

国際演劇年鑑 2015

*Theatre  
Yearbook  
2015*

*Theatre  
in Japan*

日本の舞台芸術を知る

NOH and KYÔGEN—KABUKI and BUNRAKU—MUSICAL—CONTEMPORARY THEATRE—  
CHILDREN'S and YOUTH THEATRE and PUPPET THEATRE—JAPANESE CLASSICAL  
DANCE—BALLET—CONTEMPORARY DANCE and BUTOH—TELEVISION and RADIO

公益社団法人 国際演劇協会日本センター  
ITI / UNESCO



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# Theatre Yearbook 2015

## Theatre in Japan

Published in March, 2015

Japanese Centre of International Theatre Institute (ITI/UNESCO)  
c/o Kokuritsu Nohgakudo (The National Noh Theatre)  
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# Foreword

The Japanese Centre of International Theatre Institute has become a public interest incorporated foundation and is a member of an international network comprised of National Centres and professional organizations in approximately a hundred countries and regions constituting the International Theatre Institute (ITI), which is a non-governmental organization under the umbrella of 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”. In Article 3 of the standing rules of the Japanese Centre of International Theatre Institute, it is stipulated 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 creations and exchanges of theatre and dance based upon the purpose of the UNESCO Constitution”.

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

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

Furthermore, reading performances have been presented every year since 2009 to introduce remarkable plays from around the world as part of the research and study activity to promote international theatrical exchange. In 2014, the ‘Theatre Born in Conflict Zones’ series was carried out for the sixth consecutive year and three new plays from UK/Israel, Pakistan and Nigeria (an excerpt) were translated and introduced to Japan for the first time.

Thus the publication of the ‘Theatre Yearbook’ has laid a firm foundation for actual activities to gain knowledge on 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 to the activities of the Japanese Centre of ITI in the years to come.

March 27, 2015

In commemoration of the World Theatre Day

Nagai Taeko  
President

Japanese Centre of International Theatre Institute

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N.B. Japanese names are basically written in Japanese way :  
family names come first and given names second.

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**Shots from the Performing Arts in Japan  
in 2014**

## Noh / Kyôgen



Kanze Tetsunojô, Ren'niku Kobo, Contemporary noh play ***Shi-Kôtei*** (**The First Emperor of China**) © Maejima Yoshihiro



Umewaka Genshō, The Ohtsuki Noh Theatre Public Interest Incorporated Foundation  
***Sekidera Komachi*** (**Komachi at the Sekidera Temple**) © Moriguchi Mitsuru





Kagawa Seiji, **Eguchi** (Eguchi the Courtesan) © Ishida Yutaka



Shigeyama Shime, Shigeyama Sensaku IV one-year Memorial Program of Kyôgen  
**Kuriyaki** (Roasting Chestnuts) © Yoshikawa Nobuyuki

## Noh / Kyôgen



Shigeyama Yoshinobu,  
*Futari-bakama (Two-in-one-Hakama)*  
© Chuzaburô -Kyôgen-kai



Shigeyama Sengorô, Shigeyama Sensaku IV  
One-year Memorial Program of Kyôgen  
*Makuramonogurui (Grandfather in Love)*  
© Shigeyama-Kyôgen-kai / Kawanishi Yoshiaki



Komparu Sôemon XXII, Sekine Shôroku Sangju Memorial Program of Noh  
Iccho **Yugyo Yanagi** (*The wandering Priests and Willow*) on September 28th, 2010 © Maejima Yoshihiro



Mishima Gentarô, **Ukai** (*The cormorant fisherman*)  
© National Noh Theatre



Kunikawa Jun, **Utaura** (*Poem Divining*)  
© National Noh Theatre



## Kabuki



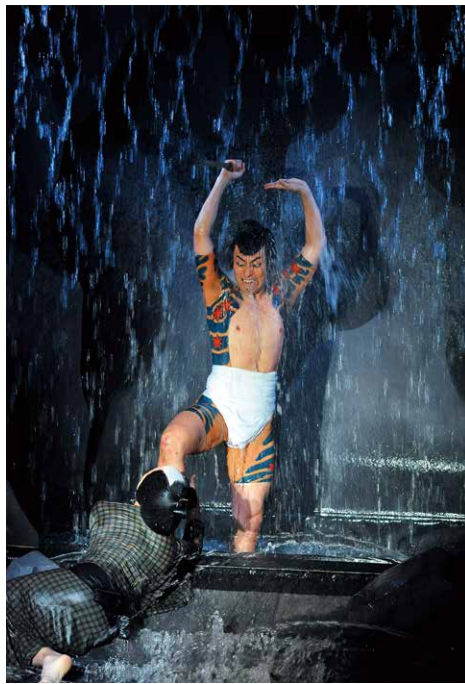
*Kanadehon Chûsingura (The Treasury of Loyal Retainers)*

Sakata Tôjûrô, Matsumoto Kôshirô, Nakamura Kichimemon, Nakamura Senjaku © Shochiku



*Okazaki-act in Igagoe Dôchû Sugoroku (Revenge at Iga Pass, The Okazaki Village scene )*

Nakamura Kichimemon, Nakamura Karoku © National Theatre



***Kaidan Chibusa-Enoki***  
**(The Ghost of Chibusa-Enoki)**  
 Nakamura Kankurō  
 (Kabuki-za Theatre)  
 © Shochiku



***Kaidan Chibusa-Enoki (The Ghost of Chibusa-Enoki)*** Nakamura Kankurō, Nakamura Shidō (Rose Theatre New York)  
 ©Heisei Nakamura-za New York Tour Executive Committee

## Kabuki



*Super Kabuki II Sora wo Kizamumono (Etching the Sky)* Ichikawa Ennosuke, Sasaki Kuranosuke © Shochiku



*Kotohoide Mimasu Kagekiyo (Long Live General Kagekiyo of the Mimasu-crest)* Ichikawa Ebizô © Shochiku





*Kanjincho* (The Subscription List) Ichikawa Somegorô © Shochiku

## Bunraku

Takemoto Sumitayû VII on his Retirement Stage, ***Sakuramaru seppuku no dan*** (***Sakuramaru's Suicide***) section from *Sugawara denju tenarai kagami* (The Secrets of Sugawara's Calligraphy)  
© National Bunraku Theatre cooperated by NPO Ningyo Joruri Bunrakuza Mutsumi-kai







***Futatsu Chôchô Kuruwa Nikki* (Two Butterflies in the pleasure Quarters)**

© National Theatre cooperated by NPO Ningyo Joruri Bunrakuza Mutsumi-kai

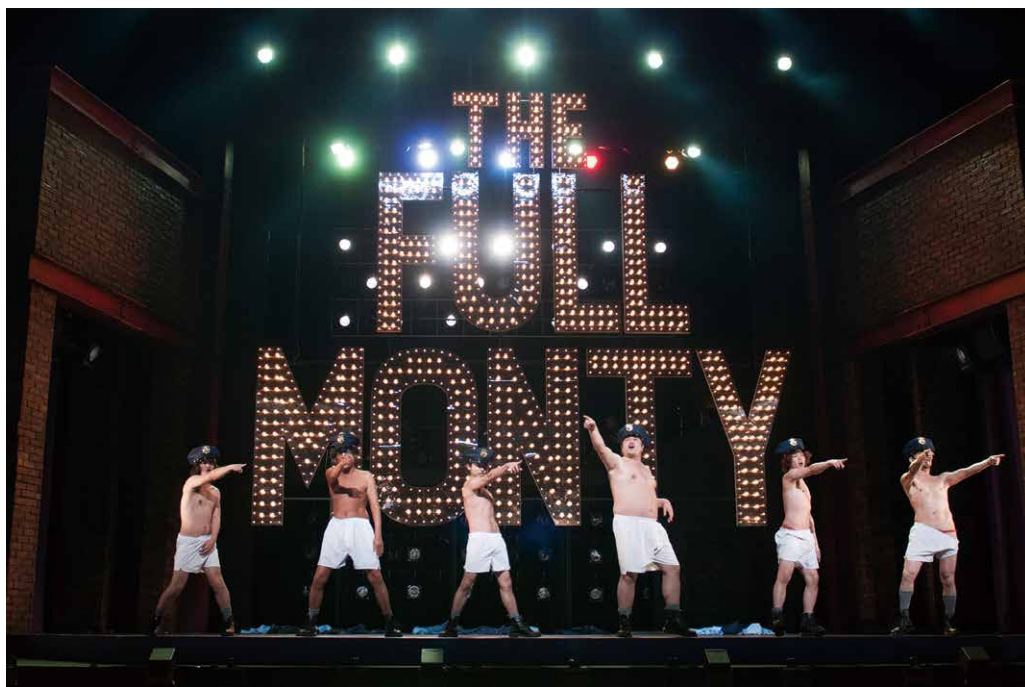


***Honchô Nijûshikô* (The Twenty-four Dutiful Sons)** © National Theatre cooperated by NPO Ningyo Joruri Bunrakuza Mutsumi-kai

## Musical



Office Miyamoto Co., Ltd., *The Beautiful Game* © Miyagawa Maiko



Fuji Television Network, Inc. / Kyodo Tokyo Inc., *THE FULL MONTY* © taro



Tokyo Broadcasting System Television, Inc. /  
HoriPro Inc. / Yomiuri Shimbun,  
***Love Never Dies***  
© Watabe Takahiro



TOHO CO., LTD. Theatrical Division, ***Lady Bess*** © TOHO CO., LTD. Theatrical Division



## Contemporary Theatre



Nitosh, *Ogai's Mystery* © Honma Nobuhiko



SPAC - Shizuoka Performing Arts Center, *Mahabharata – Nalacharitam* © Atarashi Ryota



Seinenza Theater Company, *Chi no Chibusa (Breasts of the Earth)* © Sakamoto Masafumi



Paradox constant, *Showa Restoration* © Watanabe Ryuta

## Contemporary Theatre



Ishinha,  
*Perspective play*  
© Inoue Yoshikazu



Tokyo Metropolitan TheatrexMyeongdong Theater in Seoul *Hanshin (Half Gods)* © Okamoto Takashi





The Foundation for Child Well-being / Aoyama Round Theatre *Yuzora harete – yoku kaki ku kyaku*  
 (A Clear Evening Sky: Peter Piper Picked a Peck) © Hikiji Nobuhiko



Saitama Next Theatre, 2014, *"Caligula " by the pale boys and girls* © Hosono Shinji

## Children's and Youth Theatre / Puppet Theatre



Puppet Theater Hitomi-za, *Beauty and the Beast* © Tasaka Haruo

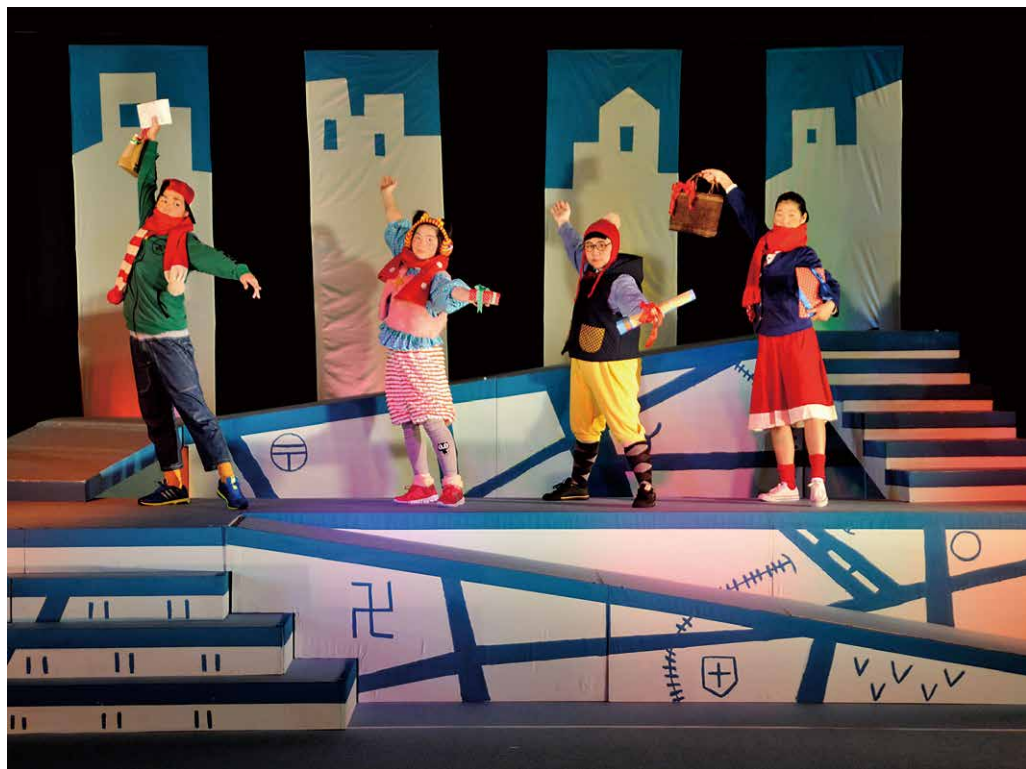


Theater Company Dora, *Ayanasu (Woven)* © Ichii Ryo





Puppet Theatre Puk,  
*The Tiger's Lullaby*  
(Tora-no-komori-uta)  
© Puppet Theatre Puk



Theatre Tampopo Educational Drama Research Assoc.,Inc, *Kasane-chan ni Kiite Mina (Go Ask Kasane)* © Yamazaki Kazuo

## Japanese Classical Dance



Azuma School, Azuma Setsuho, Kiyomoto **Tamausagi (The Rabbit in the Moon)** © Video Photo Saito / Shimizu Satoshi



Tokyo Bunka Kaikan, The Japanese Classical Dance with Orchestra vol.2 **Lilac Garden** © Tokyo Bunka Kaikan

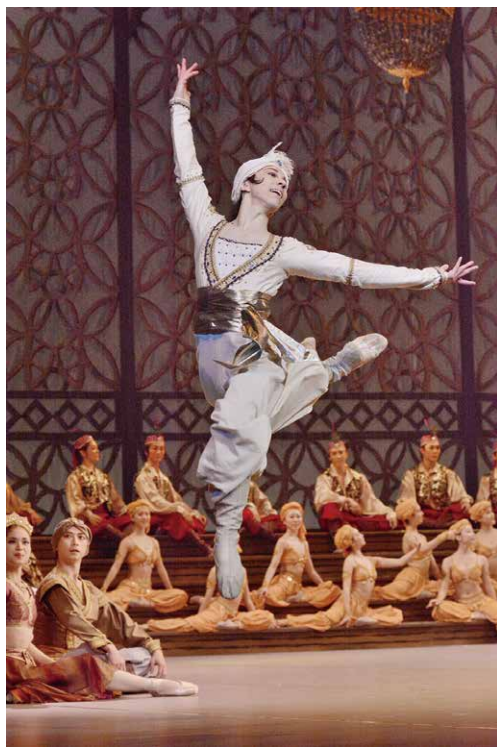


Miyagi Nôhō, From Ryukyu Dance  
 –Seven Dance Repertoire of  
 Traditional Women's Dances  
**Yanagi (Willow)**  
 © Yokohama Noh Theatre / Kanda Yoshiaki



Fujima Etsuko, Nagauta  
**Makasho (The Begging Monk)**  
 © Video Photo Saito

## Ballet



Jinushi Kaoru Ballet Company,  
*Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves*  
© Office Obana



Tetsuya Kumakawa K-BALLET COMPANY, Tetsuya Kumakawa K-BALLET COMPANY 15th Anniversary *La Bayadère* © Ogawa Shunki





© New National Theatre, Tokyo

The National Ballet of Japan, *The Sleeping Beauty* © Shikama Takashi



DANCE for Life Executive Committee, DANCE for Life 2014 Shimomura Yurie Ballet Recital *The Fisherman and His Soul*  
© Tsukada Yoichi

## Contemporary Dance / Butoh



Dairakudakan Temptenshiki, *Mushi no hoshi-Space insect* © Kawashima Hiroyuki



Momoko Shiraga (Direction, Choreography) + Yuko Mohri (Stage Design) + Yasuno Miyauchi (Music) ,  
*The Rite of Spring* © Kataoka Yohata



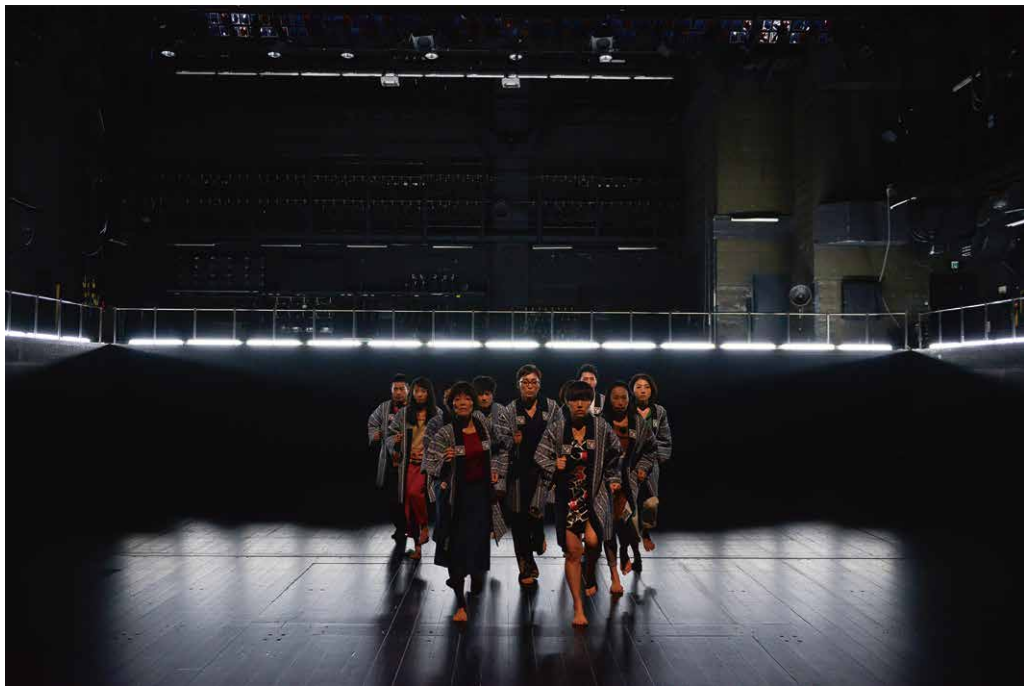
Saburo Teshigawara +KARAS, *Sleep* © Abe Akihito



Noism1xNoism2, *CARMEN* © Kishin Shinoyama



## Contemporary Dance / Butoh



idevian crew, **ZUAN** © Nosaka Marie

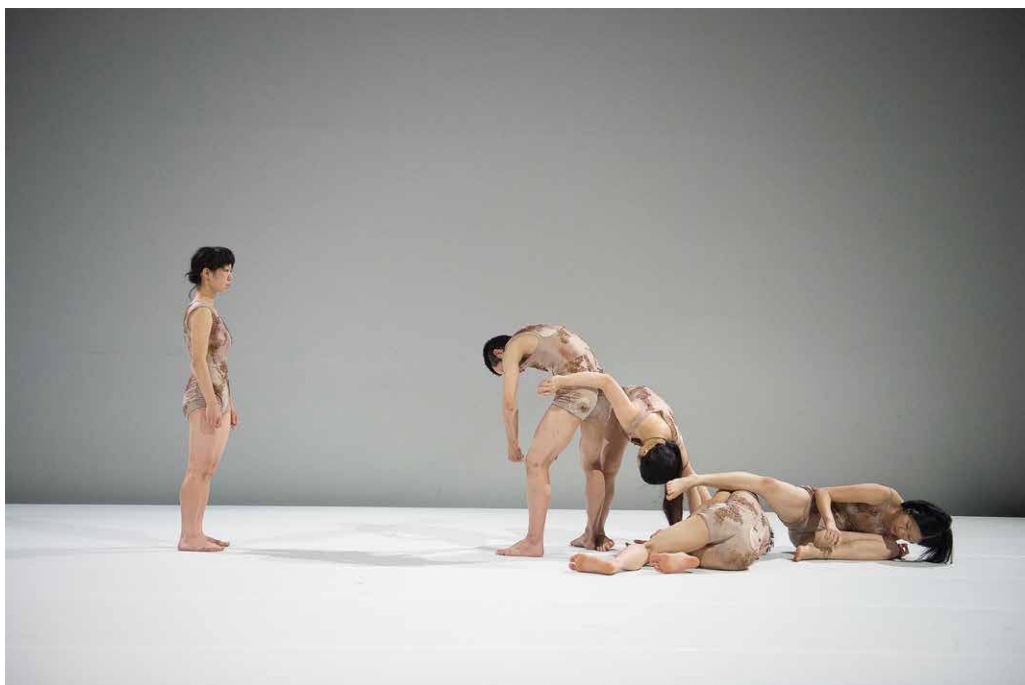


Mikuni Yanaihara project, **The Cherry Orchard** © Kataoka Yohata





CONDORS, **GIGANT** © HARU



KAORI SEKI Co.PUNCTUMUN, **Miroedetut** © Matsumoto Kazuyuki

© Amemiya Yukitaka

**KUUKIGAKORONDA! (The Air Fell)**



Min Tanaka solo dance,  
***Sluffing into a cloud afloat***

舞臺芸術  
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**The Japanese Performing Arts  
in 2014**

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# Noh and Kyôgen

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## Living National Treasure, Person of Cultural Merit, Arts Academy Award

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Nishi Tetsuo

In 2014, the designation, ‘Important Intangible Cultural Property (Living National Treasure)’ was extended to both Umewaka Genshō and Mishima Gentarō. These two nominations bring the total number of persons designated from the world of noh-gaku to 41, of which 13 are currently living.

Umewaka Genshō is a shite actor of the Kanze School. He was born in 1948, and he became Umewaka Rokurō, the 56th head of the Umewaka family. He is the second son of Umewaka Rokurō the 55th, and he studied with his grandfather, Umewaka Minoru II as well as his father. In 1986, he was awarded the Ministry of Education’s Award to Newcomers for the Encouragement of the Arts, and in 1998, the Japan Art Academy Award, having previously been awarded the Kanze Hisao Memorial Hōsei University Noh Theatre Award in 1995. He is a member of the Japan Academy of Arts.

Mishima Gentarō, is a Taiko-drum player of the Komparu School. He was born in 1936, as the eldest son of Mishima Tarō. He studied with his father as well as Maekawa Sōkan, Komparu Sōemon XXII and Kakimoto Toyoji. In 2010, he was awarded the Saika Award of Hōsei University.

The designation, Person of Cultural Merit was extended to Hōshō Kan. Hōshō Kan was born in 1934 and is a waki actor of the Shimogakari Hōshō School and its 12th leader. He is the eldest son of

Hôshô Yaichi and studied with Hôshô Shin, as well as his father. He has received the Japan Art Academy Award, and the Kanze Hisao Memorial Hôsei University Noh Theatre Award. He has also been designated, 'Important Intangible Cultural Property (Living National Treasure)' and is a member of the Japan Academy of Arts.

The 2013 Agency for Cultural Affairs' Arts Festival Prize for Newcomers went to Shigeyama Yoshinobu. He was born in 1982 and is a kyôgen actor of the Okura School. As the eldest son of Shigeyama Chuzaburô IV, he was instructed by his father. He was given this award for his performance in Futaribakama (Two-in-one-Hakama) in the Chuzaburô Kai.

The Japan Art Academy Award was awarded to Kagawa Seiji. He was born in 1944, and is a shite actor of the Kita School. He studied with Kita Minoru XV and has been recipient of the Ministry of Education's Award to Newcomers for the Encouragement of the Arts and the Kanze Hisao Memorial Hôsei University Noh Theatre Award among others.

This past year's Kanze Hisao Memorial Hôsei University Noh Theatre Award was given to Kunikawa Jun and Takakuwa Izumi. The Saika Award was given to the Kita School Oshima Noh Theatre. The Saika Award was established with an endowment from the Hattori Memorial Hôsei University Fund and it honors persons or organizations who have made great contributions to noh-gaku in one of three aspects: as a person of merit, as one who has made a significant contribution towards the propagation of noh-gaku or towards its development.

Kunikawa Jun was born in 1948 and is an Ôtsuzumi-drum player of the Takayasu School. He studied with Yasufuku Haruo. He is also

a part-time Lecturer at the Tokyo University of the Arts and an instructor at the National Noh Theatre.

Takakuwa Izumi was born in 1956 and is a nohgaku critic. She is the Head of the Intangible Cultural Properties Section of the National Research Institute for Cultural Properties. She completed a master course at the Tokyo University of the Arts, and received her doctorate at the Graduate School of Waseda University.

The Kita School Ôshima Noh Theatre is a noh theatre with a capacity 420 persons, located in Fukuyama City in Hiroshima Prefecture. The Ôshima Noh Stage was first built in Fukuyama City in 1914 but it was destroyed by fire in an air raid during the World War II. Following that, reconstruction began in 1948, and the new theatre was completed in 1965. In addition to their regularly scheduled programs of noh, they conduct numerous activities in order to propagate nohgaku.

As a continuation of the programs of noh to bring aid to the victims of the Great Tohoku Earthquake of 2011 the following charity programs were held on the 11th of March:

Kawamura Kazushige performed *Tsunemasa, Kae no Kata* (Variations of General Tsunemasa), and Sugiura Toyohiko performed *Shôjô Midare* (Wild Shôjô Spirits) amongst others, at the Kyoto Kanze Kaikan and Ôtsuki Bunzô performed *Tôgan koji* (The Lay Monk of the East Coast) at the Ôtsuki Noh Theatre. Further, Kanze Kiyokazu performed *Sei Paoro no Kaishin* (The Conversion of Saint Paul), a repeat performance of the newly written noh play which premiered in 2012, and bunraku chanter Toyotake Hanafusadayû and shamisen player Tsuruzawa Seitomo contributed with a performance of *Iesu Kirisuto no Shôgai* (The Life of Jesus

Christ) at the Kanze Noh Theatre.

The Tessenkai Nohgaku Kenshûjo at Aoyama held their 30th Anniversary Special Program during the year. Noh performances included Shimizu Kanji in *Tomonaga* (General Tomonaga, April 26th), Kobayakawa Osamu in *Shunkan* (Monk Shunkan, April 27th), Uzawa Hisa in *Nonomiya/Gasshōdome* (Holy Signs at Nonomiya Temple, April 28th), Nishimura Takao in *Kinuta* (Washing Clothes, September 27th), and Shibata Minoru performed in *Hanagatami* (Flower Basket, September 28th). The stage of the present Kenshûjo was transplanted from the Tamagawa Noh Theatre, which was first removed from its original home and then in 1983 brought to Aoyama.

The nohgaku performances at the Hakkō ceremony, called Tonomine Sarugaku, were held at the Tonomine Temple in Sakurai City, Nara Prefecture. These have been held every year on October 13th and 14th, since the end of the Muromachi period. The four nohgaku groups (Komparu, Kongō, Kanze, Hōshō) would each give performances and the distinguishing features of the program is that it includes the contests of newly written noh plays, so called ‘shinsaku noh’. The event has received special attention due to the great influence it had on the later generations of nohgaku. On May 13, 2014, the Tonomine Danzan Shrine held ‘Danzan Noh’ with the Danzan ceremony where programs such as *Okina* (Old Man) were performed by Ôtsuki Bunzō, *Kayoi Komachi* (Visiting Komachi) by Umewaka Genshō.

This past year had numerous performances of shinsaku noh, including both first performances and repeat performances. Kanze Yoshimasa performed *Tajima mori* (Lord of Tajima, March 1st,

Toyoko City Municipal Plaza) and Umewaka Genshō *Kurenai Tennyō* (Crimson Celestial Maiden, March 2nd, Nagoya Noh Theatre). This is new noh play written by Miuchi Suzue, and based on the girl's comic *Garasu no Kamen* (Glass Mask), first performed in 2006 at the National Noh Theatre's Special Program. The script was by Ueda Shinji (Takarazuka Theatre Company), and the play was directed by Umewaka Genshō.

Further, the contemporary noh play *Shi Kōtei* (The First Emperor of China) was staged by Kanze Tetsunojō on March 20th at the National Noh Theatre. The play was written by Naka Tarō, and directed by Okamoto Akira from the theatre company Ren'niku Kobo, and the noh chants were composed by Umewaka Genshō. The author, known for his refined, sophisticated style, was born in 1922, and is considered a modern poet.

Also *Choritsushi* (The Piano Tuner) was performed on October 13th at the Shinjuku Gyōen English Garden by Kanze Tetsunojō, assisted by presenter Maya Kyōko and pianist Koyama Michie. Kato Shingō staged a new version of *Masakado* (General Masakado) on October 27th at the Kikkokai event at the National Noh Theatre. This play was written by Kobayashi Yasuharu and directed by Umewaka Manzaburō, this was the repeat performance of a piece that was premiered in 2013 in Bando City, Tochigi Prefecture, the home province of general Taira no Masakado.

Among reconstructed noh works there was a performance of *Yoshinogoto* (The Koto-harp from Yoshino) on June 15th by Katayama Kuroemon at the Kyoto Kanze Kaikan. The performance was supervised by Nishino Haruo, with the noh chant provided by Mikata Ken and the choreography by Katayama Kuroemon. In the



play is similar to *Yoshino tennin* (The Angel at Yoshino), a celestial being carrying a Koto-harp appears at the Yoshino mountain, having been drawn there by the cherry blossoms.

*Tenko* (The Celestial Drum), a futuristic noh play, was performed as a part of the Bungaku-za's program from October 24th to November 2nd at the Kinokuniya Southern Theatre. It was composed by Aoki Go and directed by Takahashi Masanori, with Sakaguchi Yoshisada, and Minami Takuya as its main performers. It is a contemporary play inspired by the classical noh play *Tenko*, constructed around the drama between the father and the son in the piece.

Next, considering performances of major works, the important play *Dojoji* (The Dojoji Temple Bell), which marks the 'coming of age' for a noh actor, was performed for the first time by a number of actors, but also a considerable number of veteran actors also gave it repeat performances. The following is a list of these performances, including both first performances and repeat performances listed with the actor who performed the shite role (variant performance names are omitted).

Yamashina Yaemon (February 1st), Awaya Akio (March 2nd), Sakai Otomasa (March 9th), Yamaguchi Goichirô (March 20th), Higashikawa Takashi (March 23rd), Tomoeda Takehito (June 21st), Kanze Kiyokazu (July 20th), Nagata Katsumi (November 29th), Shibata Minoru (November 30th), Suzuki Keigô (December 20th), Umano Masaki (December 20th).

The specially taught pieces, the so-called 'naraimono' include the especially important 'old woman plays' and performances of these are listed below, followed by the name of the actors who played the shite role (variant performance names are omitted).

- *Sotoba Komachi* (Stupa Komachi) – Tomoeda Akiyo (January 25th), Sekine Shôroku (March 23rd), Takahashi Hiroshi (October 5th), Takeda Naohiro (December 23rd).
- *Omu Komachi* (Parrot Komachi) – Ôtsuki Bunzô (February 22nd), Umewaka Kishô (March 15th), Kanze Kiyokazu (April 5th), Katayama Kuroemon (September 15th), Umewaka Chôzaemon (November 8th), Inoue Hirohisa (November 30th).
- *Obasute* (Abandoned Old Lady) – Fujii Tokuzô (June 8th), Asai Fumiyoshi (November 1st), Reisaburô Nagayama (November 15th), Kongo Hisanori (December 6th).
- *Higaki* (The Cypruss Fence) – Yamamoto Nobuyuki (May 30th).
- *Sekidera Komachi* (Komachi at the Sekidera Temple) – Umewaka Genshō (March 22nd), Umewaka Manzaburō (September 21st).

There were many programs of noh and kyôgen offered in memory of departed performers. Below are some of them in chronological order:

- Shigeyama Sensaku IV one-year Memorial Program of kyôgen (February 15th ad 16th, at the Kongô Noh Theatre), starring amongst others Shigeyama Sengorô in *Makura Monogurui* (Grandfather in Love).
- Yamaguchi Iwao 33rd Memorial Noh program (March 21st, Ôhori Kôen Noh Theatre), in which Yamaguchi Goichirô performed *Dojoji*.
- Umewaka Kichinojô V 3rd Memorial Noh (March 29th, Kanze Noh Theatre), where Umewaka Naoyoshi performed *Sanemori* (General Sanemori).
- IV Memorial Program in remembrance of Shigeyama Sensaku (June 7th, Oe Noh Theatre). Amongst other performers, Shigeyama Shime performed *Suô-otoshi* (The Dropped Robe).
- Nakamori Shôzô 7th Memorial Program (June 15th, at the National Noh Theatre), where Nakamori Kanta performed *Kinuta*,

*Azusa no De* (Washing Clothes, The Azusa Tree Version).

- Wakebayashi Kôichi 1st Memorial Noh (September 23rd, Kyoto Kanze Kaikan). Wakebayashi Michitaka amongst others performed *Yoshino Tennin*.
- Adachi Reiko Memorial Noh (September 29th, National Noh Theatre), where Uchida Yoshiko performed *Motomezuka* (The Motomezuka Hill).
- Fujita Daigorô 7th Memorial Noh (November 10th, National Noh Theatre). Kanze Kiyokazu and Kanze Tetsunojô performed *Shôjô Midare, Okitsubo/Sô no Mai* (Wild Shôjô Spirits, The Sake Jar/Twin Dance Version ) and others.
- Shigeyama Sensaku IV one-year Memorial Program of kyôgen (November 13th, National Noh Theatre) at which Shigeyama Sengorô performed *Makura Monogurui*, Shigeyama Shime performed *Kuriyaki* (Roasting Chestnuts).

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The following is a list of performers of Nohgaku who passed away in 2014.

- Ôe Teruo (January 6th) Komparu School Taiko Player, 80 years old.
- Sugiura Genzaburô (January 14th) Kanze School Shite Actor, 79 years old.
- Uzawa Ikuo (January 17th) Kanze School Shite Actor, 74 years old.
- Tsuchida Kiyoshi (January 18th) Kanze School Shite Actor 77 years old.
- Gokita Takekazu (January 18th) Kanze School Shite Actor 92 years old.
- Komparu Sôemon (March 11th) Komparu School Taiko-drum Player and 21st leader, 89 years old. Important Intangible Cultural Property (Living National Treasure)
- Kawamura Haruo (March 19th) Kanze School Shite Actor, 88 years old.
- Kuramoto Masa (March 24th) Hôshô School Shite Actor. 83 years old.

- Teshima Kunzô (May 9th) Kongô School Shite Actor. 83 years old.
- Endô Rokurô (March 21st) Kanze School Shite Actor. 88 years old.
- Hiratomi Nobuyoshi (June 7th) Kanze School Shite Actor. 86 years old.
- Okumura Fukuko (July 23rd) Kanze School Shite Actor. 93 years old.
- Hosono Hiromi (August 23rd) Hôshô School Shite Actor. 87 years old.
- Kô Masanori (August 24th) Kô School Kotsuzumi-drum Player. 73 years old.
- Shimizu Toshinobu (August 30th) Takayasu School Waki Actor, 89 years old.
- Mizukami Terukazu (October 12th) Hôshô School Shite Actor. 71 years old.
- Komparu Kunikazu (December 11th) Komparu School Taiko-drum Player 57 years old.

### **Nishi, Tetsuo**

Nishi Tetsuo is a noh-gaku critic born in 1937, graduated from Saitama University. He was employed at Tokyo-dô shuppan and has held positions as adjunct instructor at Musashino University, Department of Literature and at Bunka Gakuin. He is also a review board member of the Agency for Cultural Affairs Arts Festival Nohgaku Department/Theatre Department, a board member of the Arts Encouragement Classical Arts Department/Theatre Department and Japan Arts Encouragement Society (National Noh Theatre) Advisory Panel. He is a co-author of Nohgaku Daijiten (Encyclopedia of Nohgaku, Chikuma shobô).

(Translation: James Ferner)

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# Kabuki and Bunraku

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## The World of Kabuki – a Year of Fabulous Displays of the Coming Generations

## The World of Bunraku – Sumitayû's Retirement Performance Breaks Sale's Records

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Mizuochi Kiyoshi

Throughout last year in kabuki, the big stars were mostly in good health, giving us the benefit of their matured technique as they performed the roles that they are famous for. Meanwhile, the mid-level to younger actors below the age of 40 were also making considerable achievements, taking on many ambitious roles and first-time roles.

The Kabuki-za, the home base of kabuki, celebrated the first Anniversary of its reopening in April. Although the explosion of popularity that occurred at the time of the opening has died down somewhat, with all the fine programs being staged every month, audience numbers have stabilized and the tally for ticket sales reached an impressive total of two million by November.

The New Year's program brought together many of the biggest stars such as Sakata Tôjûrô, Matsumoto Kôshirô, Nakamura Kichimon and Nakamura Baigyoku in a performance of *Kanadehon Chûshingura* (The Treasury of Loyal Retainers) act IX, which made it a grand occasion. In February, mid-level stars such as Ichikawa Somegorô, Onoe Shôroku, Onoe Kikunosuke and Nakamura Shichinosuke performed *Kokoro no Nazotokete Iroito* (The Coloured Thread Unriddling the Mysteries of the Heart) by Tsuruya Nanboku, and *Shiranami Gonin Otoko* (The Shiranami Five) by

Kawatake Mokuami, giving us the brilliance and energy suitable for this middle generation.

In March and April, the scheduled name-taking program of Nakamura Fukusuke who was to become Nakamura Utaemon VII was postponed due to Fukusuke's poor state of health and the program was changed to the Hô-ô (Phoenix) Festival, a commemoration of the 100th year anniversary of Shôchiku's direct management of the Kabuki-za. The phoenix is the official crest of the Kabuki-za. In March, there was a rich performance of *Kanjinchô* (The Subscription List) with Nakamura Kichiemon as Benkei, Onoe Kikugorô as Togashi and Sakata Tôjûrô as Yoshitsune. In April, Sakata Tôjûrô, the kabuki elder who turns 82 this year, played the role of O-Hatsu in *Sonezaki Shinjû* (The Love Suicides at Sonezaki), announcing it would be the last time he performed this role. The character, O-Hatsu is a 19 year-old girl, a role that Tôjûrô first performed at the age of 21, and that he has continued to perform for 60 years, amounting to over 1,200 times.

In May, at the Dangiku Festival, which also served as a one-year memorial for Ichikawa Danjûrô XII, Ichikawa Ebizô played Benkei in *Kanjinchô*, a role that his father was well known for. In June, Kataoka Nizaemon, who had been forced to take time off due to illness, returned with a reconstruction of *O-Matsuri* (The Festival). In July, lead actors Bandô Tamasaburô and Ichikawa Ebizô performed in *Natsumatsuri Naniwa Kagami* (The Summer Festival at Naniwa) and *Tenshu Monogatari* (The Castle Tower). In the August, at the 'Nôryô (summer festival) Kabuki', Bandô Mitsugorô and Nakamura Hashinosuke appeared in a program of mid-level stars such as Nakamura Kankurô, Nakamura Shichinosuke and Nakamura Shidô performing the *Kaidan Chibusa Enoki* (The Ghost of Chibusa Enoki),

which they had performed in New York in July, in a program that they called: 'Gaisen (triumphant return) Kôen', which proved quite popular.

In the September, Shûzan Festival, Nakamura Kichiemon performed *Hôkaibô* (The Unruly Monk) as well as the role of Mitsuhide in *Ehon Taikôki* (The Tycoon's Exploits) act X, together with Kataoka Nizaemon, Nakamura Karoku and Ichikawa Somegorô. In October, the memorial program for Nakamura Kanzaburô XVII and XVIII was held. These memorial programs are normally meant to honor the departed performer and it is customary for his descendants or students to perform roles that he was famous for and that have passed down to them. In this way, the audiences can see how the art of kabuki is transmitted from one generation to the next. In this program there was a lineup of pieces that the departed stars had been famous for, which went on throughout the day and evening. The eldest son of Kanzaburô XVIII, Nakamura Kankurô performed Mitsugi from *Ise Ondo Koi no Netaba* (The Massacre at Ise Pleasure Quarters); the second son, Nakamura Shichinosuke performed O-Mitsu from *Nozakimura* act in *Shinpan Utazaimon* (New Edition of Beggars' Songs); and the brothers performed together in *Iwashiuri Koi no Hikiami* (The Sardine Seller's Net of Love), written by Mishima Yukio, which both Kanzaburô XVII and XVIII had been known for. Also in the November star-studded program, which was a memorial program for Matsumoto Hakuô I, his eldest son, Matsumoto Kôshirô and his second son Nakamura Kichiemon supported his grandson Ichikawa Somegorô as Benkei in *Kanjinchô*. Matsumoto Kôshirô performed general Kumagai in *Kumagai Jinya* (At the Kumagai Warcamp) act from the *Ichinotani Futaba Gunki* (Chronicle of the Battle at Ichinotani), and Nakamura Kichiemon



performed *Ii Tairo* (Lord Ii). All of these were roles that Hakuô was well known for.

At the National Theatre's New Year's program, Onoe Kikugorô staged his reconstruction of the piece *Sanzen Ryô Haru no Komabiki* (Three thousand Gold Coins and a Horse), and in March, Nakamura Tokizô played the role of Kirare O-Tomi (Cutting O-Tomi) from the play *Yowa Nasake Ukina no Yokogushi* (Small Mercies and Betrayals), a piece that his grandfather had been famous for. In October, *Futatsu Chôchô Kuruwa Nikki* (Two Butterflies in the Pleasure Quarters) was staged with Matsumoto Kôshirô and Ichikawa Somegorô in the lead. In November, *Meiboku Sendai Hagi* (The Trouble in the Date Household) was performed by Sakata Tôjûrô, Nakamura Senjaku, Nakamura Hashinosuke, Nakamura Baigyoku and Nakamura Kanjaku in the central roles. In December, the reconstructed *Fujikawa* (Crossing the Border at Fujikawa), *Takeyabu* (In the Bamboo Grove) and *Okazaki* (The Okazaki Village) sections of the play, *Igagoe Dôchû Sugoroku* (Revenge at Iga Pass) were performed for the first time in 44 years. Nakamura Kichimon and Nakamura Karoku together gave an especially fine performance of the *Okazaki* act.

At the New Year's performance at Shinbashi Enbujô, Ichikawa Ebizô performed *Kotohoide Mimasu no Kagekiyo* (Long Live General Kagekiyo of the Mimasu-crest), which incorporated the works *Kan'u* (General Kuan Yü), *Kamahige* (Sickle Beard), *Kagekiyo* (General Kagekiyo) and *Gedatsu* (Jailbreak) from the Kabuki Juhachiban collection. The script was by Kawasaki Tetsuo and Matsuo Ryo and Fujima Kanjûrô directed. The Kabuki Juhachiban is a collection of 18 plays that had been made famous by Danjûrô I to IV and compiled by Ichikawa Danjûrô VII in the 19th century. Many of the plays included lack actual scripts, and this piece, although technically a reconstruc-

tion, was composed as a new work.

In March, Ichikawa Ennosuke staged a work entitled *Sora wo Kizamumono* (Etching the Sky) in his Super Kabuki II program, which was written and directed by Maekawa Tomohiro. Super Kabuki was created by the preceding Ennosuke (currently En'ô) and is a modernized contemporary kabuki dance drama that, while basing itself on the traditional techniques of kabuki, draws upon the newest stage machinery, lighting and music.

In June, a new production of kabuki was staged at the modern Theatre Cocoon, directed by Kushida Kazuyoshi and featuring Nakamura Kankurô, Nakamura Shichinosuke and Onoe Matsuya in *Sannin Kichisa* (Three Thieves Named Kichisa). At Meiji-za, Ichikawa Somegorô pitted his artistry against that of Ichikawa Ennosuke. Somegorô performed a special program composed of acts from amongst other *Yoshitsune Senbon Zakura* (Yoshitsune and a Thousand Cherry Trees) and the spectacle *Date no Jû Yaku* (Ten Flamboyant People) in May, and in November Ennosuke performed amongst other pieces *Shitennô Momiji Edoguma* (The Temple of the Four Deva Kings and the Red Maple Make-up of Edo). Apart from the kabuki programs in Tokyo, there were also programs held in Osaka at the Shôchiku-za in January, April, July and October, in Kyoto at the Minami-za in March, September and December, in Fukuoka at the Hakata-za in February and June and a star filled program was held in Nagoya at the Municipal Hall in October.

Along with these programs at the large venues, there were also tours of the regional venues, with each performer organizing their own program. Furthermore, with many of the younger actors participating in stage performances in other genres, the popularity of kabuki continued to grow as it developed in a diversity of ways.

The activities of the mid-level generation of stars such as Ichikawa Somegorô, Onoe Kikunosuke, Ichikawa Ebizô, Ichikawa Ennosuke and Onoe Matsuya clearly stood out, and what was noteworthy was how the kabuki scene, on the whole, seemed to be moving ahead towards the next generation.

In bunraku, the eldest of the Tayû (the narrating chanters) and their leader, Takemoto Sumitayû VII announced his retirement, giving as his reason his advanced age of 89. Programs to commemorate his retirement were held in April, at the Bunraku Theatre in Osaka and in May at the National Small Theatre in Tokyo. In November he was awarded the Order of Cultural Merit, an award of the highest honor. After Sumitayû, the second oldest in line, Takemoto Gentayû IX also announced his decision to retire in the summer due to failing physical stamina. Combined, they have served in the lists of bunraku for 68 years. As a result, in one fell swoop the Tayû camp had to make its change to the next generation of performers. Meanwhile, there has been a decrease in the amount of funds received from Osaka in the form of subsidies.

The National Bunraku Theatre in Osaka, the home base of bunraku, held its four regularly scheduled programs over the course of the year along with one appreciation workshop for beginners. As this year marked the 30th anniversary of the opening of the theatre, the programs throughout were called 'Commemorative programs'. The New Year's program had *Ninin Kamuro* (The Two Girl Attendants to a Courtesan), *Genpei Nunobiki no Taki* (The Nunobiki Waterfall), and *Keisei Koibikyakku* (The Amorous Courier) in the matinee and *Men uri* (The Mask Peddler), *Chikagoro Kawara no Tatehiki* (Modern Flamboyant People at the Riverbed) and *Dan-no-ura Kabuto*

*Gunki* (The Battle of Dan-no-ura) in the evening. In April, to commemorate the retirement of Sumitayû, the work, *Sugawara Denju Tenarai Kagami* (Sugawara's Secrets of Calligraphy) was performed in its entirety over the matinee and evening programs. The matinee part began with the great prelude, *Ôuchi* (At the Imperial Court) and went to *Shôjô Nagori* (Saying Farwell) of act II and the evening part went from *Kurumabiki* (The Cart Pulling) in act III to *Terakoya* (The Temple School) in act IV. Sumitayû's chanting in the *Sakuramaru Seppuku* (Sakuramaru's Suicide) section electrified the audience. Perhaps because this was Sumitayû's final performance and also because of the famous work on the program, ticket sales reached a record 93.2%, the highest since the theatre opened. In June, the Workshop for the Appreciation of Bunraku was held in both the afternoon and in the evening with performances of *Dango Uri* (The Dumpling Seller), a lecture: 'Welcome to Bunraku', and *Sanjûsangendo Munagi no Yurai* (The Ridge Pole of the Sanjûsangendo Temple). In contrast to last year, this year there was vigorous promotion activity in the schools beforehand and the happy result was an audience packed to 94.5% capacity. In July, the three-part summer program was held, the first part being for parents and their children with performances of *Kaminari Daiko* (The Thunder Drum), a lecture called 'What is Bunraku?' and *Saiyûki* (Journey to the West), the second part featured the famous works *Heike Nyogo ga Shima* (The Heike Clan and the Island of Women) and *Yari no Gonza Kasane Katabira* (Gonza the Lancer), and part three, the 'Summer Late Show' with a performance of *Onnagoroshi Abura no Jigoku* (The Woman-killer and the Hell of Oil). This program also saw audience numbers rise above those of last year.

In November the matinee featured a performance of *Futatsu*

*Chôchô Kuruwa Nikki* that had previously been performed in Tokyo and in the evening was a performance of *Ôshû Adachigahara* (The Adachi Plain in Ôshû) in its entirety, though ticket sales left something to be desired. Along with the regular programs, in July, there was a 'Su-Jôruri no Kai', a program featuring only chanting. The year as a whole saw a record number of theatregoers, 100,000 higher than the previous year.

At the National Small Theatre in Tokyo there were four programs held. In February there was a three-part program, part one having performances of *Shichifukujin Takara no Irifune* (The Seven Gods of Fortune) and *Chikagoro Kawara no Tatehiki*; part two had a performance of *Somemoyô Imose no Kadomatsu* (The Love of Osome and Hisamatsu) and part three featured *Goshozakura Horikawa Youchi* (The Cherry Trees of the Imperial Palace) and *Honchô Nijûshikô* (The Twenty-four Dutiful Sons). In May, to commemorate Sumitayû's retirement, the first part staged performances of *Zôho, Chushingura* (Supplement to Chushingura), *Koinyôbô Somewake Tazuna* (The Two-colored Reins), and *Sanjûsangendô Munagi no Yurai* and the second part featured *Onnagoroshi Abura no Jigoku*. Sumitayû, as did his father Sumitayû VI, performed *Kutsukakemura* (The Kutsukake Village) from *Koinyôbô Somewake Tazuna* as his farewell to his bunraku activities.

In September, there was a program in three parts, part one a performance of *Futatsu Chôchô Kuruwa Nikki* held in conjunction with the October program of kabuki. Part two had performances of *Ômi Genji Senjin Yakata* (The Battle of Sakamoto Castle), and *Hidakagarwa Iriaizakura* (The Cherry Trees along the Hidaka River) and part three featured the first performance of a work entitled *Farusu no Taifu*, based on William Shakespeare's *Henry IV* and *The Merry Wives of*



*Windsor* with the script by Kawai Shôichirô and editorial supervision and music by Tsurusawa Seiji. This work depicts the absurd tales of the mishaps of the pot-bellied, lustful epicurean, *Farusu no Taifu* (Falstaff), and in the end, his expulsion by the prince who had been his close companion. Ishii Mitsuru created the flamboyant scenery and original costumes, and puppeteer Kiritake Kanjûrô worked the main character in an entertaining performance. In December, the matinee and evening both had performances of *Ninin Sanbasô* (Two Sanbasô) as well as a lecture ‘The Charm of Bunraku’, and *Ehon Taikôki*. In the evening there was a program featuring mid-level performers with *Meiboku Sendai Hagi* and *Kamikojitate Ryomenkagami* (The Faithful Wife). Audience numbers in the Tokyo programs have continued to increase from before, but this year’s May program honoring Sumitayû’s retirement, was completely sold out in advance. December also recorded a full house and the other two programs surpassed the 80% mark in ticket sales. In October, a program of Su-Jôruri (only chanting) was held.

The camp of the Tayû-chanters has a new leader in Toyotake Sakitayû. With his recovered health, his precise chanting, developed through his study of the texts, shone remarkably. Toyotake Shimatayû showed a mastery of expressing the affections of his characters. Mid-level chanter, Toyotake Hanafusadayû portrayed characters from historical dramas with dynamic expression and Takemoto Chitosedayû displayed great skill in delivering a sensitive chanting tone. Takemoto Mojihisadayû, student of Sumitayû, showed his strength with his solid chanting. In terms of age, the next generation is led by Toyotake Rosetayû, who has developed in his ability to chant in important situations. Among the younger performers, Toyotake Sakihodayû, Toyotake Yoshihodayû have stood out. But, be that as it may, the Tayû

camp on the whole, has thinned out.

Among the Shamisen players, Tsurusawa Seiji tops the list with a full corps of capable talent among the mid-level and younger players. There are also Tsuruzawa Enza, Nozawa Kinshi, Toyozawa Tomisuke, Tsurusawa Seisuke and following them Tsuruzawa Tôzô. The elder of the Shamisen players, Tsuruzawa Kanji is also in good health giving much depth to the group.

Among the Puppeteers, the elder Yoshida Minosuke and Yoshida Bunjaku are in good health and displaying an art hammered out to perfection, but due to their age they are no longer able to overextend themselves and so the mid-level performers, Kiritake Kanjûrô, Yoshida Kazuo, Yoshida Tamame have been taking on some of the main roles. Kazuo in the female, Tamame in the male roles, both play to their strengths, and Kanjûrô possesses the versatility to handle both types of roles. Also, they are followed by Yoshida Tamaya, Toyomatsu Seijûrô and the younger Yoshida Ichisuke, Yoshida Kôsuke and Yoshida Tamaka are all gaining in strength as well. For bunraku, the year presented a number of challenging issues to be dealt with but then things steadily returned to normal.

### **Mizuochi, Kiyoshi**

Born in Osaka in 1936 and graduated from Waseda University, Faculty of Literature specializing in Theatre. From 1970 he was been in charge of the Theatre section for the Arts and Cultural News department of the Mainichi Shimbun and served as vice-chairman for that newspaper as well as being a member of the editorial board and special committee member. He is now an affiliate member of the editorial board. In the year 2000, he was appointed professor at Obirin University, retiring in 2007, and is now Professor Emeritus of the same university. His writings include *Kamigata Kabuki*, *Bunraku*, *Heisei Kabuki Haiyûron* and others.

(Translation: James Ferner)

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# Musical

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## Successful Premieres

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Hagio Hitomi

In Japan, an array of musicals was presented in 2014 and it was, so to speak, a good harvest year. Other than remounts, there were a large number of Japan premieres, making it this year's trend. There were some impressive works among these premieres and it was gratifying to see how well they were executed.

### ***The Beautiful Game* made anew**

The most impressive musical that I saw this year was *The Beautiful Game*. It is an Andrew Lloyd Webber musical, with the script and lyrics written by Ben Elton, originally first staged in London in 2000. In Japan, it was first performed in 2006, starring Sakurai Sho. When it was revived in Japan in 2014, however, they used the version revised for the premiere in Canada, which had been retitled *The Boys in the Photograph*. In other words, the revival in Japan was based on the revised version, and also had a new direction and cast. The Japanese title and the setting, however, remained the same. It turned into an enormously appealing musical, owing to the fact that the latter half of the story and part of the music had been changed as well as the novel direction and casting.

The story was set in Belfast in Northern Ireland between 1969 and 1970. It was a time when the IRA was intensifying its terrorist campaigns. Against such social backdrop, two football mates were caught up in the confrontation between the Catholics and

Protestants, and for that reason, they were torn apart. John (played by Baba Toru) was a hopeful ace striker and people expected him to join a professional team but his life got off the track after helping his friend, who had joined the IRA, get away from it.

It was also an ensemble piece about young people. The main plot was the love story between John and Mary (played by Otsuka Chihiro), interwoven with subplots such as the story of a young Protestant man called Del (played by Hirakata Genki) and a young Catholic woman called Christine (played by Frank Rina), who were going to immigrate to the U.S., as well as the tragic ending of the sweet love story between the slow-paced Ginger (Fujioka Masaaki) and Bernadette (Noda Kumiko).

The theme of 'conflict' was brought out through the sophisticated dramaturgy. The stage was set between two blocks of audience seats and it was devised so that the audience would also be drawn into the 'conflict' taking place right in front of them as the actors performed in the auditorium and the aisles as well. Moreover, the news video projected onto the screens on both sides of the stage created a sense of urgency. The stories of the past were presented as themes of today, making it into a thrilling and heartfelt musical.

The choreography by Shinkai Eriko was also appealing. There were Irish dance elements as well as dynamic dance numbers full of football movements. Not only was the choreography fantastic but it also helped to express the themes. The dramatization, full of inspirations, was carried out by Fujita Shuntaro, who had taken on the challenge of directing a musical for the first time. Both he and the choreographer Shinkai are indeed very promising artists.

In the original version of the musical, a sad and yet beautiful song titled *Our Kind of Love* was sung as the theme number. In the

new version, however, *The Beautiful Game* and *The Boys in the Photograph* were chosen as theme numbers. Part of the melodies of the original theme number were still there, but the music itself, given a new title and different lyrics, had been turned into the title number of *Love Never Dies*, which is also a Lloyd Webber musical that premiered in London back in 2010.

The Japanese version of *Love Never Dies* premiered in 2014 as well. It was based on the 2012 Australian version directed by Simon Philips, which was by far better than the original London version.

The story is the sequel to the blockbuster musical *Phantom of the Opera*. It is based on the novel *The Phantom of Manhattan* written by Frederick Forsyth, who wrote it so that it can eventually be adapted into a musical that would be the sequel to the *Phantom of the Opera*. However, in the initial musical adaptation process, in which Lloyd Webber also took part in creating the script, both the set up and the story were different. Ten years has passed since the last scene of the prequel and the character of Phantom (played by double-cast Ichimura Masachika and Kaga Takeshi) had become an impresario on Coney Island in the suburbs of New York, which was made possible through the cooperation of Madame Giry. The story unfolded after the Phantom's beloved Christine and her husband Raoul visits the island with their son Gustave.

In the Philips version, however, the excessive music had been simplified and the order of the musical numbers had been changed as well, which brought out a color that was different from the original version. By cutting the explanatory opening scene and starting from *Til I Hear You Sing* sung by the Phantom instead, it became clear that he loved Christine not only as a woman but also as a musical soul mate. As a result, the focus of the story shifted to the Phantom



passing on his musical spirit to the young Gustave. In the original version, however, it was only the Phantom's obsessive and delusionary love that could be felt. Besides the strength of the dramaturgy, the magical and gorgeous costumes and set designed by Gabriela Tylesova were also extremely appealing and effective for the piece.

## A Cavalcade of Topical Musicals

Apart from the two musicals mentioned above, imported musicals premiered in Japan one after another, starting from the beginning of 2014. International productions of *The Full Monty* (January) and *In the Heights* (April) had come on tour to Japan in the past, but this time, they were translated and performed in Japanese. The other Japan-premiere musicals presented in 2014 were *Musical Sherlock Holmes—The Secret of the Anderson Family* (January), *Love Never Dies* (March), *Adams Family* (April), *Sister Act* (June), *Catch Me If You Can* (June), *Carmen* (June), *Jeeves and Wooster* (July), *Black Mary Poppins* (July), *Title of Show* (August), *On the Town* (September), *110 in the Shade* (October) and *First Date the Musical* (November). As one may notice, new musicals were mounted almost every month.

Additionally, there were revivals of past productions with new staging and new cast such as *I DO! I DO!* (August) and *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* (December). Also, *Napoleon, the Man Who Never Sleeps* and *Lady Bess* were original musicals that premiered in Japan, created in collaboration with artists from abroad. It did truly seem like a cavalcade of epic and topical musicals were performed during 2014.

I would like to mention a few impressive works among them. Firstly, *Full Monty*, which was originally adapted from a film into a Broadway musical. In the Japanese version, the leading role was

played by Yamada Takayuki, who appealed to the audience with his singing, dancing and acting so good it was hard to believe that this was his first musical. *In the Heights* also came from Broadway and it was a heart-moving story about the kindness of the people living in a town made up of Latino immigrants. It was an enjoyable show, as TETSUHARU's staging and choreography created the atmosphere of the town and there were also many dance numbers performed by the entire cast.

*Adams Family*, *Catch Me If You Can*, *On the Town*, *110 in the Shade* and *First Date* were originally presented on Broadway, while *Title of Show* was originally presented off Broadway. In *Adams Family*, Hashimoto Satoshi captivated the audience not only with his skills as a performer but also with the charm of his warm personality that came through in his acting. The cast members playing the supporting roles were also perfectly cast, and Shirai Akira's staging that created a relaxed and fun atmosphere, which went well with the piece.

*On the Town* and *110 in the Shade* are musicals that premiered over fifty years ago. In *On the Town*, Sakamoto Masayuki, Nagano Hiroshi and Inohara Yoshihiko, the so-called 'Tonisen' (20th Century) of the boys band group V6, were perfect for their roles, and it was indeed an enjoyable show. As for *110 in the Shade*, it was performed in a small space with only a few cast members. The text and lyrics were translated by the director Katsuda Yasuhiko, who knows the work very well, and the turmoil taking place around the heroine (played by Miyauchi Rie), who does not give up her dreams despite the fact that she was caught up in the boring reality, was depicted light-heartedly, leaving a good feeling after seeing the show.

*First Date* is a new musical that premiered on Broadway in 2013. It did not run for long in the U.S. but in Japan, the story with many

Jewish-related materials was turned into an endearing love comedy with universal themes. The skillful performances of Nakagawa Akira and Niizuma Seiko, who played the two leading roles, also gave lots of momentum to the show. *Title of Show* that originated off Broadway had a small cast and only the performances of the four cast members (Urai Kenji, Kakizawa Hayato, Tamaki Nami and Sato Hitomi) making great efforts left an impression.

*Jeeves and Wooster* is an early work by Andrew Lloyd Webber. It was probably introduced to Japan because of its recent revival in London. Nothing new was found in the typical British comedy featuring the duo of a stupid master and clever butler, but I was surprised at how good Wentz Eiji was despite the fact that he was playing the leading role in his first musical. I hope he will perform in more musicals.

### International collaborations on the rise

*Napoleon, the Man Who Never Sleeps* (presented by Takarazuka Revue, January) and *Lady Bess* (April) were both directed by Koike Shuichiro, who also wrote the book for the former. *Napoleon, the Man Who Never Sleeps* was a new musical made in partnership with Gérard Presgurvic, who also composed *Roméo et Juliette: de la Haine à l'Amour*, but it was a pity that the music lacked originality and was also excessive. On the other hand, *Lady Bess* was created by the same writer-composer duo as *Elisabeth*. Michael Kunze wrote the lyrics and script, while Sylvester Levay composed and arranged the music. It was a story depicting the Virgin Queen Elizabeth I during her childhood and the production was organized in a sound way, focusing on her coming of age.

*Sherlock Holmes* and *Black Mary Poppins* were both originally

from South Korea. The Korean musical scene is very active at the moment and young talented creators appear one after another, but if I were to make a remark, in most of them, the weaknesses in the script stood out. It may be for that reason that these two musicals had to undergo drastic embellishments when they were adapted for Japan, and were as a result upgraded to an exceeding level. The same approach would probably be required in the future when musicals originating in Korea are presented in Japan.

There were also excellent remakes and revivals. *I DO! I DO!* was one example of the former, which was successful due to the meticulous staging by Okochi Naoko. It was a paean to life depicting a couple from the time they just got married until their autumn of life. The image of the couple may seem somewhat old fashioned for us today but the soundscape helped to understand the period of their story. Also with the help of the outstanding performance of the cute comedienne Kiriya Hiromu, it turned into a delightful musical comedy.

As for revivals, *Thrill Me* was mounted for the third time. This time, the director Kuriyama Tamiya made alterations in detail. As it was triple cast, I was not able to see all the cast combinations but I was once again impressed by Onoe Matsuya's singing and acting. *Flowers for Algernon*, which was another musical that was revived, was also memorable due to the fact that the piece had further deepened owing to the great improvement in Urai Kenji's acting.

Other memorable musicals include *Daddy Long Legs* (March), *Miss Saigon* (from July to August) and *Mozart* (from November to December).

Lastly, I would like to briefly touch upon the original Japanese musicals staged in 2014. The TS Musical Foundation is a group that

has been putting on original musicals almost once a year and in 2014, it produced *Familia-April 25th, the Day of Birth* directed by Sha Tamae. I must also not forget to write about a similar group called Musical-za that revived *Himeyuri*, an important piece in its repertoire, as well as mounting new musicals like *QUOVADIS*.

**Hagio, Hitomi**

She became a film and theatre critic after working as a newspaper journalist, and writes stage reviews for The Tokyo Shimbun and serial columns in musical magazines. She has written books including "Take Me to the Musicals" and "100 People Working on *Les Misérables*", and "Tony Awards" and "My First Musical Film -- 50 Best Musicals Selected by Hagio Hitomi".

(Translation: Sumida Michiyo)



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# Contemporary Theatre

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## Female Playwrights Shine at a Turning Point in History

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Yamaguchi Hiroko

2014 saw Japanese society seem to reach a historical turning point. In July the Abe government gained Cabinet approval for authorizing the use of collective self-defense, in a complete 180-degree reversal of what successive Cabinets had always previously judged forbidden under Article 9 of the Constitution of Japan. And then at the barely contested Lower House election, the ruling Liberal Democratic Party obtained a two-thirds majority, with the Prime Minister then suggesting his willingness to change the Constitution. Meanwhile, the government and TEPCO continue to move towards re-starting the nuclear power plants that opinion polls show over half of the public are against.

How is one to face up to this? Here the serious creativity of playwrights, especially female ones, shined.

Leading playwright Nagai Ai (b. 1951) wrote and directed *Ougai no kaidan* (Ogai's Mystery) for her company Nitosha.

Based on historical records of how novelist Mori Ogai's opinion was sought by both defendants and the government in the 1910 High Treason Incident, the play examined Mori's conflict as both a free-spirited writer and also an elite member of the military, and thus part of the Establishment. While a light-hearted comedy set in his home with his clashing mother and young wife, the suggested themes

are deep. Ultimately, Mori takes the side of the authorities and he hears the voice of Elise, his lover when he was studying in Germany he later rejected, echoing in his ear: “Traitor.” When the authorities are suppressing thinking and ideas, can people fight against it? This question was a vivid one for contemporary audiences.

### Breakthrough of the 1970's Generation

Playwrights from a later generation also presented powerful new plays.

Set in the near future, *Boots on the Underground* (Rinkogun) by Shimizu Yayoi (b. 1979) was about young people conscripted by a lottery into a “special peace support corps” in order to boost Japan’s Self-Defence Forces, and the heavily disabled youth who gets selected for it by mistake. The funny but chillingly real play dealt with a wide range of issues, including rights for the disabled, poverty among the young, and the army.

Nogi Moegi (b. 1977) wrote and directed *Showa Restoration* for paradoxconstant, a fantasy story also about soldiers, and the brother of the Prime Minister and two police guards who are erroneously shot during the February 16 Incident (an attempted military coup in 1936), but inexplicably cannot be killed. Superbly balanced between the serious and the strange and funny, the play brought out the sorrow of the young caught in the middle of the contradictions of the army.

Setoyama Misaki (b. 1977) wrote both the script and directed *Mienai kumo* (Invisible Clouds) for Minamoza. This stage adaptation of the German novel *Die Wolke* portrayed children fleeing from radiation released by the Chernobyl nuclear disaster, vividly zeroing in on contemporary Japan’s post-Fukushima dilemmas. Yamaya Noriko (b.

1976) also wrote a faithful play, *Shirotae no haru, chigiri ki na* (A Lovers' Promise in a White Spring), for Ring-Bong, examining Korea during its time as a Japanese colony.

Theatrical Group EN staged a series of new plays by three female writers. *Hatsuhagi no hana* (First Flower of the Fall) by Naito Yuko (b. 1975), *Kuchiru manimani* (Adrift to Decay) by Kuwabara Yuko (b. 1976), and *Sasayakidani shirubaa dansei gashou-dan* (Sasayakidani Silver Male Choir) by Sumi Hiromi (b. 1974) depicted the generation of the playwrights' parents. Kuwabara was also acclaimed for staging *Atoato* (Trace), which she wrote and directed for her own company, KAKUTA.

Both emerging and established talents continued to attract attention in directing.

There were many successes, such as Kamimura Satoshi (b. 1979), who staged Sartre's *The Condemned of Altona* (New National Theatre, Tokyo), Alexi Kaye Campbell's *The Faith Machine* (Bungakuza Atelier no Kai) and Wajdi Mouawad's *Incendies* (Setagaya Public Theatre). Mori Shintaro (b. 1976) showed his skills with productions of Richard Bean's *The Big Fellah* (Setagaya Public Theatre) and William Gibson's *The Miracle Worker* (Horipro), while Ogawa Eriko (b. 1978), who is also an established translator, directed Martin McDonagh's *The Lonesome West* (Sis Company) and Nick Payne's *Constellations* (New National Theatre, Tokyo), and Nozoe Seiji (b. 1975) likewise gave us an interesting production of *Vigil by Morris Panych* (New National Theatre, Tokyo).

Tada Junnosuke (b. 1976) directed *Karumegi* (The Seagull) (written by Son Ki-woong), a co-production between Tada's Tokyo Deathlock and the Doosan Art Center. Based on the Anton Chekhov play, it was rehearsed in Seoul and performed in two languages with a

joint Japanese and Korean cast portraying the lives of people in Korea during the 1930's.

## Prodigious Veterans

The dynamic activities of established artists also left an impression this year.

Naraoka Tomoko (b. 1929), a pillar of Gekidan Mingei, appeared in a five-month national tour of *The Whales of August*, before then taking the lead in a new adaptation of *The Trip to Bountiful*, a tautly performed play about an elderly woman returning to her hometown. Kato Takeshi (b. 1929), a member of Bungakuza, played the lead role of Katsushika Hokusai in *Natsu no sakari no semi no you ni* (As Cries of Cicadas in the Fullness of Summer), a play full of vitality. Nakadai Tatsuya (b. 1932) appeared in *Barrymore* for Mumeijuku, his first solo play. Watanabe Misako (b. 1932) and Hira Mikijiro (b. 1933) also made a splash in the two-hander *Do You Turn Somersaults?* (Old World) by Aleksei Arbuzov at Kani Public Arts Center.

A generation younger, Shiraishi Kayoko (b. 1941) completed *Hyaku monogatari* (100 Tales), her series of readings of scary stories.

Among directors, the output of Ninagawa Yukio (b. 1935) was prodigious, handling the artistic directorship of two theatres (Saitama Arts Theater and Theatre Cocoon) while also directing ten productions for Horipro and elsewhere.

Seven of these alone were new productions - including *Toumin suru kuma ni soine shite goran* (Try Snuggling Up to a Hibernating Bear) by the writer Furukawa Hideo (b. 1966), *Never Let Me Go* by Kuramochi Yutaka (b. 1972), based on the novel by Kazuo Ishiguro, *Taiyou 2068* (Sun 2068) by Maekawa Tomohiro (b. 1974) - as well as revivals of Shimizu Kunio's (b. 1936) *Hi no you ni samishii ane ga ite*

(An Older Sister Burning Like A Flame), starring Otake Shinobu and Miyazawa Rie, and Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*. The Saitama Arts Theater also marked 25 years since it opened, celebrating the milestone with a pair of productions from the two theatre companies based at the venue that left a strong impression: a new adaptation of 2014, *"Caligula" by the pale boys and girls* by Saitama Next Theatre, the troupe of young performers based at Saitama Arts Theater, while Ninagawa's Saitama Gold Theater, made up only of senior actors, successfully revived *Karasu yo, oretachi wa tama o komeru* (Ravens, We Shall Load Bullets) in Hong Kong, Paris and Japan.

## The Role of Public Theatres

We have looked back at the achievements of individual theatre artists, but what were the activities of the theatres built by the state or regional authorities?

Public theatres established by local governments are increasing around Japan. In terms of theatres with artistic directors and strong connections to creating new work, the Saitama Arts Theater in Saitama Prefecture, the Setagaya Public Theatre in Setagaya ward in Tokyo, and the Shizuoka Performing Arts Center (SPAC) in Shizuoka Prefecture have long histories.

SPAC is a rare case in Japan of a theatre with its own repertory company. Artistic Director Miyagi Satoshi (b. 1959) directed *Mahaabaarata – naraou no boken* (Mahabharata - Nalacharitam) (written by Kubota Azumi), which made an acclaimed appearance at the Avignon Festival in July.

Noda Hideki (b. 1955) is the Artistic Director of Tokyo Metropolitan Theatre. In 2014 he directed a cast of Korean actors in *Hanshin* (Half Gods), a co-production with Myeongdong Theater in

Seoul. The dynamic and richly expressive play was performed at both theatres.

The Owlspot Theater in Toshima in Tokyo celebrated 450 years since the birth of Shakespeare with a yearlong festival of the Bard's work. Bungakuza staged *Measure for Measure* and *As You Like It*, two of the 15 diverse productions that reinterpreted Shakespeare's plays in dance and music. Bungakuza also put on its own Shakespeare festival, staging *King Lear* in January 2015 with Emori Toru (b.1944), as well as a range of performances, readings and symposia.

Public theatres around the country have been supporting creativity through co-productions and cooperation, though over the past few years the New National Theatre, Tokyo has leaned towards staging translations of European and American plays. Of the nine productions staged in 2014, only two were Japanese: *Manira mizuhoki* (Manila Mizuhoki) by Akimoto Matsuyo (1911-2001) and *Juukyuu-sai no jeikobu* (Nineteen-Year-Old Jacob) by Matsui Shu (b. 1972), based on the novel by Nakagami Kenji (1946-1992). The passion we felt in former days, when the theatre gave us masterpieces like the works of Inoue Hisashi (1934-2010), Nagai Ai's *Konnichi wa, kaasan* (Hello, Mother) and Chong Wishing's (b. 1957) *Yakiniku doragon* (Yakiniku Dragon), is gone. As a national theatre it surely has a responsibility to stage more original theatre.

Like the New National Theatre, the Aoyama Theatre and Aoyama Round Theatre complex was built by the state (under the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare) and opened in 1985. However, it is sad to see it close at the end of the 2014 fiscal year.

In particular, the Aoyama Round Theatre, with its unique design, has cultivated many theatre companies and artists as a core fringe theatre facility. The Aoyama Theatre Festival, which started in 1987



and continued for 15 years, created new theatrical waves acutely reflecting the mood of the times. The festival was revived for a special finale just before the venue closed, staging six productions, including *Ikiteru mono wa inai no ka* (Isn't anyone alive?) by Maeda Shiro (b. 1977) and *Tokyo Slum Angels* by Tani Kenichi (b. 1982).

*The final curtain* was marked with a production of *Yuzora harete – yoku kaki ku kyaku* (A Clear Evening Sky: Peter Piper Picked a Peck) by Betsuyaku Minoru (b. 1937), adapted and directed by Keralino Sandrovich (KERA, b. 1963). Due to his unfortunate hospitalization, the planned staging of Betsuyaku's new play had to be cancelled, though the choice of Sandrovich, who has also directed Betsuyaku's play *Byouki* (Sick) in a festival of his work in 1997, made for a sharp production that also conveyed the appeal of Betsuyaku's 1985 play to a younger generation.

Kinosaki International Arts Center opened in Toyooka City in Hyogo Prefecture as a facility for theatre artist residencies. To mark the opening, it hosted the Japan Playwrights Association Congress in June, the first time the event had been held in nine years. It featured 52 events, including performances, symposia, readings and seminars, attended by a total of 7,400 people. The hot spring resort bubbled with theatre people and theatre-lovers. In autumn, the Center hosted a residency for Hirata Oriza (b. 1962) and French actors, where they produced an android version of Kafka's *Metamorphosis* with human and robot performers.

## Vibrant Theatre Works

Popular theatre artists also had a busy year.

Known for writing plays with male ensembles, Mitani Koki (b. 1961) created plays this year with female protagonists. He wrote and

directed the actress Yuka in *Sake to namida to jikiru to haido* (Jekyll & Hyde & Tears & Liquor) (Horipro), a slapstick play that set the theatre ablaze. In *Murasaki shikibu daiarii* (The Authoress, or Murasaki Shikibu's Diaries) (Parco), a two-hander starring Nagasawa Masami and Saito Yuki, and which he also wrote and directed, he examined the difficulties of being a woman. He also penned and directed an adaptation of the Goldoni comedy *La vedova scaltra* (The Cunning Widow) for Sis Company, giving Otake Shinobu a great role to show off her talents. The Parco Theater staged a revival of *Kimi to nara* (If it's with you...) with a new cast, which ran simultaneously with the premiere of *Show Girl*, an homage to the late Fukuda Yoichiro (1932-2010).

The popular theatre companies Otona Keikaku and Gekidan Shinkansen joined forces for a co-production under the name Otona no Shinkansen (literally, "Adult New Sensation Line"). *Last Flowers*, written by Matsuo Suzuki (b. 1962) and directed by Inoue Hidenori (b. 1960), applied Matsuo's caustic humor to a lowbrow spy story with an all-star cast. *Kirei* (Beautiful) at Theater Cocoon, the third staging of the play written, directed and starring Matsuo, was also a spectacle. Fellow Otona Keikaku member Kudo Kankuro (b. 1970) wrote *Manju kowai* (The Manju We Fear) (Parco) for "the three mouseketeers", a unit comprised of the three actors, Furuta Arata, Namase Katsuhisa and Ikeda Narushi.

It was also a milestone year for veteran Shingeki companies. Haiyuza celebrated 70 years since it was founded with a revival of Abe Kobo's (1924-1993) play *Kyōjin densetsu* (The Legend of the Giants) (premiered in 1960). Seinenza Theater Company welcomed its sixtieth year with *Chi no chibusa* (Breasts of the Earth), based on Mizukami Tsutomu's (1919-2004) script from 30 years ago (adapted from

his novel) and directed by Miyata Keiko (b. 1957). The drama examines the lives of women living in the province of Wakasa from the pre-war Taisho period through to the Showa era and its rapid post-war economic growth. The multi-generational cast could really show off their capabilities. The final part of the play dealt with the construction of a nuclear power plant, an issue close to home for contemporary audiences.

In the Kansai region, Ishinha, the company led by Matsumoto Yukichi (b. 1946), constructed a special temporary riverside theatre in the center of Osaka and performed the outdoor play *Toushizu* (Perspective Play), devised and directed by Matsumoto. Vast amounts of water filled the stage during the play. Borrowing the high-rises for its backdrop, the large-scale dream play reflected on Osaka as a city where people and things intersect through the sea, rivers and canals.

### **Yamaguchi, Hiroko**

Born in Gunma Prefecture in 1960. Graduated from the Department of Science at Ochanomizu University. In 1983, she joined the *Asahi Shimbun* newspaper, working at its Tokyo and west Japan (Fukuoka) branches, and Osaka head office. She worked mainly as a reviewer and reporter on cultural news, in particular for theatre. After working on the editorial board, she now writes editorials and leading articles for the newspaper.

(Translation: William Andrews)

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# Children's and Youth Theatre and Puppet Theatre

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## Bringing Theatre that Creates Emotional Experiences

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Yokomizo Yukiko

There are still many children's suicides due to parental violence and bullying. Revisions for entrance exams to universities are fierce and competition between children increasingly intense with an increased consciousness of rank. In this situation, theatre can be a good opportunity to consider the creation of an identity by providing an opportunity to compare oneself to the people on stage. While opportunities for children to see theatre in performances charging admission are growing somewhat infrequent, there are still many children's theatre troupes that are struggling to present high quality theatre.

The "Jido Seishonen Engeki Chiho Junkai Koen (Regional Tour of Children's and Youth Theatre)" sponsored by the Nihon Jido Seishonen Engeki Kyokai (Japan Children's and Youth Theatre Association), which is intended for children living outside the big cities, was held for the 55th year. In spring there were 7 theatre troupes including Minwa-za and in autumn there were 16 theatre troupes, including Gekidan Nakama, touring the regions and providing emotionally moving performances to large audiences of children.

In 2014, there was the start of a new project by the Japanese National Cultural Agency, the "Senryaku-teki Geijutsu Bunka Sozo Suishin Jigyo (Strategic Project for the Encouragement of the Creation of Artistic Culture)." In this, as touring performances of "Jido Seishonen Butai Geijutsu (Children's and Youth Stage Arts)" of the

regional areas and islands were organized, and 15 theatre troupes participated. Since the project called for 50 performances in 50 days, this limited the performances by any one theatre troupe to a maximum of 6 performances. This new project has been structured so that, as much as possible, it does not overlap with the places toured by the “Jido Seishonen Engeki Chiho Junkai Koen”. So this means that the two projects together can have maximum impact and cover the entire country.

The Gekidan Shiki theatre troupe has cooperated with the Nissei Gekijo theatre to support the “Nissei Meisaku Gekijo (Masterpiece Theatre)” which presents theatre to 6th graders for free since June 1964, but it was suddenly canceled now on its 50th anniversary. This is because it overlapped with Gekidan Shiki’s program of free performances for children, “Kokoro Gekijo (Heart Theatre)” which has been presented since 2008 and the intention was to unify the efforts into Gekidan Shiki’s program. The venue was changed to the Shiki Gekijo Aki (Autumn) and in Tokyo the play for the “Kokoro Gekijo” project was *Jon Manjiro no Yume* (John Manjiro’s Dream). There were also two touring plays, *Maho o Suteta Majorin* (Marjoline Discards Magic) and *Futari no Rotte* (The Two Lotte’s) which were performed in 159 cities from the Rishiri Island in Hokkaido to the Ichigaki Island in Okinawa. There were 462 performances for 560,000 children, so unlike the original Nissei program this is nationwide and is on a huge scale. Gekidan Shiki employs many more performers than any ordinary children’s theatre troupe and can thus provide spectacular performances throughout Japan.

There are increasing numbers of international festivals for children held from the spring into the summer. There were changes with the summer festival in Okinawa City, “Kijimuna Festa” which gained

international attention. Even as the festival was about to celebrate its 10th anniversary, some members of the Okinawa City Council opposed holding it. For a time there were concerns that it would be cancelled, but due to the strong desire from abroad to take part, it was held, but changed the name to the "International Theatre Festival Okinawa for Young Audiences 2014." The venues spread out in three cities: Tokyo (July 26, 27, National Memorial Olympic Children and Youth Center), and in Okinawa, Koza (July 26-29) and Naha (July 31-August 3). There were many excellent performances including those by La Galera Encantada, who has been awarded the top prize in Latin America for excellence in children's theatre, and presented plays like *The Queen's Child: The Caucasian Chalk Circle* (The Right Way Round). There were 6 symposiums and 2 workshops, but the festival attracted lesser audience than previous years, only 25,000 in total. It is unforgivable that a festival for children is caught in political crossfire and is forced to make changes with negative consequences. We hope that the festival can continue to be held in the future.

At the Tokyo Geijutsu Gekijo's "TACT / Festival 2014" (May 3-6, 9-11), groups like France's Camille Boitel appeared in Japan for the first time and presented *L'immédiat* (The Here and Now), Zimmermann & de Perrot from Switzerland presented *Hans was Heiri* (Hans and Heiri, Which is Which?) and Canada's Corpus, which appears every year, presented *Les Moutons* (The Sheep), and *Nuit Blanche* (Fifty Ways to See Dreams), all with very interesting concepts.

The TACT / Festival 2014 with its main venue in the Abeno Kumin Center in Osaka (Osaka International Children's Art Festival, September 9-21) is in its 8th year. There were 6 pieces from four foreign countries including *Les Moutons* by Corpus. The Japanese children's theatre troupe Kio presented *Tamago o Toru no wa Daare?*



(Who Steals the Eggs?) and *Kenji no Okurimono* (Gift from Kenji). There was a full program of 11 performing arts pieces and it is unfortunate that more people did not see them.

The “Kodomo to Butai Geijutsu Deai Fo-ramu 2014 (Forum for Children to Encounter the Stage Arts)” (National Memorial Olympic Children and Youth Center: July 24-30) is in its 15th year. With the organizing committee led by Sato Makoto, the artistic director of Za-Koenji theatre, the forum kept children’s point of view firmly in mind and increased the number of “asobi no hiroba (play spaces)” attracting a lot of children to come and play and enticing them to stay and watch the performances. There were 27 theatre troupes presenting 27 pieces (28 performances) including Puppet Theatre Puk’s *Pinku no Doragon* (The Pink Dragon) and Gekidan Nakama’s *Boku wa Afurika ni sumu Kirin to Imasu* (I am a Giraffe from Africa).

In the 43rd “Summer Vacation Children and Youth Theatre Festival” sponsored by the Nihon Jido Seishonen Engeki Kyodo Kumiai (Japan Children and Youth Theatre Association) with performances at Space Zero and the Puk Puppet Theatre (July 22-August 10), there were 22 pieces and 27 performances. The “21st Century Theatre from Kitakata” (August 8-11, Kitakata Plaza and other venues) featured a program full of variety, including theatre, puppet theatre and concerts. There were 85 pieces and 105 performances and attracted more than 10,000 people from all over Japan.

The aim of the “Nissei Gekijo Family Festival 2014” is to teach children manners when watching performances in a first-class theatre space. In addition to *Arisu no Kurashikku Konsa-to* (Alice’s Classical Concert) (July 20-21), Hitomi-za’s puppet musical, *Tobidase Songoku* (Jump Out Songoku, the Magical Monkey!) (August 2-3) and Maki Asami’s Ballet Troupe’s *Giselle* (August 22-24), for the first time the

program included “Oyako Yose (Family Variety Hall)” (July 26-27). This program of *rakugo* comic storytelling and other art forms featured in traditional *yose* performance halls was specially designed to appeal to families and featured Yanagiya Karoku performing the *rakugo Hatsu Tenjin* (First Visit to the Tenjin Shrine), Edoya Nekohachi and his son Koneko performing impressions of the sounds of birds and other animals and Hayashiya Niraku doing paper cuts of subjects requested by the audience.

The play that was the winner of the 2012 Saida Takashi Playwriting Prize, *Sora no Murago* (Sora's Village) by Shinoda Kumiko was published in the 11th issue of the magazine “Geki” and has since then been produced all through the country, beginning with the Gekidan Nakama theatre troupe and extending to amateur groups and middle school drama clubs. This is a story of an elementary school student named Sora who lives in the area that suffered through the Great East Japan Earthquake. A filmmaker comes to the area to make a documentary and this makes Sora want to become a filmmaker, but gradually Sora decides rather than to make a documentary that shows the difficulties of reality, he would rather make science fiction or adventure movies.

The world conference of ASSITEJ (International Children and Youth Stage Arts Association) is held once every three years and at the 18th World Conference (May 23, Warsaw, Poland), Fujita Asaya was re-elected as International Director. There are great expectations for the World Conference to be held in Tokyo at the time of the 2020 Olympics and Para Olympics, but the “International Children and Youth Stage Arts Festival (May-June 2020) was actually scheduled before Tokyo was selected as the site of the 2020 Olympics.

Puppet theatre troupes participated in all sorts of festivals, and one of the most important celebrations of puppet theatre is the “Iida Ningyogeki Festa (Iida Puppet Theatre Festa)” (August 5-10, Iida City, Nagano Prefecture), which included 260 troupes, professional and amateur, staging 480 performances. There were 56 professional troupes from Japan like Kawasemi-za who presented *Manuke no Ryu no Hanashi* (The Story of the Silly Dragon), Hitomi-za who presented *Urashima Taro* (Urashima Taro and his Journey to the Kingdom of the Sea), Hipopotaamu who presented *Hari-nezumi to Yuki no Hana* (The Porcupine and the Snow Flowers) and Puk who presented *Pinku no Doragon* (The Pink Dragon) and 8 troupes from abroad that gave performances charging separate admission. All the other performances could be seen freely with just the participation badge (700 yen). There were 20 performing spaces like the Iida Puppet Theatre and the Iida Cultural Hall. One feature of this year’s festival was focusing on Hokkaido where there is a lot of activity in puppet theatre. This included performances by puppet actor Taira Jo (originally from Sapporo) doing *Hanare Goze Orin* (The Isolated Female Blind Traveling Musician Orin), and Sawa Noriyuki (originally from Otaru) who is active in the Czech Republic, doing a dramatization of Miyazawa Kenji’s story *Sero Hiki no Go-shu* (The Cellist Gausche). There were also many puppet plays with a wide variety of traditional Japanese puppets, including puppets with three operators, *kuruma nigyo* (puppets operated by puppeteers sitting on little carts) and *ito ayatsuri* (marionettes).

The Theatre Troupe Puk is celebrating the 85th year since its founding and since this year also corresponds to the 100th anniversary of the birth of Kawajiri Taiji, who died 20 years ago, but long served as the head of the troupe, this has become an opportunity to

reevaluate the 65 year history of Kawajiri's puppet theatre and the activities of the troupe during that time, and provide grounds for a fresh start. There was a new production of *Tora no Komori Uta* (Tiger Lullaby) by Shibasaki Yoshihiko, originally written, directed and designed by Kawajiri in 1964. Other Kawajiri plays produced include *Ningyo Omotcha-bako* (Puppet Toybox), *Odango Kororin* (The Dumping Goes Tumbling), *Kodomo no Tame no Ningyo Fudoki* (A Puppet Geographical Gazette for Children) and *12 no Tsuki no Takibi* (Twelve Month Bonfire). In performances at its home territory, the Puk Theatre in Tokyo, and in tours throughout the country, a total of 26 different plays were presented this year, often with separate groups giving performances on the same day resulting in a total of 406 days of performances and 489 separate performances. In particular, the new piece, *Pinku no Doragon* (The Pink Dragon, original by R. Nikolov, dramatized by Yasuo Yoshiaki and directed by Noda Shizuki) was well received and had 88 days of performances with 105 separate performances. It is an entertaining story of the imaginative fantasies of the girl Hacchi about the pink dragon and its world.

The Japanese National Cultural Agency's "Jidai o Ninau Kodomo no Bunka Geijutsu Taiken Jigyo (Project for the Children that will Carry the Next Age to Experience Art and Culture)" selected two productions, the classical children's story by Niimi Nankichi (1913-1943), *Tebukuro o Kai ni* (Buying Mittens, original by Niimi Nankichi, dramatized and staged by Shibasaki Yoshihiko) and *Kurumi Wari Ningyo* (The Nutcracker, arrangement and production play originally by Kawajiri Taiji, directed by Hase Tsuguo). 70 people participated in the project, and in the short-term training program for young artists, there are currently five students and it is anticipated that they will be the power of the next generation.

The puppet theatre troupe Clarte produced the challenging work by Paul Gallico *Nanatsu no Ningyo no Koi Monogatari* (The Love Stories of Seven Dolls, dramatized by Higashiguchi Tsuguto) and participated in the Osaka *Shingeki* (Modern Theatre) Festival. The theatre troupe Kagoboshi used large puppets to perform *Sangokushi* (Romance of Three Kingdoms) in Tokyo (September 19, 20, Nerima Bunka Center). They used puppets made by the late Kawamoto Kihachiro, and having dozens of these puppets with 1 meter in height on stage at the same time created a powerful impact. To celebrate the 380th anniversary of the beginning of the troupe, Edo Ito-Ayatsuri Ningyo Youki-za (Marionette Theatre) presented *Okamoto Kido - Hanshichi Torimonochō Ibun* (A Different Story from Okamoto Kido's Casebook of Hanshichi, script and direction by Kano Yukikazu, June 5-19, Tokyo Geijutsu Gekijō Theatre West) and *Old Refrain* (script and direction by Watanabe Eri, October 2 - 5, Za Koenji 2). To commemorate the troupe's roots, it would have been nice if they had included a play from the classical repertory performed with Gidayu narrative music.

The Credo Theatre visited Japan from Bulgaria and performed Gogol's *The Overcoat* and Andersen's *Daddy's Always Right* (October 21-26, Puk Puppet Theatre). This troupe is particularly impressive since they insist on using the language of the country in which they are performing. In addition to the performances in Tokyo, they performed at the Yamabiko-za in Sapporo (October 14), the Komukomu theatre in Fukushima (October 18) and at the "5th Yakumo International Theatre Festival (Shii no Mi Theatre, November 1-2)." The "Yakumo International Theatre Festival" (October 31-November 3) was held for the first time in four years and there were 15 theatre troupes from 6 countries presenting 18 works. Canada's Corpus also

participated with *Les Moutons* and was very popular.

In April at the UNIMA Council Meeting held in Varadero and Matanzas in Cuba, three delegates from Japan, Onagi Tamiko, Sugita Nobuhiro and Senda Seiko, participated. They also participated in the Matanzas and Varadero International Puppet Theatre Festival.

Finally, here are reviews of three works worthy of note in theatre and puppet theatre:

Theater Company Dora's *Ayanasu* (Woven, written and directed by Otani Kenjiro) is a wordless play showing a family after the Great East Japan Earthquake. Perhaps because the level of abstraction is very high, it stimulates the audience's imagination and creates the powerful impression that the performers are actually speaking. The movements of the five highly trained performers were superb. It premiered in 2012, was revived in 2014 and was staged at the Kawasaki Art Center and at the invitation of PETA (Philippines Educational Theatre Association), there were also two performances in Manila on July 26, for audiences of 800. The audience included poor children and those who had experienced the tsunami in the Philippine, which perhaps increased the impact of the play. They laughed at the family in the first half, but in the second half, after the family was torn apart and scattered by the tsunami, crying could be heard in the audience. This is a play that can be understood internationally.

Puppet Theatre Hitomi-za's *Bijo to Yaju* (Beauty and the Beast, original by J.L. du Beaumont, script and direction by Uno Koshiro and Ito Shiro). This was an impressive play because of the skill of the dramatization that boiled down the complexity of the original story to focus on the theme of the prince (beast) who is returned to human form through being touched by pure love and because of the puppet



design by Kataoka Akira.

Theatre Tanpopo's *Kasane-chan ni Kiite Mina* (Go Ask Kasane, original by Arisawa Kae, script by Hisano Yumi, directed by Fujita Asaya). Created firmly from the level of the line of sight of children, the lively dialogue of the five actors delighted the young spectators. It also effectively used puppets of all kinds, including one-hand puppets, paper puppet theatre and three-dimensional puppets.

The O Fujin Prize for Children and Youth Theatre is given to a female theatre professional for long time contribution to children and youth theatre (awarded by the Nihon Jido Seishonen Engeki Kyokai) and the 24th prize was awarded to Morimoto Mayako, who has long been associated with programs of children's theatre and parent and child theatre, for her contribution to raising the level of children's culture.

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### **Yokomizo, Yukiko**

Yokomizo Yukiko is a theatre critic and regular director of the Japan Theatre Association, member of Tomin Gekijo series evaluation committee, and member of Kabuki Circle Productions. After being an editorial executive at the Jiji Tsushin communications company, she has been a judge for the arts festival sponsored by the Japanese National Cultural Agency, a member of the theatre committee of the Geijutsu Bunka Shinko Kikin (Arts Culture Foundation) and a lecturer in the Arts Division of Nihon Daigaku University. She is a member of the Buyo Hiyoka Kyokai (Dance Critics Association), Saitama Bungeika Kyokai (Saitama Prefecture Writer's Association) and the Kokusai Engeki Kyokai (International Theatre Institute). Her published translations include "Practical Stage Make-Up" (joint translation) and her books include "Yume o Kataru Yakusha-tachi (Actors Talk of What They Dream of Doing)"

(Translation: Mark Oshima)

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# Japanese Classical Dance

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## Suodori: Craftsmanship and Artistry — Looking Forward to Tomorrow

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Hirano Hidetoshi

The beginning of the westernization of theatre through the study of the theatres of Europe, part of the process of the modernization of kabuki, probably stemmed from the thinking of Tsubouchi Shôyô and Mori Ôgai concerning the place of theatre, but things underwent a complete transformation around 1908, after Ichikawa Sadanji II investigated European and American theatre scenes and his initial encounter with the plays of Okamoto Kidô and their subsequent production, *Ishin Zengo* (Before and After the Restoration). Sadanji and Kidô created a marvelous hybrid of European drama with Japanese traditional music and dance theatre technique that they called ‘Shinkabuki (New Kabuki)’ in their jointly produced works including *Shuzenji Monogatari* (The Tale of Shuzenji-temple), *Yoritomo no Shi* (The Death of Yoritomo), and *Banchô Sarayashiki* (Ghost Story of Broken Dishes at Banchô Mansion), thereby giving birth to a new genre with an appeal that has been transmitted to the present day.

In the same period, Tsubouchi Shôyô came out with his *Shin gakugeki ron* (Treatise on a New Drama, 1904) as part of his ‘Reform of the National Theatre’ and did a study of Kamigata no Mai (traditional dance of Kyoto/Osaka) and the dances of Tokyo in an attempt to investigate the roots of music/dance theatre in an effort to create a new theatre of song and dance. He explains:

In Kyoto/Osaka, as well as in Nagoya, the arts of entertainment were thought to demand the presence of the professional entertainer, whereas, in Tokyo it is rather looked at as one element of the actor's art. Once this situation is grasped, a great divide between these two areas that form the basis of the development of dance becomes evident. From *The Tsubouchi Dictionary* – Matsumoto Nobuko.

However, as opposed to the New Kabuki movement created at the same time, the 'New Dance (*Shin Nihon buyô*) Movement' of Japan based on Shôyô's *Treatise on a New Drama*, took off on its own without any association or dialogue between the Japan and the West, despite that it was also contemporary with the 'Neue Tanz' movement of Europe and the 'New Dance' of America.

## 1. A Look at the 'Empty Body (Tai)' Element in the Japanese Traditional 'Concept of the Physical (Shin-Tai)'

Sakate Yoji's performance *Cowra no Hancho Kaigi side A* (The Meeting of Honchos in Cowra) (July 16, Suzunari in Shimokitazawa) which was dealing with the incident of the attempted breakout of the Japanese prisoners of war at Australia's Cowra Camp in 1944, is a play that was developed by intertwining the incident itself with a survey taken of female students for the purposes of making a film. By taking a new look at the relationship between Japanese society and its historic relations with foreign countries, this play communicates a message that approaches the essence of Japanese society and connects the past and present at a fundamental level, and in addition to that, we were very impressed with by Yanaihara Mikuni's choreography. Since the ideas associated with the Emperor System that, since the

Meiji period, advocated a return to the values of antiquity, were still alive with the Japanese military of that time, even people who were educated under the modern system of democracy, ended up with a physical movement that hearkened back to military discipline - discarding the 'shin' (the person, individual) of shin-tai (the physical) and leaving the 'tai' (empty 'body') walking around to and fro. This is very similar to 'divine possession'. This abnormal view of physical movement of the Japanese military during the Second World War was dramatically blended into the choreography.

Historically, the Japanese view of the physical often went through periods of sudden development as a result of its merging with foreign viewpoints. The mistakes began when the Meiji regime adopted the idea of reviving the ancient view of the emperor as a divine being. Since the empty shell of the body, resembles a string-pulled puppet (marionette), there was no doubt that the military, by imposing its discipline, could impose a sense of unity with the emperor. This demonstrates the danger that occurs when the one separates the body (tai) from the person (shin).

## **2. The 'Archive' Program Picked Up by the Government**

As the year 2014 marked 100 years of western dance in Japan, the New National Theatre held a program called, 'Dance Archive in Japan' (June 6-8) that was much talked about. With 100 years of history, it could now be said to have entered the realm of 'classic'. This program has evidently been based on the Summer Dance University series of the Contemporary Dance Association of Japan: 'Learning from Modern Dance Pioneers; Exploring the World of Creation'.

Because Japan's classical 'archive of dance' has a tradition dating back to antiquity, is a testimony to the mission and purpose of culture

and art is held in the highest esteem, this 'Archive' of the New National Theatre, which is meant as the preservation and utilization of an important living record (corpus) to be communicated into the future, from the point of view of the current Japanese Classical Dance, it must seem like putting the cart before the horse.

Along with 'Celebration of the 200th Birthday of the founder of the Hanayagi Ryu' and the '7th Memorial Program of Classical Dance for the 3rd Iemoto' (Hanayagi Jyusuke) that began the year before last and are still going on all around the country, there were the '10th Memorial for the 4th Iemoto Yoshimura Yuki' (Yoshimura Kisho, April 20). Further, the '17th Memorial for Fujima Fujiko; 67th Shiko Kai' (Fujima Rankei, Fujima Rankoh, May 25); the '3rd Memorial Buyô Kai for Nakamura Jakuemon IV' (Otani Tomoemon and Nakamura Shibajaku, August 21); the '17th Memorial for Azuma Tokuho II - name taking ceremony of 3rd Soke and 7th Iemoto Commemorative Kai', (Azuma Tokuho II and Azuma Tokuyo - Azuma Ryu, September 20-21) were all performed at the National Theatre. Also Yamamura Tomogoro III and Yamamura Waka IV name taking ceremonial program 'Busen Kai' (Yamamura Tomogoro, September 26-28) was held at the National Bunraku Theatre and many other programs, unsurprisingly, were executed in a very matter-of-fact fashion. In fact, it is these kind of performances, concentrating on recreating classical pieces which show the proper state of today's Japanese Dance. The dances are performed because they have an inherited artistic value, not because of any consciousness of an archive worth mentioning.

Contrasting the problems of the Contemporary Dance Association of Japan and the Japanese Classical Dance Association Inc., the former has made 'creation' the sole meaning of 'art', and neglected the

importance of preservation of art for future generations, but the latter has gone so far as cancelling its support program for new works in order to focus on the transmission of art.

### 3. Why Suodori for the Contemporary Japanese Dance Artist?

In the same period as the ‘New Kabuki’ of Ichikawa Sadanji and Okamoto Kidô appeared, Hasegawa Shigure, who was discovered by Tsubouchi Shôyô, was studying dance in a studio in Nihonbashi, Tokyo and decided, through Shôyô’s influence, that she wanted to create a new workshop in dance, and organized the ‘Society for the Study of Dance’. In its 2nd session at the ‘Shiba, Kôyôkan’, Inoue Yachiyo III danced the Ji-uta (Japanese traditional music with shamisen played mainly in west of Japan in Edo period) *Kanawa* (Iron Trivet) and Fujima Kanjuro V *Sagimusu* (The Heron Maiden) in a competitive spirit. In the 4th meeting held at the Kabuki-za, classical works as well as opera were performed alongside with Hanayagi Yonematsu’s *Urashima* (Urashima the Fisherman), Fujima Masaya in the nagauta piece *Shichifukujin* (Seven Deities of Good Fortune), and Onoe Kikugorô VI and Fujima Kanjuro V’s *Shizubataobi* (A Cheap Obi) as a ‘Suodori’. In Edo, they called this ‘Suodori’ ‘Kinagashi Shosa’. This phrase was used to give prestige to a small-scale dance performances taking place in a tatami room without wigs or costumes.

Suodori, like Western Dance, have also passed its 100-year mark, and has gone through various developments. Among these was the establishment of a new genre called ‘Suodori Gunbu’ (Suodori Ensemble Dance), which emerged in the trend of staging the masterpieces of the postwar period such as: *Dokoku* (Lamentation) choreographed by

Hanayagi Tokubei (1954, Shinjuku Koma Theatre, with a dance corps composed of men and women in simple everyday kimono). With this transformation to a more western dance style like ballet's 'corps de ballet' came the birth of creations that were artistically successful.

The English word, 'art' originally meant 'technical skill' but in the present, the meaning has come to have more emphasis placed on the 'creation' side. On the other hand, among the intangible cultural assets of Japan we have both arts and crafts techniques as well as the performing arts. Though the two have a common denominator, for the moment, at least, we see art for the purpose of the promotion of culture and artistic technique that needs to be preserved placed in a state of opposition to each other. Although dance is 'art', Suodori belongs more to the world of 'artistic crafts'.

This year, outstanding performances of Suodori included Azuma Setsuko performing *Tamausagi* (The Rabbit in the Moon) at the Azuma Kai, and Fujima Etsuko performing *Makasho* (The Begging Monk) at the Keisho Kai (March 23, National Small Theatre). What made these performances so good was how, through the expression of doing, speaking and thinking, the physical movement of the individual performers was integrated with the Japanese song and spirit in one organic piece. This was equal to the 'Craftsmanship and Artistry' that is spoken of in the world of craftwork and shone with brilliance akin to a cultural treasure.

The contemporary Dance Festival, 'Dance New Air - Dance Tomorrow', was held at the Aoyama Round Theatre, Spiral Hall (September 12 - October 5), as well as at other venues, and featured such performances as *dan-su* (Talk/Dance) by Oue Shintaro, Moriyama Mirai and Hirahara Shintaro and also *Soko ni Kaite aru* (It is written there) by Yamashita Zan, which consciously attempted a

synthesis of the presence of the Japanese language with the dance, and was of great interest, though one could say that the sense of 'Craftsmanship and Artistry' was lacking.

Dance, Mai and Odori have differences of meaning but since they do resemble each other, couldn't they be made to work together, each supplying what the others lack and lending their combined energies to creating a hybrid style that would be the dance of tomorrow?

#### 4. The Reluctance to Live in the Contemporary

The Japanese Classical Dance Association Inc. has decided next year to discontinue its program for the planning (creation) and execution of new large-scale works that has been one of its major ongoing projects since 1977. In the press announcement of the Japanese Classical Dance Association Inc., 'Concerning our future' the following was written:

The aim of the program, as well as its scale and system of organization will be given a fundamental review and for the time being we have decided to discontinue the project. Therefore the program will not be held next year as we reflect on the fruits of our endeavors thus far, with the board of directors conducting internal discussions at the next meetings to deliberate on future policy.

This is an indication that 'creative activities' have clearly hit a dead end. The argument that 'creative activities' can be amply covered by 'Suodori' has been made in the Contemporary Nihon Buyô scene, and with the purport of demolishing this argument as an ulterior motive, I organized a workshop for Izumi Hideki as one class of a



seminar of the Arts Management Research Group of the Association of Public Theatres and Halls in Japan. This took the hint from ‘Iwa enogu (mineral pigments)’ that fascinated Japanese painter, Senju Hiroshi, replacing the ‘Iwa enogu’ that from ancient times connected the Japanese people to tradition with the traditional view of ‘physical expression’.

Izumi also conducted the workshops ‘Grasping the Physical Center of Gravity’, Grasping the Empty Space in the Physical’ and ‘The Space in the Holding of the Fan’ that were worthy of attention. One that was below par was ‘The Word and the Physical’ where another lecturer Izumi Shôyô added a talk likening Suodori celebratory pieces to a view of reincarnation. According to him, Suodori and Contemporary Dance are closely related both having at the core a contemporary physical expression that is the expression of the individual. Moreover, we came to the realization that the new types of physical expression that Europe and America have been studying were surprisingly, something already being practiced within Japanese traditional physical expression.

Could it be said that the close similarities between Suodori and Contemporary Dance may provide a suggestion for the future direction of contemporary Japanese Dance?

## 5. Regional Cultural Arts and Reconsidering Postwar History

The current of postwar history in Okinawa along with its recovery were something remarkable. In 1972, the designation of ‘Kumi Odori’ (ensemble dance) as a National Important Intangible Cultural Property, provided the opportunity for the beginning of transmission of Kumi Odori for male dancers, and in 1986, the Okinawa Prefectural Arts University began to offer training in Kumi Odori and

furthermore, with the 10th anniversary of the National Theatre's project for the cultivation of the Kumi Odori of Okinawa, the cultivation of female transmitters of Kumi Odori was incorporated. The breadth of scope and the sense of satisfaction with the project were clearly visible. The news of the awarding of the Gran Prix at the Agency for Cultural Affairs Arts Festival to the program, 'Ryûkyû Buyô: Kôten Onna Nana Odori (Seven-Dance Repertoire of Traditional Woman's Dances)' held at the Yokohama Noh Theatre, as part of their regular program will hopefully be a benefit to regions all over the country.

In the regional areas, not only the folk arts that have grown up amid nature and local climates and geography, but also the culture of the Ryôtei (First Class Restaurants) of the Hanamachi (Geisha District) that supported the early modern period until 1975, has been overlooked by the Arts Management in regional areas. The Ryôtei of the Hanamachi being the hardware, the native Japanese dance and music would constitute the software in a Japanese cultural art form, which included regional dining culture. Dining and performing arts have, since antiquity, maintained an important connection. The situation of Arts Management of Europe and America, which ties together the regional theatres and music halls with dining culture organization, has taught us that postwar regional history needs to be looked at afresh as a point of focus.

## 6. Topics

The Tokyo Bunka Kaikan's Project for Artistic Creation was 'Nihon Buyô x Orchestra - Battle of Traditions' Round 2 (December 13-14). In the first part of this project, the kyôgen actor Nomura Mansai performed a new dance piece called *Bolero*, but this time

ballet dancer Yoshida Miyako performed the piece with the assistance from amongst others top alumni from the Takarazuka Revue in an event that was well-talked about. But among the five works, *Lilac Garden*, (choreography by Gojô Tamami) with its love-hate scene that entwined the women of the Rokumeikan in western costume, and the baron, the lover, the daughter of the count and the student in Japanese costumes was a masterpiece that captured the atmosphere of the Meiji period.

This year (2014) the Agency for Cultural Affairs Arts Festival Grand Prix was awarded to Nakamura Umeya, the Award for Excellence in a New Performer went to Saruwaka Seizaburô.

### **Hirano, Hidetoshi**

Classical Japanese Dance Critic. He was born in 1944 in Sendai City and graduated from Waseda University specializing on theatre studies at the Literature department. At University, he specialized in Kabuki, and later worked at the publishing house responsible for the editing of *Okinawa Performing Arts*, the Quarterly Journal *Folk Performing Arts*, the monthly magazine, 'Japanese Music and Classical Dance' and others. Seeking to investigate the art of physical expression, he became a critic. He is also an expert committee member of the Agency for Cultural Affairs, Society for the Advancement of the Arts in Japan.

(Translation : James Ferner)

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# BALLET

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## Signs of Changes in the Japanese Ballet World

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Urawa Makoto

First of all, I would like to reflect back on the situation surrounding Japan in 2014. It was the third year after the introduction of Abenomics, the economic policy led by the Abe Cabinet, which has caused drastic drop in share prices due to its extensive monetary easing. Furthermore, the Japanese economy all in all showed dramatic growth due to the fact that the depreciation of the yen had turned into a tail wind for Japanese businesses, mainly the export-based automotive manufacturing industry, consequently racking up profits.

However, such economic growth has not reflected on the workers income, and the consumption tax rise from 5% to 8% in April directly hit people's everyday life, widening the gap in earnings and living standards, coupled with an increase in the number of non-regular workers. Such negative trend has led to sluggish consumption and has turned into shackles crippling the economic growth. The pace of reconstruction works after the 3.11 earthquake and tsunami disaster that struck eastern Japan in 2011 and the resolution of the nuclear power plant accident in Fukushima that followed remains slow as a snail.

Additionally, the aging population now constitutes almost 20% of the nation's population and the postponement of the consumption tax rise to 10% has further tightened the state finance, making the budget situation even worse.

Such circumstances have inevitably affected various aspects of the arts. Needless to say, the revision of public subsidy programs for promoting cultural activities has influenced ballet in Japan alongside the decrease in the number of children taking ballet lessons due to the general drop in the birthrate and the economic situation of households, as well as children having to cram for exams to get into institutions for higher education. This trend has wide reaching effects because the money earned through teaching ballet to children has virtually been supporting the running and activities of ballet companies.

Additionally, the devaluation of the yen, which has reached an average of over 30% since 2013, has raised the cost of inviting foreign ballet companies and guest dancers as well as the expenses required for dancers training overseas.

Nevertheless, such adverse effects tend to creep up on the ballet world, ballet companies and individual dancers slowly and not all of a sudden or drastically. Therefore, on the surface, no major changes are shown and as usual, the ballet companies are continuing their performance activities and the small and middle-sized ballet companies are also giving recitals. It may be because they have to be realistic and are going out of their way to carry on with their performances and recitals in order to gather or to retain ballet pupils.

On the other hand, some countermeasures were taken to solve the stringency of ballet companies. Premised on these circumstances described above, I would like to specifically review last year's trends in the Japanese ballet world.

The first and principal news in the ballet world last year was probably the foundation of 'The Association of Japanese Ballet Companies'.

The Association was founded as a general incorporated association on September 1 and it started off with the following eight groups as regular members: The Inoue Ballet Foundation, Noriko Kobayashi Ballet Theatre, Sadamatsu-Hamada Ballet, Star Dancers Ballet, Akiko Tachibana Memorial Foundation (Asami Maki Ballet), Tokyo City Ballet, Japan Performing Arts Foundation (The Tokyo Ballet) and Homura Tomoi Ballet. Except for the Hyogo-based Sadamatsu-Hamada Ballet and Osaka-based Homura Tomoi Ballet, the other six groups are all based in Tokyo. The New National Theatre Foundation (The National Ballet of Japan, NBJ) has also joined the association as an associate member.

Opinions were exchanged last year between the Cultural Affairs Department of the Agency for Cultural Affairs and Tokyo Ballet Association, which was constituted of four of the groups noted above. The Association of Japanese Ballet Companies was established by the four groups that met the requirements and agreed to the purport of the organization, of which the main points of the objective, according to the prospectus, is as follows:

“Japan is one of the world’s major ballet nations in terms of the high level and diversity of the performances given. The financial basis of ballet companies, however, remains weak.

Meanwhile, on the national level, rules and legislation pertinent to the promotion of culture and the arts have been developed. Moreover, looking ahead to the future, the Olympic Games will be held in Tokyo in 2020. With such an opportunity lying ahead, it is necessary that ballet companies hold discussions and resolve various issues through cooperation with parties concerned so that dancers and staff

can concentrate on their creative activities without reserve, which is for the true development of ballet in Japan.”

To this end, a number of projects were mentioned in the articles of the association, which include research studies, exchange programs both domestically and internationally, human resource development and improving conditions of mounting performances.

It was certainly a groundbreaking provision and was probably implemented based upon a strong awareness of the issues related to the situation hindering development in Japan’s ballet field. However, when you look at the whole picture, there are still many other ballet companies that are equivalent to the member groups mentioned above as well as numerous independent ballet schools across the country. There is also the Japan Ballet Association, a nationwide organization made up of individuals, which has a long history and track records. There are still many hurdles, such as how to cooperate and coordinate with the other ballet groups and existing ballet organizations, but when they are cleared, it would subsequently contribute to the true enrichment and development of the entire ballet world. I, personally, look forward to seeing these positive changes.

There is one other matter that I must commit to writing, which is that Ohara Noriko has taken over the post of Artistic Director for Ballet & Dance at the New National Theatre Tokyo (NNTT).

When NNTT opened in 1997, the first Artistic Director for Ballet & Dance was Shimada Hiroshi, followed by Maki Asami and then the previous David Bintely, who directed NNTT. Then from the 2014/2015 season, Ohara Noriko newly filled the seat and became NNTT’s fourth Artistic Director in the dance division.

Ohara learned ballet at Tachibana Ballet School and was one of the founding members of Asami Maki Ballet. After dancing leading roles, she went to Europe and starred in many pieces with Scottish Ballet as a principal dancer and then from 1999 she started working at NNTT as the ballet mistress for The National Ballet of Japan (NBJ).

Ohara's first work as artistic director was the premiere of *The Sleeping Beauty*, based on a new choreography by Wayne Eagling. During the first half of the year, NBJ presented *The Prince of Pagodas* by former artistic director David Bintley as well as classical and modern pieces, and then at the end of the year, it put on Frederick Ashton's *Cinderella* from its repertoire as the second ballet production under the new artistic director.

There were many other ballet performances besides those presented by NBJ. The member groups of The Association of Japanese Ballet Companies noted before present either classical pieces forming their repertoire, or original contemporary works, which are staged several times a year. The groups that are not members of the Association also carried on with their activities as usual. The Matsuyama Ballet put on dramatic performances with unique interpretations focusing on Morishita Yoko as well as works using young dancers. Tani Momoko Ballet also mounted performances with its new artistic director Saito Taku, featuring young dancers. Ballet Chambre Ouest is a company based in Tokyo's Hachioji and has been working on unique activities such as Field Ballet in Kiyosato, Yamanashi Prefecture.

Above all, new productions choreographed by Kumakawa Tetsuya drew attention. Kumakawa leads a group called K-Company and last year he presented *La Bayadère* that he himself directed and



choreographed, and also *Carmen* with unique interpretations, which were added to the company's repertoire. As for NBA Ballet, Kubo Koichi became its new artistic director in the previous year and presented Michael Pink's *Dracula* to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of its foundation.

The foregoing Japan Ballet Association has been hosting events to give chances, especially to new choreographers, to present original works and it was held twice in 2014.

In the urban areas, other than the two previously-cited groups, there are the Osaka-based Noma Ballet, Sasaki Michiko Ballet and Osaka Ballet Academy company, which have presented both classical and original works, as well as the Kyoto-based Higaki Ballet Company and Arima Ryuko Ballet of Academie de Ballet de Kyoto that are actively engaged in international projects. Nagoya is another region where ballet is popular and has Ochi International Ballet, Matsuoka Reiko Ballet, Yoko Tsukamoto Theatre de Ballet Company and many others, which presented a number of works including modern creative ballet. Sapporo Buyoukai based in Hokkaido is also carrying on with quality performances.

We get the impression that this year, the cited major ballet companies, with a few exceptions, were focusing on putting on existing works from their repertoire rather than their original works or creating new works. It is difficult to judge whether this trend was due to financial issues or just by coincidence, but it was the relatively new groups which came up with unique appeals and created excellent innovative works.

First, *Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves* presented by Jinushi Kaoru Ballet Company in Osaka deserves special mention. Although Jinushi

has a long career as a dancer and leader, she is little known as a choreographer in Japan. The story of the said production was based on *The Arabian Nights* but Jinushi wrote the manuscript and selected the music. It turned into a full-scale epic that you do not see very often nowadays, which was comprised of three acts, had plenty of dance scenes, kept the formality of classical ballet and yet could also be enjoyed as a piece of entertainment. Next, PDA (Professional Dancers' Association), which is an all-male group based in Osaka, presented works by Shinohara Seiichi, Yagami Keiko and Shimazaki Toru, who work extensively as choreographers in different parts of the country. In 2014, the troupe toured to Tokyo and received lots of positive response. Yagami choreographs for her own company as well and likewise, Shinohara has been choreographing pieces for his wife Shimomura Yurie, who is a dancer representing Japan, and when she danced Oscar Wilde's *The Fisherman and His Soul* in her recital, it caused a buzz because of Shinohara's philosophical approach. Other notable pieces include *Hoffman's Romance* choreographed by Ito Noriko, who is also a member of Tani Momoko Ballet, at the request of Tokyo's Setagaya Classical Ballet Union. It was a work of medium scale but was noticed for its sophisticated sensibility and it turned out to be one of the best pieces that I saw during the year.

Numerous foreign ballet companies visited Japan throughout the year as usual, including Bolshoi Ballet and the Spanish company Compañía Nacional de Danza led by its artistic director José Carlos Martínez, both visiting Japan around the same time at the end of the year and turning into a match-up between the established and the new. However, there is no denying that concerns remain on how the previously-cited weakening of the yen would affect the future ballet

scene, as it may make it difficult to invite foreign companies.

In despite of the trend toward fewer children per family and the economic slump, the number of ballet competition is increasing even more, due to reasons that include chain-style operation and integrations. Nevertheless, in some competitions, the number of participants has decreased.

Meanwhile, in January, Niyama Haruo won first prize at Prix de Lausanne and in June, Kida Mariko, who is a soloist of Royal Swedish Ballet, was awarded the world's prestigious Prix Benois de la Danse. Both news were reported extensively in the Japanese media too. Further, I want to mention that there were also many other Japanese runners-up other international ballet competitions and this proves the high level of Japanese dancers overall.

#### **Urawa, Makoto**

His autonym is Ichikawa Akira, Professor at Shoin University, Faculty of Business Administration and Corporate Culture. He serves as advisor for dance to The Association of Public Theaters and Halls in Japan and contributes reviews for various newspapers and magazines as dance critic. He has also held positions in various committees, including the committee to the Agency for Cultural Affairs, and has been on the jury for many dance competitions.

(Translation: Sumida Michiyo)

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# Contemporary Dance and Butoh

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## The Clustered Art Market, Dance as “Cool Japan”

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Tsutsumi Hiroshi

### The Clusterization of the Arts Market

2014 saw many international awards for Japanese ballet but in modern dance it was the duo of Habata Ayaka and Ito Cotaro who dazzled, winning the Grand Prix at the International Festival of Modern Choreography (IFMC) in Vitebsk, Belarus. However, appraising contemporary dance and Butoh is becoming harder and the environments that encircle them more entangled. Good examples are the following competitions and awards for younger artists.

The Competition I (Composition Division) of Yokohama Dance Collection EX2014 (February, Yokohama Red Brick Warehouse No.1) became more cosmopolitan, with entries of 152 artists from 10 countries around the world. Tada Shiori & Akagawa Junichi were selected for the Tel Aviv-Yafo Yokohama Prize, while Kim Boram won the Touchpoint Art Foundation Prize, Mitoh Ruri won the MASDANZA Prize, Kwon Ryung Eun took the French Embassy Prize for Young Choreographer, Kim Bo Ra won the Jury Prize, and Inoue Daisuke and Kim Boram were both selected for the Encouragement Prize. From the 34 entries in Competition II (New Choreographer Division), Nakamura Shun was given the Outstanding New Artist Prize, and Okamoto Hikaru and Mizukoshi Tomo were jointly awarded the Encouragement Prize.

The El Instituto Cervantes Tokyo held its first solo dance competition ‘Solo Danza’ in April. It received 33 entries from dance artists

in Japan, awarding the Special Achievement Prize to Kawabe Kozue, the Excellence in Choreography Prize to Matsuo Nozomi, and the Excellence Prize to Irite Anna.

At the Toyota Choreography Award 2014 nextage (August, Setagaya Public Theatre), Kawamura Mikiko won the double whammy of both the Audience Award and the Next-Generation Choreographer Award, selected from 203 entries (242 dancers).

These prizes will prove opportunities for overseas commissions and training, as well as performances in Japan. In recent years, this kind of public art market has become the mainstream site for artist activities, and because it is concentrated to the Tokyo area, is forming a cluster of networks of public halls, cultural agencies, festivals, and art non-profit organizations.

At February's Performing Arts Meeting in Yokohama (TPAM) 2014 many strong showcase performances was presented by producers from Japan and overseas. Momonga Complex (led by Shiraga Momoko) presented *Hitobito* (humans), while Kitamari staged a dance version of Tada Junnosuke's *Re/Play*, MOKK (led by Muramoto Sumire) performed *Vanish* and Kaeru-P performed *Kaitei no yagi* (Goat of the seabed).

Dance Triennale Tokyo was re-launched as Dance New Air 2014 at Aoyama Round Theatre and Spiral Hall, among other venues. It featured a host of international co-productions, exchange programs and visiting overseas groups. Japanese participants included Onodera Shuji, Kawamura Mikiko, Ito Kaori, Yamashita Zan, Kitamura Shigemi, Kitamura Akiko, and *dan-su* (Oue Shintaro, Moriyama Mirai and Hirahara Shintaro).

Chelfitsch staged the world premiere of *Super Premium Soft Double Vanilla Rich* at Mannheim, Germany. It went on a tour of 15

cities in nine countries, making its triumphant homecoming to Japan in December at the Kanagawa Arts Theatre (KAAT).

Teshigawara Saburo choreographed a new work in March for Göteborgs Opera Danskompani. He also participated in the Venice Biennale in June, the Ruhr Triennale in September, and the Kunisaki Art Festival in Oita Prefecture in November, and presented a new work for each festival. He had a busy calendar of domestic performances too, staging the world premiere of *Sleep* (Tokyo Metropolitan Theatre, Aichi Arts Center, Hyogo Performing Arts Center), with a guest appearance by Aurélie Dupont, an Étoile dancer at the Paris Opera Ballet. At Theater X, he staged a series of five performances based on texts by the Polish writer Bruno Schulz. In between this, he managed to direct eleven further *Update Dance* shows featuring young KARAS company members at his Karas Apparatus space. He also led dance workshops for under-eighteens at the Tokyo Metropolitan Theatre in January and December.

### Community Dance and Patriotism

Community dance projects, folk art, Bon dance events, and street performance festivals are also on the rise.

In March, the Shizuoka City Culture Hall “founded” Dance Kingdom Shizuoka, with community dances led by Aoki Yuki, Kondo Ryohei (Condors), and Selenographica.

In February Condors revived *UFO returns* at the Aoyama Round Theatre and premiered *Himawari* (Sunflowers) in May at Saitama Arts Theater. In the summer the company took GIGANT, a humorous and physically playful work inspired by Gulliver’s Travels, on a nationwide tour. In October it ran the acclaimed *Condors Learning By Playing* project for children to learn while playing, hosted by NHK at

the Shinjuku Culture Center.

Nakano ZERO presented *Carnival* in October, choreographed by Tabata Maki and featuring ordinary citizens from Nakano ward in Tokyo.

Kakuya Ohashi and Dancers created *The World* based on field-work in Koto ward in Tokyo, and in March presented it as both a performance and installation.

The Saitama Gold Theater of elderly performers staged the dance work *KOMA* in August at Saitama Arts Theater, where the company is based, conceived and directed by Seyama Azusa, who is a dancer with the Pina Bausch's company Wuppertal but originally from Takasaki City, Gunma Prefecture.

In a co-production with Kirari Fujimi Main Hall in Fujimi City, Saitama Prefecture, Tanaka Min attempted to “dance” a place with *KUUKIGAKORONDA!* (The Air Fell, June, Nanbata Castle Park), a performance at an old folk home that seemed to transport audiences back in time to an pre-modern era. The same Watashi no kodomo = buyodan (My Child = Dance Troupe) series continued with *Karada no naka no kodomotachi* (The Children Within the Body, August, Kirari Fujimi), a “landscape-dance” work in which audiences moved to different parts of building with each scene. In November Tanaka made a rare return to an ordinary theatre stage with *Sluffing into a cloud afloat* (Kirari Fujimi), which re-examined the “place” within the place, simulating an outdoor scene by constructing a barracks on an empty stage.

Tamura Ikko and other Dairakudakan Butoh dancers learnt the folk dance of Enburi at the Nango Art Project in Aoyama Prefecture, adding their original interpretation to it to create *Ojô Tokuro-sama* (Lady Tokuro, October, Hachinohe City Nango Culture Hall /

December, Dairakudakan Kochuten Studio).

Shiraga Momoko has experience with the Nenbutsu dance at Tsukudajima in Tokyo and Sasara dance in Enoshima, Kanagawa Prefecture. For her version of *The Rite of Spring* (November, Tokyo Metropolitan Theatre) at Festival/Tokyo 2014 she carried out research into the Nebuta Festival in Aomori Prefecture to create, along with the stage design by Mohri Yuko in the image of landfills and ruins, and the music of Miyauchi Yasuno interweaving the resonating sound of the dancers' breathing, a near-future vision of a fantasy Japanese festival.

Parthenon Tama held the Tama 1km Festa 2014 in September in the outdoor area around the hall. The bustling event featured performances by Strange Kinoko Dance Co. and Baobab, a parade with ordinary citizens and *She de cusu oh chee!*, and a unique Bon dance choreographed by Honaga Yoko with music by DE DE MOUSE.

There were artists sensitive to the mood of the times. With their production of *Kiniro jikan, festival no saichû* (Golden Time, in the Midst of the Festival) at Setagaya Public Theatre in March, Strange Kinoko Dance Co. announced their "graduation" from contemporary dance as something everyday.

Ide Shigehiro's idevian crew premiered *ZUAN* in October at Setagaya Public Theatre. The movement began with the dancers jostling up against each other, progressing to transform finally into Awa Odori-like traditional dance, the fever building until all the dancers formed a unit wearing happi festival coats and dancing in unison. It captured that Japanese habit of following the crowd intuitively, rather than out of principle.

November saw Yanaihara Mikuni's Mikuni Yanaihara Project produce a version of *The Cherry Orchard* at Nishi-Sugamo Arts



Factory, adapting Chekhov's original play to portray a conflict between regional redevelopment advocates and environmental conservation extremists. With its torrent of dialogue and furious dance-like movement, the overpowering performance hinted at the danger of the patriotism symbolized by the cherry orchard gradually sliding into nationalism.

## The Olympics and Bon Dance

We can see an increase tendency for public-funded projects and governments to use dance as an attraction. At the Tokyo Metropolitan Study Group session in June some suggestions of using traditional Bon dancing as part of the attractions of the 2020 Tokyo Olympics and thus make it known all over the world, were raised.

At April's Roppongi Art Night, the one-night art festival organized by the Tokyo government, the theme was "Move Your Body!" The event saw multiple dance performances happening simultaneously. *Roppongi Parade*: Float Flow Connect, supervised, directed and choreographed by Itoh Kim, marked the opening of the festival, a three-hour performance involving around 130 dancers moving around the Roppongi area. Furuie Yuri's project OH!YAMA also created a performance as part of an exhibition at the National Art Center.

Noism, the dance company led by Kanamori Jo based at Ryutopia Niigata City Performing Arts Center, celebrated ten years since it was founded. It also now includes a second company of trainees, Noism2. Noism1 revised and revived *PLAY 2 PLAY - Kanshō suru jiggen* (*PLAY 2 PLAY - Interloping Dimension*) at KAAT in January. In June, Noism1 and Noism2 jointly staged a version of *Carmen* at Ryutopia and KAAT, while Noism1 premiered *ASU - fukashi e no kenshin* (*ASU - Devotion to the Invisible*) at Ryutopia in December

and KAAT in January. In particular, *Carmen* featured the writer of the original novella, Prosper Mérimée, as the narrator, telling the story of an encounter with Don José on the run for murder. By borrowing the structure of drama, it made the story easier to understand, though Iseki Sawako in the lead role of Carmen was acclaimed for her passionate dance technique too. Kanamori was also appointed to the international committee at the BeSeTo Theater Festival, as well as delegated Niigata City Cultural Creation Advisor, and his activities as part of Niigata City's campaign to win Culture City of East Asia status and the 2020 Tokyo Olympics Cultural Program show much promise.

There were also many dancers this year who made energetic advances through state systems and platforms. Moriyama Mirai was appointed a Cultural Ambassador by the Agency for Cultural Affairs in 2013 and returned from Israel, while Moriyama Kaiji came back from Southeast Asia and Hirahara Shintaro from Spain, where he had been on the Agency-sponsored overseas study program for emerging artists.

### **The Succession of Repertory, Archiving Initiatives**

The public institutionalization of dance had a lot of affinity with the academic world. The New National Theatre, Tokyo looked back at 100 years of western dance in Japan and in June started the *Dance Archive in Japan series*, which recreates past works.

BATIK held an open call for young dancers to join its repertory company and revived *SHOKU* at KAAT in June. *Ochiatte iru* (Coming Together) at Tokyo Metropolitan Theatre in September was themed around the personal experiences of Kuroda Ikuyo, who the previous year lost her father but also gave birth to a child, and was

unable to show her father his grandchild's face before he passed away. Drawing from Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring*, it was a magnificent personal account of how individuals encounter others during the course of our lives.

Mukai Kumotaro staged *Yukitai* (Soul Playing Factory) at Morishita Studio in June. In December he founded his own dance company Deyusha and staged *Futatsu no taiyô* (Two Suns) at Kichijoji Theatre, based on the experiences of his paternal grandfather as an atom bomb survivor.

The Saison Foundation welcomed Singapore director Ong Keng Sen as facilitator of a seminar on methods for dance archiving for Japanese choreographers.

The fifth annual Tokyo Art Meeting at the Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo was titled *Seeking New Genealogies - Bodies / Leaps / Traces* (September to January, 2015). Themed around the body and performance, it featured installations from Dumb Type and chelf-itsch, as well as new performances by Pichet Klunchun and Inbal Pinto & Avshalom Pollak.

## Cool and Subtle Contemporary Japanese Dance

I wrote at the start of this essay that it is becoming harder to appraise contemporary dance and butoh. This is surely because, unlike ballet and the weight it places on skill and physical proficiency, the main emphasis lies on sensitivity.

Maro Akaji's Dairakudakan premiered *Mushi no hoshi* (Space Insect) at the Setagaya Public Theatre in June. With its memorable shuddering set evocative of a giant insect cage and butoh dancer screaming "No!" while dressed as the poet Matsuo Basho, the performance seemed to sound a warning to contemporary humanity's con-

Iwabuchi Takiko's Dance Theatre LUDENS premiered *Body Songs* at Kichijoji Theatre in February. The playful performance interpreted the dancers' movements, breathing and voices as music.

Seki Kaori's Co.PUNCTUMUN performed *Qurevelum* at Theatre Tram in March and *Miroedetut* at the Art Center of Tokyo in December. Drawing out latent physical sensations with stoic yet subtle flourishes, the highly abstract performance used the body to configure a space.

Sugao Nagisa's crewimburnny performed *nunnnnnnnnnnn* at Theatre Tram in May. The gentle and light dance felt like an amusement park, with its dancers arranged like moe anime characters in small rooms around the stage, given food, posed for photographs or even made to sign a marriage application.

Kitao Wataru's experimental dance company Baobab presented *TERAMACHI* at Musashino Arts Theatre in June, themed around Kyoto and motifs of Kabuki and Japanese physicality. *Marumaru kai kara nozomu - shūgōjutaku-ben* (Seen from the ...floor: Condominium

Version) at Komaba Agora Theater in December extracted the everyday physicality of people living in a city condominium.

The cool and subtle contemporary dance scene in Japan is frequently recognized overseas as an example of “cool Japan”. Surely the next task is to address the lack of a system for presenting dance properly across the whole of Japan.

**Tsutsumi, Hiroshi**

Born in 1966 in Kawasaki City. He graduated from Bunka Gakuin's theatre course. He is an editor, copywriter, and theatre and dance critic. After serving as an editor for art, entertainment, theatre and drama magazines, he now works freelance. His writing and editing includes *Sora tobu kumo no ue dangorou ichiza: Acharaka saitanjou* (The Flying Dangoro Party in the Sky: The Rebirth of Acharaka), *Performing Arts Magazine Bacchus*, and *Gendai doitsu no pafo-mingu a-tsu* (Performing Arts in Germany Today).

(Translation: William Andrews)

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# Television and Radio

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## Television Drama in 2014

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Kotaki Tetsuya

In 2014, problems concerning the freedom speech and expression became very apparent, questioning the essential nature of mass media and encroachments on peoples right to information by those in power.

To begin with, the new chairman of NHK, Momii Katsuto said at the press conference for his installation in January, that “If the government says ‘right,’ for our part, we cannot say ‘left.’” This raised questions about his suitability as chairman of a public broadcaster. Further, in August, the Asahi Shimbun newspaper admitted errors in past reporting about the problem of comfort women during the Second World War and the disaster at TEPCO’s Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant in 2011, and Kimura Tadakazu, the president of the company resigned to take responsibility on December 5th. Then on December 10th, the Special Secrets Law created by Abe Shinzo’s cabinet was made effective. This law threatens to limit citizen’s right to information and there are concerns that the definition of what can considered to be a “special secret” is very vague and doubts about the independence of the institutions that are supposed to oversee it. Since this threatens to restrain and smother media reporting and free expression, the operation of this law will have to be watched very closely.

The tendency of television to make people of the moment into heroes and heroines should probably also be called into question. Two

good examples are the news exposed in February, that the composer Samuragochi Mamoru, who was celebrated for being a composer despite being deaf actually had a ghostwriter who composed for him and that in December, it was found out that researcher Obokata Haruko at the distinguished Riken Institute of Physical and Chemical Research, who reported that she had created STAP cells, had actually falsified the results. In the first example, mass media made too much of a fuss of the composer's deafness and in the second example, it emphasized Obokata's gender as a "*rikejo*" (science woman) and the moment problems were identified, the media totally turned around and utterly vilified them. This lack of objectivity is a very bad tendency of news wide shows.

There have been issues of expression even in the world of television dramas. This can be seen in the dramatic series *Asu, Mama ga Inai* (From Tomorrow, Mama will Not Be Here, Nihon Terebi, January-March).

This drama took as its theme abandoned children that are being raised in a foster care institution. This is a strong challenge to the current state of television drama, which usually offers a constant fare of mysteries and police dramas. But the names of the children like *Post* (Mailbox, Ashida Aina) and *Donki* (Blunt object, Suzuki Rie) and the lines of the head of the institution (Mikami Hiroshi) "You guys are the same as dogs in a pet shop!" raised controversy. This drew objections from the Zenkoku Jidô Yôgo Shisetsu Kyôgi Kai (All Japan Association of Children's Foster Care Institutions) and the Jiei Hospital (Kumamoto City) which runs the Aka-chan Post program (a program that will take in unwanted babies in receptacles like mailboxes) that the names and lines could lead to discrimination against children in such institutions with the consequences that eight of the

sponsoring companies withdrew their advertising on the program.

Certainly it can be said that the very gloomy depiction of the home and the line that “you are the same as dogs!” invited misunderstanding. Also lines like the statement by Post that “I don’t need any name given to me by a parent that threw me away” show that the depiction of inner conflict was not particularly deep. But at least, there was never any wavering from the theme of showing “children who unceasingly need love.” The production team would have needed to do more research into real conditions and more careful scriptwriting. But a television drama is influenced by an infinite number of factors. The objections of concerned parties were amplified by the internet, and the fact that sponsors responded by withdrawing advertising is a bad precedent and will act to further limit expressive freedom in television dramas.

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So, what were the achievements in television drama in 2014? The striking factors were the work of two scenario writers and the broadcasts of NHK. The scenarios of Yamada Taichi and Okada Yoshikazu were very memorable and there was a concentration of many notable dramas from the NHK broadcasting network.

Yamada Taichi’s *Toki wa Tachi-domaranai* (You Can’t Stop Time, Terebi Asahi, Feb. 22) depicted the suffering caused by the Great East Japan Earthquake through the conflict between two families, one that suffered the disaster and one that escaped it. The man who lost his family found it almost painful when people empathized with him, while the man who escaped the disaster was weighed down unbearably by his feelings of guilt. Moreover, it became clear that the heads of these two families (Yanagiba Toshiro, Nakai Kiichi) are also carrying grudges that date back to their middle school days. This is a drama that touched both people outside the area of the disaster and anyone



who has every lived in the area. The power of this outstanding drama by Yamada Taichi earned among others the Tokyo Drama Award 2014 for one episode drama and the 2014 Japanese National Cultural Agency Arts Festival Grand Prize.

Yamada Taichi is a veteran scenario writer and at the end of the year, he dealt with one of the strongest concerns today, “why do people kill each other?” in *Naifu no Yukue* (The Destination of the Knife, NHK, December 22-23). As an old man with a past he cannot talk about to anyone the main character (Matsumoto Koshiro) tries to reform a young man (Imai Tsubasa) who has tried to stab someone with a knife, and by doing so, he finds release himself. The old man describes the cruel massacres that he saw when he was part of the Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers, but if that was all, it would only be a message drama. This became a drama with the physical warmth of living human beings is because of the humanity woven into it as it showed that even this silent old man got excited in a way that belied his years when he meets his lover from before (Matsuzaka Keiko).

In addition, Yamada Taichi wrote the 7th story in the series *Oyaji no Senaka* (Watching My Father's Back, TBS) which will be discussed in detail below. In Yamada Taichi's episode *Yoroshiku na, Musuko* (I Leave Things to You, My Son), through an encounter between a shoe-maker (Watanabe Ken), who is not very good with people, and a young man (Higashide Masahiro) who is very understanding about people's feelings, Yamada showed how just through a chance encounter between two people warmth and a human bond can be created.

One also must be impressed by Okada Yoshikazu who has had a string of excellent dramas: *Chikinre-su* (Chicken Race, WOWOW, November 3, 2013), *Watashi to iu Unmei ni Tsuite* (About the Fate

Called Me, WOWOW, 5 episodes March-April), *Zoku-Saigo kara Nibanme no Koi* (Continued: Second from the Last Love, Fuji Terebi, April-June) and *Sayonara Watashi* (Farewell to Myself, NHK, October-December).

In Chikinre-su, is a road movie about an elderly man (Terao Satoshi) who awakens from a coma and his relationship with an understanding young male nurse (Okada Masaki). The old man has awakened from a coma, but his emotions are those of when he was 19 and he acts like a child. The nurse is exasperated at first, but through the common boyish spirit that is the same whether young or old, he starts to understand the older man. This present-tense graffiti plays out against the background of the ocean by the Boso peninsula and the grassy plains of Hokkaido and has the spark to bring us to some kind of realization about life and it was awarded the Tokyo Drama Award 2014 for Excellence in Single Episode Drama and 2014 Japan Commercial Broadcaster Association Prize for Excellence.

*Watashi to iu Unmei* powerfully depicted a very heavy theme, the life of a woman in corporate management (Nagasaku Hiromi). She goes through the various events of the “lost decade”: the collapse of the “Bubble Economy,” the terrorist attack on 9/11 and the Chu-Etsu Earthquake. Through this, she is faced with difficult choices about work, love, defeat, marriage, having children and raising a family. The strength of this drama is the way that all these choices are made against the backdrop of history and running through this all, the message is that “all these individual choices that I have made add up into my life.” The drama is colored by the characteristics of the places in which it is set, the beautiful snowy landscape of the region where she goes to be married and the heat and noise of Kuala Lumpur, where she is sent by her company, and the drama was given the 31st

ATP Top Prize for Excellence.

Through its sensitive dialogue that touched the hearts of both men and women, *Zoku-Saigo kara Nibanme no Koi* showed a romance between a middle-aged man and woman (Nakai Kiichi, Koizumi Kyoko) lightly and entertainingly. Since this is a sequel to a drama that was a hit in 2012, it is all the more impressive that Okada Yoshikazu took the Tokyo Drama Awards 2014 Scenario Prize with this drama.

*Sayonara Watashi* was a drama showing friendship between two women and the two find themselves exchanging personalities, but what made this drama excellent was the fact that this is not where the story ends. A very diligent housewife (Nagasaku Hiromi) helps a free-living movie producer (Ishida Yuriko) to live. In the careful depiction of the emotions in this process, the drama showed that in mid-life, another hidden self can no longer be concealed or controlled, no matter how chilling and painful the experience of revealing it might be.

The morning 15 minute drama series on NHK for the first half of 2013 was *Amachan* (NHK) and was such a great hit that it became a social phenomenon and made the dialect phrase *jie jie jie* from the Sanriku region where the story is set, a popular catch phrase. Moreover, at the Tokyo Drama Awards 2013, it took 7 prizes: Grand Prize for Dramatic Series, the prize for production, scenario, directing, lead actress, supporting actress and a special prize for music.

The drama starting at the end of 2013, *Gochisosan* (Thanks for the food, September 2013-March 2014) was just as strong. The heroine Meiko (Anne) is a woman described by her friends as being interested only in eating and feeding others. Each episode revolved around cooking and ingredients. Moreover, this became an interesting home

drama. Extending beyond that, just beginning with the theme of “eating,” it touched on the world shattering events of the Taisho and Showa Periods, including the Great Kanto Earthquake, World War II, and the following occupation. As with the 2011 drama “Carnation,” there have been many of these historical dramas exploring the point of view of women and the lives of ordinary people on NHK, and *Gochisosan* was awarded the Tokyo Drama Award 2014 Prize for Excellence for a Dramatic Series.

In addition to the morning drama series, there were many other fine dramas on NHK including *Ashio kara Kita Onna* (The Woman from Ashio, NHK January 18, 25), *Daruma-san ga Waratta* (Bodhidharma Laughed, NHK BS Premium October-December) and *Yube no Kare, Ashita no Pan* (Last Night’s Curry, Tomorrow’s Bread, NHK BS Premium, October-December).

*Ashio kara Kita Onna* treats the Ashio copper mine incident of 1890. Waste from the copper mine polluted the Watarase and Tone rivers, and deforestation caused serious floods, destroying the livelihood of both farmers and fishermen in the area. It further led to widespread strikes and riots and the Ashio copper mine incident is considered to be the first case of industrial pollution with widespread social consequences in Japan, also leading to the first factory legislation on pollution. The drama powerfully depicts an uneducated girl (Ono Machiko) as she gains a sense of self and her anger at the social oppression. Dramatic works dealing with the Ashio mine usually focus is on Tanaka Shôzô, the leader of the movement to close the mine, but instead, Ikehata Shunsaku’s scenario makes an uneducated girl the hero and very earthily brings out the anger of people who have their homes and villages taken from them. In turn, this becomes the story of the fate of women in the early Meiji Period when the

country was mobilized with the slogan of “Rich Country, Strong Military.” It was given the 2014 Prize for Excellence in the Japanese National Cultural Agency Arts Festival and the Tokyo Drama Award 2014 Prize for Excellence for One Episode Drama.

*Daruma-san ga Waratta* was a regional drama from Kochi in Shikoku (script by Yoshizawa Tomoko), which highlighted the acting of the two lead actresses, which was very beautiful in the setting sun by the port. The main character is a woman in her thirties, who has been divorced and worries about her child (Ando Sakura), but is revitalized by her meeting with a hachikin mother from Kochi (Baisho Mitsuko). *Hachikin* is Kochi dialect for a woman who is stronger than a man. The drama was warm and moving because of the way that each of the women’s lives were etched into the expressions on their faces, and it earned the Tokyo Drama Award 2014 – Local Drama Prize.

*Yube no Kare*, *Ashita no Pan* was a warm and comforting drama with scenario writer Kizara Izumi’s unique touch in depicting daily life. Because the lines “When you give up something, that means you have chosen life,” were in the context of this very careful depiction of daily life, the drama gave a reassuring sense of courage.

Since in general, dramas on commercial networks are not very vital, the series *Oyaji no Senaka* (Watching My Father’s Back, TBS July-September) drew attention. Even though today the existence of fathers has become very weak, this project refocused attention on fathers and 10 top scenario writers competed with their scripts for the series and it earned the ATP Encouragement Prize. The scenario writers were Okada Yoshikazu, Sakamoto Yuji, Kuramoto So, Kamata Toshio, Kizara Izumi, Hashibe Atsuko, Yamada Taichi, Ikehata Shunsaku, Inue Yumiko and Mitani Koki. All of the stories

were very strong and full of the individuality of the different writers, but here I would like to introduce the second story by Sakamoto Yuji, “Wedding March.” This showed a father obsessed with boxing (Yakusho Koji) and his daughter (Mitsushima Hikari). The ending where father and daughter decide to meet their fate together was very fresh and Yakusho and Mitsushima’s vigorous emotional confrontations gave credibility to the conclusion. This story was awarded the Japanese Cultural Agency Arts Festival Prize for Excellence.

Among other series on commercial networks, there was *Sanbiki no Ossan* (Three Old Men, Terebi Tokyo, January-March) which had a fresh approach. The remaining years of the lives of three old men (Kitaoji Kinya, Izumiya Shigeru, Shiga Kotaro) were amusing because their stories were told like an old samurai movie and brought out a unique view of old age. It earned the Tokyo Drama Award 2014 - Special Prize.

In terms of ratings, the 3rd series of *Dokuta- X* (Doctor X, Terebi Asahi, October-December) continues to be very popular, but in this series, the comical acting of the main character played by Yonekura Ryoko stuck out and the effect of her line, *Itashimasen!* (I won’t do it!) has weakened.

Also, the biggest hit of 2013, *Hanzawa Naoki* (TBS, July-September 2013) won the Grand Prize for Dramatic Series of the Tokyo Drama Award 2014 and the 2014 Japan Commercial Broadcaster’s Prize for Excellence.

Finally, I would like to say a few words about the “International Drama Festival in Tokyo” sponsored by the Tokyo Drama Awards. It is intended to be a forum for Japanese television dramas to be broadcast abroad and in 2013 this succeeded in having a concentration of Japanese television dramas broadcast in Thailand (April-October). 15

series were broadcast, including *Ri-garu Hai* (Legal High, Fuji Terebi, 2013) and *Carnation* (NHK, 2011). There was also a sampling survey of how these dramas were received.

Outline of the Survey:

Date of Survey: July 9, 2013

Target of Survey: Men and women in their 20's and 30's

Size of Sample: 50

Contents of Survey: *Banbi-no* (Bambino, Nihon Terebi), *Koi suru Mezon* (Maison in Love, Terebi Tokyo), *Ri-garu Hai* (Legal High, Fuji Terebi), *Nazo toki wa Dina- no Ato de* (Unraveling Riddles is for After Dinner, also Fuji Terebi) and *Taira no Kiyomori* (NHK).

According to the results of this survey, with regard to dramas in Japan, 88% said they had a “very favorable view,” or “favorable view.” 90% said they were “very satisfied” or “satisfied.” Also the top reasons for having a favorable view were: 1) they are entertaining, 2) they are moving, 3) they are individualistic, 4) they are instructive. The survey also asked Japanese viewers opinions of Korean dramas. Where the figures for “individualistic” and “instructive” were high for Japanese dramas, the figures for “entertaining” and “moving” were high for Korean dramas. The challenge in the future will be how much these characteristics of Japanese dramas can be spread throughout the world.

Television dramas are now entering an age of globalization. In this regard, Japan is behind Korea. What is needed is not only the sales activities of the broadcasters that produce the programs, but for this kind of aggressive presentation of programs to foreign countries and audience surveys to become part of national cultural policy.

**Kotaki, Tetsuya**

Kotaki Tetsuya is a critic and professor emeritus at Nihon Daigaku university, specializing on the cultural history of television. He is also executive director of the Hôshô Hiyô Kondan Kai (Broadcast Critics Benevolent Association), special advisor to the organizing committee of the International Drama Festival in Tokyo, director of Nihon Kyakuhon A-kaibusu Suishin Konso-shium (Consortium to Create an Archive for Japanese Scripts) and member of the Hôshô Bangumi Shûshû Shimon linkai (Broadcast Programming Collection Advising Committee). Among other positions, he has been head of the selection committee for the Galaxy Prize, a judge in the arts festival sponsored by the Japanese National Cultural Agency and a member of the BPO Hôshô Ronri linkai (Broadcast Standards Committee). Among other books, he has supervised "Terebishi Handobukku (Handbook of Television History)" (Jiyû Kokuminsha), and was a co-writer on "Terebi Sakkatachi no 50 Nen (50 Years of Writers for Television)" (NHK Shuppan).

(Translation: Mark Oshima)





Commemorative photograph of the first foreign tour of kabuki to the Soviet Union. Along with the head of the troupe Kido Shirô (film producer and Shochiku chairman), literary advisor Ikeda Daigo and kabuki actor Ichikawa Sadanji II, Stanislavski and Eisenstein are also visible.

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## Developments in Japan

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# Kabuki's Tours Abroad

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Iizuka Misa

Kabuki's first tour abroad was surprisingly early, in 1928. As part of the commemoration of the 10th anniversary of the communist revolution, negotiations between Japan and the Soviet Union began. The Soviet Union officially invited a kabuki performance, and Japan overcame many organizational problems, including the astronomical expenses, a tour was organized. Ichikawa Sadanji II led the troupe of

actors, and with the additional support of the troupe itself, which included that the actors appeared without pay, the tour was realized. In July the troupe went by boat to Vladivostok and from there it was two weeks of travel on the Trans-Siberian Railway to the performance sites in Moscow. Not only were the performances themselves very successful, but also the members of the troupe could meet with top cultural figures like Stanislavsky and Eisenstein. As a result of the tour, kabuki had a great influence on theatre and film in Russia.

The second tour was in 1955 and was to the People's Republic of China, although at that time Japan did not yet have diplomatic relations with the country. With the cooperation of chairman Mao Tse-Tung and premier Chou En-Lai, a troupe led by Ichikawa En'ô I went on the first cultural exchange after World War II to the celebra-

tion of the founding of the republic. The following year, in return, a Peking opera troupe led by Mei Lan-Fan performed in Japan. These performances led the way for the eventual restoration of diplomatic relations between China and Japan.

America is the country that has been visited the most by kabuki troupes and the first tour of



During the third foreign tour of kabuki to America, the kabuki actors Nakamura Utaemon VI, Nakamura Kanzaburô XVII and Onoe Shôroku II can be seen strolling through New York City in formal kimono and *hakama* divided skirt.

America was the third international tour, organized in 1960. It was a very large-scale tour involving all the energies of the kabuki world with a troupe of 64 actors, led by Nakamura Utaemon VI, Nakamura Kanza-burô XVII and Onoe



From 2014 to February 2015, the Kabuki-za Gallery featured an exhibit, “*Kabuki wa Tabi suru Taishikan* (Kabuki is a Travelling Embassy).” In the center of the photo is the big poster (Nakamura Utaemon VI, *Sumidagawa*) created for kiosks in France for the tour in 1990.

Shôroku II, visiting three cities (New York, Los Angeles and San Francisco) and giving as many as 43 performances. Simultaneous translation broadcast on transistor radios and the name “Grand Kabuki” were first used then. It was covered extensively on television and radio and brought attention to the culture of Japan, which was a country that still seemed very distant to most Americans.

After that, there were many tours and by 2014 there have been altogether 67 tours. Kabuki has visited America and Europe, in the southern hemisphere Australia and the countries of South America, Asia and Africa. The tours include visits to five continents, all except Antarctica, 38 countries and 114 cities.

Among these tours, there are many that have been affected by world-shaking events in history. For example, the tour of the Soviet Union that was scheduled in June 1986 had to be canceled because of the disaster at Chernobyl in April, but due to the strong wishes of the participants, it became a reality the following year. Also, the weight of history was felt very strongly when the tour to Europe in 1989 that went to Brussels in Belgium, Berlin and Dresden in East Germany



Poster for the performance of *NINAGAWA Juniya* in London's Barbican Theater in 2009.

and Vienna in Austria, came just one month after the fall of the Berlin Wall. In 1982, representative members of the troupe that was appearing in America went to the White House to pay their respects to President Ronald Reagan, who had just been elected the previous year. It is now commonly said that “kabuki is a movable embassy,” but these foreign tours have not only served to introduce Japan’s traditional culture to the world, they have also helped to make kabuki serve on the front lines of peace diplomacy.

Keeping in mind the language barriers, these tours have most frequently performed

dances like *Renjishi* (Father and Son Lion Dance), or often pieces with a comical touch like *Migawari Zazen* (The Zen Substitute) or *Bo Shibari* (Tied to a Pole), or colorful and spectacular plays like *Yoshitsune Senbon Zakura* (Yoshitsune and the Thousand Cherry Trees) or *Kanjincho* (The Subscription List). At the same time, very serious drama like *Heike Nyogo no Shima - Shunkan* (The Heike Clan and the Island of Women - Shunkan) and *Kanadehon Chushingura* (The Treasury of Loyal Retainers) have also been presented. Nakamura Utaemon VI’s performance as the mother driven mad by the loss of her child taken by slave traders in *Sumidagawa* (Sumida River) was a very deep portrait of the inner feelings of a human being and was applauded abroad in exactly the same way as it was in Japan. Audiences were also impressed with the colorful sets and costumes and could not believe that the *onnagata* (male actors playing female roles) were not actually women.

There are always unanticipated problems when performing in a foreign country. Tours of kabuki have found the theater district in the city they are visiting was in the midst of a labor strike, or that the union rules could not be eased to make performances possible, or the technical staff on site would have terrible difficulties with the unique sets, props, wigs and costumes of kabuki; it was always trial and error. But it seems that with repeated tours, understanding of the needs of kabuki has increased and in recent years, things have gone very smoothly. Also, there is the considerable contribution of commentators like Faubion Bowers and simultaneous translations in making kabuki understandable to people in the different countries.

Among recent tours, in 2004, there were performances at the National Chaillot Theater in Paris to commemorate the name-taking of Ichikawa Ebizô XI, and in 2007, at the performances at the Paris Opera House (Garnier) featuring Ichikawa Danjûrô XII together with his son Ebizô, Danjûrô and the other actors performed a *Kôjô* Stage Announcement in French. Also, in 2009, the kabuki staging of Shakespeare's play *Twelfth Night* by director Ninagawa Yukio, *NINAGAWA Juniya* appeared in London. Nakamura Kanzaburô XVIII created a moveable theater for kabuki called the "Heisei Nakamura-za" which was used for performances throughout Japan, but in 2004, it was taken to New York. American audiences felt that they were taken to a real Japanese kabuki theater and the performances were as well received as they were in Japan. After this success in New York, the world Mecca of show business, these tours were repeated several times. At the same time, in recent years, in addition to full-scale performances of kabuki, there are more small-scale performances, performances directed at students and workshop performances. Through these various efforts, one can see the high interest

around the world in Japan's kabuki. Kabuki as a "movable embassy" has long worked to aid diplomacy and friendship between countries, but perhaps kabuki's true value as drama and entertainment is now also being recognized.

**Iizuka, Misa**

She graduated from the Literary Department of Rikkyo University and is librarian at the Shochiku Otani Library, which is devoted to theater and film. Her duties include the collection, sorting, making available and preservation of documentary materials on theater and film.

Photo provided by the Shochiku Otani Library / Cooperated by Shochiku  
(Translation: Mark Oshima)



Tour to Taiwan, *Étoile de TAKARAZUKA* (April 2013) © Takarazuka Revue

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## Developments in Japan

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# The History of Takarazuka Revue Company's International Tour

## Disseminating Japan's unique theatrical tradition following kabuki

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Ishii Keifu

Takarazuka Revue Company marked its one hundredth anniversary in 2014 and one may say that it has become a 'traditional cultural asset' of the unique Japanese theatre tradition rather like kabuki, which has a four hundred year old history.





The Takarazuka Revue's first performance *Donburako* (April-May 1914) © Takarazuka Revue

The two different styles of performing arts originated in Japan at different times in history and strangely enough, they resemble each other in some respect, although they are opposites. Only men perform in kabuki, while only unmarried women perform in Takarazuka Revues. However, at the beginning, neither of its founders desired those conventions. With regard to kabuki, the powers-that-be did not allow women to perform in its show for the reason that it would corrupt public morals. As for Takarazuka, its founder Kobayashi Ichizô came up with an idea trading on novelty, which was to organize an entertainment group comprised of girls in order to attract more passengers to use the railway lines that he operated. Actually, he was thinking of having men take part sooner or later to form a theatre company to present people's theatre for the new era. However, many wealthy women, mainly in the Kansai region, became fervent fans of the all-girl revue shows and due to



their strong objections, the plan to establish a mixed theatre troupe had to be cancelled.

The development of these unique theatre companies, one all-male and the other all-female, has been led by the private sector alone with no encouragement whatsoever from the government, and both have survived through the ages to this date. Coincidentally, last year, when Takarazuka celebrated its a hundredth anniversary, kabuki also happened to mark a hundred years since Shochiku Co., Ltd. started to administer kabuki. The fact that these two major theatre traditions have been maintained by two private companies, namely Shochiku and Hankyu Railways, and that both have become widely known outside Japan, may also be an unique characteristic of Japanese culture.

Takarazuka Revue, which Kobayashi claimed to be the people's theatre, was in fact a unique Japanese opera created modeling kabuki.



Tour to Canada and the U.S., *Hana no Odori* (August-November 1959) © Takarazuka Revue

At the beginning, not only kabuki but also the preceding traditional Japanese theatre forms such as noh, kyôgen and buyô - traditional Japanese dance - were presented with the accompaniment of instruments used for Western music rather than those used for Japanese music. In other words, the accompaniment for the songs changed from the traditional string instrument shamisen to the piano, and the accompaniment for the dances changed from the offstage geza music to the orchestra. Though it was a compromise of Japanese and Western performance traditions, it turned into an accessible lyric drama that was different from either kabuki or real opera. Kobayashi wanted to produce shows that were not like kabuki or opera, which were only accessible for a limited number of high-class audience, but to rearrange traditional styles of songs, dance and acting into easy-to-understand shows and to present it to the theatre fans of the new age at a reasonable price. As mentioned before, however, it developed into an all-female revue that did not allow men to perform on stage and it diverted from the original idea. At that time, Kobayashi used to lament that kabuki had turned into classical theatre and museum pieces. He also made the following comment about the future of Takarazuka Revue, when it was successfully presented at the Imperial Theatre: "I believe that serious and experimental lyric drama will sooner or later become accepted as a theatre form that deserves to be recognized internationally." This comment was written in the essay column called 'Omoitsuki' (literally, memos of things coming to mind) in the April 1950 issue of 'Kageki (lyric drama)'. Takarazuka Revue was founded based on the idea of kabuki, but I wonder what kind of theatre Kobayashi would have created, if he had seen kabuki flourishing as it is now.

Thus Takarazuka Revue has been influenced by kabuki and in

1938, it toured abroad for the first time, ten years after kabuki. It was the thirteenth year of the Showa Era, when there was a looming threat of war, and the Takarazuka Revue Troupe toured to twenty-six cities in Germany, Poland and Italy as the Goodwill Mission of Art between Japan, Germany and Italy. Thirty members of Takarazuka, alias Takarasiennes, which included Amatsu Otome, set sail from Kobe Port and returned to Japan the following spring. Then almost straight away, in 1939, they toured to nine cities in the U.S., including Honolulu, San Francisco and New York, and this time, Sayo Fukuko and Kasugano Yachio took part. Kasugano, who was a great star of Senka (superior members of Takarazuka) at that time, left a legendary remark when she insistently said, “Please take a photograph of me standing at the top of the Empire State Building”. Perhaps she had seen the film ‘King Kong’. Later on, between 1942 and 1944, before the war ended, Takarazuka toured three times to the northeastern part of China, or as it was then called Manchuria, and then after the war, it



Tour to New York, *Takarazuka Odori Sanka* (October 1989) © Takarazuka Revue  
Shion Yu, Hibiki Mito, Oura Mizuki, Matsumoto Yuri (from left to right in the front row)

toured to Hawaii three times between 1955 and 1957, and in 1959, it went on tour to the U.S. and Canada. There is an interesting episode from this tour: On their way to North America, they took a ship ride, but on their way back, they took an airplane, and glamorous stars such as Hama Yuko and Fujisato Miho got very excited on the plane because it was their first time to fly. They must have behaved like school girls on an excursion. One star sitting at the window murmured, "I didn't know that airplanes could still fly even when a propeller has stopped moving", and her remark developed into a big commotion. Back in those days, there were only propeller-driven aircrafts and indeed one of the propellers had stopped operating due to an engine trouble. Airplanes can fly safely even if only one of the propellers is operating, but the captain, who had not bothered to explain this fact beforehand, inevitably had to make an announcement over a loudspeaker to calm down the passengers on board, who had fallen into a state of panic.

Each Takarazuka show was based on traditional dances performed only by adorable woman, which was different from kabuki, and they were very well received abroad, as the lavish traditional kimono costumes and exoticism brought great satisfaction. When Takarazuka toured to Paris in 1965, it presented a Western-style show for the first time. As a German TV network had organized the tour, the show was directed by a German director and choreographed by a British choreographer called Paddy Stone. This connection later on led to the famous choreography in Kamogawa Seisaku's 'Shango' that premiered in 1967 and earned its place in history. Since then, when Takarazuka tours abroad, in most cases they have taken a double bill of a Japanese show and a Western show, and so far, it has toured twenty-five times to eighteen countries, visiting a total of a hundred and

twenty-nine cities including Southeast Asia, Latin America, London, Hong Kong, and the recent tour to China and the tour to Taiwan in 2013. Particularly worth mentioning is Takarazuka's third tour to Europe from 1975 to 1976, when it visited Moscow and four other cities in the Soviet Union as well as Paris. Hatsukaze Jun, who was the top female-role player (called *musumeyaku*) at that time, and took part in the tour, reminisced and said, "It was seventeen degrees below zero in Leningrad (current Saint Petersburg) and it was really freezing. We performed at a ballet theatre that had a raked stage and presented a Japanese show, wearing white makeup, as well as a Western show. The local audience thought that we were visiting them with two teams, as they couldn't believe that the stars that were wearing white makeup in the previous show had reappeared in the following Western-type show". Also in the New York tour back in 1989, Takarazuka performed at Radio City Music Hall, which is like a sanctuary of revue shows, and this time, the troupe had also taken its famous grand staircase. Therefore it was possible for them to present the glamorous grand finale and the audiences' continuous bravos echoed in the hall.

In August 2015, Takarazuka will mark its a hundred and one year anniversary and it is planning to tour Taiwan for the second time after its first occasion in 2013. Due to the success of the previous Taiwan tour, Takarazuka Revue Company is planning to make its way into the Asian market starting with 'The Rose of Versailles' (*Berusaiyu no Bara*), which is the biggest hit ever. By touring abroad, it has opened the doors for Takarazuka to become international, and now the company is working on expanding the scope of business, bearing in mind that there are aspiring Takarasiennes in other Asian countries.

**Ishii, Keifu**

Ishii is a theatre columnist born in Tokyo in 1943. After graduating from Keio University, he joined the newspaper publishing company Sankei Shimbun and since then, has been working in the fields of literature and theatre for twenty-eight years. After leaving the company in 1998, Ishii has been working as a freelance, writing articles for newspapers, magazines as well as giving lectures. He writes reviews regularly for the monthly magazine 'Kageki', etc. Ishii has been watching Takarazuka Revue Company's shows for fifty year and is the author of books including 'Takarasienne's Fairy Tales'.

(Translation : William Andrews)



VPAM's *LOVE STORY* at Dance Box (Shin-Nagata, Kobe) © Đỗ Đoàn Bằng (VPAM participant, Stage designer)

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## Developments in Japan

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# Hosting the Vietnam Performing Arts Specialists Middle Term Invitation Program

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Yokobori Fumi

The Dance Box space in Shinnagata in Kobe hosted two sessions of the Vietnam Performing Arts Experts Mid-term Invitation Program (VPAM), organized by the Japan Foundation, and planned and operated by the Japan Centre of International Theatre Institute.

The first session was held over two weeks in early June 2014. It was an exchange between practitioners from the Youth Theatre of Vietnam (Nhà hát Tuổi trẻ Việt Nam) and the Dance Box area through dance, theatre and mime workshops. The instructors for the three workshops were Yazaki Takeshi (dance), Goma no Hae (theatre)

and Iimuro Naoki (mime).

Goma no Hae's workshop made use of picture books to create a piece of theatre out of four elements: sound played on instruments, voices reading a picture book, body language, and stage design through various props. After finishing with the picture book that Goma no Hae brought along, the participants then went in search of a picture book written in Vietnamese. Physical theatre performer Nguyễn Hoàng Tùng and actor Lê Tùng Linh went to the library run by Vietnam Dream Kobe for Vietnamese children in Japan at the nearby Takatori Community Center. In Shinnagata there is a large community of Vietnamese residents and many places where Vietnamese socialize. There is a Vietnamese food shop right behind the building where Dance Box is located, plus Hạ Long, a Vietnamese restaurant, is about five minutes' walk away. It later became a regular haunt for the workshop participants. Actor Lý Chí Huy said, "Goma no Hae's workshop will be useful for future children's workshops in Vietnam." They hold workshops for both children and the disabled. In this way, the Youth Theatre is not merely a place for performing regular theatre.

The dance workshop also left an impression through its group activities. The participants made a short piece incorporating the demands of 'standing', 'walking' and 'meeting' into it. Interestingly, the Vietnamese groups created many dramatic works involving themes of romance and war. Needless to say, one factor for this was that half of the participants were theatre actors.



Study Tour in Kyoto © Monden Miwa



For the second session, the practitioners from the first were joined by other participants such as directors, technical staff, and producers. The 15 participants had a packed

two weeks from June 23rd to July 7th, touring west Japan to Kyoto, Matsuyama and Tottori, and then creating a new work, which they performed as the final output of the program.

In Kyoto, Matsuyama and Tottori the participants visited a range of spaces run by non-profit organisations, the private companies and city authorities, in particular art centers and theatres, looking at the various programs operated there. At the Kyoto Art Center, Uchiko-za (Matsuyama), Theater Neco (Matsuyama), and Bird Theatre Company (Tottori), they could learn about the situations and contexts in each region, and how the various theatres creates work and programs in coordination with local artists. While the schedule was somewhat of a non-stop march through a succession of different theatre facilities, work also continued on devising ideas for the final performance on July 7th.

After completing their whirlwind tour of Japan, from the 30th of June, the participants started to create the work. The performance was set for July 7th, meaning the creation period was also no less of a whirlwind. First the title of the script was fixed to be *Love Story*, based on *Romeo and Juliet*, and then the roles were cast. Meetings after the rehearsals often continued long into the night.

According to what I heard, the Youth Theatre has a top-down



Creating *LOVE STORY* with Japanese staff members © Goto Ayako

structure with the director at the top, and with currently little process for ideas to come up from crew such as lighting or sound teams. During the sessions in Japan all the members of staff took part in the meetings and shared their opinions to create the work. A stage manager was also added to the team, a position that is not widespread in Vietnam, and in this way the creative work was done using methods different from their usual system. What was clearly shown to us, though, is that we do need to be careful about simply calling the system in Japan the “better” one. The system in Vietnam has come about by building up a variety of elements of history, human relations, and family. Since we must presume the contexts in Japan and Vietnam to be different, is it possible to make a good environment for creativity that can be shared by both? This is a question that became very apparent because it was a group residency featuring almost all the types of people working in the theatre.

Something else proved interesting through the group residency creation process. As we previously noted, there is a large Vietnamese community in and around the Shinnagata area. In the past,

Vietnamese artists have stayed here but the impact on the local area was clearly different when the number of participants was larger. For evening meals and parties everyone headed to the nearby Hạ Long. The visitors spoke with the



VPAM's *LOVE STORY* © Đỗ Doãn Bằng

local Vietnamese, accelerating the interplay between them. When searching for an interpreter to translate from Japanese into Vietnamese, we also ended up asking the local network. While these are small connections, this linked process produced a new “map” of Shinnagata. At the final performance, more than a quarter of the audience was made up of Vietnamese residents in Japan. The theatre lobby was filled with the sound of Vietnamese speakers.

Hosting the Vietnam Performing Arts Experts Mid-term Invitation Program offered an opportunity to reconsider the role of the theatre space. Through working with not only artists, but the full range of people involved with a theatre, we were able to take a comparative look at how our theatres work, such as how it is possible to build reliable relations between students, performing places and theatre groups, as well as see how small daily things glimpsed in both ordinary times and extraordinary times when making a performance, connect to the large-scale construction of social systems.

After the participants went back to Vietnam they restaged *Love Story* at the Youth Theatre to a full house of 500. The audience gave it an enthusiastic reception. Judging solely by the photographs uploaded



VPAM's *LOVE STORY* © Đỗ Đoàn Bằng

to Facebook, Lưu Hải Phong's lighting was very beautiful. When I went to Vietnam last September, Nguyễn Hoàng Tùng told me at his studio that he now considers the rehearsal space as a place to be utilized like a theatre. This might be the influence of having seen how in Japan many kinds of rehearsal spaces are transforming into performance spaces. I would like to finish with the expectations we have for the Youth Theatre of Vietnam's future developments and the hope that this exchange can continue to make informal and formal connections.

**Yokobori, Fumi**

Yokobori Fumi is a program director of non-profit theatre space Dance Box. In 2008-2009, she conducted a six-month performing arts research survey in six Asian countries and New York on a fellowship from the Asian Cultural Council (ACC). She works to develop programs linking dance, regional communities and theatre spaces, and build networks between Asian countries.

(Translation : William Andrews)



Learning and discussing about Nihon buyô and Peking opera at Atelier of Hanayagi Chiyo (right).

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## Developments in Japan

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### Report on the 1st ITI World Theatre Workshop: **Peking Opera and Nihon buyô**

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#### What can contemporary theatre learn from traditional theatre?

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Hishinuma Yoshiaki

The first ITI World Theatre Workshop exploring what contemporary theatre can learn from traditional performing arts was held for three days from August 19th during the height of the Tokyo summer. The opening workshop paired Peking opera with Japanese Classical Dance (Nihon buyô), welcoming Chen Gang from the Central Academy of Drama in China.

Chen Gang arrived in Japan on August 17th and the following day he was taken to the National Theatre of Japan. There he saw three acts from *Sugawara Denjû Tenarai Kagami* (The Sugawara

Secrets of Calligraphy). Chen was very pleased to have the opportunity to see one of three great works of kabuki.

“It meticulously expresses the emotions of humanity and our innermost intentions in a complete aesthetic style,” he remarked, demonstrating a deep understanding and sympathy with the expressive capabilities of Kabuki. He said seeing the play was one of the fruits of his visit. He used the word “tension” to express the ability for Kabuki dance to surge and build up one by one, remarking on how it was a distinctive characteristic of eastern performing arts, common to both Peking opera and kabuki.

On the third day he went to see a rehearsal by Hanayagi Chiyo, a leading figure in the world of Nihon buyô. Chiyo, who this year turned 91, and many of her disciples have worked to further the exchange between Peking opera and Nihon buyô. Hanayagi Chiyo serves as a Nihon buyô instructor for the New National Theatre, Tokyo’s opera and theatre research studios, as well as the Nikikai Opera Institute, but she has also left a great mark on cultural exchange between Japan and China, such as holding buyô perfor-

mances in China and assisting in the Chinese publication of a book on the foundations of Nihon buyô. As such, she was delighted for Chen Gang to visit her rehearsal.

The event began with Chen giving an introduction and



Lecture and demonstration of movement for Peking opera by Chen Gang at Toho Gakuen College of Drama and Music.

demonstration of basic movements in Chinese traditional theatre, while Chiyo spoke about the history and contemporary state of Nihon buyô, as well as its characteristics. The students then danced the *koto* piece *Rokudan* (Six Steps) and the *jiuta* song *Arenezumi* (The Wild Mouse) as demonstrations of basic technique. The dance showcased the diversity of expression and the quintessence of technique that both Peking opera and Nihon buyô have inherited, reaffirming the charms shared across eastern performing arts.

Chiyo then spoke about the pivotal elements of Nihon buyô: “Training. Training. And memorize the foundations and rules. In Japanese traditional dance, you achieve a freedom of expression within the rules of the dance after having undergone extensive training in these rules, whereas modern dance trains the body to break the conventions.”

On the fourth and fifth days, there were workshops held at Toho Gakuen College of Drama and Music, with theatre students and young directors and members of theatre companies. The participants were captivated by Chen, with his jovial and frank personality, passionate and sincere tutorship, and artistic abilities he has cultivated since his youth.

Chen began to learn classical Chinese theatre from the age of three. He grew up in Hubei province; his father was a Hanju opera performer while his mother an actress in Peking opera. Blessed with this lineage, his talents flowered quickly and he was admitted into a



Learning practically the basic movements of Peking opera at Toho Gakuen College.

Hanju company at the age of ten. From the age of fourteen he entered a local school for the arts, while from sixteen he entered the China Conservatory of Music. He taught other students how to sing and perform, and was touted as a child prodigy with a big future ahead of him. At eighteen he passed the exams to enter the Central Academy of Drama, a Chinese national theatre university. He continued on to complete post-graduate studies there, acquiring knowledge of performing and directing, including both Chinese traditional theatre as well as American and European theatre. He has directed widely, not only for the stage but also television drama and cinema.

At Chinese national theatre universities there are courses on all the performing arts. Contemporary theatre and classical performing arts offer mutual stimuli. For performers, it means new training methods are constantly being created. This is an enviable situation compared to Japan.

On the fifth day of the workshop, Toho Gakuen College of Drama and Music instructor Miura Go led a session called Foundational Physical Expression Training for Stage Performers, including the foundations of the Suzuki method, pilates, and Ankoku butoh.

Over the course of the day the participants could experience the contrasts between the various physical disciplines. Chen then instructed the participants on several techniques involved with Peking opera, including the Central Academy of Drama's fundamental physical exercises. At one point during his agile movements he adopted a kabuki-style *mie pose*, which met enthusiastic applause from the young students.

In terms of the perception of physical training, one difference between Miura and Chen did reveal itself during a certain stage of the session. Miura instructed the participants to be aware of the sight



lines of the audience. However, Chen said that the students must not be conscious of the audience at all. The remaining time of the workshop was then given over to the training that takes place at the Central Academy of Drama.

In recent years, the Global Alliance of Theatre Schools (GATS) International Theatre Festival has become a mainstay among theatre colleges in Japan and China, with Toho Gakuen participating every year. Through this workshop, an exchange of theatre between schools from the two countries deepened mutual understanding of traditional performing arts, as well as improved skills. In this sense, the workshop proved an extremely effective initiative. In the future, Nagai Takeo, President of the Japanese Centre of International Theatre Institute hopes this kind of theatre exchange between two or three countries can be continued. Chen Gang returned to China on August 23rd.



Learning practically the basic movements of Peking opera practically at Toho Gakuen College.

**Hishinuma, Yoshiaki**

Hishinuma is a translator and is also a member of the Board of Directors of the Japanese Centre of ITI and the Secretary-General of Japan-China Theatrical Exchange Wagekijinsha. He has translated modern Chinese plays such as *Farewell Seto-naikai* (*Bie le, Laihu nei hai*) by Deng Youmei as well as *Bull* (*Niu*) and *Road Work* (*Zhu lu*) by Mo Yan. Among the works he has translated that have also been performed in Japan, there are *Empress Dowager* (*Xitaihou*) by Sun Demin, which was presented by Shochiku Co., Ltd., *Go Player* (*Qiren*) and *Frog* (*Qingwa*) by Guo Shixing produced by the New National Theatre, Tokyo, *Aboard the Ferryboat Together* (*Tong chuan guodu*) and *Temporary Ward* (*Linshi Bing Fang*) by Shen Hongguang produced by The Theatrical Company of Toen and *The Peony Garden* (*Mudan ting*) presented by Jiangsu Province Kunqu Theatre and hosted by Nippon Cultural Centre.

(Translation: William Andrews)

## SPECIAL FEATURE

'Theatre Born in Conflict Zones 6'



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**SPECIAL FEATURE**

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## **A Report on 'Theatre Born in Conflict Zones 6' Can We Overcome Wars, Violence and Control?**

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Yoshiiwa Masaharu

In response to the major theme 'Arts and Peace Building', recently set by UNESCO, various countries' international theatre centers (ITI), as an international non-governmental organization under the umbrella of UNESCO, has actively involved in variety of projects on the theme 'Theatre in Conflict Zones'. The Japanese Centre of ITI has responded to this trend and has been carrying out a special project titled 'Theatre Born in Conflict Zones' since 2009, and 2014 marked its sixth year (co-organized by the Tokyo Metropolitan Theatre since 2012).

This project is part of the research and study program of the Yearbook issued by the Japanese Centre of ITI, and in 2014, reading performances, special lectures, talk sessions, symposiums and round-table talks were held based on the theme 'Can We Overcome Wars, Violence and Control? 1914-2014: A Hundred Years Since the Outbreak of World War I'. Plays from UK/Israel, Pakistan and Nigeria, which were all translated into Japanese and staged in Japan for the first time respectively, were performed between December 19 and December 23 at Atelier West of the Tokyo Metropolitan Theatre. Each session was sold out, signifying that this series has taken root in the Japanese theatre circles.

<Dramatic Reading>

***Ballad of the Burning Star*** (UK/Israel)

Written by Nir Paldi

Translated by Sumida Michiyo

Directed by Ohtani Kenjiro

Performed by Itazu Miki, Ogawa Shiho, Koyama Moeko (Empathy), Sahara Yumi  
(Ryuzanji Office), Doi Manami (Dora Theatrical Company), Furudate  
Kazuya (Company-ma)

Music performed by Suzuki Masato

Date & Time: December 19 (Fri) 19:00 / December 20 (Sat) 14:00

*Ballad of the Burning Star* was produced by Theatre Ad Infinitum, a multinational theatre troupe based in London, and it won the Grand Prize at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in 2012. The production is



*Ballad of the Burning Star* ©Takakura Daisuke

now on tour in the U.K. Theatre Ad Infinitum is a group putting on plays based on physical theatre and was founded by graduates of L'École Internationale de Théâtre Jacques Lecoq in Paris.

Nir Paldi, who wrote and directed this play, was born and raised in Israel. He said that he saw the Palestinian issue as an 'Israeli issue', and through a cabaret-style performance, he portrayed how disputes and occupation in this region has effected and torn apart the feelings of the Israeli people.

After the dramatic reading on December 19, there was a talk session between Hosoda Kazue (Israeli Literature and Culture, Chuo University) and Nir Paldi, the writer and director of the play. Paldi explained his background that he was born in Israel and moved to a settlement when he was three years old, which became the starting point for him to write this play. The Jews, who have had a history of being discriminated and persecuted, are now on the reverse side as they are the ones discriminating and persecuting the Palestinians as



*Ballad of the Burning Star* © Takakura Daisuke

well as depriving their territories. The paradoxical reality and ironies that were very clearly explained by Paldi were very interesting.

After the performance on December 20, there was a symposium under the title '1914-2014 and Theatre: From the Post Colonial Point of View'. Nir Paldi, Sawada Keiji (translator and professor at Waseda University), Yoshikawa Emiko (professor of Latin American Theatre at Sophia University) were on the panel and it was moderated by Shichiji Eisuke.

Paldi talked about the current situation of the Israelis living in settlements, his own identity issue of whether he is an Israeli or a Jew and the audience's reaction in the U.K., which were all very interesting discoveries. He also said that in the actual performances, the cast danced in most of the scenes and the dance numbers expressed the settings (war, inside the bus, etc.), to which narration and songs were added. Since the play was originally based on physical theatre, there were concerns that it would not be possible to express the intention of the original production through a reading, but I actually found it enjoyable to listen as music was used tactfully in the dramatic reading.

In their respective presentations, Professor Sawada referred to the 'ANZAC Myth' and the aborigines' stories while Professor Yoshikawa said, "In Mexico, theatre is a weapon. It is necessary for living." Both presentations were evocative and gave us interesting insights on the variety of dramatic expressions in conflict zones.



Mr. Nir Paldi (right) and Ms. Hosoda Kazue (left) at the talk session.

## &lt;ITI Special Lecture&gt;

***Madmen and Specialists*** (Nigeria)

Written by Wole Soyinka

Translated and lectured by Aihara Ayako

Performed by Arai Jun

Date &amp; Time: December 21 (Sun) 14:00

Aihara Ayako, the translator of the play, gave a lecture on the Nigerian-born playwright Wole Soyinka, which turned into a very valuable opportunity to learn about Nigerian theatre. Soyinka, who became the first African to receive the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1986, was born in 1934. He studied literature at universities in Nigeria and the U.K., and during the 1950s, he worked at the Royal Court Theatre in London, and it was from around this time that he started to write plays, one after another. *Madmen and Specialists* was written based on his experiences in prison during the Nigerian Civil War (1967-1970, the Biafran War). He said, “The play was written using the methods of *The Theatre of the Absurd* to depict the madness of war that deprived humanity through the antagonist, a doctor that was steeped

in evil due to his strong desire for power.”

After the lecture, Arai Jun read a part of the play. Although it was indeed a wonderful reading performance, it was a pity that we could not get the whole



Mr. Shichiji, Mr. Otori, Mr. Nishido and Mr. Sakate at the symposium (from left to right).



picture of the story as only a small portion of it was introduced. After the special lecture, there was a symposium on ‘War and Theatre: From Greece to the Twentieth Century, the Present’. The panel was comprised of Otori Hidenaga (theatre critic), Nishido Kojin (theatre critic and Professor at Kinki University), Yoji Sakate (playwright, director and leader of Theatre Group Rinkogun), and the moderator was Shichiji Eisuke (theatre critic).

A wide range of topics were covered in the discussions, ranging from how war was depicted and perceived in theatre pieces of all ages and cultures, what kind of stance could be taken through the arts and theatre toward conflicts that occur in various parts of the world, including Japan. Nishido pointed that, “When you look at this issue from the standpoint of perpetrators and victims, there are so many Japanese films, theatre and novels portraying wars that adopt the stance of the victims”, and this comment for me was a stimulating revelation.



Ms. Arai Jun (back) and Ms. Aihara Ayako (front) at the meeting about *Madmen and Specialists*.



*Burqavaganza* © Ishizawa Chieko

## <Dramatic Reading>

### ***Burqavaganza*** (Pakistan)

Written by Shahid Nadeem

Translated by Murayama Kazuyuki

Directed by Nishizawa Eiji

Performed by Akagi Yuka, Enjoji Aya, Kato Akemi,  
Kogure Miyuki (Daruma-za), Dai Miho,  
Murai Yu (Kaimaku Pennant Race)

Date & Time: December 22 (Mon) 19:00,  
23 (Tue/public holiday) 14:00

Burqa is a coat or a veil worn by Pakistani and Afghani women to hide their whole body when they go out. This play is set in Pakistan in the near future called the ‘Compulsory Burqa Era’ and social manners are depicted comically and cynically through a young couple. It premiered in March 2007 by

Ajoka Theatre, a company representing Pakistan. It was banned in April, a month later, but got permission to resume in May and from then on it has been performed up to the present day. The author Shahid Nadeem said, “Burqa has now become a symbol of ultraconservative ideology. It represents resistance toward the West, denial of women’s human rights and belongs to extremists who only have backward political awareness.” It was also mentioned that when the play was presented in Pakistan, in the last scene, all the characters flung up their burqa veils and revealed the faces of political figures such as George Bush and Tony Blair, and also in the very last moment, a picture of a woman in burqa painted on a large panel on stage is revealed, showing the face of a beautiful girl, which brought the play to a close in a tone full of irony.

After the performance on December 22, the translator of the play Murayama Kazuyuki (studying cultures of South and East Asia at Wako University and Chuo University) gave a lecture, and after the performance on December 23, the translator, director and the cast as well as guests speakers Niino Morihiro (professor at Rikkyo University) and Muneshige Hiroyuki (Black Tent Theatre) were invited to take part in the roundtable talks, which became an extremely precious and interesting opportunity to know the current situation of theatre in Pakistan. In the performance, all the cast were wearing burqas and when one of them, namely Enjoji Aya, said, “when I was wearing a burqa, I could stare at the audiences’ faces but when I took it off at the end, I felt very embarrassed”, it overlapped with Murayama’s comment, in which he said, “You can become an invisible person when you wear a burqa”, and I thought it was an interesting comment of a man experiencing wearing a burqa.



Mr. Murayama Kazuyuki explains about a burqa.

### Yoshiiwa, Masaharu

Yoshiiwa Masaharu is director and vice president of the Japanese Centre of ITI. He worked at the Imperial Theatre after graduating from Tokyo University in 1965 and then studied under Nicolas Bataille. Later on, he became a member of Neo Literature Theatre (NLT) Company and then founded Les Quinze (current Half Moon Theatre Company), mostly presenting modern British plays, while teaching at the Graduate School of Osaka University of Arts. He has introduced new plays by young playwrights and especially female playwrights, besides presenting a series of Harold Pinter’s plays.

Front Photo : *Burqavaganza* © Ishizawa Chieko  
(Translation: Sumida Michiyo)



## Companion Volume “Theatre Abroad 2015” (Japanese)

These articles which do not appear in “Theatre in Japan 2015”.

### World Theatre Day Message by Krzysztof Warlikowski

#### Theatre in Asia and Africa

- China** Commemorative Performances Marking 450 Years  
Since the Birth of Shakespeare and 80 Years Since “Thunderstorm” ———— Iizuka Yutori
- Korea** Theatre Festivals and Cultural Authority ———— Nam Song-ho
- Macau** Contemporary Performing Arts in Macao ———— Erik Kuong
- Philippines** A Year of Overcoming Difficulties ———— Rodolfo Vera
- India** Looking Back on 2014 ———— Tsurudome Satoko
- Afghanistan** Afghanistan Theatre Map 2014 ———— Murayama Kazuyuki
- Zimbabwe** Developments in Zimbabwe Theatre 2009-2013 ———— Samuel Ravengai

#### Theatre in the Americas and Oceania

- Canada** Summer Theatre Festivals as Triggers for Regional Development ———— Kanzaki Mai
- U. S. A.** Innovative Endeavors in Public Theatre: From the American Civil War to Post-9/11  
————— Tonooka Naomi
- Mexico** Shakespeare, Japan, and National Borders ———— Yoshikawa Emiko
- Bolivia** A Changing Nation and Challenging Theatre Artists ———— Norge Espinosa Mendoza
- Australia** Portraying the Lives Today of the People We Cannot See ———— Sawada Keiji

## Theatre in Europe

<b>U.K.</b>	Independence or Autonomy? Between Hegemony and Democracy – Motohashi Tetsuya
<b>Scotland</b>	Artists Examining Independence and Having Fun with Change ——— Nakayama Kaori
<b>Germany</b>	Three Scandalous Cities: Vienna, Leipzig, Berlin ——— Terao Itaru
<b>France</b>	A New Work by Théâtre du Soleil, A Strike-Threatened Avignon Festival, Young Theatre Artists Coming to the Fore, and the Arrival of a New Minister for Culture — Odanaka Akihiro
<b>Belgium</b>	Developments in the Performing Arts in Belgium in 2014 ——— Sara Jansen
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<b>Sweden</b>	A Poverty of New Plays and a Generation Shift ——— Komaki Yu
<b>Russia</b>	What Is to Be Done? ——— Shinozaki Naoya

## Developments Overseas

ITI Activities and the Latest Trends ——— Sota Shuji
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## Special Feature “Theatre Born in Conflict Zones 6”

Latent Perpetrators and the Reality : A Review of “Ballad of the Burning Star” ——— Seki Tomoko
Critique : Post-Colonialism and Theatre ——— Nishido Kojin

## Overseas Tours Report

World tour of Elderly Actors Troup in Hong Kong and Paris – Saitama Gold Theatre ——— Matsuno Hajime
“Half Gods” : An International Co-Production by Tokyo Metropolitan Theatre (Japan) and Myeongdong Theater (Korea) ——— Maeda Keizo
Theatre company Chiten in Finland : A Journey Inquiring into Theatre as Critique ——— Tajima Yuna

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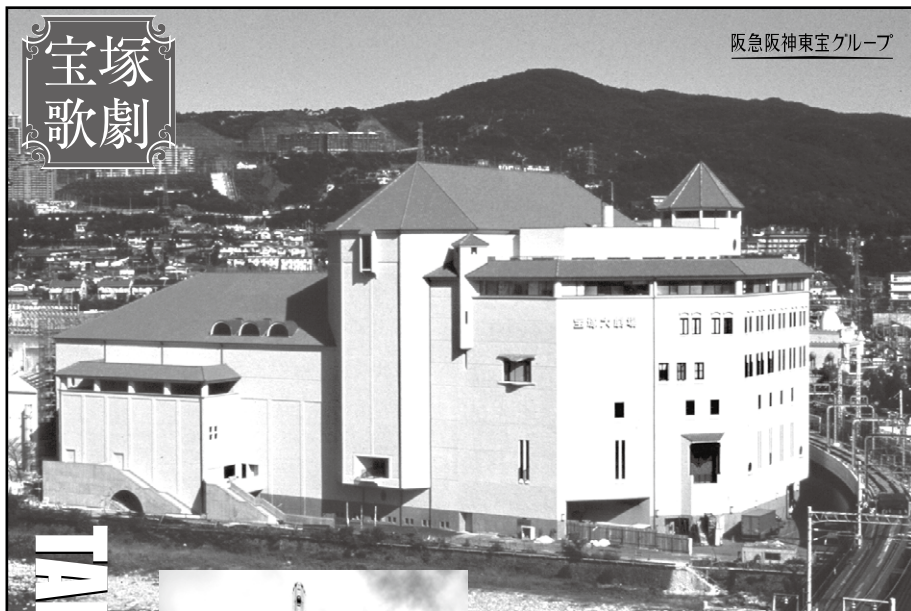
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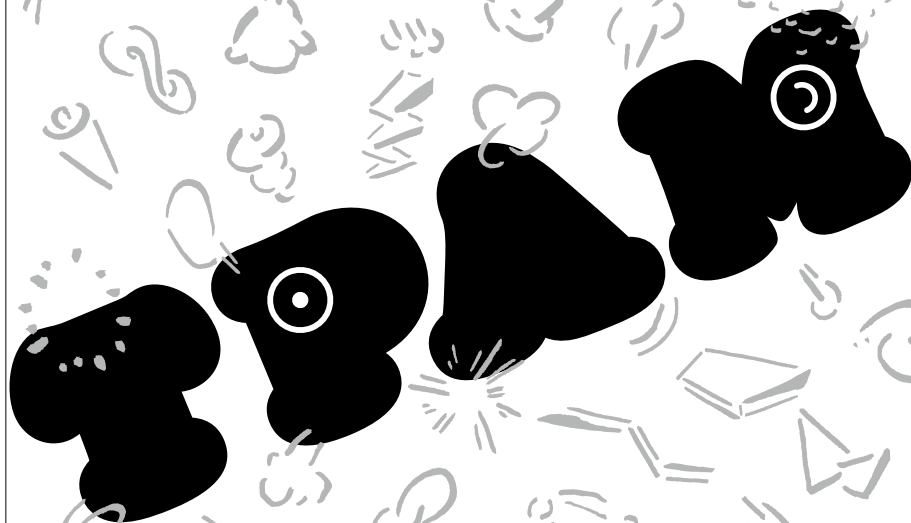
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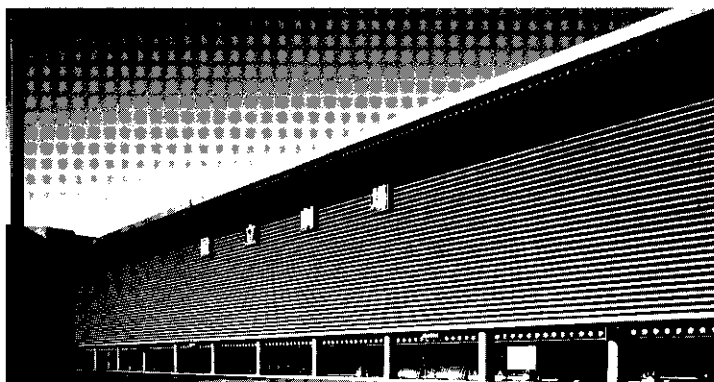
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