian theatre artists are less readily visible.

The Japanese Centre of International Theatre Institute approached the Ukrainian League of Authors in Kyiv, with whom we had established a connection through our “Theatre Born in Conflict Zones” project, to see if we could interview representatives from local theatres. The director, Marina Kotelenets, offered to personally conduct in-person or telephone

interviews with representatives from theatres in three regions facing different experiences with the war.

Ms. Kotelenets's interviews provide records of what happened to these theatres on the day of the invasion, what it has been like for them to engage in artistic creation under wartime conditions, and what they foresee for the future.

Theatre for mutual aid

Lesya Ukrainka National Academic Drama Theatre

(Kyiv)

<https://lesyatheatre.com.ua/>

The Lesya Ukrainka National Academic Drama Theatre is one of the largest drama theatres in Ukraine.

The Theatre's official history begins in 1926, when the Kyiv District Executive Committee organized the State Russian Drama Theatre. However, the Theatre's true roots extend back to the nineteenth century, when the outstanding actor and director Nikolai Solovtsov organized the Solovtsov Theatre as a permanent Russian theatre in 1891. It was located in the same building in which the Lesya Ukrainka Theatre now operates. It was renamed in 1941, after the renowned Ukrainian poetess and playwright Lesya Ukrainka.

For the last 25 years, the Theatre has been directed by Mikhail Reznikovich, one of the most recognized directors in Ukraine. He is a student and steward of the cultural traditions of the famous Soviet director, teacher, and theatre theorist Georgy Tovstonogov (1915–1989).

Until recently, the theatre was called the Lesya Ukrainka Kyiv National Academic Russian Drama Theatre. Until then, it had performed plays in Russian since its inception, inviting Russian directors to stage performances of classics by Chekhov, Ostrovsky, and Bulgakov, as well as those by contemporary Russian authors.

In March 2022, however, following the Russian Federation's invasion of

Juliet and Romeo*The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time**The Cripple of Inishmaan*

Ukraine, the Theatre removed the phrase “Russian Drama” from its name and began translating its entire repertoire into Ukrainian.

Kyrylo Kashlikov is the Theatre’s managing director, as well as an actor and director there. He has been actively directing since 2014, when he staged *Juliet and Romeo*, a reworking of Shakespeare’s classic. Then he directed *A View from the Bridge* by Arthur Miller (2016) and *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* by Simon Stephens (2018). In subsequent years, he staged plays by two Irish authors: Martin McDonagh’s *The Cripple of Inishmaan* (2020) and Brian Friel’s *Translations* (2022). On February 24, the day Russia launched its invasion, a rehearsal of a completed production of *The Ferryman*, based on the play by Jez Butterworth, was scheduled on the Theatre’s big stage, but the release of that production had to be postponed.



Kyrylo Kashlikov

Managing director, actor, and director
at the Lesya Ukrainka National Academic
Drama Theatre

Interview date: October 10, 2022

24 February

When the war started, Ukraine's Ministry of Culture and Information Policy ordered a halt to all performances in Ukrainian theatres. All employees had to work remotely, and at two-thirds of their normal salary. Some Theatre employees left Kyiv and Ukraine; others enlisted for territorial defense and were later sent to the front.

Kyiv became empty...

My family did not want to go anywhere, and I could not abandon the Theatre. Therefore, my wife and daughter decided to live with me there. Several of our actors and their families joined us, because their houses were located next to strategic sites that were periodically targeted in missile strikes.

As early as the first few days of March, the Ministry of Culture established contact with all its institutions and organizations, sent out reports, and exchanged information. Minister Oleksandr Tkachenko (Minister of Culture and Information Policy since June 4, 2020) began to analyze the situation and determined that it was possible to keep at least some forms of theatre open in Kyiv, despite the hostilities.

Those of us who remained in Kyiv were eager to do something. Ours was the only theatre in Kyiv considered suitably safe, which was the foremost priority for continued performances. We did not need to construct a bomb shelter, since there is a subway entrance right in front of the Theatre's entrance; when an air-raid signal sounded, we could open the doors and everyone in the audience could reach shelter within 2–6 minutes. The Minister himself visited the Theatre to



Three Loves, the first performance since the war began, played to a full house.

confirm how effectively our team operates during air raids.

So on April 9, 2022, we were able to present our first performance of *Tri Kokhannya* (Three Loves), dedicated to Lesya Ukrainka, on our 129-seat Small Stage. The venue was full, and everyone—both audience and actors—was in tears.

Alexander Tkachenko then asked us to present a performance for children, and by mid-April we

had prepared a children's stage performance. Many people came to it, with parents and grandparents bringing children. I was surprised at how many little Kyivans remained in the city. In our Theatre's hall there were 5- and 6-year-olds playing and crawling on the carpets—that sight alone left me crying again.

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Theatre and war

I realized that the war had changed the Theatre's mission. In March and April 2022, I kept remembering a thought by McDonagh: a character in one of his plays stated that it is when we stand on the edge of the abyss that we recall our humanity.

In April, Kyiv was half empty, but people from across the city came to our performances, thereby expressing protest against fear and danger. They came to the theatre in part to forget about everything for a while, but also, more importantly, to experience a sense of community and closeness. Theatre is the only art form that provides such a feeling of mutual belonging. Everyone, both actors and spectators, becomes united. Sometimes it felt like a scene from a post-apocalyptic movie in which people converged, gathering just to sit together. In April, our Theatre had become their gathering point.

Since we could not yet fully return to work at the Theatre (many actors had

left, and translations of our performances into Ukrainian were not yet ready), I proposed a “We are from Ukraine” theme, that we should perform readings of topical plays by Ukrainian playwrights, particularly those providing incisive reflections on the ongoing military events.

Through social networking, I invited all theatrical colleagues remaining in Kyiv to use our facilities. As a result, several independent projects began to utilize our Small Stage. This was our way of supporting theatre people—they still couldn’t earn much money, but hopefully at least enough to get by somehow. We also provided our venue to the Ivan Franko Kyiv National Ukrainian Theatre. Their theatre is as big as ours, but their large, beautiful building is located near the government quarter, and the danger of shelling and rockets made it impossible for them to work. They returned to their home venue in October, but even during those days of war, there was activity at our Lesya Ukrainka Theatre five days a week: the Ivan Franko Theatre performed on our stage on two days, we performed on another two, and one day each week was allocated to independent projects.

Later, actors and directors from the Mykola Kulish Kherson Theatre fled from southern Ukraine when Russian troops captured Kherson. Many decided to stay in Kyiv, so we extended opportunities to work on our stage to them, too. In October, we even released a jointly produced documentary performance, *Lyshatysja (Ne) Mozhna... (Staying is (Not) Possible...)*, based on the stories of actual Kherson theatre workers. Believe me, the venue was always at capacity seating for their performances.

I have always dreamed of improved solidarity between



Staying is (Not) Possible... Photo: Alexandr Kniga

actors, of theatrical people casting aside the jealousy and competition we tend toward, and instead becoming sincere friends. That suddenly happened during the war. For me, this has been a very important and valuable experience.

Our performances and our future

Our immediate reaction to the pain of military activity was a fresh read of Ukrainian drama. More time should pass before we attempt serious performances on the topic of the current war: a certain distance is needed, to disassociate ourselves from our painful reflections.

Therefore, I believe that our new production of Irish playwright Brian Friel's *Translations* is a more meaningful statement about the current situation in Ukraine.

I started working on this play two years ago and have been thinking about it all this time. That allowed us to stage it in just two months. In fact, this play presents a complete mirror image of the events taking place in Ukraine. *Translations* will soon become a classic, and this is very important, because it was not an impromptu creation. I believe that our "play of *Translations*" is already about *our* war, about the factors that led to it.

Will we resume performances of plays from Russian theatre? It is simply inappropriate to discuss that topic today. Seven members of our Theatre team are currently fighting at the front, and others are under contracts for territorial defense. Many families have lost loved ones. During work breaks, women go to the theatre buffet to weave camouflage nets for use at the front. No, now is not the time for discussions of Russian culture.

Our future repertoire will be more connected with Ukrainian classics. Mikhail Reznikovich, the Theatre's artistic director, is currently working on a stage version of the tragic novel *On Sunday Morning, She Gathered Herbs* by Ukrainian writer Olha Kobylyanska. But I still want to release a production of *The Ferryman* by Jos Butterworth, which was postponed due to the war.

Another problem confronting not only us, but all Ukrainian theatres, is loss of funding, resulting in inevitable budget cuts. Theatre subsidies have been reduced by 10% until the end of the year and will be cut by another 20% in 2023.



Translations Photo: Iryna Somova

This is a very serious problem, but we have sought and will continue to find opportunities to retain our team, both cast members and technical staff. We don't want to abandon our people in such difficult times.

Believe me, everything changed after February 24. We are no longer able to conduct strategic planning in the Theatre. At all. We simply don't have the energy or the time. On a daily basis, we can only consider prospects over the next six months, no more, so that is all we have been talking about.

We need to continue translating performances into Ukrainian, but doing so is a colossal job. In 2019, Ukraine adopted a law titled "On ensuring the functioning of the Ukrainian language as the state language," which required all performances performed in Russian to provide subtitles, so we have been dealing with this issue for a long time. In place of subtitles, we decided to provide audiences with simultaneous Ukrainian interpreting of performances via headphones.

On February 26, I created a Telegram channel group to allow operational communications with Theatre staff. Nearly our entire team, almost three hundred people, joined that group. Everyone immediately agreed to remove the words "Russian Drama" from the Theatre's name, and the actors took the position that they would only work in Ukrainian.

At the beginning of the war, the Theatre repertoire had about sixty

performances. Now, seven months later, 29 have already been performed in Ukrainian. Anyone involved in stage work will understand what an incredible job that is for actors who have worked only in Russian for their entire professional lives. But we will do it!

The theatre running away from the war

Luhansk Regional Academic Ukrainian Music and Drama Theatre

(Luhansk / Severodonetsk / Sumy)

<http://ukrugteatr.com>

The city of Luhansk is the center of the easternmost region of Ukraine. It is located sixty kilometers from the Russian border, so most of the region's population speaks Russian.

The Luhansk Regional Academic Ukrainian Music and Drama Theatre was founded in August 1941 as a theatre group in Kharkiv in northeastern Ukraine to serve Soviet military units and hospitals during World War II. After the 1944 liberation of the territory of Ukraine from the German invaders, the Theatre returned from evacuation to Luhansk, where it began working as a regional Ukrainian music and drama theatre.

Due to antiterrorist operations in eastern Ukraine, in December 2014 the Luhansk Theatre was to be moved from occupied Luhansk to the city of Severodonetsk, which remained controlled by the Ukrainian authorities. Most of the troupe remained in Luhansk, with only three employees (the director, the accountant, and one actor) reaching the new location. They alone faced the task of rebuilding the team in a new place and resuming full theatre operations as quickly as possible.

Eight years later, in March 2022, the Luhansk Theatre was again forced to evacuate from the war zone. In June 2022, Russian troops captured Severodonetsk.



Serhiy Dorofeev

Former Director and Artistic Director (2015-2022)
of the Luhansk Regional Academic Ukrainian Music and
Drama Theatre

Interview date: October 12, 2022

From Luhansk to Severodonetsk

Our Theatre has always worked in Ukrainian, and we were greatly loved by the public back in Luhansk, despite that being a Russian-speaking region. This is because our performances have always been better and more interesting than those in other Luhansk theatres.

The Theatre was moved to Severodonetsk, and when I headed it in 2015, its creative staff consisted of only ten people. But with just that limited staff, we had

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to recreate the Luhansk Ukrainian Theatre from scratch in a new place. The Theatre was allocated new premises in 2015, and our actors, who had left Luhansk for destinations throughout Ukraine, began to return to us. To expand our team, we invited students from various creative universities. Our Theatre gave some of them their first job.

By 2016, the Theatre's repertoire had grown to twelve performances. In that same year, the regional administration started major renovations of the old building, which was allocated specifically for our Theatre. In 2017, we got our own stage and excellent technical equipment. Finally, it felt as if we had a home again.

Since we were the only theatre in the Luhansk region (in the part that remained under Ukrainian control), we were tasked with meeting the needs of all categories of the local population. We thus staged performances for both adults and children. We performed classics (well-known and loved by audiences), musicals, entertaining performances, and modern plays. Since our team was very young—the average age of our troupe members was 25—we invited young

Ukrainian directors and playwrights. We tried to show audiences a modern, experimental theatre.

Note that Severodonetsk is by no means a theatre city. It is a small industrial town with a large chemical plant. Therefore, the public initially viewed us with distrust and considered theatre in Ukrainian as something unusual. But over time, audiences really fell in love with us. We attracted larger audiences, more fans...in general, we managed to turn the tide of opinion in the city.

I remained clearly aware of the Theatre's mission: to fortify Ukrainian culture in the region. For the purpose of cultural enlightenment, in 2018 we started our own theatre festival, to which we invited the most interesting performances from across Ukraine.

It was a wonderful eight years filled with very interesting and intense work, but the Theatre had to evacuate again in 2022. Once again, we had to leave our homes, our Theatre, and Severodonetsk, along with the relationships we'd cultivated there.

24 February

On February 24, all residents of the Luhansk region were asked to evacuate. The regional administration told the Theatre staff to prepare for departure, so we started packing our things. Even on February 24, we could hear flying, landing, and exploding missiles in Severodonetsk.

Actually, we already had an action plan prepared, so we were able to contact all employees in just fifteen minutes. We'd created lists in advance, specifying who was ready to leave, who would need help to evacuate, who could evacuate on their own, and who intended to remain in the city under any circumstances. Of course, not everything went according to plan: some of those who said they would stay were the first to leave, while some who'd planned to leave ended up staying in the city for a long time.

In February, there was chaos in Severodonetsk. Crowds of confused people. Huge transport convoys. Even so, the regional administration organized evacuations by rail, regularly traveling to the central and western regions of the country. There were even special buses to bring people to railway stations. That lasted for

over two weeks, until the railroad was bombed.

I remember it being very difficult to convince people of the need to leave Severodonetsk. Our employees used the Theatre basement to hide from the bombing and shelling. But even they did not immediately decide to leave; they thought everything would work out before they could move anywhere. Eventually, however, most everyone had to leave.

Interestingly, in 2014, only one-third of troupe members at the original Luhansk Theatre left our native Luhansk for territory controlled by Ukraine. The rest remained in Luhansk, accepted the so-called Luhansk People's Republic as the new government, and later a Russian one. By contrast, in 2022, more than 90% of our new young troupe left Severodonetsk for other territories of Ukraine or elsewhere in Europe. Among the remaining 5–8% were those who welcomed the Russians, but none were from our creative staff. Today, not a single one of our actors remains in Severodonetsk.

When Russian troops entered Severodonetsk in June 2022, a tank destroyed the theatre building with direct fire. There is a video recording of a captured Donetsk People's Republic fighter who explains why he fired ten shots at the theatre: because his commander believed that Ukrainian soldiers were hiding inside. But there were no soldiers there. I know that for sure, because until the last minute I remained in touch with colleagues who had been living and hiding in the Theatre. No one was hurt, thank God, but the theatre was destroyed. Only the walls remained.



The Luhansk Theatre in Severodonetsk was destroyed.

Our Theatre is a wanderer and a migrant

At the beginning of the evacuation, I joined part of the Theatre team in relocating to Dnipro (a large regional center in eastern Ukraine, located on the Dnieper, the largest river in Ukraine). There we worked on the stage of the Dnipro

Academic Drama and Comedy Theatre (<https://dramicom.dp.ua>), which accepted our troupe to its venue.

In July 2022, I was invited to become director of the M.S. Shchepkin Sumy National Academic Drama and Musical Comedy Theatre (<https://musicdrama.com.ua>) in northern Ukraine. At around that time, Oleksandr Grishkov, who worked as my deputy in Severodonetsk for eight years, headed the Luhansk Theatre.

Today, the Sumy Theatre actually houses two theatres, two legal entities with their own troupes and repertoires: the Luhansk Theatre and the Sumy Theatre.

The theatrical public in Sumy was at first surprised, wondering why they needed more than one theatre. But our first performances were sold out and were a great success with local theatregoers. The Luhansk Theatre in Sumy thus easily won over its audiences.

In August, the two troupes and theatres coordinated to produce a common project, *Will. Freedom. Victory.*, as a musical performance for the Independence Day of Ukraine holiday. Now this show is included in the Sumy Theatre repertoire, and it is very popular with audiences.

Our next coproduction will be Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. It will be a big musical performance with a live performance by the Sumy Theatre orchestra.



Will. Freedom. Victory.



Romeo and Juliet

Safety

The M.S. Shchepkin Sumy Theatre did not work during the first six months of the war, because the Sumy region was partially occupied by Russian troops and the city was surrounded. There was still danger even after the enemy was expelled from northern Ukraine. It was necessary to resolve all issues related to the safety of audiences and employees at the Theatre before we could conduct any performances. This was the first task I had to resolve as a director.

The Theatre had a basement, in which people were living and hiding during the city's besiegement. We have refurbished it in accordance with safety requirements. The basement can only accommodate 150 people, so I also formed an agreement with the Ukrainian Academy of Banking, which is located next door, that in the event of an air raid during one of our performances, they will share their bomb shelter with us, providing room for another 50 people. This allows us to sell more tickets and perform for 200 people (in an 800-seat auditorium, but still).

We have also opened a new experimental space directly below the revolving stage. A "stage beneath the stage," that is in a sense its own bomb shelter. We have already staged two chamber plays at this venue: *Lungs* by Duncan Macmillan and *Borsch*, based



Lungs



Borsch

on stories by Ostap Vyshnya (an extremely popular Ukrainian satirist).

Life goes on without Russians

We have zero interest in plays by Russian authors, regardless of whether they are classics or contemporary works. Even in Severodonetsk our policy was for no shows by Russian authors, and I want to continue that in Sumy. Even if we come across good material, even if it is by an author with a neutral position toward the situation in Ukraine, the answer is still no. So far as I am concerned, there are no good Russians left, even including my own relatives from across Russia, from Petersburg to Kamchatka. We no longer share a common position. We exist in different worlds.

Now we are expanding the Theatre's repertoire, restoring previous performances in both our theatres. This is very difficult because many actors are on the road—some in other Ukrainian cities, some abroad—and all our scenery and costumes were burned in Severodonetsk. But under my lead, the Sumy Theatre has put on three (of course, small-scale) performances. As a gift for children in the region, we also perform *The Carnival of the Animals*, based on the musical suite by Camille Saint-Saëns, which allows children to become acquainted with musical instruments and learn some basic musical knowledge. Tickets for that show are always sold out. All our new performances are also popular.

But like Severodonetsk, Sumy is a small town, and small towns do not support long runs; after ten performances our potential audiences have dried up. Therefore, despite the war and the very difficult economic situation in Ukraine, we have to increase the pace of our work. But so long as we can maintain our creative activities, we will keep bringing in audiences.

Ukrainian playwright Natalia Vorozhbit's *Sasha, Take Out the Garbage* also entered the repertoire.



The people need theatre all the more during wartime. Visiting the theatre is not unlike visiting friends and relatives for understanding, for support. And we should provide them with that.

Theatre in the rear

Ivan Franko National Academic Drama Theatre

(Ivano-Frankivsk)

<http://www.dramteatr.if.ua/>

The Ivan Franko National Academic Drama Theatre is located in the city of Ivano-Frankivsk, in western Ukraine at the foot of the Ukrainian Carpathians (Prykarpattia). Both the city and the theatre bear the name of the outstanding Ukrainian writer, poet, and cultural figure Ivan Franko (1856–1916). Now, during the war, Ivano-Frankivsk is far from the front lines.

It was officially created in 1939 as a traveling theatre for amateur groups from western Ukraine. It became the first professional Ukrainian theatre in the Carpathian region during the Soviet era.

The website of the British Council describes the theatre as follows:

For a theatre that celebrated 80 years in 2019, the National Academic Drama Theatre (Ivano-Frankivsk) boasts a remarkably youthful and energetic troupe and staff — one aching for increased opportunity for innovation. Over the last decade Rostyslav Derzhypilskiy has served as artistic director of this venue that seats 900 in its large hall, and between 50–150 in its small hall. Theatre repertoire strikes a performance balance, featuring everything from treatments of contemporary Ukrainian popular fiction to a shock operatic production of *Hamlet* to Albert Camus's *Caligula*, staged by French director Jules Audry. Upcoming productions include works by Sophocles, Shakespeare and Chekhov.

The Ivan Franko Theatre has tirelessly pursued international links, completing tours to the United States, Canada, Italy and Poland. It is currently developing Ukraine's first Shakespeare Festival to feature both domestic and international productions. It has also put together the Gogol Fest and multi-disciplinary Porto Franko festivals. This is an experienced and versatile group, one open to international collaboration and creative exchange, which is ready to tour.

(https://www.britishcouncil.org.ua/sites/default/files/theatre_profile_if_nadt.pdf)

They are an experienced and versatile group, open to international collaboration, creative exchange, and ready to tour.



Rostyslav Derzhypilsky

General director and artistic director - actor, director, producer
at the Ivan Franko National Academic Drama Theatre

Interview date: October 12, 2022

Repertoire without Russian

In 2019, our Theatre attained national status. From that time, we began to precisely plan our work as a theatre center for the whole of Ukraine. To that end, we invited the best directors in the country for our productions. In 2022, we had agreements with several Ukrainian and foreign directors.

We always planned our repertoire to include both classical plays and modern drama. We also included Russian authors, Chekhov and modern playwrights. The premiere of a play based on Dostoyevsky's *The Idiot* was scheduled to take place here on March 12–13, 2022.

I have long dreamed of staging a work by Dostoyevsky, but at this moment, after Russia's invasion, all plays by Russian authors have been removed from our repertoire. Currently, staging Russian plays is out of the question.

February 24

At the beginning of the war, especially after learning about all the military horrors and murders, the question for me personally was, Is there really a need for a theatre in such times? But I did not remain in such a confused state for long.

Literally just a few days after the war started, we turned our theatre into a humanitarian and logistical center for transport and aid, supporting the soldiers of the Ukrainian Armed Forces and displaced persons from the eastern and southern parts of our country.

Our actors, even stars who are widely known in Ukraine and abroad, have become logisticians. Before the war, they participated in theatre projects across

Europe, even starring in movies and television projects. The people therefore placed a lot of trust in these actors, and in our team in general.

Funds from countries around the world immediately began to flow into the bank account of our public organization, which was established long ago to support our Theatre. In just a few days, we collected a lot of goods for humanitarian aid: medicine, household items for displaced persons, and many other things. This work was led by our employees: actors Nadiya Levchenko and Ivan Bindar and our chief choreographer Dmytro Leka. They communicated with parties around the world.

My deputy managing director, sound engineer, and some technical staff went to the front, but I tried to retain our actors because replacing them would make it nearly impossible to recreate the synergy we had developed as a troupe.

Our sewing department, which in normal times sews costumes for the theatre, began to sew items for the military.

Many refugees from Kyiv, Kharkiv, and eastern and southern Ukraine appeared in our city. Some lived in our theatre for a while. Therefore, our actors created a kind of counseling center for refugee children, where they could play, communicate, and spend time.

When theatre becomes more than theatre

We quickly resumed actual theatrical activities. Here is why: A few years ago, we set up a stage in our theatre's large basement, where we played Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and *Romeo and Juliet*. This basement became a bomb shelter for use during air raids, a time when many people came to us, including displaced persons. I must



Hamlet



Romeo and Juliet

confess that such scenes were very difficult to watch, because everyone there was psychologically traumatized. Among the refugees were pregnant women, women with small children, even people bringing pets. They were all very scared during the air raids, even to the point of sickness. In those first days, therefore, all our theatre employees approached them as

psychologists and tried to calm them down.

Then a thought came to me: Why not risk doing what we know best?

I didn't know what plays would be best to perform for these people. Comedies, for people who have witnessed horror and violence? Tragedies, despite our being surrounded by tragedy ourselves?

But we took that risk, and in early March we put on our first performance. That was *Aeneid*, which is based on a burlesque travesty poem by the Ukrainian writer Ivan Kotlyarevskyi and the first literary work published in modern Ukrainian (in 1798). We next played *Hamlet*, to show our gratitude to the people of Great Britain for their unprecedented support of Ukraine, then *Nation*, based on the works of contemporary Ukrainian writer Maria Mathios.

All doubts about the people's need for theatre evaporated when we read a social networking post by one of our viewers. A woman from Bucha wrote the following:

When the war came and the bombing began, I took my family, my children and hid them all in the basement. I didn't cry then, because I understood that I had no right to cry, that I had to keep calm and strong, that I am responsible for my family's safety. We sat in the basement for a week, afraid to go upstairs because everything outside and on the street had been destroyed by rockets. I didn't cry then, either, because I understood that I had to provide my family with

food, water, and warmth. When I realized it was time to move on, we gathered our belongings and fled our city under bombs. Even then I did not cry, because I understood that I was responsible for my family and had no room for panic. When we arrived in Ivano-Frankivsk, I still did not cry, because I knew I still had many issues to solve, starting with finding housing for my family and children.

But one day, during yet another air raid, I got to watch a performance at the Ivan Franko Theatre. I burst into tears from the first words spoken when the director and actors came

onto the stage and started the play, and I cried through the entire thing, until the last sound of their performance. After that, I felt better. I looked at the world around me and gradually understood what I had to do next, how to continue existing for my family. I didn't miss a single performance after that.

These words really struck us. We once again realized how theatre can be a powerful therapy. Art can accomplish even things professionals cannot. A traumatized person must make the decision to visit a psychologist or psychotherapist and request treatment, and the specialist must seek an individual approach for each patient. But those visiting the theatre can subconsciously "live through" their trauma. They can experience the catharsis that audiences have sought at the theatre for thousands of years, and they can leave cleansed and changed.



On August 22, 2021, before the war began, *Aeneid* was staged on the summit of Mt. Pip Ivan.



Nation Photo: Bohdan Savliuk



People gathered for a performance in a theatre basement bomb shelter. Photo: Bohdan Savliuk

We thus introduced our “Bomb Shelter Theatre” project, and during the whole of March we put on plays in our theatre basement. So far as I know, we were the only theatre in Ukraine that continued its activities from the beginning of the war.

Interestingly, we even managed to provide large-scale performances in our bomb shelter. Before that, I had no idea what unusual content was possible in such a limited space.

As early as April 2022, we returned to our usual theatre format, utilizing five stages. When an air-raid alarm sounded, the show would (and still does) stop. Everyone, both actors and audience, heads for the bomb shelter, waits until the all-clear is given, then returns together to finish the performance.

What to stage during the war, and whether to stage about the war

During the first six months of the war, I found it difficult to read books or watch serious films or plays. But I understood that the theatre must move on and that we theatre people should react to what is happening.

But what should we stage plays about? We had extensive discussions with friends and colleagues who are theatre scholars, and we finally realized that in times like these, it is possible to use what we call the “poster style.” While I love the subtle emotions in Chekhov’s plays and the psychological dramas of Dostoyevsky, these do not work during war, because our world has been reduced to black and white. A style like the unequivocal presentations of propaganda posters is thus better suited.

At that time, the famous Ukrainian composers Roman Grygoriv and Illia Razumeiko, who primarily work in contemporary opera, were at the Theatre. Roman is also a member of the Presidential National Orchestra, so we had the idea of developing a joint project with the Presidential Orchestra, with their musical element (more than fifty musicians) and our cast on stage, and me as

director. We created *Fight for Ukraine* as a performance concert in the poster style, including spiritual Ukrainian and world music, Ukrainian poetry classics by Taras Shevchenko and Vasyl Stefanyk, and Ukrainian military songs.



Fight for Ukraine

This performance presented themes of Ukrainian identity and how Russia had destroyed us in previous centuries. Some very politically incorrect things were often spoken on that stage. But we realized that such was necessary for both us and our audience. That held for both western Ukraine locals and, most interestingly, for refugees from the east and south of the country, within whom a Ukrainian spirit had already sprouted. We realized that they too needed to be able to recognize themselves as Ukrainians. Even in the Russian acculturated east, there are now people who self-identify as Ukrainian. That's pretty cool too. A new Ukrainian nation is arising before our eyes.

I am very reserved about topical drama on subjects related to modern war. I know there have been many readings of Ukrainian authors here and in Europe, and that documentary theatre has become very popular. But I think a certain time should pass so that we can view current events from afar, from a little distance. Right now, only painful reflections are possible, but theatrical art calls for a more refined understanding and artistic generalization.

In the West, everyone is very interested in our reaction to these military events, but I want to prevent Ukrainian art and theatre from being associated solely with war, so that we do not reduce ourselves to war victims, forever crying and bemoaning our fate. We must maintain a higher level of artistic accomplishment.

Our plans regarding Ukraine

Our repertoire of course includes domestic classics. But it so happened that as

director I had never staged a classical Ukrainian work. That is why I want to realize such productions now, but we will of course interpret them from modern perspectives, not in classical presentations.

We have planned premieres of plays by Ukrainian playwrights, including *Sorochintsy Fair* by Hryhoriy Kvitka-Osnovyanenko and *Forest Song* by Lesya Ukrainka. And we will definitely stage comedies! There is no need for avoiding levity. Without doubt, we need to heal the nation, and theatre has proven itself as a powerful therapy. We are currently working on these performances, with premieres scheduled for the end of October and November. Other than that, I am afraid I am not yet at liberty to speak.

After the interview: Marina Kotelenets



Five months have passed since I recorded these interviews. Five months of war. During that time, the Ukrainian theatre had to act as did all Ukrainians throughout our country: to conduct military operations, while at the same time saving lives and everything connected with them.

Theatres have resumed their work to the extent possible, restoring previous performances and even preparing premieres. During this period, many stages in our country presented performances about the war. But audiences, as might be expected, currently prefer “light” performances. Comedies, melodramas, and detective stories have traditionally led box office sales, and such trends have only strengthened during the war. Also, live concerts by orchestras and classical ensembles have suddenly become wildly popular. Many are defiantly held by candlelight, metamorphosing uncertainty regarding the availability of light and electricity (since buildings and entire urban districts can lose power at any time) into an exquisite aesthetic gesture.

But the most important trend today is incredible activity among young Ukrainian playwrights and their incisive, gut reactions to the shocks of war.

Throughout the world today, there is unprecedented interest in our authors.

Readings, performances, and festivals with Ukrainian playwrights and actors are being held all over Europe and in the United States. Collections of their new plays have been released in France and the US.

Texts by today's Ukrainian authors are in many respects journalistic and documentary. They are like transcripts of the lives Ukrainian people are currently experiencing, the trials and travails of ordinary people. Their historical value is undeniable, but farther down the road we will see them flower into great artistic results.

In the meantime, the Ukrainian text that has become best known to the world is Natalia Vorozhbit's *Bad Roads*, which the author wrote in 2017 about the start of the war in eastern Ukraine, which stretches all the way back to 2014.

Kotelenets, Marina

Marina Kotelenets graduated from the Kyiv National I.K. Karpenko-Karyi University of Theatre, Cinema and Television (M.S. Theatre Studies) and the Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv (M.S. Psychology). Marina worked as an art critic and journalist for Ukrainian publications, then began teaching at her alma mater Karpenko-Karyi University in the Department of Theatre Studies. Since 2011, she also works at the UPO All-Ukrainian League of Authors as an expert in working with theatres and playwrights. Since 2016, she has been director of the All-Ukrainian League of Authors.

(Translation: Tatiana Vernoslov and Tony Gonzalez)

Developments in Japan and Overseas

Continuing Creating After Leaving My Homeland

An interview with director Timofey Kulyabin

Interviewer: Uchida Kensuke

(Part-time lecturer at Chiba University and researcher of Russian theatre)

Interview date: November 7, 2022, starting at 8:00 pm (Japan time)



Timofey Kulyabin

Russia invaded Ukraine on February 24, 2022, and as of November, eight months have passed with no sign of an end to the fighting. During this period, there has been a movement among Japanese theatre professionals and theatre researchers who love Russian theatre and have established an amicable relation with it, to support stage performers from both Russia and Ukraine and to learn about the current situation. So how are those Russian theatre people doing now?

The Japanese Centre of International Theatre Institute interviewed Timofey Kulyabin, a director currently based in Germany who received acclaim in 2019 for his *Three Sisters*, which was performed entirely in sign language at the Tokyo Metropolitan Theatre. We asked him about what he has

been thinking and feeling from the invasion to the present and how he has continued his work as a theatre artist.

After February 24, everything changed

I heard that you were working on an opera in Prague on February 24, the day Russia launched its invasion of Ukraine. Could you tell us how you felt that day?

TK: I was shocked, of course. It was a huge shock to both me and my colleagues. I think our fear outweighed our surprise at being faced with such an unexpected situation. Our lives changed forever after that day. You might even say that a new life began.

You immediately posted an anti-war statement on Instagram. Many other artists too made anti-war statements in various forms. However, on March 4, the so-called “Fake News Law” was enacted as a presidential decree, and now it’s a crime to oppose the war, or even to hope for peace, and Russia has become completely devoid of freedom of speech.

TK: Now, in Russia, simply publicly speaking out against the war can land you in jail, and leaving the country is very difficult. It’s like the whole country has been hijacked and taken hostage.

Recently, *Theatre Magazine* editor-in-chief Marina Davydova and the director Dmitry Krymov have left the country, but those remaining in the country are having a difficult time. On April 21, you resigned as artistic director of the Krasny Fakel (“Red Torch”) Theatre in Novosibirsk. Was that related to your anti-war statement?

TK: Yes, of course.

Was your resignation voluntary?

TK: Well, it’s a very complicated story, but the truth is that they made me prepare a document saying I was resigning “for personal reasons” and told me to sign it. The Russian Federal



Uchida Kensuke
Photo: Ayada Shoichi

Security Service (FSB), what used to be called the KGB, contacted the theatre and told us that if Timofey Kulyabin continued to make anti-war statements, the entire theatre would be held responsible. They were even prepared to fire my parents, who also work at the theatre. So I was forced to announce that I was quitting on my own for personal reasons.

I didn't realize such pressures were actually put on you... Performances have continued at the Krasny Fasel Theatre since your resignation, but is the government still pressuring them? If you just could tell us whatever you can...

TK: I'm sure that the theatre group members are feeling terrible pressure and are depressed. I have been communicating with them by e-mail, and since the mobilization order was issued on September 21, many of them, especially the young actors, are very anxious about being sent to the war zone. Some of them have left Russia.

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The Theatre had a donation box to support the Donbass region of Ukraine and held a charity festival in October. Is that related to such pressures?

TK: I don't know if the charity event in support of the Donbass region was a voluntary theatre project. But there were similar events for political propaganda even before the war started. Not long ago everything was about "liberating the people of the Donbass from Nazis," and more recently "liberating them from Satanists," but either way, the government remains in control. Unfortunately, Russia is not a free country.

In Moscow, you worked with the Bolshoi Theatre and Teatr Naciy (the Theatre of Nations). Have you kept in touch?

TK: As you know, the Bolshoi has removed my works from their repertoire, and they have not contacted me. Teatr Naciy is still performing some of my works, such as Chekhov's *Ivanov* and Kleist's *The Broken Jug*, so I'm sure we will remain connected in some way. However, a number of the actors who were in those productions have left the country, so I don't know all the details...

Theatrical artists are leaving the country one after another

Chulpan Khamatova, who appeared in *Ivanov*, relocated to Latvia and is now working with the New Riga Theatre (Jaunais Rigas Teatris).

TK : Khamatova is a well-known actress, so her defection was a big topic, but I have heard that quite a few other actors have also left the country, including Ingeborga Dapkunaite , who was in *Burnt by the Sun* (1994, directed by Nikita Mikhalkov).

In May you directed Bernard-Marie Koltes' *In the Solitude of Cotton Fields* at the Dailes Teatris in Riga.

TK : Yes, Khamatova came to us on the first day of *Cotton Fields*. We are friends, so we know each other's situation.

The play and film director Kirill Serebrennikov has also left the country, recently directing *The Decameron* at the Deutsches Theater Berlin, where you directed *Platonov* this past October. Are you in contact with him as well?

TK : Yes, that's right. Two years ago, Kirill and I held rehearsals at the Deutsches Theater at about the same time. He directed *The Decameron* and I directed *Miss Julie*. This was just when the COVID pandemic was starting, and Germany went under lockdown about a week after the first showing of *The Decameron*. Kirill and I are acquaintances, or friends or something, something hard to define, but we are both similar in that we are expressing our anti-war stance from outside of Russia.

Seventh Studio, a project Serbrennikov represented, was



In the Solitude of Cotton Fields (2022), Dailes Teatris
Photo: Māris Morkāns

Miss Julie (2021), Deutsches Theater Berlin Photo: Arno Declair



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accused of embezzling public funds, and you too were involved in a scandal in which the religious community sued you for your production of *Tannhäuser*. So it seems to me that the two of you are in similar positions.

In your recent work with the Deutsches Theater and the National Theatre in Prague, have you experienced any inconvenience in presenting your work because you are Russian? Is there any kind of cancellation movement against Russian culture?

TK : I have never experienced anything like that. I think stories about Russian productions being cancelled or hostility to Russian culture are just myths or rumors. Rather, I feel that in Germany everyone became more sympathetic and cooperative toward Russian-speaking artists after the war started. Of course, this may be partly because I opposed the war from the beginning.

Well I'm glad to hear that.

Censorship and Suppression of *Tannhäuser*

Again, please tell us about *Tannhäuser*, which premiered at the Novosibirsk

Opera and Ballet Theatre in 2014. Your staging of the young Christ in place of the medieval knight Tannhäuser, who was consumed by lust, was decried by the Church as an insult to the faith and taken to court. In the end, the court ruled that there was no criminality involved and the production was allowed to continue, but the authorities later intervened, *Tannhäuser* was removed from the repertoire, and the manager, Boris Mezdrich, was fired. I think that was an important case in terms of the religious community and the government using legislation to pressure the arts.

TK : *Tannhäuser* is just one example. It was total censorship. But what I want everyone to understand is that “religion” and “the Church” are two completely different things. It is actually not religion or faith that negatively impacts the art world, but the organization, the Russian Orthodox Church. We can even consider the Church as a criminal organization. The military, politicians, and the Church are three entities responsible for the functioning of the Russian government, and all three should be discussed equally. In my personal opinion, the Church deserves to be tried in international court.

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Patriarch Kirill supports the current war, doesn't he. And not only your plays, but also productions like Konstantin Raikin's LGBT-themed *All Shades of Blue* have been sabotaged by the authorities and Orthodox Church activists. I agree with your opinion that the Church should be tried as a tool of the government.

TK : The Russian Orthodox Church today acts in collusion with the Putin regime and is responsible for their propaganda. It works as an extension of the government based on a logic that has nothing to do with faith. So I think we have to consider



Tannhäuser (2014), Novosibirsk Opera and Ballet Theatre
Photo: Viktor Dmitriev

religion and faith as something completely separate from religious organizations.

Creating “one and only” works

Chekhov's *Three Sisters* was a truly wonderful production that was performed in Japan in 2019. I went to the theatre every day and watched every performance.

TK: Thank you very much

There was a bit of a slip-up on the last day. In the scene where Olga borrows a key from Andrei, there was no key on the stage. I got goosebumps seeing them have a proper sign language conversation about it and getting through the scene nonetheless. The actors didn't just memorize signs for their dialogue, they must have really mastered sign language. It must have taken them a lot of time and effort to reach that point. Did the actors not object to the use of sign language in the production?

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TK: No, not at all. [laughs]

It seems most people would think that having studied sign language that much, they'd want to do at least one more production in sign language.

TK: I didn't really think that way. The important thing was to make something experimental, something unlike anything else.

It was indeed unlike anything else. It was a historic production in the history of Chekhov productions.

Editor: In *Three Sisters*, there were many moments in every scene where despair and hope clash. I felt that such a work could only be created by drawing something out of the actors themselves, rather than by how they read the dialogue.

TK: I think so, too.



Editor: What are the minimal qualities that you look for in an actor?

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TK : When I started college, I was asked the very same question: “What is the most important quality for an actor?” I couldn’t decide on one, because there are many aspects to being an actor. One day I asked Pyotr Fomenko, the professor director, “What are the most important qualities for an actor?” What do you think he answered? “Depends on the actor.” [laughs]

Did you choose the Deutsches Theater’s *Platonov* yourself?

TK : The Theatre offered me that one. *Platonov* is a very long play, so I rewrote it with a dramaturge. We rewrote it about five times, editing out characters and several scenes.

Yes, it would be a seven- or eight-hours if you tried to stage it as-is. In the original, four women appear along with the main character, Platonov, but in your production, the characters are all elderly.

TK : I set the play in a nursing home and staged it so that all the characters except

Platonov (2022), Deutsches Theater Berlin Photo: Arno Declair



Platonov die at the end. Some of them die of old age. While *Platonov* is outdated in some ways, it also has a very innocent side, and I wanted to emphasize that. The characters look old, but they act like youths and children. These old people share the fate that they have little time left until their death. But they have their own lives, and just like young

people, they fall in love, get into trouble, come together, and fall apart. I wanted to show that this is what motivates them to live.

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You have directed *Three Sisters*, *Ivanov*, and now *Platonov*. What is the significance of Chekhov as a writer for you?

TK: Let's see... Chekhov is a great playwright. Unlike a novel, a play is expressed in the form of dialogue, and I think the secret of a Chekhov performance lies in how its dialogue is structured. He is deeply observant of people and extremely intelligent in what he puts into his dialogues and the words he uses for them. I believe he is a writer who has written interesting works that will never be boring, even in this day and age.

Themes of "modernization" and "forgetting"

You often change the setting of your productions to the present day. For example, you produced *Oedipus* as a contemporary mystery. Modernization itself is not an uncommon take, everyone tries it and usually fails, but your works always have the strength to reach the audience. I think that comes from the depth at which you read the text, but how do you undergo your interpretation and reconstruction?

TK : The time required varies according to the piece, but when reconstructing a text, I consult with the dramaturge and discuss it with the stage designer, reading the work very deeply and paying close attention to various details.

You mentioned that when you directed *Macbeth* in 2008, you compared seven or eight different translations. Did you learn that kind of reading at GITIS (the Russian Institute of Theatre Arts)?

TK : It is a technique I developed in my own way. The text reflects my tastes and preferences. Even if it is a classic, the audience who watches the play will be a modern audience. I believe that the people speaking on stage and those watching the play—in other words, the actors and the audience—should speak the same language. Therefore, even if the story takes place in ancient Greece, the actors should speak in modern language.

Editor: From past interviews, I get the sense that along with themes like “my existence does not fit these times or this place” and “this is not my place” that are common across your works, you often use the words “abandoned” and “forgotten.” As an example, the characters in *Three Sisters* are forced to live in



Eugene Onegin (2012), Krasny Fakel Theatre (From a streamed video)

the countryside, even though Moscow is where they should be. They have the feeling that their existence will one day be forgotten. Do you have any special feelings about words or concepts like “forgotten” and “abandoned”?

TK: Yes, forgetting is a major theme in *Eugene Onegin* as well. People change and are forgotten. That a forgotten person is forever lost is an idea that forms the basis of Russian literature. The absurdity is that when we die, we will be forgotten, and given that, why do we live? This is a universal theme in art. It is difficult to find a theme within myself, but I think “forgetting” is probably an important keyword for me.

A new work on the theme of war

Editor: When does inspiration come to you in your creative process?

TK: It’s different every time. Inspiration is not something we can control; it has to come on its own. Inspiration often comes to me suddenly while I am working.

Do you plan to make a production about the current situation between Russia and Ukraine?

TK: Of course. I think my next work will have war as its theme.

Please tell us about the concept for your next work, if you can.

TK: In April 2023, I will be staging *Macbeth* at Schauspiel Frankfurt. It will be a very new interpretation of *Macbeth*, quite different from the show I directed in 2008. After that, I will be putting on Brecht’s *Fear and Misery of the Third Reich* at the Russian Theatre in Tallinn, Estonia. As for opera work, I will be directing Tchaikovsky’s *The Queen of Spades* at the Opéra National de Lyon.

I’ll definitely have to go to Europe to see that. [laughs] Please come to Japan again. There are many people here who love your work.

By the way, have you always been interested in Japan? The music video for Madonna’s song “Jump” you used in *Eugene Onegin* featured dancers

performing parkour on the streets of Tokyo, and the music playing during the duel between Lensky and Onegin was “Yearning,” a song by the Japanese band Mono.

TK : I’m the one who selected Mono. I’m a specialist, so I know everything. [laughs] I would love to visit Japan again. I am very attracted to Japan. I like it so much you could even say I’ve fallen in love with it. I have only seen Tokyo, but I would love to visit the countryside as well, since all megalopolises are similar to some extent.

Well I live in the countryside, so please come visit my home. Thank you very much for speaking with us today. We’ve had a wonderful time. Like Nina in *The Seagull* meeting her crush Trigorin, I want to shout “сон” (it’s like a dream)! [laughs]

TK : I hope we can meet in Japan. And please come to Europe anytime. I’ll be waiting for you.



Photo: Ayada Shoichi

After the interview

Uchida Kensuke

On December 22, about three months after this interview, Kulyabin’s productions of *The Wild Duck*, *Eugene Onegin*, and *Three Sisters* were removed from the repertoire of the Krasny Fasel Theatre, where Kulyabin had been artistic director. These three productions were signature works at that theatre, nominated for a Golden Mask award at Russia’s largest theatre festival, and although the Theatre gave the excuse of faulty equipment, there is no doubt that they were targeted by authorities and pressured to cancel those performances.

The next day, on the 23rd, Aleksandr Kulyabin, father of Timofey Kulyabin and general director at Krasny Fasel, was removed from his post. The local press

did not mention any reason for this, but it is likely because he was held jointly responsible for his son Timofey, who was operating from overseas.

On the 24th, Kulyabin posted a message on Facebook. He began by stating that this decision was not by choice of those working at Krasny Fakel, and after thanking everyone at the theatre, including his father, and writing that he was proud of the work they had accomplished together, he concluded by saying:

“Two years ago, we performed and presented an anniversary play called *My 'Red Torch'*. I came up with the name and it was important to me that everyone on and off the stage could say that the theatre was ‘mine.’ Whatever happens, it’s mine—and ours—and no one can take it away.”

Kulyabin, Timofey

Born in 1984 in Izhevsk, capital of the Soviet Udmurt Republic. Graduated from the Russian Institute of Theatre Arts (GITIS) in 2007, he received high acclaim as a director early on. He won Russia’s most prestigious theatre award, the Golden Mask, for his productions of *Eugene Onegin* in 2012 and *Three Sisters* in 2015. In 2015, he was appointed artistic director of the Krasny Fakel Theatre in Novosibirsk Oblast (until 2022). He has directed many operas and is currently continuing his creative work in various places in Europe.

Uchida, Kensuke

Part-time lecturer at Chiba University and visiting researcher at the Tsubouchi Memorial Theatre Museum at Waseda University. Specializes in Russian theatre and the history of theatrical exchange between Japan and Russia. He is also active as a dramaturge and playwright, and he currently offers Russian language courses and provides Russian theatre news on YouTube. His recent co-authored works include *An Encyclopedia of Russian Culture* (2019, Maruzen), *Anthology of Western Theatre Theory* (2019, Getsuyosha), and *Kabuki and Revolutionary Russia* (2017, Shinwasha). In 2022, his new translation of Chekhov’s *The Seagull* was published by Ronsosha.

(Writing: Sakaguchi Kaya / Translation: Tony Gonzalez)



The Tale of King Kuroshima (Kuroshima-o monogatari) at the 2022 *Uchinaa shibai* appreciation workshop. (Photo provided by National Theatre Okinawa)

Developments in Japan and Overseas

A Retrospective on the Fiftieth Anniversary of Okinawa's Reversion to Japan

The Rich World of Uchinaa Shibai, a Theatre Reflecting Okinawa's Turbulent History

Uchinaa shibai (in Japanese, *Okinawa shibai*) is a form of drama that arose among the Okinawan people after the Ryukyu Kingdom was dissolved and performing arts previously seen only at court spread into the public realm. Rooted in traditional culture but exploring familiar, resonant themes, *Uchinaa shibai* became hugely popular, and many masterpieces were written in the two genres of *hogen serifu geki* and *Ryukyu kageki*, or "dialect

theatre” and “Ryukyu lyric drama,” respectively. However, particularly around the time of the Second World War, Okinawa was placed in highly straitened circumstances, and *Uchinaa shibai* was not shielded from the effects of Japanese and US politics in turn.

Nevertheless, *Uchinaa shibai* overcame these great challenges to survive to the present day. Although it has often been overshadowed in public attention by the other traditional Ryukyuan performing arts, on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of Okinawa’s reversion to Japan, let us explore the history and nature of this theatre of the people.

〈History〉

The Birth and Evolution of *Uchinaa Shibai*, a Theatre for the People

Hosoi Naoko

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Uchinaa shibai is a form of popular theatre born of the dissolution of the Ryukyu Kingdom in the late 1870s. Based on traditional culture and using Okinawan language and music, it was created by the people of Okinawa as “our theatre.” Despite coming perilously close to disappearing during Okinawa’s modern history, it remains beloved today. On the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of Okinawa’s reversion to Japan, this retrospective outlines the history of *Uchinaa shibai*.



North Hall of Shuri Castle (prewar), where the Ryukyu court received emissaries.
(Photo provided by Naha City Museum of History)

Okinawa’s Traditional Culture

The traditional culture of Okinawa is the intangible culture of the age of the Ryukyu Kingdom, created mainly as a tool of Ryukyu court diplomacy and refined and developed over centuries.

The Ryukyu Kingdom maintained relations with both China and Japan.

Emissaries from China, known as *sakuhoshi*, were welcomed with performances called *ukanshin udui* (Ja. *okansen odori*). *Ukanshin udui* included *kumi udui* (Ja. *kumi odori*), a form of theatre combining song, dialogue, and dance; *buyo*, classical dance; and *uzagaku*, chamber music of the Chinese Ming and Qing dynasties. With respect to Japan—specifically, the daimyo of the Satsuma Domain—meals served as tribute were accompanied by *To udui* (Ja. *To odori*), faithful copies of Chinese plays performed in Chinese, as well as *buyo* and *uzagaku*.

The performers of this period were Ryukyu nobles who learned these arts as needed. There were no professionals dedicated solely to performance.

The Dawn of Public Performance and Theatrical Venues

In mainland Japan, the traditional domains were replaced by prefectures in 1871, but things proceeded differently in the Ryukyu Kingdom. First, in 1872, the kingdom was redesignated the “Ryukyu Domain,” although the Ryukyu court was preserved. Then in 1879, the Ryukyu Domain was abolished and Okinawa Prefecture established in its place. The policies pursued by Japan with respect to



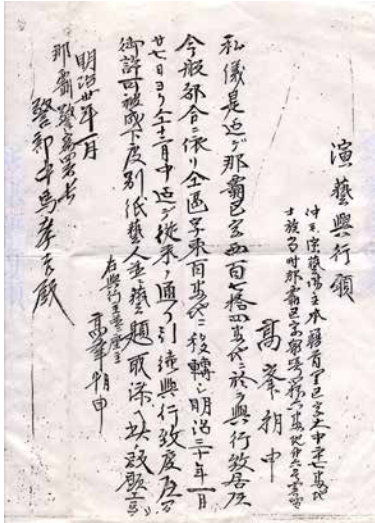
Detail from *Emissary Procession (Sakuhoshi gyoretsu no zu)* showing chief emissary and vice-emissary. (Collection of Okinawa Prefectural Museum and Art Museum)



Detail from *Ryukyuan Dance and Music Scroll (Ryukyujin bugaku omakimono)* showing *uchi kumi udui*. (Collection of Okinawa Prefectural Museum and Art Museum)



Detail from *Ryukyuan Dance and Music, With Folk Dances (Ryukyujin bugaku narabi ni odori no zu)* showing music being performed (Collection of Okinawa Prefectural Museum and Art Museum)



Request from the Nakamo Theatre to stage a play (1897). Due to claims that theatre corrupted public morals, permission was required to stage public entertainments. (Photo provided by Naha City Museum of History)

the Ryukyus between 1872 and 1879 are collectively called the “Disposition of the Ryukyus” (*Ryukyu shobun*). Part of this process was the dissolution of the Ryukyu court, stripping the nobility who served there of their vocations. *To udui* was lost along with the court, but some of the former nobles trained in the performance of *ukanshin udui* eked out a living by continuing to perform in secret at restaurants and similar venues. They also taught these arts to other former nobles. In 1882, Okinawa was brought into step with the Japanese mainland by the promulgation of strict regulations on public performances of dramatic works. At the time, however,

public performance itself had yet to be established in Okinawa, which led to an unusual situation in which it was born and developed within a preexisting regulatory framework.

By 1883, “*kamajii* theatres” had made their appearance. *Kamajii* were straw bags used to hold rice and other dry goods, and enterprising producers used these as makeshift walls to enclose performance spaces. Located near Shian Bridge in Naha, these *kamajii* theatres were crude, roofless performance venues charging minimal entrance fees. They were also where the performing arts of the Ryukyu court were revealed to the common people for the first time and the inception of public performance in Okinawa. In the 1890s, more permanent theatres began to appear. The first solid, tile-roofed theatre was the Nakamo Theatre in Naha, which was built on land reclaimed from the Kumoji River in 1891.

Popularization and the Formation of *Uchinaa Shibai*

Although the performing arts of Okinawa had begun as tools of Ryukyu court

diplomacy predating the Ryukyu Disposition, finding a new audience in the common people led to a process of gradual popularization. In the field of dance, the first generation of performers—those who had learned directly from the original performers of *ukanshin udui*—revolutionized the art, creating dances that took up themes from everyday life, as well as group dances. These became known collectively as *zo udui* (Ja. *zo odori*).

The popularization of *kumi udui* was driven by the second generation of performers. Broadly speaking, two approaches were pursued. The first was to retain the existing character of *kumi udui*—its dialogue, lyrics, and choreographic gestures—while changing the key themes from “loyalty” or “obedience” to stories about parents and children or relationships between lovers. This approach would eventually produce *Ryukyu kageki*, “Ryukyu lyric theatre,” one of the major genres of *Uchinaa shibai*.

The other approach was to perform in a realistic style using colloquial language, which was not an element of traditional *kumi udui*. This approach resulted in *hogen serifu geki*, “dialect theatre,” another major genre of *Uchinaa shibai*, which directly incorporated new elements inspired by the political plays called *soshi shibai* then arriving in Okinawa from the Japanese mainland as well as the Shinpa (“New School”) plays and kabuki that Okinawan performers saw in mainland Japan and Taiwan.

Of these two approaches, Ryukyu lyric drama may seem easier for performers to experiment with, since it used the existing elements of *kumi udui*. In fact, however, dialect theatre was the first to emerge.

The Dialect Drama Boom

The first play to arrive in Okinawa from the Japanese mainland is said to have been a *soshi shibai* play staged in 1896. *Soshi shibai* were based on new political beliefs like the Liberty and People’s Rights movement, combining verbal elucidation of these philosophies with bodily action to create a form of theatre. The actors were amateurs and their technique crude, but their works had a certain realism and rough-hewn power. The realistic effects involving fake blood and the rapidly changing programs came as a shock to the audiences of the day, as can be

seen in contemporary newspaper accounts and memoirs by performers. With their colloquial dialogue and realistic performance style, *soshi shibai* demonstrated for the people of Okinawa a type of theatre that was utterly different from *kumu udui* and classical dance.

From around 1898, dialect theatre gradually rose in popularity while *kumi udui* and classical dance began to disappear from theatrical programs. In 1903, an organization called the Kogekikai (“Theatre Appreciation Society”) was founded by performers with the stated goal of improving the quality of theatrical programs and the social standing of the performing fraternity. Members of the Kogekikai took turns visiting the Japanese mainland and Taiwan, bringing back plays to perform in Okinawa. The Kogekikai played a critical role, with Uema Seihin, in particular, mirroring the efforts of mainland figures striving to create a new theatre by introducing mainland plays without any adaptations for Okinawan audiences.

Uema’s Okinawa-za theatre competed with the Kyuyo-za, which was run by the three Tokashiki brothers, Shugi, Shuryo, and Shurei. For a nine-year period starting in 1906, plays taking Ryukyuan history as their theme enjoyed massive popularity, inaugurating what might be called the “Age of Dialect Theatre.” The first of these historical plays is said to have been *Record of the Origins of Hokuzan* (*Hokuzan yuraiki*), produced by the Tokashiki brothers in 1902.

Tragic Female Protagonists: The Birth of Ryukyu Lyric Drama

In Okinawa, Ryukyu lyric drama is known simply as “lyric drama” (*kageki*). It is said to have been born of *uchi kumi udui* (Ja. *uchi kumi odori*), one of the choreographic elements making up *kumi udui*. These dances were performed by a contrasting pair of performers—for example, actors playing male and female characters. Traditionally, the songs accompanying these dances were performed by additional musicians, but from around 1900 dancers began singing the songs themselves, creating a form of comedy. Under the influence of the dialect theatre boom, however, these performances became longer and more tragic. Finally, in 1910, the genre’s first tragedy with a female protagonist was staged. This was the

beginning of Ryukyu lyric theatre, and tragic stories and female protagonists remained key to achieving popularity in the genre.

For a time, the world of Okinawan theatre became a three-way contest between the Tokashiki brothers' theatre, now renamed the Meiji-za; the Okinawa-za, and the newly completed Naka-za. The “three great lyric dramas,” which are performed even today, are said to be *Aka in Tumai* (*Tumai Aka*) (written by Ganeko Yaei and first performed in 1910), *Peony in the Deep Mountains* (*Okuyama no botan*) (written by Iraha Inkichi and first performed in 1914), and *Hando-gwa of Iejima* (*Iejima Hando-gwa*) (written by Majikina Yuko and first performed in 1924). *Yakushido Temple* (*Yakushido*) (also written by Iraha Inkichi and first performed in its present form in 1912), which added humor and lively spectacle to the motifs of *Aka in Tumai*, was also highly popular, and is sometimes added to the above list to create the “four great lyric dramas.”



Family photograph of Ganeko Yaei, author of *Aka in Tumai* (circa 1909). (Photo provided by Naha City Museum of History)



Iraha Inkichi and Tokashiki Shuryo in stage costumes. (Photo provided by Naha City Museum of History)

Pressure on *Uchinaa Shibai*

The first external pressure on *Uchinaa shibai* was the imposition of Japanese mainland regulations on theatre without any consideration for Okinawa's unique circumstances. As noted above, in Okinawa the development of public performances was preceded by the regulations that constrained it. The first set of regulations in 1882 was followed by more regulations in 1886, 1891, 1892, and 1929.

However, the impact of these rules and regulations paled beside that of the negative campaign waged against *Uchinaa shibai* in the newspapers. This

surprisingly tenacious campaign focused its attacks on lyric drama in particular, which had won many female fans. The level of the drama was criticized, and male actors were castigated over their relationships with women. Whether these accusations were true or not, the attacks strongly emphasized elements that a traditional perspective would view as social harms. In some regions, women were barred from theatres altogether. Nevertheless, the protracted nature of this negative campaign and the stream of new regulations and prohibitions is proof that public performances continued regardless. *Uchinaa shibai* enjoyed the unflinching support of the people.

In the second half of the 1930s, the campaign to increase use of the Japanese language entered a new stage, with measures once confined to schools expanded



Makishi Kochu during his time with the Matsu theatre troupe. Makishi was designated one of the four holders of this Intangible Cultural Property. (Photo from *Photo Album of the Great Ryukyus*, provided by the Naha City Museum of History)

throughout the community. At the regional level, groups of young women were assembled for the campaign, which took mothers raising children as its first target. From 1937, these efforts merged with the “Japanization” movement (targeting Korea, Taiwan, and Okinawa) and intensified so greatly that they become known as the “movement to annihilate dialects.” It was true that people who traveled from Okinawa to the mainland to study or work faced discrimination if they could not speak Japanese fluently, and so there had been movements actively promoting Japanese even among the people of Okinawa. But Japanization went beyond matters of language, demanding that important elements of everyday life conform to mainland patterns. In Okinawa, people were forced to change their surnames to Japanese ones and were barred from building new tombs in the turtle-back form traditional to the Ryukyus. The

theatrical world was not exempted from these policies, and from 1942 all plays were required to be performed in standard Japanese. This imperiled the very existence of *Uchinaa shibai*, which was performed in Okinawan. Being robbed of its language was a far greater blow than the prohibitions and negative campaigns that had come before.

Meanwhile, with increased movement of people, such as the waves of immigration that began in 1899 and evacuations to the mainland during the war, traveling *Uchinaa shibai* troupes appeared, and classical Ryukyuan dance took root where performers settled.

Uchinaa Shibai's Postwar Revival

In 1945, at the beginning of the period of *Amerika-yu* or US rule, the military government formed a fifteen-member Okinawa Advisory Council as a consultative body. At its first meeting in August 29, the council suggested that the list of eleven administrative



A green room right after the war. Collection of Keystone Studios. (Photo provided by Naha City Museum of History)



An excited audience at an *Uchinaa shibai* performance in decades past. (Photo provided by Naha City Museum of History)

departments proposed by the military government be augmented with a Department of Arts and Monuments as well a Department of General Affairs. The former, the council said, was needed to “stabilize the hearts of the people, update their lifestyles, and improve their tastes.” The proposal was accepted, and the military government ordered the formation of these thirteen departments.

The first head of the Department of Arts and Monuments was Toyama Seiken, a former elementary school principal who was also a member of the Okinawa Advisory Council. On September 6, at the council’s sixth meeting, Toyama requested support from all regions for “the commencement of tours by performing arts troupes, with particular emphasis on Okinawan song and dance,” with “promotional announcements” during intermissions seeking to “stabilize the hearts of the people, update their lifestyles, and improve their tastes.” Although it was a consultative body, the Okinawa Advisory Council also played an executive role. Under its direction, the Department of Arts and Monuments reached out to *Uchinaa shibai* performers and had them form the Okinawan Performing Arts Federation. It formed screening panels and held auditions, from which fifty actors and musicians were issued certifications as performers. These certified performers were divided into three traveling troupes named “Matsu,” “Take,” and “Ume,” meaning “Pine,” “Bamboo,” and “Plum,” respectively. At first, each troupe had around 16 members, but their numbers eventually rose to around 40 performers each. The *Uchinaa shibai* performers of this period were thus public servants, a fact that was not lost on the public, which sometimes criticized the troupes for charging entry fees on top of their government salaries.

The three troupes divided the prefecture up between them and traveled their routes giving performances. For the people of Okinawa, *Uchinaa shibai* was a part of everyday life. Many new open-air theatres were opened, with 44 said to be operating by 1948. With just three troupes to perform in those 44 theatres, demand was greatly underserved. Audiences wanted more performances, and actors and musicians without formal certification demanded recognition.

The Department of Arts and Monuments, which had authority over these matters, became part of the Okinawa Civil Government, the successor to the

Okinawa Advisory Council, and was then absorbed into the Department of Education in April 1948. Minutes from a meeting of department heads held in October that year record comments from the chief of police asking, after some comments about public morals, whether it would be acceptable to add two new official theatrical troupes named “Crane” and “Rebirth,” bringing the total to five. Governor Shikiya Koshin ordered the heads of the General Affairs Department, the Police Department, and the Public Health Department to explore the matter. What happened next cannot be followed from records alone, but before the end of the year, the forming of theatrical troupes was opened to all, and a stream of new troupes appeared on the scene.

The Decline of *Uchinaa Shibai*

Once the doors were opened and anyone could form an *Uchinaa shibai* troupe, the genre flourished for a time. There were contests sponsored by newspapers and even theatrical festivals. Before long, however, both performances and troupes



Okinawa TV's *Wednesday Theatre (Suiyo gekijo)* (1960s). From left: Iraha Akira, Ogimi Kotaro, Yagi Masao. (Photo from *Photo Album of the Great Ryukyus*, provided by the Naha City Museum of History)

Okiei movie theatre flying the US and Japanese flags (January 1, 1953).
 (Photo provided by the Naha City Museum of History)



began to plunge in number. One factor in this decline was the beginning of television broadcasts in Okinawa in 1959 and radio broadcasts of *Uchinaa shibai* in 1960. In the early days of Okinawan broadcasting, stations aired recordings of *Uchinaa shibai*, or filmed performances in theatres and broadcast them as live programs. Audience figures were said to be particularly dismal on days when these broadcasts were held.

Struggling to retain their audiences, *Uchinaa shibai* venues reinvented themselves as film theatres, only to see films, too, face pressure from the rise of television. The Okiei, a film theatre that opened in 1951, changed direction in 1965. It transferred its distribution rights to other theatres, renovated its theatre for live performances—complete with a revolving stage—and set about attracting audiences with all-star performances featuring luminaries of the *Uchinaa shibai* scene. This created a vicious circle for other troupes: bereft of their stars, they had even less ability to draw an audience, and without the necessary funds to build venues with staging facilities as advanced as those of the Okiei, they continued to lose customers to the larger theatre. For the Okiei, the all-star initiative had been

a last-ditch effort to escape certain doom, but one of its side effects was to weaken *Uchinaa shibai* as a genre. Finally, in 1977, the Okie's own productions of *Uchinaa shibai* came to an end as well.

Meanwhile, in 1967, the Government of the Ryukyu Islands—Okinawa's administrative body from 1952 to 1972—had declared the five surviving *kumi udui* by Tamagusuku Chokun Important Intangible Cultural Properties, naming seven actors and seven musicians as their holders. The performers named included celebrated *Uchinaa shibai* stars like Tamagusuku Seigi (1881–1971), Majikina Yuko (1889–1982), Oyadomari Kosho (1897–1986), and Miyagi Nozo I (1906–1989), who by the declared holder of *kumu udui* as an Important Intangible Cultural Property at the national level in 1972. This speaks to the physical affinities between performing *kumi udui* and *Uchinaa shibai*.



***Uchinaa Shibai* After Reversion**

In 1972, the year that administrative authority over Okinawa reverted to Japan, *kumi udui* was declared an Important Intangible Cultural Property at the national level. Okinawa Prefecture passed its Prefectural Ordinance for the Protection of Cultural Properties the same year.

According to the Okinawa Prefectural Cultural Promotion Division, in 1989, Ryukyu lyric theatre was recognized as a Prefectural Important Intangible Cultural Property on the grounds that it was “a theatrical form unique to Okinawa in which dialect texts were set to the melodies of existing folk songs and sung by the actors themselves,” making it “invaluable cultural heritage, both on artistic grounds and in terms of the history of the performing arts.” Designated as holders of this property at the same time were Miyagi Nozo I, Ogimi Kotaro (1919–1994), Makishi Kochu (1923–2011), and shamisen player and singer Noborikawa Seijin (1932–2013). A Ryukyu Lyric Theatre Preservation Society

was also established. All four of the holders of this cultural property performed not only Ryukyu lyric theatre but also dialect theatre, and should, in effect, be viewed as holders of the cultural property of *Uchinaa shibai*.

In 1990, the Okinawan Prefectural Theatre was established on the second floor of Naha Higashimachi Hall as a permanent venue for local performing arts (it was closed in 2009), and in 2004, the National Theatre Okinawa (managed by the National Theatre Okinawa Management Foundation) was opened as Japan's sixth national theatre. The theatre has had an artistic director since 2010, and Kinjo Shinji, who became the theatre's third artistic director in 2022, has had a close connection to classical Ryukyu dance since early childhood. He is also familiar with Ryukyu lyric theatre and was among the theatre's first class of *kumi udui* trainees.

Japan's Basic Act on Culture and the Arts, promulgated in 2001, and the Okinawa Prefectural Ordinance for the Promotion of Culture and the Arts resulted in government support that has been a boon for *Uchinaa shibai*. However, for actors, in particular, being designated as a holder of an Intangible Cultural Property can become a status symbol, and at present it seems that whatever tailwinds exist are being enjoyed by Ryukyu lyric theatre alone. *Uchinaa shibai* has long been loved by the people of Okinawa as "our theatre," but whether its full diversity can be preserved and nurtured remains to be seen.

Note: I thank the Okinawa Prefectural Cultural Promotion Division for the materials it provided during the writing of this essay.

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(Translation: Matt Treyvaud)

〈Interview〉

An Unscripted Oral Tradition: Uchinaa Shibai Today

Kinjo Shinji (Performer of Ryukyu performing arts; artistic director, National Theatre Okinawa)
Senaha Takako (*Uchinaa shibai* actor)

The Birth of *Uchinaa Shibai*

Is it fair to say that *Uchinaa shibai* has been for the people since it first emerged as a traditional performing art?

Kinjo: Before *Uchinaa shibai* was the age of *kumi odori*.⁽¹⁾ This was one of the court performing arts of the Ryukyu Kingdom. After the domain system was abolished and replaced by prefectures, the kingdom collapsed and *kumi odori* performers were dispersed far and wide. But there was no point trying to stage *kumi odori* in Naha playhouses, because the general audience wasn't interested, so *Uchinaa shibai* was born as a form of drama with more connection to everyday life.

Uchinaa shibai is always performed in *Uchinaaguchi* [the Okinawan language], and the costumes are Okinawan as well. It has its own unique conventions, but it has also changed along with the times. Long before we were born, in the period before the war and for a few years afterward, Senaha-sensei and her colleagues performed in theatres with no curtains and no lighting. *Uchinaa shibai* was closely related to everyday life, something you would casually go and watch with friends. Today, seeing a play at the National Theatre means buying expensive tickets and dressing up nicely, but back then you could even bring food to eat while you watched.

Senaha: That's true. Everyone brought plenty of food. The audience and the performers would get together after the show. "This part was good, but listen—that other part, you should do it more like this," they'd say, and we'd fix it for them next time.



The Taisho Theatre, where Senaha first took the stage (Photo provided by Naha City Museum of History)

Kinjo Shinji and Senaha Takako
(Photo: Ayada Shoichi)



Kinjo: Back then, there were performances every day, after all. Now the longest run is two or three shows at most. The stage equipment has changed, too. The way the performances are presented has changed in step with the audience.

Senaha: In those days, everyday life was conducted in the Okinawan language, so the lines in *Uchinaaguchi* came out naturally. There were no scripts, only oral instructions: “First do this, and then do that.”

Kinjo: You discussed it in advance, and the words [lines] came naturally.

Senaha: Yes. You would remember that. Then you would think up better, more polished lines for yourself. That’s the sort of theatre it was.

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Kinjo: Paper itself was precious then, so memorization was the only way to go.

Senaha: After the war, there were no clothes, nothing—just burned-out ruins. We would find parachutes thrown away by the Americans and decorate them with *bingata* designs using American paint. When we put those clothes on, they were dry and stiff, and the color would gradually flake off until they were half-bare. We had to make our own wigs, too.

It All Started with Classical Dance: “I Didn’t Know To Be Scared”

Senaha-san, you first took the stage at the age of ten, before the war ended. What was it like entering the theatrical world alongside adults?

Senaha: I never had time to play. I’ve given my whole life to the theatre. I was born in Kumoji, Naha. I had three brothers, and my father died just after I turned three. My youngest brother was still a baby, and my mother had to work with him strapped on her back. I was left with a few different members of my extended family. One of them was my uncle, who was a *koto* teacher. He had no

children, so he said, “I’ll take her and teach her *koto*.” Alongside *koto*, he also taught classical dance. I said, “I’m not playing *koto*, I’m going to dance!” Once I started learning, I was taken to perform at family celebrations and events like that. “You’re really talented, you can do anything,” people would say. I was in constant demand.

That was very early to start learning *koto* and classical dance.

Senaha: There was a theatre called the Taisho Theatre, run by a man called Takayasu Koshun. One of its actors, Oyadomari Gensei, who was in the same grade at school as my older brother, was looking for child actors. One day he came to meet me at school and took me to the Taisho Theatre. I’d never seen a play, so I had no idea why he was taking me to such a big place. He said, “You’re learning classical dance?” I said, “Yes.” “Alright, from now on you’ll dance on this stage.” “Okay.” I didn’t know to be scared. I went right out onstage. That was where it started. I looked forward so much to going out in front of people. Everyone adored me. Then the war started, and my *koto*-teaching uncle said he was going to the mainland. He was going to take me, too, but my mother said, “No, I’d miss her.” He went alone, and then died in the Konan Maru⁽²⁾ incident. If I’d gone with him...

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A Vision of Femininity That Differs From Today’s

Senaha-san, when live theatre restarted shortly after the war, you were chosen to play Chiraa, the heroine of *Peony in the Deep Mountains* (*Okuyama no botan*).

⁽³⁾ The idea of femininity in *Uchinaa shibai*, as also seen in characters from *The Musician’s Love* (*Ongakuka no koi*),⁽⁴⁾ like the *juri* (a courtesan of Tsuji⁽⁵⁾), is that they are vibrant even if their social position is low. Where does the appeal of characters like this lie?

Kinjo: That’s a difficult one. First, the position of women was different from how it is today. The male chauvinism of the times still lingers in these plays. As a result, when modern audiences watch *Uchinaa shibai*, they see a lot of men who seem like terrible people. But they weren’t seen as terrible back then. In *The*

Senaha (right) in *Peony of the Deep Mountains* (1966)
(Photo provided by Senaha Takako)



Senaha's 1954 Actors' Association membership card (Photo provided by Senaha Takako)



Kinjo Shinji in *Peony of the Deep Mountains* (2015) (Photo provided by National Theatre Okinawa)

Musician's Love, the male protagonist spends months with the *juri*, even though he has a wife. But his wife and the *juri* aren't on bad terms, the man doesn't apologize, and in the end everyone lives together.

Senaha: People with high social standing couldn't do that. One official who had was with a *juri* lost his job at Shuri Castle and died. But for the common folk, this was seen as unremarkable, and there are many plays like this. Nowadays, of course, audiences are likely to say, "What?!"

Kinjo: Then and now, women have always made up a majority of the audience for *Uchinaa shibai*. I imagine that the works produced were ones that women could

empathize with. People in similar situations could cry along with the characters.

Senaha: After the war, there were many real-life dramas as people who had been torn apart by war found each other again. Lovers reuniting, saying "You're alive!" As I often say to Shinji, we should make new plays. Wouldn't it be good to have

plays about how the world has changed?

Kinjo: They would still be *Uchinaa shibai*, so they would have been performed in *Uchinaaguchi*, with Okinawan costumes, following the form's conventions. With those ground rules, what kind of stories would we see?

Senaha: In one postwar play I loved called *A Foreign Mother* (*Ikoku no haha*), there's one scene set in China where a parent and child part in tears. It has dialogue in Chinese. I didn't realize you could make a play like that. But it was only staged once. The script has been lost too.

Kinjo: I never heard of that before. Was it written by Ogimi Kotaro? If it was after the fifties or sixties, there might be some footage.

Scripts with More Than One Right Answer

Tell us about the scripts for *Uchinaa shibai*.

Kinjo: By the 1990s, my generation was already performing from scripts, but they were very rough. There would be stage directions like, "Say something like this," and the actors were free to come up with the rest. So every actor came up with their own words. The problem was, if the generation after us tried to perform from those scripts, they probably couldn't do it. So, now I make more detailed scripts, but I always make sure to remind the actors that there's more than one "right answer."



Scene from *The Musician's Love* (Photo provided by Ginoza Village Cultural Center Garaman Hall)

For example, I might change dialogue based on who is playing a certain role: *That actor could say these lines, but this one couldn't memorize the whole thing, so I'll pare it back to the bare minimum...* In the case of musical theatre, the songs are set, so you can't expand them, but as for the dialogue, I might think, *This actor can speak briskly and keep the pace up*, and add more lines. So the script is different for every production. Even for the same play, if the actors change, the approach changes too.

Senaha: That's what makes theatre interesting.

Kinjo: *If Senaha-sensei is performing this role, then she'll move like this*—that kind of thought does go into it.

Senaha: People today don't speak Okinawan as much, so it's like just reading a book, and the lines feel too fast. I'd like to see more emotion. When I see a young actor doing a good job, I think, *There, we did it, we did it*, as if it were my own accomplishment. I'm already ninety, and I've spent my life in theatre, so everyone keeping theatre alive is dear to me.

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Kinjo: The lines audiences laughed at fifty years ago don't get laughs any more. You have to change how things are said, use different words—you don't know where people will laugh until you try.

Senaha: Laughter and tears, one after another—that's theatre. When I was still playing child roles, I had a scene where my character goes to visit her long-lost mother with a baby on her back, but is driven away. It reminded me of my own situation, and it made me so sad that I started bawling—runny nose and everything. I couldn't even speak. Soon I had the audience crying as well. When I got backstage, my older colleagues scolded me. "How can you speak your lines if you're crying? Make the audience cry by *pretending* to weep—that's what being an actor is."

Playing the Upside-Down Ghost

Senaha-san, you're also known for your work in supernatural and horror plays.

I understand that you appeared in many ghost stories at the Okiei Theatre.⁽⁶⁾ Did you make the audience very scared?

Senaha: I wasn't scared, though
[laughs].

Kinjo: But I gather the audience was terrified. Back then, Senaha-sensei usually played the lead role. There are many horror plays in the *Uchinaa shibai* rep-



ertoire, like *The Upside-Down Ghost (Sakadachi yuri)*.⁽⁷⁾ This play features a headless mannequin turned upside down, and the actor pops their head up from below. The “upside-down ghost” is said to have appeared in Makan Road (Makanmichi), Naha.

Senaha: Everyone was too scared to do it, but I said, “I’m not scared—it looks like fun. I’ll do it.” I thought about ways to scare people.

Kinjo: The women that become ghosts either die or are killed in the first half of the play. I believe that you have strong feelings about how your characters are killed, how they die. You have fun with it, don’t you?

Senaha: Ahaha! I’ve played every kind of role, male and female. The troupes were small—ten people would be a lot—so I had to play several roles.

The Pleasure of Discovering How Okinawa Used to Be

Kinjo: *Uchinaa shibai* are closer to reality than *kumi odori*. With *kumi odori*, the gestures are exaggerated versions of the real thing. They’re formalized. For example, if a character draws their sword in the play, you might think they would simply pull it out, but it’s more complicated than that—first, they hold the sword like so, and then they pointedly adopt a stance like so. When performing *Uchinaa*

shibai, I was fascinated by the feeling of approaching people living in various earlier ages. To wash our hands today, we turn on the tap to make the water run, but in an *Uchinaa shibai*, there are no scenes like that. You mime getting water from a well and putting it into a tub. Today, if we peel a sweet potato, we bring tissues, but at the time they put them in a *baaki* [bamboo colander]. As an actor, you are uncovering an older Okinawa that still lingers on in the performing arts.

Rising Interest in *Uchinaaguchi*

Senaha: What I have high hopes for now is TV shows that teach *Uchinaaguchi*. If we teach *Uchinaaguchi* to children, I think more people might come to see plays.

Kinjo: Okinawa has seen a recent movement to use *Uchinaaguchi* more widely. At school, my children even express thanks for their lunch in *Uchinaaguchi*.

Senaha: My grandchildren say to me, “What’s that? What are you saying, Grandma?” I tell them what it means and recommend that they watch some plays.

Kinjo: Our recent performances have all been subtitled. I think we are gradually seeing more audience members from younger generations, or outside Okinawa prefecture. As part of my job, when the theatre stages a production, I stand in the lobby greeting patrons beforehand and saying goodbye as they leave, and they often say things like, “The subtitles said such-and-such, but what did that character say in *Uchinaaguchi*?” or “About that dialogue in that scene—can you tell me how to pronounce those words properly, what they mean?” It’s wonderful to see people take an interest in language.

What is the National Theatre Okinawa doing to raise awareness of *Uchinaa shibai*?

Kinjo: Alongside our regular productions, since 2015 we have held an “*Uchinaa shibai* appreciation workshop” once a year. It’s very inexpensive and meant for beginners. We try to include plays that even children can enjoy, so in September 2022 we did *The Tale of King Kuroshima* (*Kuroshima-o monogatari*). In the past,

we have done *Bakeneko* (*Kaibyoden: Bakeneko—Yamada Nundunchi*), and *Tale of the Irises* (*Shobu nu yurechi*). We also do one play per year aimed at audiences already familiar with the genre. In March 2023, we will stage a historical play called *Prince Tamagawa* (*Tamagawa Oji*⁽⁸⁾) (Playwright: Taira Ryosho, Director: Kinjo Shinji). The dialogue in a historical play is difficult and quite different from everyday conversation. When we stage a difficult play, we make sure the first half of the program is something light and easy. *Uchinaa shibai* are generally presented as double features. We combine historical plays with light farces or cheerful dances. For our March production, we'll be staging Iraha Inkichi's musical farce *Feelings* (*Umui*) (Director: Kinjo Shinji), with Senaha-sensei appearing in it.



Tale of the Irises at the *Uchinaa shibai* appreciation workshop (2017) (Photo provided by National Theatre Okinawa)

Young Performers Onstage

How well are the younger generation mastering difficult songs or dances for on-stage performance?

Senaha: Many *Uchinaa shibai* are musical plays, with songs as well as dialogue. The actors study how to project, how to tighten their voices, how to make their voice cry in tragedies. You have to know how to sing, speak, and move, which is challenging. People who do classical dance carry themselves completely differently, too. You can tell right away. They're more supple in how they stand and move. Even when they stand in one place, they're completely relaxed. People



Performance of *Yakushido*, one of the Four Great Works of Ryukyu Lyric Theatre (Photo provided by *Uchinaa Shibai* Research Society)

without that classical dance background are stiffer.

Kinjo: I tell younger actors over and over again, the first step is to memorize the Four Great Works of Ryukyu Lyric Theatre.⁽⁹⁾ Not just the male parts but also the female parts, even if you're a male actor. I think those four works are the foundation of this theatre. And once you master one play, you'll find the same songs used in others, so they are useful in many places. Sometimes young actors get together and say, for example, "Today let's do *Yakushido*," draw straws to divide up roles, and practice the plays with each other. They only look at the script when they get lost.

I think that younger actors should play the biggest roles they can while they're still young. While in your twenties, you shouldn't be satisfied with reaching your personal "100%"—you should play roles a little beyond your level. That will take you to the next step. Today's young actors will have to teach the generation that follows them, so we need to teach them how to teach others.

Senaha-san, you have been performing in *A Musician's Love* for decades, as the *juri* for a long time and in recent years as Paapaa (the old dame of Tsuji). What is it like working alongside young people?

Senaha: I often tell young actors about their part and how they should perform it. For example, a *juri* is a woman who works in a place where men come to enjoy themselves, so she understands how men feel. The thing about men is—I say this with a man right here, but anyway [laughs]—they’re looking for a person, a place that will care for them and make them feel safe. I’ve been around a long time, so I understand this role. The *juri* is an expert in giving men that feeling of being cared for, of validating their feelings, so you have to play her completely different from the protagonist’s wife. There needs to be a distinction between professionals and amateurs.

What about Paapaa?

Senaha: Paapaa is part of the oldest generation of *juri*, so she knows everything. She can size men up. She’ll say, “Don’t let this one go.” I watched my own mentors play her way back when.

Kinjo: Paapaa must be played with a sense of the clownish.

Senaha: Personally, I am a bit of an *uumaku* (rascal), so I have more fun playing characters that make other characters cry, rather than characters that do the crying. When I played a ghost, I would tell the person playing

Senaha in *Aka in Tumai* (*Tumai Aka*), one of the Four Great Works of Ryukyu Lyric Theatre. At right is Iraha Sayuki. (Photo provided by Senaha Takako)



Performance of *Hando-gwa of Iejima*, one of the Four Great Works of Ryukyu Lyric Theatre (Photo provided by Uchinaa Shibai Research Society)

the role of my killer, “Pretend to lift me up,” and then onstage I would leap up suddenly, which startled them as well as the audience. When I had a role where my *kamoji* (hairpiece) was cut, I would make that mechanism myself.

Kinjo: The sword strikes the *kamoji* and it looks like the hair flies away. And you made the mechanism yourself.

Senaha: It looked like it was really cut. That’s the most enjoyable thing, the most interesting part. Whatever role I play, I enjoy it. Even at home, I’ll be thinking my hardest about how to play a certain role next time, and my grandchildren will say, “What are you doing, Grandma?” I tell young actors, “You’re an actor, so take any role you can. You mustn’t turn roles down because you’re afraid.”

Kinjo: I remember that when I visited you at home, you were writing out dialogue and memorizing it.

Senaha: Yes. I’m crazy about theatre [*laughs*].

(Reporting/writing: Kakihana Rieko)

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1. *Kumi odori* is a form of music and dance theatre created by Tamagusuku Chokun, an official of the Ryukyu Kingdom with responsibility for dance performances, to entertain emissaries from the Chinese emperor. Today it is a National Intangible Cultural Property. In 2010, it was inscribed on the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage register.
 2. The Konan Maru was a passenger ship offering regular service between Osaka and Naha. In 1943, it was torpedoed by a US Navy submarine, killing 650 passengers, including civilians.
 3. *Peony in the Deep Mountains* (1914; Author: Iraha Inkichi) is one of the “Four Great Works of Ryukyu Lyric Theatre.” It is about the love between Sandee, the son of a noble family, and Chiraa, a commoner. They have a son together, and Chiraa goes into hiding so that her humble birth will not prevent his advancement. Twenty years later, her now-adult son comes to visit her.
 4. *The Musician’s Love* is a historical work of Ryukyu lyric theatre by Iraha Inkichi.
 5. Placename in Naha. In the licensed quarters established here in 1672, Chinese emissaries and Ryukyu nobles were entertained by *juri*, women skilled in the performing arts. There were around 180 such establishments in Tsuji in the 1930s, but on October 10, 1944, the neighborhood was burned out by aerial bombing.

6. In 1965, the Okiei film theatre was renovated with a revolving stage and reopened as the Okiei Theatre. Its all-star performances featuring popular *Uchinaa shibai* actors attracted many actors.
7. A horror play by Tokashiki Shuryo, first staged around 1914. In the play, a beautiful woman sees that her ailing husband is tortured by jealousy of her, and cuts her own nose off to prove her love. However, the husband falls out of love with her, kills her, and drives stakes through her legs. She returns as an “upside-down ghost” to seek revenge.
8. A historical play by Taira Ryosho (1893–1979). It depicts the turbulent life of Prince Tamagawa, sixth son of King Sho Ko, and the suffering of the Ryukyuan people under the resulting political turmoil.
9. The “Four Great Works of Ryukyu Lyric Theatre” are said to be *Peony in the Deep Mountains*, *Hando-gwa of Iejima* (*Iejima Hando-gwa*; 1924; Author: Majikina Yuko); *Aka in Tumai* (*Tumai Aka*; 1900; Author: Ganeko Yaei); and *Yakushido Temple* (*Yakushido*; 1912; Author: Iraha Inkichi).

Kinjo, Shinji

Born 1987 in Tomigusuku. In 1991, began studying under Tanida Yoshiko and Kinjo Mieko of the Tamagusuku Ryu Senju Kai dance academy. In 2007, graduated from the first incoming *kumi odori* class at the National Theatre Okinawa. In 2008, while studying at Okinawa Prefectural University of the Arts (Major: Ryukyu Performing Arts), won the highest prize in the Ryukyu Classical Dance category at the Ryukyu Classical Performing Arts Competition. Teacher in the Tamagusuku Ryu Senju Kai. Holder of the Prefectural Intangible Cultural Heritage “Ryukyu Lyric Drama.” Member of the *Uchinaa Shibai* Research Association. In April 2022, accepted post as artistic director of the National Theatre Okinawa.

Senaha, Takako

Born 1933 in Naha. In 1943, debuted as a child actor with the Shinraku-za troupe at the Taisho Theatre. Shortly after the end of World War II, entered the Matsu theatre troupe, transferring to the Ume troupe after around a year. Worked with the Okinawa-za and Tokiwa-za troupes before founding the Mitsuwa-za troupe in 1954 with her husband Matsumora Koei. Acted in the Okiei Theatre, which started in 1965, from its third production, *Aka in Tumai* (*Tumai Aka*). Spent the next twelve years until the Okiei Theatre was disbanded as one of its leading actors. Holder of the Prefectural Intangible Cultural Heritage “Ryukyu Lyric Drama.” In 1984, received the Encouragement Prize in the Theatre category of the Okinawa Times Arts Awards. In 2005, won the Grand Prize in the same category. In 2013, honored by Okinawa Prefecture as a Person of Cultural Merit. Still performing on many stages.

(Translation: Matt Treyvaud)

〈Column〉

The Remarkable Postwar Success of the All-Female Otohime Theatre Troupe

Kakihana Rieko (Editor of the Theatre Yearbook)

December 25, 1945. *Uchinaa shibai* stars languishing in internment camps across the burned-out wastelands of Okinawa are assembled at Ishikawa (modern-day Uruma) to put on a Christmas show in conjunction with a US military camp. The show is one of the cultural initiatives undertaken by the occupying US forces. Staged on sloping ground amid the ruins of Iha Castle, the open-air performances overflow with the energy of an *Uchinaa shibai* revival, and the audience responds with great enthusiasm.

One of the groups performing in the show was an all-female dance troupe led by Uema Ikuko (1906–1991). The young dancers' vibrant performance of the *zo-odori* "Tanchame" won thunderous applause. That moment was the birth of what would become the most popular theatrical company in Okinawa, with Uema as its first leader: the Otohime Theatre Troupe.

The Otohime Theatre Troupe was formally founded in April 1949. With the approval of the Okinawa Civilian Administration under US military rule, the

troupe's 21 founding members staged a production of *Aka in Tumai* (*Tumai Aka*), one of the Four Great Works of Ryukyu Lyric Theatre. They entertained internees across Okinawa, performing in hastily constructed open-air theatres for audiences of villagers who had been swept up in the



Hazama Yoshiko, "Okinawa's Danjuro," performing in *Aka in Tumai*.
From Hazama Yoshiko, *The Eternal Tarugani* (*Eien no Tarugani*)

First Theatre Contest pamphlet.
(Photo provided by Senaha Takako)

maelstrom of war. By night, they bedded down in the same theatres. The troupe lived together all year round, working together from morning till night to create their plays. Some audience members are said to have paid the entry fee in vegetables.

Determined to satisfy the huge demand for theatre they had discovered, the Otohime Theatre Troupe developed a revolutionary system in which every member of the troupe both acted and wrote. Within a year of its founding, the troupe had a repertoire of 50 plays, from lyric theatre and period pieces to contemporary works. At the height of the troupe's popularity in the 1960s, its repertoire exceeded 160 plays performed by more than 50 actors as the troupe visited every one of the 120 theatres scattered across Okinawa.

In 1951, less than two years after its founding, the Otohime Theatre Troupe was chosen from among the 27 theatre companies officially recognized by the Okinawa Civilian Administration to perform in Hawai'i. In 1955, the troupe won first place at the Ryukyu Shimpō's first Theatre Contest¹ with *Palace of the Princess (Uminaibi Udun)*, a work based on Ueda Akinari's *Tales of Moonlight and Rain*. In the contest's third year, the troupe won first place again with the fantasy play *The Tale of*



1956 production of *The Tale of Tsukishiro*. At right is Hazama Yoshiko, playing the Spider Spirit. From Hazama Yoshiko, *The Eternal Tarugani*



Writer Kawabata Yasunari visited the Otohime Theatre Troupe at the Ishikawa Theatre in June 1958. At far right in the front row is Uema Ikuko, first leader of the troupe. (Photo provided by Okinawa Prefectural Archives)



Theatre Company Unai, *The Tale of Tsukishiro* (2009). Company leader Nakasone Ritsuko is at far left in the photo on the right. (Photo provided by Theatre Company Unai)

Tsukishiro (*Tsukishiro Monogatari*),² written by Kaneshiro Michiko based on Jean Cocteau's *Beauty and the Beast*. The star of this production was Hazama Yoshiko (1928–2001), who succeeded Uema as the troupe's second leader and was praised as "Okinawa's Danjuro."

The Otohime Theatre Troupe's reputation as one of the finest performing companies in Okinawa soon reached the Japanese mainland, and many cultural figures visited to see the troupe perform. Among those who praised Otohime's performances were writers Kawabata Yasunari and Inoue Yasushi and playwright Uchimura Naoya (third chair of the Japanese Centre of International Theatre Institute).

In the 1960s, with the spread of TV broadcasts, demand for *Uchinaa shibai* fell, and troupes began to disband. Apart from a small hiatus, the Otohime Theatre Troupe alone survived alongside its fans. Today, Theatre Company Unai (*unai* means "sisters"), founded in 2004, continues to uphold Otohime's tradition of all-female dramatic performances.

The current leader of Unai is Nakasone Ritsuko,³ who left her job at a Naha department store to join Otohime nearly sixty years ago. Past eighty years of age, she continues to perform regularly. Regarding the accepting, female-only atmosphere that Otohime cultivated, Nakasone says, "You can speak your mind freely,

without feeling out of place. Male actors would probably hold back when dealing with married women, but speaking woman-to-woman lets us get right to the heart of the matter. Even performing the same play, our productions are completely different than those of companies with male actors. Years ago, a man watching our rehearsals commented that he envied women, because we can perform with all our heart.”

Today, Nakasone also teaches theatrical skills as a part-time lecturer at Okinawa Prefectural University of Arts. The precious lives and passion for theatre preserved by women against all odds through the horrific of Battle of Okinawa flowered anew in the lineage from Otohime to Unai and are now being inherited by a new generation of young performers.

1. The pamphlet for the first Theatre Contest included a welcome message from the Ryukyu Shimpō's chief editor at the time, Oyadamari Masahiro, explaining that the contest was being held “with the same intention of raising the level of the international theatrical arts as that promoted by the Ministry of Culture's Arts Festival and the International Theatre Institute.”
2. After winning a prize at the contest, *The Tale of Tsukishiro* was made into a color film directed by former Shochiku movie star Obinata Den and screened at the Naha Theatre from New Year's Day, 1959. *Yanbaru Highway* (*Yanbaru Kaido*) is another cinematic adaptation of the Otohime Theatre Troupe's work.
3. Nakasone Ritsuko was born in 1941 in Motobucho. Attending a performance of the Otohime Theatre Company's *Palace of the Princess* as a junior high school student, she was enthralled by the elegance of the singing voices, the costumes, and the princess's *kanpu* (hairstyle). In 1964, she joined the



Green room in the early 1960s.
(Photo provided by Theatre Company Unai)

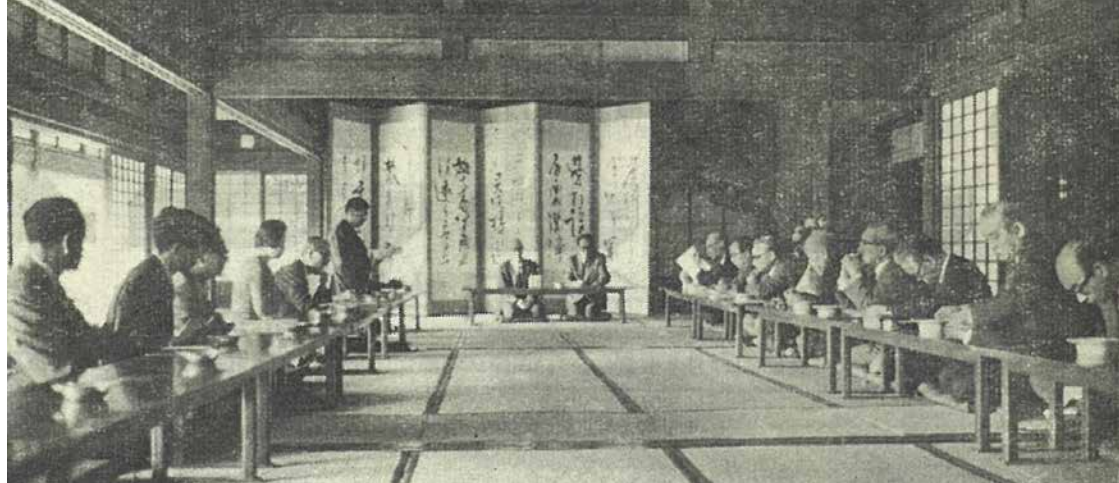
troupe herself. In 2001, when the Otohime Theatre Troupe disbanded after the death of second leader Hazama Yoshiko, Nakasone moved quickly to bring the former members together again, staging new productions the following year, and then in 2004 founding Theatre Company Unai. She has been the head of of Theatre Company Unai since 2009. She is also head of the Tamagusuku-ryu Otohime Ritsuju no Kai. In 2011, she received an award in the Theatre category of the Okinawa Times Art Awards for her contributions to the theatrical arts. She is a holder of the Prefectural Intangible Cultural Property “Ryukyu Lyric Theatre.”

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(Translation: Matt Treyvaud)



General meeting on April 11, 1973.

Developments in Japan and Overseas

What We Learned Digging Through Rare Materials from the Early Days of the ITI Japanese Centre 2023, the fiftieth anniversary of the first issue of the *Theatre Yearbook*, as a gateway

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Sota Shuji (Managing Director and Secretary General, Japanese Centre of International Theatre Institute)

The March 2023 publication of *Theatre Yearbook 2023*, a fiscal 2022 project of the Japanese Centre of International Theatre Institute, marks fifty years since publishing the first issue in this series, *Theatre Yearbook 1973* (noting that in 1972, the year before that first issue, we published its predecessor, the *International Theatre Materials Collection*). Taking that as an opportunity, the *Yearbook* editorial board decided to go back another twenty or so years before that inaugural publication and reacquaint ourselves with the situation and historical development of international performing arts exchange in the Japanese Centre's earliest days.

Naturally, many aspects of those days cannot be uncovered from surviving materials alone, but through that effort, we hoped to clarify in concrete terms the impact that the global exchange of theatre and dance that resumed after the Second World War has had on the establishment and development of contemporary theatre and dance in Japan.

Establishment of ITI Headquarters and the Japanese Centre

The International Theatre Institute (ITI), a worldwide network of professional theatre and dance organizations, was founded shortly after the Second World War, in 1948. Prior to that, there were discussions at a 1946 UNESCO conference in Paris of creating an international theatre organization, and after a 1947 preparatory meeting in Paris by prominent theatre professionals from around the world, those from 28 countries gathered in Prague for the foundational general meeting in 1948. The history of the ITI Japanese Centre began three years later, in 1951.

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The San Francisco Peace Conference, which stipulated the postwar settlement between Japan and the Allied Powers, occurred in September of the same year. The Peace Treaty entered into force in April 1952, but the Japanese Centre had already begun its activities as a member of the ITI's global network prior to that date.

From the perspective of today's readers, it may seem completely natural for Japan to be treated as a member of the international community, but by keeping in mind the postwar environment and Japan's status as a defeated nation, one realizes that it was a completely different world in those days.

The direct impetus for the Japanese Centre's founding came in 1950 when Kitamura Kihachi¹, who later became one of our founding sponsors, attended the 1950 PEN International Congress in Edinburgh as a Japan representative, learned about the ITI, and on his way home, stopped to meet the ITI Secretariat in Paris to obtain more information. The playwright André Josset (1897–1976), then secretary general of the ITI, asked Kitamura to establish a Centre in Japan.

After returning to Japan, Kitamura consulted with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Education (External Relations and UNESCO

Division and Art Division, Minister's Secretariat) regarding the establishment of the Japanese Centre, and the following year, on May 24, 1951, we came into being. The founding sponsors were Kawabata Yasunari, Kawatake Shigetoshi, Kitamura Kihachi, and Kubota Mantaro. Takahashi Seiichiro² was appointed as our first president and Kitamura Kihachi as director general.

Immediately after completing the procedures for establishing the Japanese Centre, Kubota Mantaro attended the Fourth ITI World Congress in Oslo in June 1951 as the Japanese Centre representative, and Japan's membership was approved there.

The Founding Prospectus of the Japanese Centre places Japan as a representative of one side of theatrical exchange between East and West, and this Oriental versus Occidental framework clearly shows the nature of cultural exchange in those days.

Activities in the Japanese Centre's first decade

The activities of the ITI Japanese Centre in the first decade after its founding can be seen in its newsletter, *ITI News*. Starting with its first "Vol. 0" in 1951, which contained the organization's Founding Prospectus, *ITI News* issues were published at a relatively steady pace until 1961³.

Early *ITI News* issues indicate that at the time, in response to the activities of ITI centers around the world, there was extensive promotion of International Theatre Month events in Japan with the cooperation of major domestic theatres and entertainment companies⁴. There were also discussions of cooperation for the publication of *Le décor de théâtre dans le monde depuis 1935* [Theatrical scenery in the world since 1935] (1956), which was being edited and published by the ITI headquarters in Paris, with the Japanese Centre responding to publisher requests for stage set diagrams and photographs.

At the time, the Paris headquarters provided us with the periodicals *Le théâtre dans le monde* [World Theatre] (quarterly) and *World Premières* (monthly). A few copies of these publications are preserved in the current Japanese Centre office.

ITI News issues often included a "Correspondences with the Secretariat"

column that noted daily communications, notices, and requests sent to the Secretariat from the Paris headquarters and other national ITI Centres, and what the Japanese Centre was able to do in response. For example, we responded to questions from the Paris headquarters regarding the current situation in Japan for an international survey on the role of theatre in youth education, and in response to a request from the UK Centre, we airmailed International Theatre Month pamphlets and posters from the Kabuki-za and other theatres. *ITI News* No. 30 states: “In April, we responded to a questionnaire from the Paris headquarters regarding state subsidies for theatres. Our response was later published in the first issue of the ITI newsletter *International Theatre Informations*.”

We also received inquiries from individual theatre-related organizations through ITI Centres in their respective countries. *ITI News* No. 28 (April 1960) reports that Laurence Olivier Productions inquired about Mishima Yukio’s *Tropical Tree*, and after contacting Mishima, we made arrangements for a synopsis and translation. This shows how even in its early days, the Japanese Centre served as a window for access to the performing arts in Japan.

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ITI News at the founding of the ITI.

An International Theatre Month pamphlet.

ITI Japanese Centre's involvement in the first overseas Noh tour

One of the earliest postwar examples of a Japanese performing troupe travelling overseas was the participation of a Noh troupe in the 1954 *Festival Internazionale del Teatro*. This was made possible when the Festival, through communications with the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, requested the participation of Japanese theatre troupes. Apparently, the Japanese Centre started receiving requests for delegates of Japanese performance troupes from as early as 1951, the year we were founded.

The Noh performance was realized in 1954, when a fifteen-member troupe, including Kita Minoru and the Second Generation Kanze Yoshiyuki, participated in the Festival. *ITI News* Nos. 12 and 13 describe in detail how that event came about and reports on the performances there.

The first *Festival d'Art dramatique de Paris* in 1954 (organized by the city of Paris and held at the Théâtre Sarah-Bernhardt) also involved the ITI headquarters in its operations, and records show that the Festival requested the participation of a Japanese theatre group. The Festival and its second occurrence



A letter from John Gielgud, sending his congratulations regarding International Theatre Month in Japan.



January 8, 1952 issue of *World Theatre*, with features on pantomime, Nordic theatre, etc.



World PREMIÈRES No. 41 (Jan/Feb 1964), with *World Theatre* Day messages from Laurence Olivier and Jean-Louis Barrault.

A brochure regarding Noh troupe participation in the 1954 Venice Biennale.



in 1955 were extremely successful. After that, it became known as *Théâtre des Nations*, a name that embodies the postwar atmosphere for deepened understanding of foreign countries through culture⁵.

ITI and *Théâtre des Nations*

Following the extremely successful *Festival d'Art dramatique de Paris* events in 1954 and 1955, the creation of the *Théâtre des Nations* was proposed in 1955 at the 6th ITI World Congress in Dubrovnik, Yugoslavia, in 1955 (*ITI News* No. 16). The *Théâtre des Nations*, which became the ITI Headquarters' best-known project worldwide, was recognized as a cutting-edge event leading international theatrical exchanges in that period. A look at the groups appearing shows participation by the most famous theatre companies and directors from each country, including Italy's Piccolo Teatro (Giorgio Strehler), Germany's Berliner Ensemble

(Bertolt Brecht), Laurence Olivier and Peter Brook from England, Ernst Ingmar Bergman from Sweden, and the Living Theatre from the United States.

In November 1956, *Théâtre des Nations* general director A.-M. Julien visited Japan for an observational tour on his way back from the First World Conference of the ITI in Bombay, and a Noh troupe led by Kita Minoru attended the following year's festival.

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Letter and brochure from A.-M. Julien regarding hosting of the *Théâtre des Nations*, July 10, 1962.

A period of inactivity

The Japanese Centre's *ITI News* was published for ten years following its inception, culminating in the publication of its No. 31 issue in 1961. Unfortunately, publication ceased after that. This was likely due to the December 1960 death of Kitamura Kihachi, who had served as director general since the organization's founding, resulting in a stagnation of administrative functions.

Looking at subsequent developments, *ITI News* No. 32 was published on a one-off basis in 1965, after a blank of approximately four years since its previous issue. However, that revival was short-lived. After that one issue, the newsletter again entered a hiatus; the next reprint would not come until 1971.

So far, we have found no documents that allow speculation on the circumstances during this period, and the cause of that long gap in Japanese Centre activities in the years around 1965 remains unknown.

Cooperation with two international symposiums

As described in the previous section, the 1960s was a period of stagnation in Japanese Centre activities. In fact, since the 1961 cessation of *ITI News*'s publication, the only clue regarding the status of such activities can be found in the one-off October 1965 issue of *ITI News* No. 32.

Articles in that issue indicate that two major international UNESCO-related conferences were held in years before and after its publication (1963 and 1968), and that the ITI Japanese Centre cooperated with these conferences.

First, in November 1963, the Japanese National Commission for UNESCO hosted the International Symposium on the Theatre in the East and the West in Tokyo. Symposium representatives included Eugène Ionesco and more than forty other theatre professionals from twenty-one countries. Its theme was "Mutual Appreciation of Eastern and Western Cultural Values." The Japanese National Commission for UNESCO issued proceedings for that symposium in 1965.

Next, the Cultural Conference on Mutual Influences between Japanese and Western Arts was held in Tokyo and Kyoto in 1968 (as described in the first issue of the *ITI Bulletin* in 1971), with discussions in four categories: literature, music, architecture, and theatre. The National Commission for UNESCO published

proceedings of that meeting in English and Japanese in 1969. Unfortunately, specifics regarding the Japanese Centre's cooperation are not clear.

Role as a delegate organization for the Tokyo Noh Troupe's performances in Europe and the U.S.

Although it is unclear how this is related to the above two international conferences, in 1965, the Japanese Centre and the Kanze Noh Theater sent a 28-member "Tokyo Noh Troupe" to various European countries and the US. This was a large-scale tour, including visits to six European cities (Athens, Ulm, Vicenza, Rome, Paris, and Dusseldorf) and one U.S. city (Seattle).

According to *ITI News* No. 32, the Japanese Centre was involved with the Tokyo Noh Troupe as its "delegating organization" (i.e., the entity responsible for project implementation). However, as mentioned above, that 1965 issue of *ITI News* is the only one published during the period, so no existing documents allow us to determine the situation before and after, making it difficult to explore the situation at the time in further detail.

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Possible temporary external support and a second suspension of activities

However, considering the two above-mentioned international symposiums held around 1965 and our serving as the delegating organization for the Tokyo Noh Troupe, we can speculate that the Centre was expected to play a role in promoting such large-scale projects, and thus that there was some form of external support, and that this manifested as the Japanese Centre's revival specifically at that time.

Afterward, however, the ITI Japanese Centre again entered a long period of inactivity. *ITI News* was later renamed *ITI Bulletin*, the first issue of which was published in March 1971. There was thus a second gap of about four and a half years after the publication of *ITI News* No. 32 in October 1965.

Festival Mondial du Théâtre de Nancy, featuring contemporary Japanese theatre

After the *Théâtre des Nations*, which was founded in the 1950s and quickly gained international fame, the *Festival Mondial du Théâtre de Nancy*, led by Jack Lang, became the driving force behind international theatrical trends from the mid-1960s to the 1970s. That festival was held in the northern France town of Nancy starting in 1964 as the *Festival Mondial du Théâtre Universitaire*, gaining worldwide acclaim through a series of productions by the leading-edge theatre companies of the time. Jack Lang was a major politician who later served as Minister of Culture in the Mitterrand administration, leaving a significant mark on the development of French cultural policy that extends to the present day.

April 1971 appearances at the Nancy festival included the Seinenza Theatre Company, Tenjo Sajiki, and the Youkiza Puppet Theatre from Japan, as well as productions by Robert Wilson, Tadeusz Kantor, and Augusto Boal. The Japanese learned about many European avant-garde theatre troupes during this period, and many Japanese contemporary theatres started receiving invitations to theatre festivals throughout Europe. More than any other theatre festival, the Nancy festival played a major role in this process.

The first issue of the new *ITI Bulletin* (March 1971) noted that Lang asked the ITI Japanese Centre to provide arrangements for staff members coming to observe Japanese theatres from December 22, 1970 to January 17, 1971, which we did. At the time, there were also plans for Japan to “host” the Nancy festival, and Lang himself visited Japan in August of that year (*ITI Bulletin* No. 4, September 1971)⁶.

Reconstruction of the Japanese Centre

As described above, the Japanese Centre was inactive for about ten years before and after 1965, but its participation in the *Festival Mondial du Théâtre de Nancy* seemed to provide an impetus for its reorganization. On December 12, 1970, the Center elected playwright Hojo Hideji, then president of the Japan Theatre Arts Association, as its director general and held a reorganization meeting. Documents from that period show that the Japanese Centre was largely inactive in the

four immediately preceding fiscal years (1967–1970) (*ITI Bulletin* No. 1).

Interestingly, at the time of this “reorganizational meeting,” the Japanese Centre had 874 registered members, of which 28 attended the meeting and 561 sent proxies. That is remarkably higher enrollment, nearly three times, over our current (fiscal 2022) membership of just over 200. This suggests that there was some sort of initiative by the board members and others at that time, who likely lobbied leading industry associations, and that the members of those associations joined *en masse* due to that top-down approach.

The 1971 restructuring of the ITI Japanese Centre got underway with a general assembly in December 1970. At that time, we obtained cooperation from leading companies in the theatre and broadcasting industries. We also caught up with dues to the ITI headquarters, which had been in arrears for several years. (Even so, ITI Japanese Centre’s financial base remained fragile, and there was uncertainty regarding whether sufficient financial resources would be available for its future operations.)

Three main post-restructuring projects and the first issue of the *Theatre Yearbook* (1973)

At around this time, the Agency for Cultural Affairs began subsidizing ITI Japanese Centre projects. This allowed three activities related to international exchange in the field of theatre to be carried out on a regular basis as major annual projects: “editing and publishing the *Theatre Yearbook*,” “holding international theatre exhibitions,” and “lectures on international theatre.” Further, very impactful projects started undergoing development with the cooperation of experts in various fields who became involved as board members.

ITI Bulletin No. 1 (March 1971) notes that the business activities of the U.S. Centre and those in other countries inspired the Japanese Centre to start publishing its *Yearbook*. The publication of our *Yearbook* itself has a pre-history: the first issue was published in March 1972 as the *International Theatre Collection*, but renamed the following year as the *Theatre Yearbook*.

In the beginning, *Yearbook* pages introducing overseas performing arts to Japanese readers covered only the US, the UK, France, Germany, and other

developed countries. We began covering China in the 1980s, South Korea in the 1990s, and since the 2000s we have expanded our coverage to include countries in Asia, Africa, Latin America, and other regions that we had previously neglected. All told, the 51 issues of the *Theatre Yearbook* from 1973 to 2023 have introduced works and news from 87 countries and regions.

Initially, introductions of “Japanese performing arts” to the rest of the world were dominated by traditional performing arts such as Noh and kabuki, but the *Yearbook* introduces contemporary theatre in general, including modern-realist *shingeki* and avant-garde works. In 1983, we started introducing television and radio dramas, in 1984 we added *butoh* and other forms of contemporary dance, and in that fashion, *Yearbook’s* contents have continually changed with the times. In addition, since the 1997 edition, *Yearbook* has been published in two volumes: one in Japanese and one in English.

Summary

This article traced the history of the Japanese Centre from its founding immediately after the Second World War, through a period of stagnation in the 1960s, and finally to its reconstruction period in the 1970s and the start of the *Yearbook* project.

If one is to understand current trends in world theatre and the impacts that Japanese traditional, contemporary, and avant-garde theatre has had on the world, it is vital to know the roles played by the Japanese Centre and the ITI Headquarters, the longest active NGO among UNESCO organizations in the fields of theatre and dance.

For the first time, we have dug through materials from the earliest days of our organization, allowing us a glimpse of the history of theatrical exchange between Japan and other countries that had previously remained unknown to the public. Taking this initiative as an initial first step, I hope we can continue to trace the changes of the times and to further deepen our awareness of the significance of international exchange NGOs in the cultural sphere.

Author's note

In this article, we showed how the Japanese Centre was closely involved in the overseas performances of Noh troupes on two occasions, in 1954 and 1965. By contrast, Shochiku, at the request of the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, took full control of organizing overseas Kabuki tours, realizing and overseeing the success of many overseas performances. This is briefly described in a report by Kawatake Toshio in *International Theatre Yearbook 1973*.

1 Kitamura Kihachi (1898–1960) was a director, playwright, theatre critic, and translator. After graduating from Tokyo Imperial University with a degree in English literature, he joined the Tsukiji Shogekijo Theatre in 1924, where he translated and directed many plays. Together with his wife, actor Murase Sachiko, he formed Geijutsu Shogekijo Theatre in 1937. After the war, he worked to rebuild *shingeki* theatre as permanent secretary of the New Theatre People's Association, and in 1951 he founded the Japanese Centre of International Theatre Institute, of which he became director general. His publications include *Expressionist Drama, An Introduction to Directing*, and a collection of plays, *Beautiful Family*.

2 Takahashi Seiichiro (1884–1982) was an economist. After graduating from Keio University with a degree in political science, he studied the history of economics in England and returned to Japan to teach at his alma mater. 1947, as Minister of Education in the Yoshida Cabinet, he enacted the Basic Act on Education and the School Education Act. Internationally known for his collection and research of ukiyo-e prints, he served as director of the Japan Art Academy and the Tokyo National Museum, and in 1951 became president of the Japanese Centre of International Theatre Institute. His works include *A Study of the Economic Theory of Mercantilism and Two Hundred and Fifty Years of Ukiyo-e*.

3 There is no mention of "ITI News" in Nos. 0 or 1; that name was first used in issue No. 2.

4 When it was first founded, International Theatre Month was supported by a wide range of theatre-related organizations, from major entertainment companies to student and amateur theatre troupes. As an annual International Theatre Month event, it was customary to hold an onstage opening ceremony before the start of a Kabuki-za performance.

5 The Théâtre Sarah-Bernhardt was known as the Théâtre des Nations from 1879–1898 and from 1957–1967, so that name can refer to the theatre or the theatre festival, depending on the context. The name was changed from Théâtre des Nations to Théâtre de la Ville in 1968, and retains that name to this day.

6 This concept was conceived by Wakabayashi Akira (1926–2013), founder of the International Youth Theatre Center (KSEC) and an actor and director affiliated with the Bungakuza, but the project was never realized.

Sota, Shuji

In 1980, Shuji Sota joined Toho Co., Ltd., where he worked in publicity and advertising for stage performances. Since 1990, he has led projects for international exchange in the performing arts at the Japan Center, Pacific Basin Arts Communication. In 1995, he was involved in the launch of the Tokyo International Performing Arts Festival (now Festival/Tokyo) and the Tokyo Performing Arts Market (now YPAM), and has since been in charge of their administrative offices. He has been a professor at Atomi University's Faculty of Management since 2002, and served as the secretary general of the Japanese Centre of ITI since 2009 and as its managing director since 2013.

(Translation: Tony Gonzalez)

紛争地域から生まれた演劇シリーズ
Theatre Born in
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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 33 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 (2023)**

Bad Roads by Natalia Vorozhbit (Ukraine)

2019 *Common Ground* by Yael Ronen (Israel/Germany) & Ensemble
This Is War by Hannah Moscovitch (Canada)

2020 *Liberian Girl* by Diana Nneka Atuona (UK)

2021 *The Murder of Isaac* by Motti Lerner (Israel)

2022 Five scripts from *Viral Monologues* by the 24 Hour Plays (USA)
This Trip by Charlie O'Leary / *Unknown Caller* by Dan O'Brien / *Thank You for Visiting Me* by Zhu Yi / *Invincible* by Jessica Blank and Erik Jensen / *The Hardest Part* by Howard Sherman

Searching for **New Plays**

ITI Japanese Centre 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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The web version of
the *Theatre Yearbook*
(full-color, 2014-) is available here.



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SPECIAL FEATURE "Theatre Born in Conflict Zones 14"

Theatre Born in Conflict Zones 14

The fourteenth entry in the “Theatre Born in Conflict Zones” series (a project related to the *International Theatre Yearbook*) was scheduled to be a reading of Ukrainian playwright Natalia Vorozhbit’s *Bad Roads* at Proto-Theater in Tokyo from 9–11 December 2022, but that had to be canceled after a person involved in the performance tested positive for COVID-19. Our editorial department asked director Ikuta Miyuki to write up some director’s notes.

Director’s notes

200 **Doubting what you know, relating indistinguishability**

Ikuta Miyuki

I think the announcement that the fourteenth entry in the “Theatre Born in Conflict Zones” series would introduce a Ukrainian play was met with a very strong response. It had been almost a year since the Russian military invasion in February 2022, and I sensed a great deal of public interest in Ukraine and its people. I myself began reading the play with a certain sense of anticipation, and I found myself surprised from the very beginning...

The play is set in the Donbass region of eastern Ukraine in 2014. Eight years before the current invasion, there was already conflict there. Indeed, I recall the annexation of Crimea being reported at the time. But I wonder how many of us had that clearly in our minds when the invasion occurred in February 2022. Many of us who were bombarded with the extensive media coverage that started

in February must have felt as if the invasion had come out of the blue.

But as we read more of the play, we again find our expectations subverted. There is little of what we might expect, such as Ukrainians suffering amidst Russia's unreasonable attack as reported daily in the media. What we instead saw in the script were things like a woman who loses herself in an ill-fated love affair.

The play presents six episodes, starting with a lengthy monologue by a woman. That woman, who seems to be a reflection of the author, leaves Kyiv with a soldier and travels with him to the front lines in eastern Ukraine. Through her eyes, we learn bits and pieces about a front-line base and children involved in the fighting, but her primary interest is in the soldier she is traveling with. She talks eloquently about her desire for him, to the point where one wonders how she can fall so blindly in love while being surrounded by death. But despite his strong patriotism, well-developed body, and heroism, he is unable to get an erection, probably due to psychological stress. The soldier asks the woman to perform oral sex on him, and their journey eventually ends.

The next four episodes are presented as asides about people the woman glimpsed on her journey. Once again, we are confused. From daily news reports, we have become accustomed to blame for the Russians and an emphasis on the tragedy of the Ukrainians. In this play, however, we also see depictions of sexual exploitation and violence by Ukrainian soldiers and varied identities for those living in eastern Ukraine. There are those who support and are involved with Ukrainian soldiers in their work, as well as families who watch Russian television on a daily basis. There are also soldiers who are anxious about fighting "brother against brother," yet shoot at each other nonetheless.

This conflict between pro-Russian and pro-Western factions in Ukraine is very allegorical, especially in the final episode, the only one that takes place before the war. A young woman runs over a chicken kept by an elderly couple and proposes to compensate them with money. The couple at first considers her offer to be some kind of joke, but when the young woman offers them monetary compensation, they start to bicker and eventually force her to offer them her car as well. Then they hear a crying child and its mother's consolations and its mother, and the couple, as if waking from a nightmare, kick the young woman

out, shouting “Get the hell out of here, don't try to entice us!”

I myself understood that last line as a criticism of human desire and the violent nature of capitalism that stimulates it. When people who have lived modestly and within their means are exposed to the more decadent lifestyle that capitalism promises, unlimited desire awakens within them, and the life they have built for themselves is easily destroyed. It was a moment when I, someone living in a capitalist society, could come into contact with a conflict that was happening far away, despite its being reported on in the news every day.

The troupe had many discussions regarding the language used in this play to find a way to bring it to a Japanese audience. Because the subject matter is one that we often see in the media, it was easy to fit it into a composition within the scope of what we know. Ichikawa Nana, the translator, frequently stopped me as I tried to add wording to clarify situations that were difficult to understand. I think it was because Ms. Ichikawa sensed the importance of an “indistinguishability” that the writer was not stating outright.

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The troupe also carefully discussed how to present this play as a reading and how the actors should perform it against a backdrop of images of actual human suffering via television and the internet. The same holds true for other works, of course, but no matter how much we read and imagined the material, there were many aspects we could not fully grasp. I felt bad about acting as if I knew what I was talking about, but a play cannot be conveyed by mere rote reading. In our rehearsals, we searched for ways to utilize the “reading” format to strike a balance between allowing everyone to become as involved with the characters as possible, while at the same time presenting an objective point of view.

It is unfortunate that all our performances were canceled, but I remain convinced that there are many things we could realize by performing this play now. Keeping in mind the danger of oversimplifying complex situations to make them easier to understand, I hope we can someday bring this work to audiences.

Ikuta, Miyuki

Director. Member of the theatre company Bungakuza and the theatre group Riseiteki-na-Henzintachi. M.A. (Music), Tokyo University of the Arts. Among Japanese Centre of International Theatre Institute productions, she directed *"This is War"* (Theatre Born in Conflict Zones 10) and *"Anatomy of a Suicide"* (World Theatre Lab, 2021). Her recent productions include *"Girls in Crisis," "Oroika Song,"* and *"The Architect and the Assyrian Emperor."*

(Translation: Tony Gonzalez)

About the "Theatre Born in Conflict Zones" series

The International Theatre Institute sponsors a worldwide project titled "Theatre Born in Conflict Zones" as an effort to promote peace through theatre. In 2009, the Japan Centre started its "Theatre Born in Conflict Zones" series as part of a survey and research project for the *Theatre Yearbook*. Through activities including translations, readings, lectures by writers and experts, and exhibitions over the past thirteen years, this series has introduced 28 outstanding plays previously unknown in Japan. Since the third year, we have also published collections of plays. If you would like to order the latest edition or back issues containing translations of *Viral Monologues*, please contact the Japanese Centre of International Theatre Institute. —The Editor

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This year's performances were unfortunately canceled, but the following is a record of the reading performances that could not be presented:

Theatre Born in Conflict Zones 14

Reading of *"Bad Roads"* (performances and distribution both canceled)

9–11 December 2022

Location: Proto-Theater

Archive distribution: 6 December 2022 (10:00 a.m.) through 9 January 2023 (11:59 p.m.)

Playwright: Natalia Vorozhbit

Translator: Ichikawa Nana

Director: Ikuta Miyuki (Bungakuza)

Performers: Ishimura Mika (Tegamiza), Iwao Kaishi, Kameda Yoshiaki (Bungakuza), Saito Atsushi (Haiyuza Theatre Company), Shibata Minami (Bungakuza), Terada Michie (Bungakuza), Nishioka Mio

Producer: Hayashi Hideki



As a volume separate from the *Theatre Yearbook 2023*, we publish *Collected Plays*, which contains a Japanese translation of *Bad Roads* with commentary by the translator. Please contact the Japanese Centre of International Theatre Institute if you would like a copy.

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Companion Volume *Theatre Abroad* 2023 (Japanese)

These articles do not appear in
Theatre in Japan 2023.

World Theatre Day Message by Samiha Ayoub

Theatre in Asia and Africa

China Looking Back on Chinese Theatre in the “Pandemic Age”:
No Way Out But Through ————— Xi Muliang

South Korea Recovery and Development ————— Lee Seung-gon

Theatre in the Americas and Oceania

USA Restructuring the Theatre World ————— Tonooka Naomi

Theatre in Europe

UK The Violence of Othering: Racism, Genderism, Ablism ————— Motohashi Tetsuya

Germany Though Hard Times Lie Ahead, Theatre Remains One of the Most Immediate
Forms for Reflecting Them and Seeking Solutions ————— Eva Behrendt

France From Pandemic to Ukraine War and Energy Crisis:
Ongoing Challenges for the Theatre World ————— Fujii Shintaro

Italy Creativity Showcased Under Pressure ————— Velia Papa

Spain Weaving Humanity on Simple Stages with Words, Rhythm, and Silence
————— Okamoto Junko

Finland A Return to Normalcy During Uncertain Times ————— Linnea Stara

Lithuania Dystopian Times ————— Kristina Steiblytė

Russia Theatre Amid Silence ————— Shinozaki Naoya

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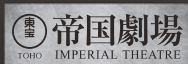
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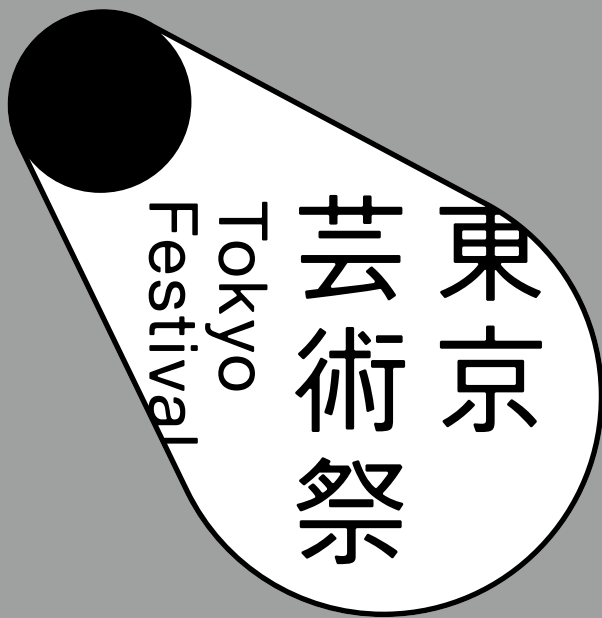
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東京の多彩で奥深い芸術文化を通して世界とつながることを目指し、毎年秋に東京・池袋エリアを中心に開催している都市型総合芸術祭です。東京の芸術文化の魅力を分かり易く見せると同時に東京における芸術文化の創造力を高めることを目指しています。中長期的には社会課題の解決や人づくり、都市づくり、そしてグローバル化への対応を視野にいれて取り組んでいます。

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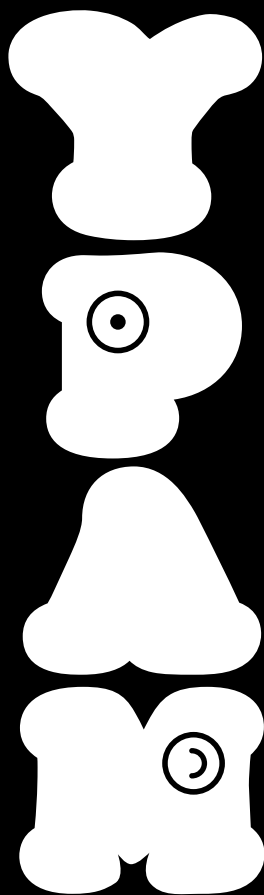
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