

国際演劇年鑑 2016

*Theatre
Yearbook
2016*

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

公益社団法人 国際演劇協会日本センター
ITI / UNESCO

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Published in March, 2016

Japanese Centre of International Theatre Institute (ITI/UNESCO)
c/o Kokuritsu Nohgakudo (The National Noh Theatre)
4-18-1 Sendagaya, Shibuya-ku, Tokyo 151-0051, JAPAN
Tel: +81-(0)3-3478-2189 / Fax: +81-(0)3-3478-7218
mail@iti-j.org / <http://iti-japan.or.jp>

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文化庁

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Editor-in-chief	Tanokura Minoru
Director in charge	Sota Shuji
Editor	Nakajima Kana
Editorial Staff	Iki Terumi, Goto Ayako, Sakurai Yumiko, Sentoku Miho
Translation	William Andrews, James Ferner, Mark Oshima, Sumida Michiyo, Sasapin Siriwanij (Thai)
Proofreading	Tove Bjoerk, William Andrews
DTP Staff	Nakamura Tomoko
Art Direction and Design	Kubo Saori
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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 ninety 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 2015, the ‘Theatre Born in Conflict Zones’ series was carried out for the seventh consecutive year and three new plays from Nigeria, Philippines and Syria 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, 2016

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 2015**



Katayama Yûsetsu Sekidera Komachi wo Miru Kai, *Sekidera Komachi* (Komachi at the Sekidera Temple)
on March 26th, 2005 © Katayama Family Noh and Kyomai Preservation Foundation / Watanabe Shinya



Issô Hisayuki
 Kanze-kai Monthly
 Noh Performance, *Fujito*
 (The straits of Fujito)
 on July 6th, 2014
 © Maejima Yoshihiro



Tsuchi-Gumo (The Ground Spider) 16th Hana no kai, Kanze Kiyokazu (centre), Mori Tsuneyoshi (left) © Uda Yasushi

Noh / Kyôgen



Narayamabushi kô **(The Ballad of Narayama)**

Nomura Mansaku (front),
Nomura Mansai (back)
Mansaku no Kai Kyôgen Company
© Masakawa Shinji



Hoashi Masanori (Noh Flute) 18th Komparu Yasuyuki Noh Performance, *Teika* (The vine of Poet Fujiwara Teika) on March 25th, 2012

© Ikegami Yoshiharu



Jûki (Juki the Clumsy Acolyte) Shigeyama Sengorô, Shigeyama Sensaku 2nd Memorial Program of Kyôgen
© Kawanishi Yoshiaki



Sekidera Komachi (Komachi at the Sekidera Temple)
Umewaka Genshō, Umewaka Rokurō 37th Memorial
Program of Noh © Yoshikosi Ken



Kondô Kennosuke
Tsuru Kame (Crane and Tortoise)
© Kameda Kunihei

Kabuki



Fûinkiri (Breaking the Seal) Nakamura Ganjirō IV © Shochiku



Kawashô (At the Kawashô Teahouse)
Nakamura Ganjirô IV (left) and others
© Shochiku



Yoshidaya (At the Yoshida Teahouse)
Sakata Tôjûrô © Shochiku

Kabuki



Shin Usuyuki monogatari (The New Tale of Usuyuki) Matsumoto Kôshirô (left), Nakamura Kaishun (right) © Shochiku



Tōkaidō Yotsuya kaidan (The Ghost Tale from Yotsuya) Ichikawa Somegorô (left) and others © National Theatre



One Piece Ichikawa Ennosuke (centre) and others
© Shochiku / Super Kabuki II One Piece Partners



Datekurabe Ise monogatari (The Flamboyant Tale of Ise)

Nakamura Kichiemon
© Shochiku

Bunraku



Ichinotani futaba gunki - Kumagai Jinya (Chronicle of the Battle of Ichinotani - Kumagai's Battlecamp)

Yoshida Tamao II (right) © National Bunraku Theatre cooperated by NPO Ningyō Joruri Bunrakuza Mutsumi-kai



Fushigi na mame no ki (The Strange Bean Tree)

© National Bunraku Theatre cooperated by NPO Ningyō Joruri Bunrakuza Mutsumi-kai



Imoseyama onna teikin (Husband and Wife Mountains : A Mirror of Virtuous Women) Kiritake Kanjūrō (centre)
 © National Theatre cooperated by NPO Ningyo Joruri Bunrakuza Mutsumi-kai



Ōshū Adachi ga Hara (The Adachi Moor of the Distant Northeast Country) Takemoto Mojihisadayū (left),
 Tsuruzawa Enza (right) © National Theatre cooperated by NPO Ningyo Joruri Bunrakuza Mutsumi-kai

Musical



Aladdin Shiki Theatre Company © Arai Takeshi



Memphis Tokyo Broadcasting System Television, Inc. / Hori Pro Inc. © Watanabe Takahiro



One Night of Stars Takarazuka Revue Company © Takarazuka Revue



Heads Up! Kanagawa Arts theatre (KAAT) © Kunita Shigeto

Contemporary Theatre



Our New Constitution mamagoto x Parthenon Tama © Yamaguchi Mayuko



Fuku☆Shima 2085 —The Lucky☆Island After the Fact Association of Japanese Theatre Companies © Yokota Atsushi



Message to Adolf
 Kanagawa Arts Theatre (KAAT) /
 Cat Produce Co.,Ltd.
 © Hikiji Nobuhiko



Twilight Ishinha © Inoue Yoshikazu

Contemporary Theatre



God Bless Baseball Okada Toshiki © Usuyama Kikuko



Ano Ko wa daare, dare deshone (Who's that Girl, Who?) Bungakuza © Miyagawa Maiko



King Richard II Sai-no-kuni Shakespeare Series 30th Production×Saitama Next Theatre 6th Production,
Saitama Next Theatre/Saitama Gold Theater © Miyagawa Maiko



Sannin Kichisa (Three Kichisa) Kinoshita-Kabuki © Ryuichiro Suzuki

Children's and Youth Theatre / Puppet Theatre



Alice in Wonderland's Mad Hatter's Tea Party Theatre Troupe EN © Morita Kozo



The Griffin and the minor canon Puppet Theatre PUK © Itou Miyuki, Nakade Mikio



Wonder Shadow Shadow Play Theatre Kakashiza © Umemura Takako



The Face of Jizo
Puppet Theater Musubi-Za
© Shimizu Jiro

Japanese Classical Dance



Mushi no Ne (The Sound of Insects) Inoue Yachiyo © National Theatre



Meoto Dôjôji (The Couple at Dôjôji Temple) Hanayagi Motoi(Right), Fujima Etsuko(left) © The Japanese Classical Dance Association Inc.



© New National Theatre,
Tokyo

Playing with a ball at La Scala

Dance Archives in Japan 2015, Nishikawa Minosuke
© New National Theatre, Tokyo / Shikama Takashi



Yanaji (Willow) Shida Maki,
Ryukyuan Dance Maki-no-Kai
© Ryukyuan Dance Choyo-ryu

Ballet



The Sleeping Beauty Morishita Yoko, Matsuyama Ballet Company © Hiyama Takashi (A・I Co., Ltd.)

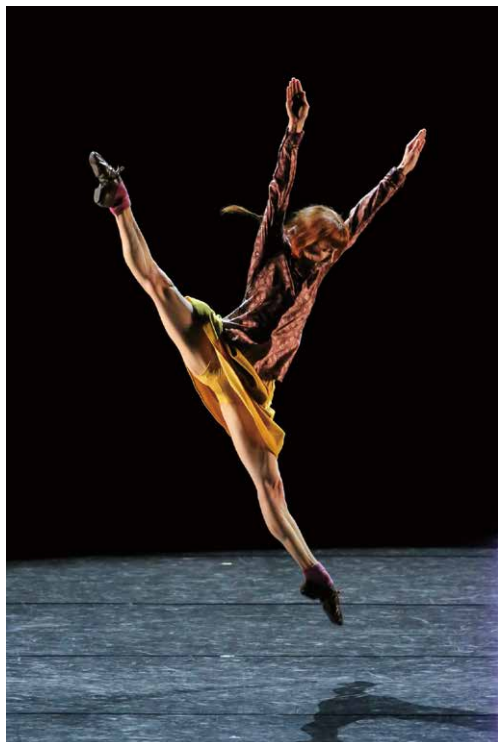


AN'AIKH—fate from Notre Dame de Paris Sasaki Michiko Ballet Company © Okamura Masao



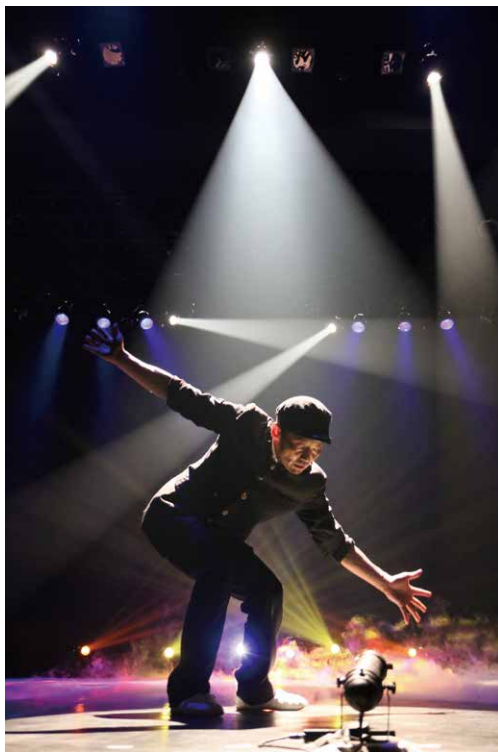
© New National Theatre,
Tokyo

Tales of Hoffman The National Ballet of Japan
© Shikama Takashi



Sylvie Guillem *Life in Progress – Bye*
Japan Performing Arts Foundation ©Hasegawa Kiyonori

Contemporary Dance / Butoh



Tomorrow Never knows
CONDORS © HARU



Odoru Manga "Choju-Giga" Setagaya Kodomo Project 2015, Setagaya Public Theatre © Hikiji Nobuhiko

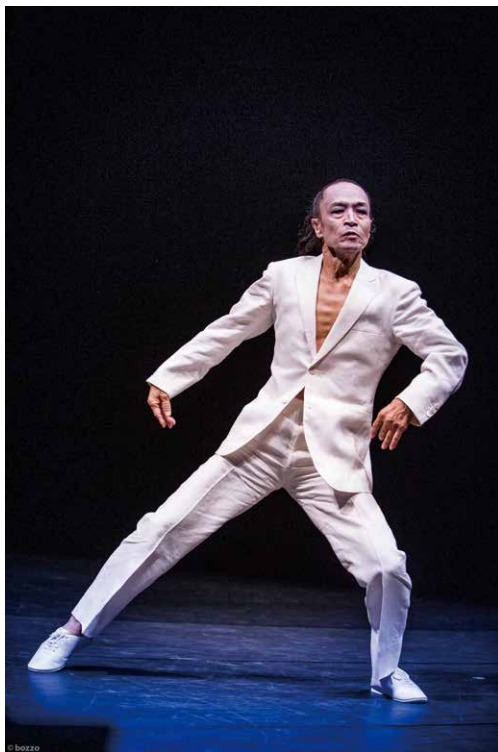


Border Integrated Dance Company Kyo © Aoki Tsukasa



MEGURI—Teeming Sea, Tranquil Land Sankai Juku © Sankai Juku

Contemporary Dance / Butoh



tonight is nasty
TENSHIKAN
© bozzo



© bozzo

tonight is nasty TENSHIKAN © bozzo



Sheltered Princess—a fairy tale for grown child Noism1 © Shinoyama Kishin



Mizu to Inori—water angel
Saburo Teshigawara + KARAS
© Nemoto Kotaro (Staff Tess)

Contemporary Dance / Butoh



© bozzo

Maboroshi no Yoake—Midnight Dreamers Kawamura Mikiko © bozzo



Monaka Co. Yamada Un © Hatori Naoshi

舞臺芸術
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The Japanese Performing Arts
in 2015

Noh and Kyôgen

Awards Presented and Important Works Performed

Nishi Tetsuo

In the past year, Issô Hisayuki was selected as a member of the Japan Art Academy. He is a Noh flute performer of the Issô School. Born in 1940, he was the eldest son of Issô Shônosuke, and he received instruction from Fujita Daigorô. He has been a recipient of the Kanze Hisao Memorial Hôsei University Noh Theatre Award and is designated 'Important Intangible Cultural Property' (National Living Treasure) and known as the foremost Noh flute performer today.

The Cultural Achievement Award was given to Nomura Mansaku, a Kyôgen performer of the Izumi School. Born in 1931, he was the second son to Nomura Manzô VI. He received instructions from Nomura Mansai I, as well as from his father. He is a member of the Japan Art Academy, and has previously been awarded the Grand Prize at the Arts Festival of the Agency for Cultural Affairs and has also been designated 'Important Intangible Cultural Property' (National Living Treasure).

The Japan Art Academy Award was given to Kakiyama Takashi, a performer on the Ôtsuzumi (hip drum) of the Takayasu School. He was born in 1940, the eldest son to Kakiyama Shigezô, and received instructions from Yasufuku Haruo. He has been a recipient of the Award of the Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology to New Artists for the Encouragement of the Arts - in Nohgaku and the Kanze Hisao Memorial Hôsei University Noh Theatre Award previously.

This year's Award of the Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology to New Artists for the Encouragement of the Arts was given to Katayama Kuroemon, amongst other things for his reconstruction of the work *Yoshinogoto* (The Koto Zither at Mt. Yoshino). He was born in 1964 and is a lead (*shite*) actor of the Kanze School. As the eldest son of Katayama Yûsetsu, he received instruction from his father as well as Kanze Tetsunojô VIII. He has also been awarded the Prize for a New Artist at the Agency for Cultural Affairs' Arts Festival, as well as the Kyoto Municipal New Artist Award previously.

The 36th Kanze Hisao Memorial Hôsei University Noh Theatre Award was presented to both Mori Tsuneyoshi, and Takahashi Yûsuke. Mori Tsuneyoshi is a support (*waki*) actor of the Shimogakari Hôshô School. He was born in 1955 as the eldest son of Mori Shigeyoshi, who also instructed him. He is a previous recipient of the Award of the Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology to New Artists for the Encouragement of the Arts. The second winner, Takahashi Yusuke (born in 1978) is the curator of the Kanagawa Prefectural Kanazawa-Bunko Museum. The 25th Saika Award went to Hoashi Masanori who is a Noh flute performer of the Morita School, born in 1931 and instructed by Sadamitsu Yoshitsugu.

The charity Noh performances to bring aid to the victims of the Great Kanto Earthquake continued this year. On March 10th, there was a performance of half of the Noh play *Ema* (The Votive Picture) by Katayama Kuroemon and others at the Kyoto Kanze Kaikan, and on March 11th, the Noh play *Hagoromo* (The Feather Robe) was performed at the Osaka Nohgaku Kaikan with Umewaka Naoyoshi in the lead.

Another important happening during 2015, was the staging of the modern Kyôgen play *Narayama-bushi Kô* (The Ballad of Narayama). It is a work based on a novel by Fukuzawa Shichirô and was first produced as a Kyôgen at the Kaja-kai in 1956 by Nomura Mansaku. On this occasion, the piece was adapted by Okamoto Katsuki, directed by Nomura Mansaku, and performed by Nomura Mansaku, Nomura Mansai and Fukuda Hiroji at the National Noh Theatre (November 25th-29th) under the auspices of the ‘Nomura Mansaku wo Miru Kai’.

Lead (*shite*) actor Katayama Yûsetsu of the Kanze School passed away on January 13th. He was 84 years old and living in Kyoto at the time of his death. He was the eldest son of Katayama Kuroemon VIII, and previously also wore the stage name Katayama Kuroemon IX. He studied the art of Noh acting with Kanze Kasetsu and Kanze Gasetsu., and was designated ‘Important Intangible Cultural Property’ (National Living Treasure) and a member of the Japan Art Academy. To that, he was a recipient of The Cultural Achievement Award of the Agency for Cultural Affairs and was the president of the Nohgaku Performers’ Association from 1991 to 2006. He was also awarded the Medal of Honor (Purple Ribbon), the Japan Art Academy Award, and the Grand Prize at the Agency for Cultural Affairs’ Arts Festival. His mother was Inoue Yachiyo IV of Kyobu dance school and his elder sister succeeded that line of the family art heritage as Inoue Yachiyo V.

The Kanze Noh Theatre in the Shibuya ward, which was founded in 1972, closed its doors after 43 years of operation. It will reopen in two years time at a new location in Ginza.

On December 8th, there was a performance of a newly written Noh play on the theme of *Romeo and Juliet* at the National Noh Theatre, which was written by Ueda Kuniyoshi (formerly Munekata). The adaption of the Noh music and the choreography was produced by Nomura Shirô, and the play was directed by Kasai Kenichi. The role of Romeo (*shite*) was performed by Nomura Shirô, Juliet (*waki*) by Uzawa Hisa, the Nurse (*waki*) was performed by Uzawa Hikaru and friar Lawrence (*ai*) by Miyake Ukon.

Other original plays performed this past year include the Noh plays *Harima*, a Noh play, performed with Otsuki Bunzô in the lead and Myôfukô - *Nekyia* (Journey to the Netherworld - *Nekyia*) lead by Umewaka Genshō. Also the new Kyôgen play *Shimoyodanuki* (The Raccoon Dog on a Frosty Night) was staged by Yamamoto Tōjirō.

Among works, which have not been performed since the medieval times, during 2015, *Aya no Tsuzumi* (The Colored Hand Drum) was reconstructed according to the original written composition by famous support (*waki*) actor Kanze Kōjirō Motoyori, who died in 1573. The play was written, produced by and acted by Asami Masakuni and supervised by Takemoto Mikio and Miyake Akiko, and performed by the Kanze School at the Yokohama Noh Theatre on February 21st. The play is presently performed by both the Hōshō and Kongō Schools.

In the following, I will list the important performances of *Dôjôji* (The Dôjôji-temple) and plays from the Old-woman repertoire during 2015. *Dôjôji* is the play with the largest scale in the Noh repertoire. All of the roles in the play are considered to be important, specially transmitted roles called ‘*omoi naraigoto*’. For a Noh performer, the first performance of the work is called ‘*nuki*’ - literally ‘something that

must be passed through’ – marks an important milestone, where one is recognized as an independent performer. It is also a work that more than a few seasoned veterans like to revisit. The performances of the work are listed in chronological order giving the name of the lead (*shite*) actor (variant performances are omitted).

Takanashi Banri (February 22nd)	Ito Shinya (July 4th)
Takeda Tomoyuki (March 22nd)	Yamai Tsunao (August 29th)
Yamashina Yaemon (March 25th)	Shiotsu Keisuke (October 3rd)
Kanze Kiyokazu (March 29th)	Mikata Shizuka (November 3rd)
Kubo Shinichirô (April 4th)	Kizuki Masako (November 21st)
Imamura Yoshitarô (April 19th)	Nakamura Masahiro (December 13th)
Hôshô Kazufusa (April 27th)	

Important works, which are directly transmitted from teacher to student, are called ‘naraimono’-pieces, and amongst these, the ones considered the most important are the old-woman roles. The performances of such pieces are listed here in chronological order with the name of the lead (*shite*) actor (variant performances are omitted).

Sotoba Komachi (Stupa Komachi)	Nomura Shirô (July 11th) Umewaka Genshō (September 6th) Imura Yoshinobu (September 22nd) Daie Matasaburô (October 25th) Yamamoto Hiromichi (November 1st) Urata Yasuhiro (November 29th)
Ômu Komachi (Parrot Komachi)	Ôtsuki Bunzô (March 7th) Tazaki Ryûzô (September 21st) Matsuyama Takao (November 15th) Kondô Sachie (November 23rd)
Obasute (Abandoned Aunt)	Umewaka Genshō (June 7th) Uchida Anshin (December 6th)
Higaki (Cypress Fence)	Umewaka Chozemon (March 21st) Umewaka Genshō (October 11th)
Sekidera Komachi (Komachi at the Sekidera Temple)	Umewaka Genshō (June 14th) Ônishi Tomohisa (November 29th)

There were numerous memorial programs (*'tsuizen'*) of Noh and Kyôgen to commemorate famous performers staged last year, here listed chronologically.

Takanashi Yoshio; 13th Memorial Program of Noh (February 22nd)	Takanashi Ryôichi performed the play Sagi (The Heron) and others
The 55th Umewaka Rokurô - the 37th Memorial Program of Noh (March 21st, June 7th, 14th, September 6th and November 15th)	Umewaka Kishô performed Kiyotsune – Koi no netori (The Dream Lover Kiyotsune) and others
Ôtsubo Tokio 23rd Memorial Program of Noh (May 4th)	Ôtsubo Kimio performed Ohara gokô (Imperial Procession to Ohara) and others
Sakurama Michio - the 33rd Memorial Program of Noh - Sakurama Ujin no Kai (July 4th)	with a performance of Ama (The Fisher) by Sakurama Ujin and others
Umemura Heishiro 37th Memorial Program of Noh – Yamai Tsunao Kai (August 29th)	
Komparu Soemon/Katayama Yûsetsu/ Kondo Kennosuke Memorial Nohgagaku-za (August 30th)	Kanze Tetsunojô (<i>mae-shite</i>), Katayama Kuroemon (<i>nochi-shite</i>) also performed Ama and others
Shigeyama Sensaku 4th, 3rd Memorial Program of Kyôgen (September 9th)	Shigeyama Sengorô performed Jûki (Juki the Clumsy Acolyte) and Shigeyama Shime performed Kanazu (Kanazu Bay) and others
Sendai Sano 63rd Memorial Rokuyuki Sano no Kai (October 12th)	Ôtsubo Kimio performed Teika (The vine of Poet Fujiwara Teika) and others
Wakebayashi Yasuzô 33rd Memorial – Koichi 3rd Memorial program of Noh (October 18th)	Wakebayashi Michiharu performed Ataka (The Ataka Barrier) and others
Sano Iwao 50th Memorial/ Sano Hajime 7th Memorial Program of Noh (October 31st)	Sano Noboru performed Sumidagawa (Sumidagawa River) and others
Kizuki Tatsuo 7th Memorial Program of Noh (November 21st)	
7th Memorial Program of Noh for the late Urata Yasutoshi (November 29th)	Urata Yasuchika performed Shakkyo – Ôjishi (The Stone Bridge – The Great Lion) and others

Ônishi Nobuhisa 33rd Memorial Program of Noh (November 29th)	Ônishi Fumihisa performed <i>Miwa – Hakushiki Kamikagura</i> (Mt. Miwa - The White Robed Kagura Dance) and others
Inoue Yoshisuke 3rd Memorial – Inoue Teiki Noh (December 5th)	Inoue Hirohisa performed <i>Yugyô Yanagi</i> (The Playful Willow Tree) and others
Uchida Nobuyoshi 23rd Memorial Program (December 6th)	

List of Noh performers who passed away from the end of 2014 through 2015 :

Komparu Kunikazu (2014 December 11th), Komparu School Taiko Performer, aged 57

Hashioka Jikan (December 11th), Kanze School Shite Performer, aged 86

Andô Ichirô (2015 January 11th), Kanze School Shite Performer, aged 90

Kondô Kennosuke (May 1st), Hôshô School Shite Performer, aged 87

Koyama Fumihiko (July 20th), Kanze School Shite Performer, aged 80

Yamaki Yuri (August 10th), Nohgaku Scholar, aged 96

Imai Yasuo (October 28th), Hôshô School Shite Performer, aged 94

Sowa Hiroshi (December 2nd), Koh School Kotsuzumi Performer, aged 90

Nishi, Tetsuo

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

(Translation : James Ferner)

Kabuki and Bunraku

Endeavors to cultivate new audiences and two name-changing ceremonies

Mizuochi Kiyoshi

Entering the third year since the reconstruction of Tokyo's Kabuki-za, the home base of Kabuki performances, there was a decline of the number of spectators, who had come mostly to look at the theatre building during the previous two years. In 2015, it was more the line-up of stars actors and the content of the program that were instrumental in determining audience numbers.

The grandest event on the Kabuki scene in 2015 was the program commemorating the name changing of Nakamura Kanjaku V to Nakamura Ganjirô IV. A name-changing ceremony (*shûmei*) is the passing on of a stage name from parent to child. It is an event unique to the classical performing arts of Japan, and is based on the idea that the name of the actor who has passed away takes on a new life in a new physical body. At the foundation of this concept lies the Japanese idea of the changing four seasons, in which the leaves on the trees wither and fall off in the winter and then come back to life in the spring. In this is rooted the Japanese sense of life and death. Ganjirô is the biggest stage name in the Kansai area (Osaka) and so the name-changing program began at Osaka's Shôchiku-za in January and February, and in April moved on to the Kabuki-za. In June, the program was performed at the Hakata-za in Fukuoka, and finally in December, at the Minami-za in Kyoto. Some of the roles that the previous Ganjirô was known for, such Jihei of *Kawashô* (At the Kawashô

Teahouse), Chûbei in *Fûinkiri* (Breaking the Seal) were performed, showing that the art of the Ganjirô acting house has successfully transmitted to the present generation.

The veteran actors, sometimes referred to as the ‘top executive class’ of Kabuki, are all in good health. The eldest still active actor, Sakata Tôjûrô is now 83 years old, but at his son Ganjirô’s name-changing program, he performed the role of courtesans Yûgiri in *Yoshidaya* (At the Yoshida Teahouse) and Ohatsu in *Sonezaki shinjû* (The Love Suicides at Sonezaki), both onnagata (female) roles, in which he displayed a bewitching presence that belied his age. He first took on the role of Ohatsu, who in the play is a 19 year-old girl, at the age of 21 and has now been performing it for 60 years with a total of more than 1200 performances.

One of the outstanding features of the past year was that the top stars increasingly performed alongside the mid-level actors in their 30s and 40s. In the midst of the ongoing ‘change of guards’ in the Kabuki scene, the veterans and the succeeding generation of actors showed how a direct transmission of tradition works by acting together. Nakamura Kichimon played alongside Onoe Kikunosuke in the acts *Jinmon* (At the Heike Battlecamp Gate) and *Kumiuchi* (The Battle on Suma Beach) from the play *Ichinotani futaba gunki* (Chronicle of the Battle of Ichinotani), taking the role of general Kumagai. Matsumoto Kôshirô also performed with Kikunosuke and Nakamura Kinnosuke in *Tsumoru koi yuki no sekinoto* (The Barrier Guard) in the role of barrier guard Sekibei. Kataoka Nizaemon shared the stage with a cast of mid-level actors in *Sugawara denju tenarai kagami* (Sugawara’s Secret Teachings of Calligraphy) as minister Sugawara Michizane. Bandô Tamasaburô performed along with Ichikawa Ebizô in *Yo wa nasake ukina no yokogushi kirare Yosa* (Yosa the Scarred) in the role

of Otomi and Ichikawa Chûsha in *Botan dôrô* (Tales of the Peony Lantern) in the role of Omine. He also starred with Kikunosuke in the act *Akoya* from the play *Dan-no-ura kabuto gunki* (Records and Helmets from the Battle of Dan-no-ura) as courtesan Akoya, with Onoe Shôroku in *Tsumoru koi yuki no sekinoto* as the avenging spirit Sumizome and in the act *Imoseyama onna teikin* (Husband and Wife Mountains: A Mirror of Virtuous Women) Mikasayama Goten (At the Mikasayama Mansion) in the role of the young girl Omiwa.

Meanwhile, there were also a number of performances with several top class stars staging such works as *Shin Usuyuki monogatari* (The New Tale of Usuyuki) in June (Kataoka Nizaemon, Matsumoto Kôshirô, Nakamura Kichiemon, Onoe Kikugorô) *Meiboku sendaihagi* (The Trouble in the Date Household) in September (Nakamura Baigyoku, Bandô Tamasaburô, Nakamura Kichiemon) at the Kabuki-za. Both programs displayed the richness and substance of Kabuki today. Kichiemon reconstructed two pieces that had long been discontinued and staged them with great success: *Datekurabe Ise monogatari* (The Flamboyant Tale of Ise) in September and the scene *Yura Hyôgonosuke shin yashiki no ba* (The New Estate of Yura Hyôgonosuke) from the play *Shinrei yaguchi no watashi* (Miracle at the Yaguchi Ferry) in November at the National Theatre.

At the National Theatre in the present year there was a continuation of the staging of complete plays. In January, *Nansô Satomi hakken den* (The Legend of the Eight Dogs from the Satomi clan), in March, *Tsuyu kosode mukashi hachijô* (Old-fashioned Kimono in the Rainy Season – or for short - *Kamiyui Shinza*, Shinza the Barber), in October, *Ise ondo koi no netaba* (The Sleeping Sword of Love at Ise), in November, *Tôshi kyôgen shinrei Yaguchi no watashi* (The Yaguchi Ferry) and in December, *Tôshi kyôgen Tôkaidô Yotsuya kaidan* (The

Ghost Tale from Yotsuya) were staged in their entirety. Each performance, with the added reconstructed scenes that had been previously cut out, exhibited the characteristics worthy of the National Theatre.

On a sad note, Bando Mitsugorô, who was at the center of the coming generation of Kabuki actors, and whose activities were the subject of much expectation, suddenly passed away in February. He was fifty-nine years old. Previously, in 2012 Nakamura Kanzaburô of the same generation, and in 2013, Ichikawa Danjûrô in his mid-60s, also passed away, so the news brought quite a shock to the Kabuki scene.

Amidst this state of affairs, the generation of actors in their 40s and younger really stood out. At the top of the list, Ichikawa Somegorô played a wide variety of roles throughout the year. In the classic scene *Kinkaku-ji* (The Golden Pavilion) from the play *Gion sairei shinkôki* (The Gion Festival and the Chronicle of Nobunaga) he played the role of rebel Matsunaga Daizen, in *Kanjinchô* (The Subscription List) he played lord Togashi, in *Sugawara denju tenarai kagami*, retainer Matsuômaru, in *Yotsuya Kaidan*, the three key roles of Oiwa, Kohei and Yomoshichi, and in a resurrected piece, *Date no jûyaku* (Ten Flamboyant Figures) he performed all ten flamboyant personages, displaying the art of quick changing. In addition, he was involved in a Kabuki rendition of a work of modern theatre, *Aterui* (Emishi General Aterui), which is just an example of the wide variety of roles he undertook. In the autumn, he also performed in a high-tech Kabuki spectacle in Las Vegas called *Fight with a Carp*.

Kikunosuke, who has until now been performing female roles, attempted a number of heroic (tachikata) roles this year such as the playboy Gorozô in the scene *Gosho no Gorozô* (The Gallant Gorozô) from the play *Soga moyô tateshi no Gosho zome*, general Tomomori in *Yoshitsune senbonzakura* (Yoshitsune and the Thousand Cherry Trees),

fishmonger Sôgorô in the scene *Sakanaya Sôgorô* (Sôgorô the fishmonger) from the play *Shin sarayashiki tsuki no amagasa* (The New Tale of the Plate Mansion and the Umbrella hiding the Moon), and master thief Tenichibô in *Tenichibô Ôoka seidan* (The Political Advice of Magistrate Ôoka and Great Thief Tenichibô). Shôroku, on the other hand, performed a number of roles that his father used to perform for the first time, such as Sekibei in *Tsumoru koi yuki no sekinoto*, *Shinza in Tsuyu kosode mukashi hachijô* and rebel Marubashi Chûya in the play *Keian Taihei ki* (Chronicles of Peace from the Keian Era). Ebizô too gave several first performances of famous roles such as Kumagai in the scene *Kumagai Jinya* (At the Kumagai Battlecamp) from the play *Ichinotani futaba gunki*, the false monk in *Kumo ni magô Ueno no hatsu hana Kôchiyama* (The Monk from Kôchiyama Temple) and he also embarked on a tour of the country, which he organized himself. In addition, he traveled to Singapore and gave Kabuki performances there in an endeavor to cultivate new audiences.

Ichikawa Ennosuke staged a number of plays that were easily accessible to the general public, together with some of his contemporaries. His most talked-about performance was the ‘Super Kabuki II’, a Kabuki program that featured popular comic book story *One Piece* (October at the Shinbashi Enbujô Theatre). This premiere performance won great acclaim from the younger spectators. Kataoka Ainosuke, focusing on the Kansai area, gave performances that were rich in visual effects, such as quick changes, and flying through the air, thereby thrilling many first-time spectators. The brothers, Nakamura Kankurô and Nakamura Shichinosuke reactivated the Heisei Nakamura-za (a temporary stage that recreates the atmosphere of a 19th century small Kabuki theatre), which was originally established by their father, bringing it to both Tokyo and Osaka and also

putting on programs in a number of other contemporary theatres and regional venues.

Every year in January there is the 'Asakusa Kabuki' held in Tokyo and this year it was Onoe Matsuya, Bandô Minosuke and other actors in their 20s, who took the stage and attracted an audience of the same generation. Nakamura Shidô put on a program for children in September at the Minami-za together with Matsuya, with a play based on the picture book, *Arashi no Yoru ni* (On a Stormy Night), which brought in a large audience. Furthermore, in response to the growth of Kabuki's popularity, there were quite a number of smaller-scale programs sponsored all over the country.

Further, in addition to its usual introductory performances aimed at junior high school- and high school students, the National Theatre in Tokyo staged a Kabuki performance aimed at introducing Kabuki especially to foreign spectators for the first time. The Kabuki stage and an onnagata actor's make up was introduced bilingually in Japanese and English, and Chinese and Korean was added to the usual English and Japanese commentary on the performance of *Tsubosaka reigen ki* (The Miracle at Tsubosaka Temple) and offered to the audience on a special event organized on the 19th of June.

In this way, the year saw a range of programs, from those meant for the longtime fans to those aimed at newcomers to Kabuki with no experience whatsoever in a varied assortment of undertakings, and overall this resulted in the birth of a new life energy for the Kabuki scene.

Bunraku is performed by a narrator (*tayû*), who chants the narrative element as well as the dialogue between the characters, a shamisen player, who provides the musical element, and the puppeteers, who work in groups of three to manipulate the puppets. These three

elements are integrated into one unit for the performance of classical Bunraku puppet theatre. In the past year, there were some drastic changes among the narrators, as Takemoto Sumitayû, who had been their leader for 14 years, decided to retire due to his age (b.1924) and Takemoto Gendayû, who was to succeed him, passed away in the same year. Furthermore Toyotake Shimatayû, who was designated, 'National Living Treasure' (Important Intangible Cultural Asset) in the past autumn, also announced his retirement in February. Presently, the leader of the narrators is Toyotake Sakitayû, who is in his late 60s, and generally, there has been a shift towards the younger generation.

The programs of Bunraku followed the normal pattern for the year, with five performances being given at the National Bunraku Theatre in Osaka, and four at the National Small Theatre in Tokyo. In the January program at the Bunraku Theatre, the first part consisted of a lineup of popular pieces, such as the dance piece *Hanakurabe shiki no kotobuki* (Celebration of the Four Seasons Dances from the Four Seasons), and the acts *Hikosan gongen chikai no sukedachi* (The God of Mt. Hikosan and the Vendetta of Promise), *Keyamura* (At the Keyamura Village) and the scenes *Michiyuki hatsune no tabi* (Michiyuki Travel Passage: The Journey with the First Birdsong of Spring) and *Yoshino yama* (At Mount Yoshino) from *Yoshitsune senbonzakura*. The second part consisted of works aimed at Bunraku fans, such as *Hiyoshimaru wakaki no sakura* (The Young Cherry Tree), *Meido no hikyaku* (The Courier for Hell). The total audience rate was recorded at 70.2%, and surpassed that of the previous year. In April, the puppeteer Yoshida Tamame took the name of his master teacher, Yoshida Tamao II, and a name-changing ceremony was held. At this ceremony, Tamao performed the role of general Kumagai the scene *Kumagai jinya* from the play *Ichinotani futaba*

gunki, a work that his master was known for. The program's first part consisted of *Utsuozaru* (Monkey Hide) and *Kumagai Jinya*, followed by the formal name-changing announcement, and finally *Sanjûsangendô munegi no yurai* (The Origin of the Ridge Pole of the Sanjûsangendô Temple Hall). The second part consisted of the tenth act from the play *Ehon Taikôki* (Picture Book of the Tycoon's Exploits), *Ten no Amijima shigure no kotatsu* (The Cold Rain and Love Suicides at Amijima) and the dance piece *Yagura no Oshichi* (Oshichi climbing the fire-tower) from the play *Date musume koi no biganoko* (A Maiden's Flaming Love). Both morning and evening performances drew a large number of spectators.

In June, the main event was the *Bunraku kanshō kyōshitsu* (Workshop for the Appreciation of Bunraku), which is aimed at junior high school and high school students. The same program was performed twice a day and consisted of, *Gojōbashi* (The Bridge at Fifth Avenue), followed by an explanation and finally *Sonezaki shinjū*. Thanks to the advance encouragement given to the schools, attendance was recorded at a whopping 100.6%. In July, there was a special program for the summer vacation. The first part was entitled Theatre for Parents and Children, and consisted of the work *Fushigi na mame no ki* (The Strange Bean Tree) based on a children's story, followed by a lecture entitled: 'What is Bunraku' and the comic piece, *Tokaidōchū hizakurige* (The Shank's Mare along the Tokaido Highway), a work that even children can enjoy. The second and third parts were entitled 'Great Works of Theatre' and included the piece, *Shō utsushi asagao banashi* (Tales of a Lifelike Image of a Morning Glory Flower), which was performed in its totality over both the mid-day and the evening shows, and lastly, also *Kinuta to daimonji* (The Fulling Block and the Bonfire) was also performed. The morning show of the October

program at the Festival for Performing Arts, sponsored by the Agency for Cultural Affairs, consisted of *Go Taiheiki shiraishi banashi* (The Vendetta by Two Sisters), *Unagidani* (The Eel Valley) and *Dango uri* (The Dumpling Peddlers). In the afternoon, *Tamamo no Mae Asahina no tamoto* (The Nine-Tailed Fox and Asahina's Sleeve) was performed in its entirety for the first time in many years. The story is based on a legend of a fox spirit that transforms into the guise of a famous beauty named Tamamo no Mae and perpetrates evil deeds. The rendition of the fox spirit by lead puppeteer Kiritake Kanjûrô, with his skill in effecting the transformations into different people and his precise technique in differentiating between them was reported by various media, which resulted in an upsurge of audience numbers. Attendance over the year recorded an increase over that of the previous year.

Tokyo's four programs were held at the National Small Theatre. The February program was performed in three parts. Part one consisted of *Ninin Kamuro* (Two Girl Attendants to a Courtesan), and *Genpei nunobiki no taki* (The Banner-pulling Waterfalls in the Genpei Wars). Part two included *Shiki no kotobuki* and *Ten no Amijima shigure no kotatsu* and in the evening, there was a performance of *Kokusenya Kassen* (The Battle of Coxinga). *Kokusenya Kassen* featured some of the mid-level performers in the roles and though there were rough spots, all in all, it was an energetic performance. In May, the name-changing ceremony of Yoshida Tamao was brought from Osaka to Tokyo. Tamao's portrayal of Kumagai in *Kumagai jinya* was done with unerring accuracy, and furthermore, with the supporting roles being handled by prominent performers the result was a superb performance. To that, in part one, the scene *Nozaki mura* (At the Nozaki Village) from the play *Shinpan utazaimon* (The New Scandalous

Ballad of Osome and Hisamatsu) and *Gojôbashi* (At the Gojô Bridge), and in part two, the scene *Kinkaku-ji* (The Golden Pavilion) from the play *Gion sairei shinkôki* (The Gion Festival Chronicle of Faith) and *Katsuragawa Renri no shigarami* (The Katsuragawa River) were also performed. In September, the morning program consisted of the acts *Men uri* (The Masque Peddler), *Kamakura sandai ki* (Three Generations of Kamakura Shoguns) and *Ise ondo koi no netaba*. In the afternoon, the fourth section from *Imoseyama onna teikin* was performed. In *Kamakura sandaiki*, a younger narrator performed well, and Kanjûrô's handling of the puppet for the role of Omiwa in *Imoseyama* was a great technical display. In December, according to annual tradition, the younger performers took over with a performance of the third section of *Sanjûsangendô munagi no yurai*. For the last ten years, the Bunraku programs in Tokyo have been bringing in large audience numbers and the past year was no exception, recording an attendance of 90%. In addition, there were performances aimed at adults in the evenings (6pm start) at both theatres, and programs of the Jôruri chanting (Bunraku without the puppets). There were also several programs of younger performers, and two performances toured regionally.

The leadership of the narrators has now fallen to Toyotake Sakitayû and he has shown a superb artistry in his differentiation of human characters and scene depictions during the year. Takemoto Chitosedayû, Toyotake Hanabusadayû and Takemoto Mojihisadayû have also shown the ability to take on some of the bigger sections. Furthermore, Toyotake Rosetayû has gained in strength and among the young performers, Toyotake Sakihodayû and Toyotake Mutsumidayû having managed to find their way out of some of their difficulties, and were showing great progress during the year.

The shamisen players thrived and most of the major player remained in good health during the year. The focus of the group is on 60 year-old Tsurusawa Seiji and the generation directly below him. Seiji was chosen as a member of the Japan Art Academy and is active as one of the leading shamisen players. Following him is Tsuruzawa Enza, who is now handling major works paired with Sakitayû, and Toyozawa Tomisuke, who mainly does historical pieces, in which he displays a splendid dynamic quality. To that, Nozawa Kinshi is becoming known for his sensitive palate of sounds, and Tsurusawa Seisuke, Tsurusawa Seitomo and several others have been cultivating a distinctive flavor of their own during the year. Among the young players, Tsuruzawa Tôzô has become quite the rising star.

Among the puppeteers, the National Living Treasure, Yoshida Minosuke and Yoshida Bunjaku have both, due to physical issues, been performing less frequently than before. The central position is now occupied by the three performers Kiritake Kanjûrô, Yoshida Kazuo, and Yoshida Tamao, all performing superbly during the year, with Yoshida Tamaya and Toyomatsu Seijûrô following closely. To that, two new younger performers, Yoshida Ichisuke, Yoshida Kôsuke, have begun to grow and we can look forward to their development in the future.

Mizuochi, Kiyoshi

Born in 1936 in Osaka. Graduated from Waseda University Faculty of Literature, specializing in Theatre. From 1970 he was in charge of the Theatre section for the Arts and Cultural News department of the Mainichi Shimbun and served as vice-chairman for that newspaper as well as having been a member of the Editorial board and also a special committee member before his retirement. Affiliate Member of the Editorial Board. From the year 2000, professor at Obirin University, retiring in 2007, Professor Emeritus. Writings include: *Kamigata Kabuki*, Bunraku, Heisei Kabuki Haiyûron and others.

(Translation: James Ferner)

Musical

From Newly Translated Musicals to Original Musicals

Hagio Hitomi

There are no other cities in the world like Tokyo, where you can see such a variety of musicals. The same thought occurred to me again when I looked back at the musical scene in 2015. Musicals that originated in various countries, including titles from Broadway, were translated into Japanese, and were either premiered, or revived, or presented as long runs. There were also many original Japanese musicals this year, and therefore the variety of musicals has increased even more. Of course, when you look closely, there were mixtures of wheat and chaff.

The musical that drew most attention in 2015 was probably Shiki Theater Company's *Aladdin*. It was presented as a translated version of the popular musical *Aladdin*, which opened on Broadway in 2014. Due to its success, Shiki has already started selling advance tickets for 2017. Moreover, it was Shiki's first production under the new leadership. It is based on Walt Disney's musical animation film with the same title, made in 1992. It is a love fantasy about a poor young man called Aladdin, who in the end gets married to Princess Jasmine through the help of Genie of the magic lamp. One of the most fascinating aspects of this musical is Alan Menken's music. For the stage adaptation, more numbers by Menken were added to the original soundtrack, and it was turned into an entertainment epic with lots of

physical comedy and spectacles such as a flying carpet.

The Shiki version of *Aladdin* was almost the same as the original Broadway production but some elements unique to the Japanese version were added. Due to worries that musicals that are just fun to watch will not become successful long runs, the plot was slightly shifted toward a heartwarming story. Rather than the romance, there was more focus on the character arc of Aladdin and his emotional ties with Genie as well as his friendship with his companions. The charm of Takiyama Hisashi, the actor who played Genie in the Japanese version, contributed to the emotive aspects of the story.

One of the problems when you translate a musical into Japanese is the translation of the lyrics. For *Aladdin*, Takahashi Chikae, the lyricist who translated the lyrics for *Let It Go*, which was the insert song of the film *Frozen* that became a mega hit all over Japan, also worked on translating the lyrics for *Aladdin* and she exerted her good sense for lyrics. Sometimes the lyrics were translated literally and at other times they were translated freely and understandably, capturing the theme of the number appropriately and making the most of the melody line. The production also reminded us how important it was to have a good translator for the lyrics.

Among the Japan-premiere musicals, *Memphis* was another impressive production. It premiered on Broadway back in 2009 and the music was composed by David Brian. The story is set in the South, back in the 1950s, when there was intense racism everywhere. A young man (played by Yamamoto Koji), who was inspired by black music, crosses racial boundaries by spreading music. In the original

Broadway version, the racial theme was conveyed through a rush of black music, while in the Japanese version, the appealing lightness of the protagonist was highlighted, which seemed to emphasize the power of music.

Dogfight, premiered by Toho, was much better than I had expected. Based on a film made in 1991 under the same title, it premiered off Broadway in 2012. The music (lyrics and score by Benj Pasek & Justin Paul) of *Dogfight* was really good, but the book (Peter Duchan) did not leave much impression. The script was not changed when it was mounted in Japan, but the parts of the plot that were somewhat lacking, were filled with dance, which made the flow of the story convincing enough. Above all, the casting was just right, and the two main characters were portrayed effectively in a clear-cut and appealing way.

Eddie (played by Yara Tomoyuki) decides to take part in a dog-fight (a game competing how ugly the boys' dates were) the night before he is due to go to the Vietnam War. As his date, he asks out Rose (played by Emma Miyazawa La Fleur), who works in a café, and he is gradually attracted to her. The drama depicting the protagonist from the eve of the Kennedy assassination until he returns from Vietnam, hurt both physically and mentally, brings out the loss of American innocence. It is not too much to say that the naivety of Yara's Eddie and the dignity of Miyazawa's Rose have brought success to the production.

Other foreign musicals translated into Japanese and presented this year included *Bombay Dreams*, *Sherlock Holmes 2–Bloody Game*,

TOP HAT, Catch Me If You Can, 1789–The Lovers of Bastille, THE VISIT, End of the RAINBOW, CHESS THE MUSICAL, Scott and Zelda, Passion and Anyone Can Whistle.

TOP HAT, Catch Me If You Can and *1789–The Lovers of Bastille* were presented by Takarazuka Revue. The fact that these musicals, originating respectively in London, Broadway and France, were presented by Takarazuka, which owns its own theatres, has many regular fans and can therefore secure a number of shows, led to daring challenges that could only be possible with this company, and this attitude was reflected in the works. Due to the unique feature of Takarazuka that is only has females cast members, whether the piece is a sweet romantic comedy or a light comedy, it always turns into a convincing musical. As I mentioned before, it is difficult to produce successful musicals in Japan. Or let me put it this way. Even if musicals are made fairly successfully, in most cases, they are not revived or turned into long-run musicals. Nevertheless, Takarazuka makes these things possible.

Sherlock is a sequel to the Korean musical that was successful the previous year. As for other musicals from Korea, *Bballae–Laundry* was remounted with a Japanese cast and the Korean-cast production also visited Japan but the title did not draw attention as much as before. The producers probably realized after such a long time, that musicals presented during the Korean wave boom, had been sustained by Korean stars rather than the works themselves.

THE VISIT was presented on Broadway during the same period. However, they were different musicals made from the same original

story (written by Friedrich Dürrenmatt). The Japanese version of *THE VISIT* originated from the 2014 Viennese production (premiered in Switzerland). Having seen both the Viennese and Broadway versions, I thought that the Viennese version (music composed by Moritz Schneider and Michael Reed, lyrics by Wolfgang Hofer), of which the theme was greed for money, was more contemporary and interesting compared to the Broadway version (composed by John Kander, lyrics by Fred Ebb, premiered in 2001) that focused on the love story. It had potential to become more interesting through the director's ingenuity.

Passion and *Anyone Can Whistle* were Japan premieres of Stephen Sondheim's musicals. *Passion* premiered in 1994 and *Anyone Can Whistle* in 1964. As for *Passion*, it would probably not have been possible to stage it, without the musical star Inoue Yoshio playing the lead role. It might have been successful in terms of audience turnout but there was something lacking in the production itself.

Translating the lyrics into Japanese was a big challenge in this production as well. When you look at Sondheim's lyrics that he himself wrote to his own music, the lyrics written during the latter half of his career seem to get more and more difficult to translate. Translating lyrics is difficult in the first place, but Sondheim has added so many double meanings, rhymes and wordplays, which must have made it incredibly difficult to translate. The translator of the lyrics (Ryu Machiko) tried her best using her wisdom and ingenuity, but the Japanese lyrics inevitably cut the melody line here and there. In these types of musicals, it might be better to take the drastic approach to translate just the gist of the lyrics to bring out the melodies and to use the spoken text to add information, which is necessary

to understand the story.

Compared to *Passion* that was presented at the New National Theatre, Tokyo, *Anyone Can Whistle* was a small-scale musical presented by a small production company. It was probably realized due to the commitments of the director (Katsuta Yasuhiko) and the producer. Perhaps it is people like them who sustain the world of musicals in Japan.

End of the RAINBOW is a musical about the later life of Judy Garland, which premiered in Australia in 2005 and was presented in London in 2010. It counts as one of the small, but good musicals presented in Japan. There was also *Scott and Zelda*, a musical composed by Frank Wildhorn, in this category. Although they have not been presented on Broadway, Wildhorn's musicals have enjoyed enduring popularity in Japan. Or rather, it may be more correct to say that he is a composer, who is appreciated by the Japanese producers.

To mention Frank Wildhorn, he also wrote music for an original Japanese musical titled *Death Note-The Musical*, which was produced with the international market in mind. It is based on a best-selling manga, which has been made into a film as well. It is a story about 'a notebook of death'. If a person's name has been written in the notebook, that person will die. Set against the backdrop of a bleak modern society, the director Kuriyama Tamiya focused on the realms of man and gods, which was an interesting point of view, but to my regret, the original manga overrode the musical from time to time, and the director's concept could not be carried through the piece.

Manga has the strongest market of all cultural goods delivered from Japan. Therefore, there are many films based on mangas and naturally, the number of mangas turned into musicals are increasing. In fact, a new genre called ‘2.5-dimensional musicals’ has emerged. It has obviously been developed for manga-musicals, and many works of this genre have been produced one after another. The audience of this new genre is slightly different from conventional musical fans. In 2.5-dimensional musicals, the accuracy of replicating the characters in the original mangas is one of the main focuses. In other words, they are catered for those who are infatuated with manga characters. There are, however, manga-based musicals like *Death Note*, which the producers do not want to be categorized as a 2.5-dimensional musical.

There were other impressive original musicals too. First, there were *The Al Capone—The Hidden Truth of Scarface* (written and directed by Harada Ryo) and *Hoshi ai hitoyo* (One Night of Stars). *Hoshi ai hitoyo* was the first production that Ueda Kumiko wrote and directed for Takarazuka Grand Theatre and it left the impression, that she has already exemplified her masterful capabilities. (The Takarazuka Company owns the Grand Theater for regular productions and the Bow Hall for works that are slightly experimental in nature.) Set in an imaginary clan during the era of Tokugawa Yoshimune, a story evolving around three friends from childhood was portrayed as a musical. Love and friendship torn apart due to different status and loss of innocence were wistfully and beautifully expressed.

HEADS UP! was another enjoyable musical. It was a backstage story depicting the flurry of the staff preparing for a show, which had been decided in the last minute to be put on just once. This type of

storyline is quite common, but the pastiche music by Tama Shoichi was well suited for the story, which made the all-too-commonness enjoyable. It was also full of love for theatre and we could see the knowledge and skill of musical theatre that LaSalle Ishii had exerted to the work, as the conceper and director of the production.

Prince of Broadway was produced in Japan as a musical aimed to be presented on Broadway. Originally a project that sprouted out on Broadway but did not bloom for a long time, it was finally premiered in Japan by obtaining capital resources from Japanese investors. It was, so to speak, a tryout in Japan. It was directed by Harold Prince and choreographed by Suzan Stroman, and besides the best team of creative staff, the cast was also topnotch, which had Tony Yazbeck and also Yuzuki Reon among the actors, who took part from Japan. Though I enjoyed the stage made up of good numbers and good cast, the script was weak, so I think it would be difficult to take it to Broadway without making changes.

Limelight was based on Chaplin's masterpiece, which was made into a musical for the first time in the world. Despite the subject matter, in this musical too, the script was not refined well enough and that was a shame.

As for revivals, *Elisabeth* clearly remained the most popular musical of all, followed by *Les Misérables*. The producers have been leveraging musicals with stable popularity and have been changing the cast to remount them over and over again. With *Titanic*, the title itself has already been translated and presented twice before but the version presented in 2015 was a remake of the production that originated in

London (directed by Tom Sutherland). It was made into an ensemble piece different from the original version and the contemporary point of view incorporated into the story gave it a fresh feel.

There are many more musicals that I would like to have mentioned in my report, such as *The Man of La Mancha* with Matsumoto Koshiro playing the title role for forty years, but I am running out of space. However, I would like to conclude by stating that many musicals were performed in 2015, as was expected, and that the works and people working on musicals are becoming more multinational.

Hagio, Hitomi

After working as a newspaper journalist, she became a film and theatre critic. She writes theatre reviews for Tokyo Shimbun and also writes columns regularly in musical magazines. Books written by Hagio include *Take Me to Musicals*, *The Hundred People Working on Les Misérables* and others. She has edited and written *Broadway Musicals—All About The Tony Awards*, *Your First Musical Movie—Hitomi Hagio's Best 50* and others.

(Translation : Sumida Michiyo)

Contemporary Theatre

Confronting 70 Years Since the War

Yamaguchi Hiroko

In 2015, the year that marked seven decades since the end of the war, prime minister Abe Shinzo and his government turned a deaf ear to accusations of being unconstitutional and forced through a new state security legislation. In response, students and citizens took to the streets and raised their voices in unprecedented numbers. “Constitutionalism is in crisis,” and “We mustn’t turn Japan into a nation that goes to war,” they cried. The demonstrations spread across the country like an immense wave.

Theatre people too, from playwrights to directors, *shingeki* producers and critics, as well as the Japanese Centre of the International Theatre Institute also spoke out in public against the new law. A group called “Theatre People and Stage Artists Against the Security Law System and the Abe Government” was formed, holding “silent standing” protest events outside stations and other public places.

On stage, there were also many productions that widely explored the meanings of war, peace, the postwar period, and democracy. Many young playwrights presented new works that incorporated frank ideas about the current situation in Japan. Also plays by writers of the generation, which had first-hand experience of war, took on a contemporary significance and made an impact on audiences in 2015.

The “Constitution” of September 19th

In the early hours of September 19th, as the large numbers of

young people surrounding the Japanese parliament continued to shout slogans like “Don’t destroy the Constitution,” the new security legislation was railroaded through. That day, the political policy Japan had been following during the postwar period up until then shifted dramatically, and in the evening *Atarashii Kenpou no Hanashi* (Our New Constitution), written and directed by Shiba Yukio (b.1982) from the theatre group Mamagoto, premiered at the waterfront stage of Parthenon Tama (Tama City, Tokyo). The title of the play is taken from a textbook for junior high school students, produced by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture in August 1947. It explained in an easy-to-understand way the concepts of democracy, international pacifism, and fundamental human rights, which were determined in the Constitution of Japan enacted in May that year. Shiba borrowed the title to create a play that gently, yet profoundly, questioned the rules of the nation.

The outline of the play is as follows: As rain continues to fall, everything and anything becomes soaked in water. The rain stops and a young girl, called A, walks through the water. Coming across a small island, she goes ashore. More people arrive until the population of the island reaches 21 persons. The island then becomes a nation, and the rather timid A is chosen as prime minister. But soon various troubles arise, and the nation breaks up. Divided by a border, a war begins across the water.

When the war is over, A calls out to everyone: “We did what we thought was best at that time and talked to each other. But anyone can make mistakes. Can you promise to remember how we really wanted things to be, when you are about to make, or have already made a mistake?”

This was the “Constitution” in the play, which presented an ideal

and a promise to aspire to it. The dialogue of the play was lucid and powerful. Shiba has published the script on the Mamagoto website, and wants others to stage his play as they see fit.

Examining Modern and Contemporary Japan

Theatre created by younger artists on the topics modern and recent history, and war, also attracted attention.

Fujita Takahiro (b.1985), from the Mum & Gypsy theatre company, re-staged *cocoon* (adapted by Fujita from a manga by Kyo Machiko), which he premiered in 2013. The play is a portrayal of the harsh experiences of young women during the ground war in Okinawa, and had a very strong impact on the theatre scene. Nogi Moegi (b.1977) wrote *Gaikoukan* (Diplomat) for theatre company Seinenza, which was directed by Kuroiwa Makoto. This play depicts a fictional meeting, where government officials discuss measures to deal with the Tokyo War Crime Trial immediately after the war, and the play explores the mistakes the officials make. Theatre company Gekidan Chocolatecake staged *Tsuioku no Ariran* (Memory of Arirang), written by Furukawa Takeshi (b.1978) and directed by Hisawa Yusuke (b.1976), which was about Pyongyang during and after the colonial period. In *Sozoro no Tami* (In Spite of the People), written and directed by Nakatsuru Akihito, the theatre company Trashmasters focused on contemporary Japan rocked by the security legislation.

Among the older generation, Kokami Shoji (b.1959) wrote and directed *Hobo's Song: Snufkin's Letter Neo*, which was staged by Kyokou no Gekidan, a company made up of young actors. It depicts a civil war between the Imperial Japanese Army and a new Japanese army. The play considered the difficulty of living in Japanese society

with its high levels of peer pressure, as well as the issue of the emperor system, and behind the vibrant singing, dancing and laughter, an eerie sense of reality lurked.

Another work depicting civil war was *Arekara no Rakki Airando* (Fuku☆Shima 2085—The Lucky☆Island After the Fact), written by Sato Shigenori (head of Unit Rabbits, based in Koriyama City, Fukushima) and directed by Ryuzanji Show. It was set in the year 2085, when another nuclear power accident has happened. The Japanese government bans the people of Fukushima from having children because they have been exposed to radiation, compelling young people to take up arms to oppose this and the government army subsequently attacks Fukushima. Converting anger at the absurdity of an everyday life in which one is forced to worry about radiation levels, the handling of the accident that has no end in sight, and the fading concern outside Fukushima into a musical nonetheless full of laughs, the production roused Tokyo audiences.

Older plays also reflected the present. The theatre company Gekidan Mingei staged Kinoshita Junji's *Fuyu no Jidai* (The Age of Winter), directed by Tanno Ikumi, adapting its themes of freedom of discourse in the late Meiji and Taisho periods to the present. The Bunkaza and Toen theatre groups co-produced a staging of Miyoshi Juro's *Haikyo* (Ruin), directed by Uyama Hitoshi, which examined war responsibility and the postwar period.

The "World" Reflected on the Stage

The play *Adolf ni Tsugu* (Message to Adolf), which is based on the manga with the same name by Tezuka Osamu, was adapted by Kiuchi Hiromasa, directed by Kuriyama Tamiya, and co-produced by Kanagawa Arts Theatre. It told the story of the intersecting destinies

of three people called Adolf, including Hitler himself, in wartime Japan and Germany, also dynamically connecting the issues with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that continues to this day. *Astro Boy*, another manga by Tezuka Osamu, was also remade for the stage by Urasawa Naoki and others. *Pluto* (written by Tani Kenichi, produced by Bunkamura) was directed and choreographed by the Belgian-born Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui. This play asked how we can sever the chains of hatred that divide our world, and the ambitious production utilized sophisticated video installations as the bodies of the actors and dancers weaved the story.

Osaka-based company Ishinha produced *Twilight* (devised and directed by Matsumoto Yukichi), a new work staged at a baseball field in the mountains of Nara Prefecture. It portrayed the journey of a young boy, incorporating the surrounding nature, memories of the site and legends into the play. At the end, all that was left in the massive baseball field was a row of countless numbers of shoes. Like people forever moving forward in search of something, the deeply affecting scene overlapped with the recent images of refugees fleeing to Europe.

A production Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* directed by Uyama Hitoshi also brought the folly of war and the difficulty of ending it into sharp relief.

While relations between the governments remain strained, Korean and Japanese theatre actually come closer and closer together every year. Festival/Tokyo 2015 featured two co-productions with joint Japanese and Korean casts performing in their own respective languages.

God Bless Baseball, written and directed by Okada Toshiki (b.1973), shaped a vision of America that hangs over both nations from

the young Japanese and Korean performers' personal memories of baseball and what they said about their respective history and society. At the end of 2015, the Japanese and Korean governments agreed on a resolution to the long-pending comfort women problem, which the United States government welcomed in an official statement, as if to "endorse" the agreement. Reality seemed to overlap with the play.

Taifuu Kitan (A Typhoon's Tale) was written by Korean playwright Sung Kiwoong (b.1974) and directed by Tada Junnosuke (b.1976). A Korean royal family exiled to a remote island uses magic to shipwreck a boat carrying the nephew who overthrew the king in the first place and his allied Japanese politicians, in order to bring them to the island. Though based on Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, the play unfolds in a different way of the classical romance of reconciliation and forgiveness. While to Japanese audience's eyes it might seem full of scathing expressions against Japan, it was actually criticized as "pro-Japanese" after the Korean performances. The co-production was stimulating, not least for these varied audience responses.

Determined Veterans, Energetic Younger Artists

19 theatre groups came together to organize the Betsuyaku Minoru Festival from March (until July 2016), staging the plays of Betsuyaku Minoru (b.1937) in a wide variety of ways. Such a festival could only happen because Betsuyaku has written so many plays with such diversity. Betsuyaku, the father of the Theatre of the Absurd in Japan, now suffers from Parkinson's disease and is in poor health, but his desire to write brims as ever. His 140th play, *Ano Ko wa daare, dare deshona* (Who's that Girl, Who?), was directed by Fujiwara Shinpei and presented by the Bungakuza theatre company. Inspired by an actual incident that happened in Amagasaki City, Hyogo

Prefecture, the play portrayed a woman called Miyoko who exerts control over the people around her through marriage and adoption. These incomprehensible events are presented in all their incomprehensibility, revealing the bottomless darkness that lurks within society and humanity.

Ninagawa Yukio (b.1935) now needs a wheelchair and an oxygen mask, but nonetheless directed six productions with his customary vigor during the year. Four were new productions, including a *Hamlet* set in the front garden of a crumbling tenement and *Aoi Shushi wa Taiyou no naka ni aru* (The Blue Seed is in the Sun), an early play by Terayama Shuji (1935-83). Among his other plays during the year, *King Richard II* opened featuring a tango by over 30 wheelchairs, and was especially striking. The joint production by Saitama Gold Theater and Saitama Next Theatre without any famous stars seemed to be the grand sum of Ninagawa's endeavors in public theatre in Saitama.

Among younger talents, the Kyoto-based director Sugihara Kunio (b.1982) attracted attention. His company KUNIO staged *Tatami* (written by Shiba Yukio), which took a rather bizarre setting of a father announcing he wants to “fold up” (*tatamu*) his life to explore old age, death and the impasse of consumer society. Kinoshita Yuichi (b.1985) revised and adapted the five-hour Kabuki play *Sannin Kichisa* (Three Kichisa) with his troupe Kinoshita-Kabuki, adding a pop interpretation to Kawatake Mokuami's original play.

Takahashi Masanori (b.1978) directed an adaptation of Melville's *Moby-Dick* (written by Sebastian Armesto), demonstrating his vibrant talents. The vast expanses of the ocean and the enormous whale appeared in the Bungakuza Atelier through just the bodies of the actors and a few props, probing philosophically and religiously

into the depths of man's confrontation with nature.

The playwright Osada Ikue (b.1977) wrote a subtle play about the poet Ibaraki Noriko, *Mikan to Yuu-utsu* (Mandarins and Melancholy), for Group lebal that was directed by Makino Nozomi.

Meanwhile, Keralino Sandorovich (b.1962) wrote and directed *Goodbye*, based on the unfinished novel by Dazai Osamu, as a high-speed comedy. Freely expanding on the original, the play conjured up a Keralino-esque universe.

Mitani Koki (b.1962) wrote and directed the two-hander *Burst! Kiken na Futari* (Burst! A Dangerous Pair) with Kusanagi Tsuyoshi and Katori Shingo from the popular idol group SMAP. The performances were packed with fans of the idols, but the play itself was Theatre of the Absurd, revealing the cheerful madness of a man fascinated by danger. It showed Mitani, known for his well-made comedy plays, entering a whole new territory.

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 for the newspaper.

(Translation: William Andrews)

Children's and Youth Theatre and Puppet Theatre

A year of good fight despite the declining birthrate

Fruitful new trend of "Baby Drama" and Kid's Programme

Yokomizo Yukiko

Despite the continued reduction in the number of school children, this year, children and youth theatre, including puppet theatre, continued to fight on strongly. At the same time, the "Kodomo no Shiro (Children's Castle)" theatre in Tokyo's Omote Sando district closed in March after operating for 30 years, saying that it had "finished performing its function." This is very regrettable, as the venue provided a place to for children to playfully experiment and brought joy to a large number of people. The associated Aoyama Gekijo and the Aoyama Enkei Gekijo ("Round Theatre"), which mainly performed children's theatre, also closed during the year, thus aggravating the deficiency of theatres in Tokyo.

One striking new trend in children and youth theatre is "Baby Drama." This is theatre suitable for infants and babies from 0 to 2 or 3 years old. The Nagoya puppet theatre troupe Ningyo Gekidan Musubi-za has been producing "Puppet Theatre for Children Aged 0, 1 and 2" since 2004. In 2014, the Nihon Jido-Seishonen Engeki Gekidan Kyodo Kumiai (Japan Children and Youth Theatre Association), Jienkyo for short, established the "Baby Drama Study Section (temporary name)." It is clear that the necessity for emotional and motor skill education from early infancy has now been widely

acknowledged.

The “*Jido Seishonen Engeki Chiho Junkai Koen* (Regional Tour of Children’s and Youth Theatre)” of *Nihon Jido Seishonen Engeki Kyokai* (Japan Children’s Theatre Association, Inc.), which is sponsored by the *Geijutsu Bunka Shinko Kikin* (Arts Culture Foundation), was organized for the 56th year. In the spring, 7 theatre troupes, including Geiyu-za and Puppet Theatre Troupe Puk, and in the fall, 12 theatre troupes, including Nobara and Minwa-za, toured the country. The “*Senryaku-teki Geijutsu Bunka Sozo Suishin Jigyo* (Strategic Project for the Encouragement of the Creation of Artistic Culture)” organized by the Japanese National Cultural Agency sponsored the “*Jido Seishonen Butai Geijutsu Junkai Koen* (Tour of Children’s and Youth Stage Arts)” which toured remote islands and the countryside of Japan, staging 60 performances in 60 days. 15 theatre troupes, including Kazenoko Hokkaido and Hitomi-za participated by dividing the area of the tour between them.

Gekidan Shiki’s “*Kokoro no Gekijo* (Heart Theatre)” is a private program that receives no support from the national government, and during 2015, it presented three family musicals, “*Mukashi mukashi Zo ga Kita* (Once Upon a Time an Elephant Came),” “*Oji to Kojiki* (The Prince and the Pauper)” and “*Ningen ni Naritakatta Neko* (The Cat that Wanted to be Human)” from Rishiri Island in Hokkaido to Ishigaki Island and Miyakojima Island in Okinawa, touring 166 cities throughout Japan, with a total of 483 performances for audiences of 560,000 children. The scale of this enterprise is immense and moreover, the performances are free.

There are many festivals in the summer. Jienkyo’s “*Kodomo to Butai Geijutsu Deai no Fo-ramu 2015* (Forum for Children to Encounter the Stage Arts)” (National Olympics Memorial Youth

Center: July 23 – 29) is in its 16th year. With 32 theatre troupes gathering 10,000 participants, and its well organized “*asobi no hiroba* (play spaces)” and a “*ningyo gararii* (puppet gallery),” it was a lively event. In the 43rd “Summer Vacation Children and Youth Theatre Festival” with performances at Space Zero and the Puk Puppet Theatre (July 22 – August 9), there were 25 theatre troupes and 35 performances, including Theatre Company Haikyo’s “*Arashi no Yoru ni* (One Stormy Night)” and Dramatic Company Chojugiga’s kyogen musical “*Kaki-yamabushi* (The Persimmon Thief)” performed for 6000 spectators.

The 16th “21st Century Theatre from Kitakata” (August 7 – 16, Kitakata Plaza and other venues) featured an unusual event with Zenshin-za’s reading theatre presentation of “*Hanbun no Satsuma Imo* (Half a Yam).” There were many theatre troupes, including Gekidan Reclam-sha performing “*Bekkanko Oni* (Flat Demon)”, and puppet theatre troupes such as Puk, Hitomi-za, Musubi-za, Edo ito ayatsuri ningyo (string marionettes) and magicians. In total, 92 works were staged over 119 performances, attracting an audience of 10,000. The fact that the festival grows bigger, with more and more participating theatre groups each year, must be because of the inviting warmth of Kitakata, which is also famous for its ramen noodles.

The “Nissei Gekijo Family Festival” was held for the 21st time and it is a luxurious occasion, which aims at teaching children manners when watching performances in a first-class theatre space. In addition to the three works: a classical music concert, “*Arisu no Henteko Butokai* (Alice’s Strange Dance Party)” (July 25, 26), Hitomi-za’s puppet musical “*Tobidase ☆ Songoku - Gyumao to Honoo no Yama* (Jump Out ☆ Monkey - The Ox Monster and the Mountain of Fire)” (August 1, 2) and Stardancers Ballet Troupe’s “Cinderella”

(August 21 – 23), for the first time, the Bunraku Puppet Theatre Troupe from Osaka participated. Under the title “*Nissei Oyako Bunraku* (Nissei Parent and Child Bunraku Puppet Theatre)” (August 8, 9) they presented “*Gojo Bashī* (Fifth Avenue Bridge)” showing the first encounter of Ushiwakamaru (the childhood name of the hero Yoshitsune) and the powerful warrior priest Benkei, who is so impressed with the strength of the delicate seeming boy that he becomes his loyal retainer. They also presented a new play, “*Fushigi na Mame no Ki* (The Strange Bean Tree),” a Bunraku version of the story of Jack and the beanstalk. A boy named Honwakamaru trades his family’s precious cow for some beans. Narrator Toyotake Sakihodayu vividly depicted the interchange between Honwakamaru and his furious mother Oju and then the boy’s surprise when the beans grow up overnight into a tree that goes into the sky. The play featured experienced puppeteers Yoshida Kanya as the main puppeteer for Oju and Yoshida Ichisuke as the main puppeteer for Honwakamaru, and their skill drew their young audiences into the world of the play.

The Nissei *Meisaku* (“Masterpiece”) Series sponsored by the Nissei Foundation began in 2014. It is a lavish program, with performances in 12 cities throughout Japan, giving free performances of puppet theatre and classical music concerts to elementary school children and the opera “*Hansel and Gretel*” to middle school children.

In the Kanagawa Geijutsu Gekijo’s “KAAT Kids Program,” “*Wakatta-san no Kukūi* (Know It All’s Cookie)” (July 23 – August 2) was written and directed by Okada Toshiki, a prominent young and innovative theatre artist. The musical “*Pinocchio*” was dramatized and directed by Miyamoto Amon. This program shows that they are taking young audiences seriously. In Theatre Troupe En’s “*Kodomo*

(Children's) Stage," with such productions as Betsuyaku Minoru's "*Fushigi no Kuni no Arisu no Boshiya-san no Ocha no Kai* (Alice in Wonderland's Mad Hatter's Tea Party)," they showed that they well understand the sensibilities of their young audience.

Beginning in 2014, the international festival "Kijimuna Festa" was renamed the "International Theatre Festival Okinawa for Young Audiences 2014." Then in 2015, it was renamed again to "Ricca ricca * Festa." In Okinawa dialect this means "let's go together." This is a fond nickname that reflects its international and multi-cultural nature. Unlike the "Kijimuna Festa" that was centered on Okinawa City, the festival moved to Naha. The performances were spread out over such places as a special stage in Naha Shin Toshin Park, Okinawa Prefectural Museum, Art Museum and the Asato Catholic Church. The festival featured such performances as Emoto Akira's troupe Gekidan Tokyo Kandenchī's "*Natsu no Yo no Yume* (A Midsummer Night's Dream)" and the students in the training program at the New National Theatre presenting Inoue Hisashi's "*Shonen Kodentai 1945* (Youth Oral Transmission Troop)" and troupes from 17 countries including Australia and Italy presenting 38 works from July 27 to August 2. Four of these works were also presented at the Tokyo Geijutsu Gekijo (Tokyo Metropolitan Theatre) and two at the National Olympics Memorial Youth Center.

The "TACT / Festival 2015" was held at the Tokyo Geijutsu Gekijo from May 3 to 6. Canada's Corpus appeared for the 6th time with "Les Moutons (The Sheep)," and is already a familiar presence. Claire Ruffin from France presented "L'Insomnante (Insomnia)" which had innumerable pillows on the ceiling and depicted struggling to get to sleep with a comic touch. José Montalvo's latest piece was a unique collaboration between film and dance with "Asa Nisi Masa -

The Monstrous Spell” and added a unique touch to the festival.

Here are my “Best Three” from children and youth theatre this year:

Gekidan Nobara’s *“Arisu ga Kureta Fushigi na Jikan* (The Strange Time that Alice Gave Me)” (by Harada Ryo and directed by Fujita Asaya). Taking Lewis Carroll’s book *“Alice in Wonderland”* as an underlying motif, this was a tragedy about the Great East Japan Earthquake. The protagonist tries to recover and live his life. By alternating between a fantastic world and the tragic reality of the world after the earthquake, the play created a new world for children’s theatre.

Gekidan Kakashi-za’s *“Wandaa Shadow* (Wonder Shadow)” (arranged and directed by Goto Kei). As an extension of using limbs and bodies to make various silhouettes, this piece brought the actors out front and the screen in back for a fascinating play of light and shadow.

Ningyo Gekidan Musubi-za’s *“Chichi to Kuraseba* (The Face of Jizo)” (script by Inoue Hisashi, direction by Kimura Shigeru). A father killed in the atomic blast becomes a living ghost and returns to the world of the living because he is worried about his daughter. This expanded the possibilities of puppet theatre by showing the heart-warming interaction of father and daughter by dividing the expression between puppets and a narrator.

In July at the China Children’s Theatre Festival held in Beijing, Fujita Asaya, Japan chairman of the Japanese ASSITEJ (International Children and Youth Stage Arts Association) decided to hold a children’s theatre festival that will move around Japan, China and South Korea. This will be held in Japan in February – March 2018.

The “*Iida Ningyo Geki Festa* (Iida Puppet Theatre Festa)” (August 4 - 9) in Iida City, Nagano Prefecture has become a standard part of the summer and was on the theme of “*Miru, Miru, Miuru* (See, Watch, Be Fascinated)” and included performances of puppet theatre by 240 troupes in 440 performances. This year featured performances of all four plays that received the Aichi Prefecture Puppet Theatre Center’s “P New Artists Prize” were performed. The plays were, “*Sanagi no Toki* (The Pupal Stage),” “*Yama Gurumi Ningyo Geki: Sakura no Mori no Mankai no Shita* (Mountain Walnut Puppet Play: Under the Cherry Blossoms in Full Bloom),” “*Yurei* (Ghost)” and “*Yagi no Ohanashi* (The Story of a Goat).” The festival is very lively with performances making the entire city a puppet theatre spilling out everywhere including professional and amateur groups in venues from the Iida Puppet Theatre, cultural halls, public halls, parks and even on the street. There were troupes from five countries including Russia and France.

The Theatre Troupe Puk has a home in its Tokyo Puk Theatre, 70 members, and during 2015, it performed 28 pieces. There were three new works: “*Kaiju ga Machi ni Yatte Kita* (The Griffin and the minor canon)” (original story by Frank R. Stockton, dramatized by Hoshino Takeshi and directed by Takeuchi Toyoko), “*Kiri to Kaze kara Kiita Hanashi* (A Story I Heard from the Mists and Wind)” (original story by Miyazawa Kenji, dramatized by Kawajiri Taiji and directed by Kishimoto Mariko) and “*Harinezumi to Kinka* (The Porcupine and the Gold Coin)” (original story by Vladimir Orlov, dramatized by Sakurai Masami and directed by Hayakawa Yuriko). The three pieces that were best received this year were: “*Tebukuro o Kai ni* (Going to Buy Gloves),” “*Kaiju ga Machi ni Yatte Kita*” and “*Juni no Tsuki no Takibi* (Twelve Month Bonfire).” The play “*Botan*

Doro (The Peony Lantern)” which is aimed at an adult audience was presented at the Tohoku Engeki Kansho Kai (Tohoku Theatre Appreciation Presentation). Playwright Inoue Hisashi’s “*Uka-uka Sanju, Choro-choro Shiju* (Cheerful Thirties, Falling Apart Forties)” is another play aimed at adults. Puppet theatre is now highly valued as a theatrical genre. The Theatre Troupe Puk has been chosen as part of the “*Jidai o Ninau Kodomo no Bunka Geijutsu Taiken Jigyo* (Arts Experience for the Children that will Support the Next Age)” and performances of “*Tebukuro o Kai ni*” and “The Nutcracker” in elementary schools have increased. The troupe is extremely busy with 337 days of performances this year and 407 separate performances.

Polina Borisova’s “Go” used live actors as though they were puppets. An old woman wandering around her room would write whatever she needed with white tape attached to the wall. This fast expression of things awakened the imagination. This toured 7 cities from Sapporo to Izu Oshima.

In November, Nishikawa Koryu of the Hachioji Kuruma Ningyo troupe collaborated with American puppet artist Tom Lee, performing “Shank’s Mare (original Japanese title, “*Hizakurige*.” It was performed at the La Mama theatre Off-Broadway in New York. The puppets operated by a single puppeteer seated on a small box with wheels were reviewed very favorably.

To commemorate the “Year of Japan – Central America Interchange” Gekidan Kageboshi took two plays “*Tsuru no Ongaeshi* (A Crane Returns a Favor)” and “*Mochi-mochi no Ki* (The Sticky Tree)” and toured 9 cities in 7 countries with 15 performances beginning with San Jose, Costa Rica on July 28 and ending with San Luis Potosi, Mexico on August 26.

The ASEAN Puppet Exchange / ASEAN – Japan Puppets (APA)

and celebration of the ASEAN Day 2015 (August 3 – 10 Jakarta, Indonesia) aims at peace in Southeast Asia through puppet theatre. The Theatre Troupe Puk represented Japan and presented “*Kappore*” and “*Tama Sudare*.”

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 Engeki Kyokai) and the 25th prize was awarded to Goto Yuko, costume designer for Gekidan Urinko.

This year also saw the passing of many artists including Matsutani Miyoko (89) known for “*Tatsu no Ko Taro* (Taro, the Child of a Dragon), writer of children’s literature Imae Yoshitomo (83), Puk’s puppet maker and writer and director Noda Bokushi (80) who is known for writing Puk’s hit play “*Erumaa no Boken* (Yerma’s Adventure)” and Uno Koshiro (86) a founding member of Nigyo Gekidan Hitomi.

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)

Japanese Classical Dance

On the significance of expressing a fresh view on westernization through Japanese dance.

Hirano Hidetoshi

People are formed by a multitude of factors, starting from the necessities of their daily lives: clothing, food and shelter, through the environment that surrounds them, their beliefs and DNA. These various factors give shape to an individual 'ingrained physical self', which acquires an everyday 'language'. The Japanese Classical Dance (*Nihon buyō*) finds its 'ingrained physical self' in the style of movement of early modern Kabuki, as well as in the Edo period (1603-1868)'s dance forms, called '*mai*' and '*odori*' and its language is, the 'Japanese physical language', which has been passed down to the present day.

Considering the 'physical self' and the 'physical language', which lie at the core of the performing arts, amid the westernization that the nation was propelled towards following the Meiji Restoration, the Japanese people have never abandoned their own sense of the physical self (*shin-tai*) '*shin*' or '*mi*' = 'self' and '*tai*' or '*karada*' = physical body. Throughout the 150 years since the westernization of music and 130 years since the westernization of theatre in the history of Japan's modern period, the Japanese Classical Dance has shone with a luster all its own. Looking back on the 70 years since the end of the World War II, up until 1980, this luster was not lost, however, in the past 20 years there has been a tendency toward depression.

This change is the result of that the cultural policies

concerning westernization have finally elbowed their way to the field of ‘dance’. Japanese Classical Dance has yet to deal with this situation appropriately.

Inoue Yachiyo’s *Mushi no ne* (The Sound of Insects) and Fujima Kanemon’s *Dattan* (The Fire Procession)

Mushi no ne (November 21st, National Theatre ‘Mai no Kai’), is essentially a remake of the Noh play *Matsumushi* (Pine Cricket). The chorus ‘Abeno no uta’ (The Song of the Abeno Field) is performed as a ‘*jiuta*’ (singer/shamisen: Kikuhara Kôji, shamisen; Kikuo Yûji, koto: Kikuho Fumiko), with its melodic splendor coupled with the exquisite choreography of the previous Yachiyo, the insects and the grass as well as the fog were expressed in the singing, thus establishing a correlation between the world of nature and the human world, and all this embodied in the dancing of Yachiyo was really something to behold. The longing for those who have passed on became clear through the arts of the performers and spread throughout the small ‘*zashiki*’ (tatami room) theatre space.

Dattan (June 27th ‘Fujima Ryû Taikai’ at the Kabuki-za) is the creation of Fujima Kanemon IV, who is also known under his Kabuki acting name Onoe Shôroku II. He was the grandfather of the current Kanemon VI – or in Kabuki – Onoe Shôroku IV. *Dattan* had its premiere performance in February 1966, supervised by Hagiwara Yukio and Hiraoka Jokai, and directed by Moriya Tadashi. At that time, Onoe Baikô performed together with a young Matsumoto Koshirô, along with a cast of young Kabuki performers. With Onoe Kikugorô’s troupe performing the ‘*tombogaeri*’-stage acrobatics, and the fascinating stylized ‘*tachimawari*’-fighting scene, the finished product was something quite unique. This time around, Kanemon

chose Azuma Tokuho for the role of ‘Shoe no Nyoin’ (The Woman in Blue) in the first part to make a special appearance. Azuma Tokuho managed to create a scene pervaded by an unearthly atmosphere, and Kanemon’s portrayal of the role of priest Jûkei was outstanding in its unsophisticated simplicity. The illusion created from the minds of the two performers exhilarated the audience. The second half featured a male 50-member dance troupe from the Fujima School appearing as group of monks, displaying the simple movements of the Kabuki performers made for a powerful group dance and ‘*tachimawari*’ circling dance. In addition, the enactment of the Buddhist water purification ritual ‘*misogi*’, captured the hearts of the audience and made for a brilliant piece of dance theatre.

Yachiyo was designated an important intangible cultural asset (Kyômai dance) last year. As the fifth head (*iemoto*) of the Inoue School, she is a master teacher of the Hanamachi/Gion Kobu (Geisha) style dance. Kanemon is the sixth head of the Fujima School as well as a Kabuki performer. Neither of the two have been much affected by the westernization and within the ‘adverse legacy’ of modernization (the classical), they’ve both managed to shine through. These two works, which have come down to us through the tradition, were truly something to be thankful for.

Verification and Exploitation of the Adverse Legacy of Modernization

In 1996, the Niwaka Association was founded. ‘Niwaka’ is a term, which referred to amateur performers performing impromptu comic sketches from the mid-Edo period to the Meiji Restoration. Gunji Masakatsu (1913-1998), the authority in Classical Japanese Dance (*buyô*) scholarship, used the metaphor of the ‘*wachigai*’ pattern

of intersecting rings in his speech on the occasion of the formation of the 'Niwaka Association'. He likened the right-side and left-side rings to 'medicine' and 'poison' respectively.

Both the 'medicine' and 'poison' are rings of the same size and so he stressed the importance of maintaining a balance between the two in order not to break the pattern, and the importance of the core part where the two rings overlap. Speaking about Classical Japanese Dance, the right-side unyielding element, the 'classical' or 'medicine' is the 'ingrained physical self' and the 'Japanese physical language' as well as the techniques of the traditional classical works has been guarded and faithfully taught down to the present. This is due to the idea of the 'house' in the feudal class system, which preserved and protected traditions and passed them down to the present age.

This system is called the '*iemoto*' system, and is a system in which the head of a house - the '*iemoto*' plays a central part and take a leadership role in the development of the style of the school. Hereditary '*iemoto*' exists as a normative and legitimate model with regard to the school's accomplishments in order to preserve the identity of the style and as a political authority, the '*iemoto*' leads and manages the school through a top-down control system and has the authority to issue certificates.

On the other side, the left-hand ring, the creative endeavors of the people and outside influences of new cultures, which give birth to new fashions - is the 'poison'. The poison is not in itself a bad thing, because for the art to remain living, it needs to be flexible and integrate new ideas. Presently, the '*iemoto*' system, which preserves the classicism of Japanese dance on the one hand, is too rigid, and there is little breathing room for development. In fact, it is mostly in dances performed at regional Buddhist and Shinto festivals, where one can

find the two aspects of tradition and innovation maintained in good balance today.

Last year, the problem of the succession of the head of the Hanayagi School shook the media again. The Hanayagi School has been riddled with internal strife between two competing fractions for the '*iemoto*' title ever since the third '*iemoto*' died without leaving a clear heir in 2007. This time, the strife resulted in a high profile court case, but the problem is not limited to the Hanayagi School alone. The problem with the system of the successive '*iemoto*' leaders and the succession of artist names is something that often arises in the world of Japanese Classical Dance. I believe that this is a problem that involves the essence of Japanese Classical Dance.

In the course of its modernization, Japanese Classical Dance, through its 'New Dance Movement' - have learned its lessons from the transmission and preservation of the 'classical' as well as from Europe and America. However, in the process, the world of Classical Japanese Dance has often been involved in problems between different traditional schools. This situation has continued throughout the 70 years that have passed since the end of the war. As a result of the awakening of the sense of self that came with the modern period, the 'New Dance Movement' began to declare its independence from the '*hanamachi*' districts, where geisha entertainment was centered. In the high days of geisha history, each '*hanamachi*' had its own ranking and lineage - names, kimono, dances and culture were passed on between generations - according to the '*iemoto*' system.

Its practitioners became professional dance performers by occupation, thereby shedding their skin to recreate themselves as the new breed of dance artists. The real problem is that historically, many individuals who were involved in 'the New Dance Movement' were

also adherents to the '*iemoto*' system.

Archiving occurs regularly in Japanese Classical Dance, and is a process tied up with both tradition and creativity. The year before last, the ongoing 'Dance Archive in JAPAN 2015 (National Theatre, March 7th-8th)' was carried out at the New National Theatre. At this event, Kanai Fumie from the world of ballet gave us three versions of Eguchi Takaya's, *Scala-za no Maritsukai* (Playing with a Ball in La Scala) in a greatly interesting performance. In this program, 100 years of western dance tradition was entitled 'Revisit the Old and Learn the New', undoubtedly, both the 'tradition' and the 'creativity' of Japanese Classical Dance are upheld by the same worldview and the intention was only to recreate the compositions of the masters. However, Ms. Kanai gave us three different interpretations: the 'Recreation Version', the 'Classical Japanese Dance Traditional School Version', and the 'Duet Version'. Nishikawa Minosuke performed in the Nihon Buyô Traditional School version. He manipulated the ball with a freedom of movement reminiscent of the miming techniques of a clown. The humor as well as the expression of pathos displayed on the face, made it a meaningful work of Classical Japanese Dance with its peculiar physical language and corporal expression. Furthermore, talking about clowns, there was also some correspondence here with the old Japanese arts of clowning. The expressiveness grounded in transmission/preservation was wonderful to behold and made for a lively performance. We would like to send a round of applause to Ms. Kanai for this presentation of her forward moving energy towards a new kind of 'dance'.

The problems with the Japanese Performing Arts Foundation and 'Dance'.

In February of 2011, 'fundamental policies concerning the

cultural arts' were drawn up. The Japan Arts Council became involved in the collection and analysis of basic information pertinent to necessary reforms of the subsidiary system in a trial endeavor to hold the Japan chapter of the 'Arts Council'. The aim is to provide a large amount of subsidiary assistance to organizations at the top level in the field of cultural arts in order to make Japan deserving of being called a 'nation of culture'. However, there has been no indication of any overall vision with regard to cultural property protection, cultural promotion or the Japanese language and religion that lie at the foundation of the Cultural Affairs Agency cultural policy.

Inquiries into and studies on the reform of subsidy and grant programs have yielded a number of questions. One such question is why at the present, the overwhelming majority of recipients of assistance funding are Nohgaku groups. Last year, for the first time a Classical Japanese Dance group, the Goyôkai (July 6th, Mitsukoshi Theatre) was selected. The program included the Nagauta piece *Matsu no okina* (Old Man Pine Tree) performed by Hanayagi Juraku, the Kamimai uta piece *Kiri no ame* (Misty Rain) by Yamamura Tomogorô, the Kiyomoto piece *Ryûsei* (The Comet) by Hanayagi Motoi, the Nagauta piece *Sarumai* (Monkey Dance) by Nishikawa Minosuke and the Kiyomoto piece *Yamanba* (Mountain Hag) by Fujima Rankô, each of these five works on the program was performed as a '*suodori*', which means that the performers wear crested kimonos and formal hakama trousers. The differences between schools, and in individual styles were present, but each performance was meaningful in terms of its high artistic quality as each of these five performers is in the top rank of the '*iemoto*' system. As far as artistic technique is concerned, they are all top class and from the point of view of their students, they are all master teachers in their

own right. Hanayagi Motoi's style of movement is derived from Kabuki dance, Yamamura Tomogorô's influenced from his revival of the *Shichi henge-dance* (Dance of Seven Transformations), and Hanayagi Juraku brilliantly performs the 'suodori', but as a group it is difficult to give any proper valuation to the Goyôkai. In comparison to other theatrical troupes, their day-to-day activities are rather sparse, and as a theatrical troupe that is to be the recipient of a grant, it is hard to call them the most suitable candidate.

The National Theatre staged a program of dance, 'Noh/Kyôgen Dance' (National Theatre, May 23rd) and the five members of the Goyôkai appeared in the lineup too. Yamamura Tomogorô performed the Nagauta piece *Kikujidô* (Chrysanthemum Boy), Nishikawa Minosuke, Fujima Rankô and others the Nagauta piece *Shichiki-ochi* (Seven Fallen Horsemen, direction by Umezu Shôichirô, music by Kineya Gosachi and choreography by Nishikawa Senzô) and Hanayagi Juraku and Yamamura Tomogorô performed the Nagauta piece *Tsurigitsune* (How to Catch a Fox, direction by Matsumoto Kamematsu, music by Kineya Rokuzaemon XIV, choreography by Hanayagi Juraku II); Hanayagi Motoi, Fujima Rankô and Nishikawa Minosuke with others, performed the Tokiwazu and Nagauta combined piece *Migawari zazen* (Substitute Meditation). They performed for a full house, but on the whole, the performance was rather lacking in excitement. One can only wonder why.

Each of the works on the program were traditional pieces and simply lining them up in one production had the same result as the program at the Mitsukoshi Theatre mentioned before. The interest of a program of dance was wanting. Nor was there even the slightest sense of the impending crisis facing the world of Japanese Classical Dance.

The National Theatre's '4th Fascination of the Traditional

Performing Arts – the Enjoyment of Japanese Classical Dance’ Program (June 13th) presented Classical Japanese Dance as a traditional performing art in a program aimed at enlightenment and diffusion. However, in the explanatory lecture given by Onoe Kikunojô, he stated, “I cannot explain the difference between Kabuki Dance and Japanese Classical Dance”. Obviously there was something greatly wrong with the production of this event.

The time to learn how to express the westernization through Japanese Dance

In the ‘58th program of the Japanese Classical Dance Association’ sponsored by the Japanese Classical Dance Association, two works of scholar Tsubouchi Shôyô, *Buyô* (Dance) and *Buyô Geki* (Dance Theatre) were performed side by side on February 20th. Tsubouchi Shôyô did much to advance westernization of theatre both theoretically and practically and was an advocate of the learning of western culture and internalization through the Japanese culture. Shôyô achieved some success with his practice, introducing the western educational system with its concept of educating all from ‘amateurs to experts’, but this had nothing to do with the presentation of a Japanese dance composition that incorporates western dance. The ‘West’, in Shôyô’s time, was going through its heyday of Wagnerian Opera boom, and dance fell outside of Shôyô’s theories.

Last year, the Japanese Ballet Company staged a program of songs by Misora Hibari, a performer who had been brought up after the war and rose from amateur singer to become the queen of Enka ballads. Also, in the ballet *Giselle*, a collaboration with Rakugô performer Yanagiya Karoku was incorporated. In fact, dance is on the agenda all year around, and there were numerous other works

of collaboration between western and Japanese traditional forms, but none of these have gone beyond the superficiality of ‘encounter’. There was no intermingling of the basic technique of western dance (physically moving the body) and traditional Japanese expressionism, thus Shôyô’s theories of reformation applied to Japanese theatre were not applied on Japanese traditional dance after all.

In the field of music, the western style of notation with its five-lined staff notation is already in widespread use, but now the westernization of Japan’s education has extended to dance. In the intersecting-ring metaphor, the right side is the ‘classical’, in short, expression based on the ‘ingrained physical self and the Japanese language’ of transmission/tradition but the present situation, where special individuals from within the ‘*iemoto*’ system are charged to protect it, the time has come where we feel the need to verify the boundaries of each sphere. The overlapping of right-side ring, the ‘medicine’, with not only western performing arts but also indigenous Japanese folk arts, has the potentiality for creating fertile new dance forms, such as can be seen performed at the Sanriku International Art Festival in the north east of Japan is proof of.

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Topics

It must not be forgotten that old classical dances, considered a negative legacy of the modernization of Classical Japanese Dance, have in modern times sparkled as community dance along with the folk performing arts in every corner of Japan.

In Okinawa prefecture, the national and prefectural governments cooperated in a revival of the ‘Kumiodori’ that has been designated an intangible cultural heritage. The Kumiodori narration, music, movement and dance all came together in a musical theatre of the era of the

Ryûkyû Kingdom. Ryûkyû dance, is something that female performers have had great success in spreading to all corners of Okinawa. One such performer is Sato Takako, a professor at the Okinawa Prefectural University of the Arts and at her 'Sato Takako no Kai' (October 21st, National Small Theatre), one of Ms. Sato's students Shida Maki, who brilliantly won the grand prize at the Agency for Cultural Noh Theatre, was remarkable to watch and seemed, to us, to strongly tie together the regional community and the dance.

The Fujima Kanjûrô School 8th leader Fujima Kanjûrô's 'Suodori no Kai' was an outstanding event. Along with his activities as a producer and choreographer, he held the 120 Anniversary Brazil Program commemorating the treaty of amity between Japan and Brazil (August 14th-22nd). At the level of international exchange between nations, the 'Buyô Shûdan Kiku no Kai' (rep: Hata Satoshi) was held in Peru by invitation of the Japanese Embassy, at the Peruvian Japanese Theatre's 'Matsuri' as the headliner on the program (November 11th-18th).

The Agency for Cultural Affairs Encouragement for the Arts Award was presented to Azuma Setsuho; the Arts Festival Prize for Excellence was awarded to Saruwaka Seizaburô.

Hirano, Hidetoshi

Classical Japanese Dance Critic. Born in 1944 in Sendai City. Graduated from Waseda University: the 1st Theatre Specialization of the Literature department. At University, he specialized in Kabuki. Worked at a 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. An expert committee member of the Agency for Cultural Affairs, Society for the Advancement of the Arts in Japan

(Translation : James Ferner)

Ballet

THE BALLET SCENE IN JAPAN DURING 2015 Maximum Efforts Made Under Adverse Conditions

Urawa Makoto

The Reality Surrounding Ballet in Japan

Looking back at 2015, issues such as terrorist attacks initiated by the jihadist group Islamic States (IS) and the massive numbers of outpouring refugees seemed to have aggravated and have also spread to wider areas, consequently making our country face a growing risk as well. In Japan, there were political issues concerning conflicting ideologies such as the law on Japan's security framework, the relocation of the U.S. military base in Okinawa and the restart of nuclear power plants. Meanwhile, there were many large-scale natural disasters and abnormal weather conditions due to global warming. Also economically, the disparity widened and it was not a good time for many people.

Amid such situation, the national finance and household economy deteriorated even more, which naturally had a big impact on the world of dance. One of the negative phenomena was especially the closing of public theatres. This trend had already begun in various parts of Japan, but there were many performance spaces popular among dance-related people that disappeared last year, such as Aoyama Theatre and Aoyama Round Theatre in January and Yuport in September. It will obviously cause serious restriction down the road, not only on dance activities, but also performing arts in general.

Moreover, the low birth rate, strained household finance and measures to prepare to go on to good universities in order to keep pace with severe competition in the society, have naturally led to a decrease in the number of aspiring dancers that have been paying for their dance lessons and tickets to see dance performances, through which they have been virtually supporting ballet economically so far.

There are quite a lot of people in the dance field who have a sense of crisis regarding this situation and efforts have been made. The Association of Japanese Ballet Companies, which was founded in 2014, is one of them, and there are also other groups formed to enhance operation activities and institutionalizing patrons, but they have still not found a conclusive countermeasure.

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I will now direct my focus onto ballet activities during 2015. I have been saying the same thing every year that on the surface, it does look as though each company is consistently engaged in their activities as usual and the quality of their production has remained unchanged. Strictly speaking, however, the number of productions and the number of days of performances have already started to decrease around Japan and the increase in double bills and triple bills is probably not just for the sake of mounting relatively short new works, but also because of financial difficulties to create and present large-scale productions that cost a huge amount of money to produce.

The Noticeable Trend of Same Titles

I would like to pick up some recent trends that stood out against the backdrop of economic difficulties that the dance circle is facing.

First of all, I noticed, though it may not have been intended and was merely a coincidence, that there were many cases in which the same titles were presented by different companies.

The much loved *Swan Lake* and the annual year-end *The Nutcracker* productions were no surprises but besides them, the following three titles leaped out. The most popular title was *The Sleeping Beauty*. A new production of *The Sleeping Beauty* was presented in fall 2014 as the first production under Ohara Noriko, who became the New National Theatre's new artistic director for ballet and dance. Then in 2015, Maki Asami Ballet presented Terry Westmoreland's choreography of *The Sleeping Beauty* from February to March and The Matsuyama Ballet presented the version jointly choreographed by Rudolf Nureyev and Shimizu Tetsutaro in May and October, which gave us chances to see this title performed by long-established ballet companies for the first time in many years. Morishita Yoko of The Matsuyama Ballet performed Princess Aurora beautifully to the end and she has not lost her luster. This title was also selected by visiting companies from abroad, four large and medium-scale companies in Tokyo, and also a company in Kyushu (Kumamoto). Tani Momoko Ballet, which is another company with a long history, will premiere the Eldar Aliev version of *The Sleeping Beauty* at the beginning of the following year, in other words, January 2016. Japanese Ballet Association, which is a nationwide organization and a public interest incorporated foundation for ballet people, will also put on *Sleeping Beauty* in March 2016, with a triple cast. The second most popular title was *Coppélia*. The Japan Ballet Association invited Sergei Vikharev to restore and revive the Marius Petipa version of *Coppélia* in March. The title was presented

frequently during the latter half of the year, especially outside Tokyo. That is to say, in October, Sadamatsu Shoichiro's choreography of *Coppélia* was presented by Sadamatsu-Hamada Ballet in Kobe, and in November it was presented by Miyashita Ballet in Kyoto using the choreography by Fukagawa Hideo, who worked abroad during the 1970s and became famous. In Nagoya, Matsuoka Reiko Ballet presented the version by Shinohara Seiichi, who is a choreographer representing Japan, and another local company called Theatre de Ballet Company presented the Fukagawa Hideo version in December. In the two Fukagawa-versions of *Coppélia*, Fukagawa himself performed Doctor Coppélius and excited the audience. Moreover, in December, both in Tokyo and Nagoya, a few other companies presented the title including partial productions. In 2016, *Coppélia* is scheduled to be presented by Star Dancers Ballet in January and by Inoue Ballet in July.

Romeo and Juliet was another interesting title. In November, Stuttgart Ballet presented this title choreographed by John Cranko, which is regarded as ballet's standard, and in December, Mariinsky Ballet brought a version choreographed by Leonid Lavrosky, which became famous for Galina Ulanova performing the part of Juliet. Both productions already had an established reputation, were presented by the companies where they originated, were mounted after each other and furthermore at the same theatre.

Before them, the Kyoto-based Arima Ryuko Ballet presented the Fabrice Bourgeois version of *Romeo and Juliet* in August, inviting the top dancers of the Paris Opera Ballet. More productions of this title are due to be presented in 2016. The Royal Ballet will visit Japan with Kenneth MacMillan's version of *Romeo and Juliet* and in autumn, also

the National Ballet of Japan (NBJ) will present this version. The Matsuyama Ballet will present Shimizu Tetsutaro's version, which is regarded as his best choreography, the Osaka-based Sasaki Michiko Ballet will present Shinohara Seiichi's version, which won the Art Festival Award, and Sadamatsu-Hamada Ballet is scheduled to present a new production by Sadamatsu Shoichiro. Perhaps this trend is linked to the four hundredth anniversary of Shakespeare's death.

As described, it may perhaps be due to the fact that there are so many ballet companies scattered around Japan that different versions of the same title are often presented for a short period of time. This trait stands out even more with the annual year-end productions of *The Nutcracker*, as more than twenty versions are presented every year and each of them entertain the audience with unique ideas.

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The Trend of Dance Companies

Next I would like to pick up some topics related to the prospects of ballet companies.

The National Ballet of Japan attached to the New National Theatre, Tokyo, welcomed its new artistic director Ohara Noriko back in September 2014 and has been engaged in activities steadily and consistently, presenting not only classics but also contemporary dance works, as well as giving its members chances to create their own pieces. In the new production *Tales of Hoffman* choreographed by Peter Darrell and Roland Petit's *Die Fledermaus* that has become the main feature of the state-run company, young ballet dancers who have been performing abroad, such as Ono Ayako and Fukuoka Yudai, were cast and they were dancing more expressively than before.

Also dancers who have completed the training at the New National Theatre's ballet school are significantly making their way into the cast of the productions at the state-run theatre. K-Ballet Company led by Kumakawa Tetsuya mounted many productions, including the revival of the updated version of *Carmen*, and won the audience's favour. Kumakawa also held *Ballet Gala* in August, gathering young dancers who were dancing abroad. As for Tokyo Ballet, Saito Yukari, who used to be one of the principal dancers of the company, took up the post of artistic director, and she is expected to give full scope to her talent in the new production of *Swan Lake* scheduled for 2016. The company also hosted the World Ballet Festival in August, inviting top-level senior dancers of the world. Additionally, the Star Dancers Ballet provided a precious opportunity of presenting the *All Tudor Program* with *Lilac Garden* and *Pillar of Fire* as the main focus of the lineup. As for international projects, Kikuchi So of Tokyo Komaki Ballet organized *Star Gala* in June and invited leading members from Boston Ballet, including Kuranaga Misa, and Higaki Ballet Company that often tours overseas presented Konishi Yukiko's *Lady of the Camellias* in Florence in May.

The Works and Dancers Drawing Attention

In the following section, I will cover original works and Japan premiere productions that were noticeable.

First of all, let us take a look at new productions by non-Japanese choreographers. Maki Asami Ballet, under the company's ongoing programme to commemorate its sixty-fifth anniversary, premiered in Japan two small but yet interesting works. One was Peter Breuer's *Boléro* in April and the other was Dominic Walsh's *Afternoon of a*

Faun in October. Additionally, in June, NBA Ballet Company, which is a company that creates programmes with unique points of view, presented *HIBARI* depicting the life of Japan's legendary enka ballad singer Misora Hibari. The singer's life story was turned into a dance piece by Lynne Taylor Corbett, and it was much talked about. As for Kobayashi Noriko Ballet Theatre, which focuses on transferring British ballet pieces such as works by Frederick Ashton and Kenneth MacMillan, it presented another piece by MacMillan this year, titled *Gloria*, in which the choreographer depicted how he felt about people who died from wars. It was indeed a very moving piece.

With regards to Japanese choreographer's original works, there was a new production choreographed by Funaki Jo for Ballet Chambre Ouest in June. In Nagoya, Matsuoka Reiko Ballet presented a modern work by Nakaya Toshihiro and in Kobe, Sadamatsu-Hamada Ballet revived two works by Jiri Kylian, as well as presenting new works with unique qualities by Shimazaki Toru and Mori Yuki, who create many highly appreciated contemporary works. Other choreographers that drew attention include Nakahara Mari of La Danse Contrastée, who makes narratives abstract and Kanamori Jo, who is the artistic director of Noism based in Niigata. The dance unit formed by Nakamura Megumi and Shuto Yasuyuki earned good opinions not only for their original works, but also as dancers. Kimiho Herbert also presented works with modern feel. Additionally, Japan Ballet Association has been hosting events commissioned by the Agency for Cultural Affairs to give chances to mid-career and young choreographers to showcase their works. Also Nishijima Kazuhiro continued his activities in ballet for reviving and supporting the victims of the Great East Japan Earthquake.

Most of these works adopted abstract styles and in comparison, narrative ballets were extremely difficult to produce due to cost-related reasons. However, excellent works have recently been created outside Tokyo. The two productions of *Romeo and Juliet* presented in Nagoya, as previously mentioned, were works by proven choreographers and Ichikawa Toru changed the setting into a fight for revolution, while Kawaguchi Setsuko casted modern dancers and kept the picture compact. They were both worth watching.

The best production of narrative ballet this year was *ANAIKH ~Destiny~Notre Dame de Paris*, which was choreographed by previously mentioned Shinohara Seiichi for Osaka-based Sasaki Michiko Ballet and presented in August. It was an epic, taking direct dramatic approach and tightly plotted through dance and mime. The lead character Esmeralda was played by Shimomura Yurie, who is currently at the peak of her career with mature performance and technique, and Quasimodo was played by Sasaki Dai, who excels in his techniques and has also shown remarkable progress in his expressiveness. The two dancers interacted thoroughly, and overall it was a tour de force.

There were other noteworthy dancers such as Sakai Hana, who has a wide repertoire ranging from classical works to contemporary works, and she showed strong presence in a number of productions. *Ballet for the Future* was presented in August and drew attention. Yoshida Miyako and Horiuchi Gen, who had performed with The Royal Ballet and New York City Ballet, danced together in the piece. Meanwhile, Tani Momoko who is one of the pioneer ballerinas of Japan and also the founder of Tani Momoko Ballet, passed away in April and in May, Maya Plisetskaya, who has had a great deal of

influence on ballet in Japan as well, passed away, making us feel the changing times.

Finally, I would like to mention Sylvie Guillem, who has enormous popularity worldwide. As she is extremely fond of Japan, she has visited our country many times. She also gave her very last performance in Japan. She performed with Tokyo Ballet in December in a program that included new pieces and she toured around Japan to give farewell performances. She also appeared in a countdown TV concert programme on New Year's Eve to end both the year 2015 and her career with her striking *Boléro*.

Urawa, Makoto

Autonym is Akira Ichikawa. Works at Shoin University as a professor in the Faculty of Business Administration and Corporate Culture as well as serving as an advisor on dance-related matters to The Association of Public Theatres and Halls in Japan. Other careers include contributing reviews for a variety of newspapers and magazines as a dance critic, holding various positions in committees such as those of the Agency for Cultural Affairs, and sitting on the jury of many dance competitions.

(Translation: Sumida Michiyo)

Contemporary Dance and Butoh

A Border-Crossing, Growing Dance Scene, and the Trends Required of the Next Generation

Tsutsumi Hiroshi

Subsuming and Diffusing Contemporary Dance

It is frequently claimed that the contemporary dance boom is over, but in fact dance is being subsumed by art, theatre and music, and spreading out in the form of various regional outreach projects and performances for children. In particular, dance is increasingly being co-opted in theatre directing, choreography, staging and ensembles.

Actor and dancer Moriyama Mirai appeared in many performances throughout the year. In *Pluto*, adapted from a manga, he was part of the dance ensemble directed by Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui. Meanwhile, in the duo *Judas, Christ with Soy* he performed alongside the Israeli dancer Ella Rothschild in the Japanese premiere of an adaptation of Dazai Osamu's novel *Kakekomi Uttae* (An Urgent Appeal). He also took the lead in *Shikei Shikkouchuu Datsugoku Shinkouchuu* (Under Execution, Under Jailbreak), devised, directed and choreographed by Hasegawa Nay from the Araki Hirohiko manga.

Onodera Shuji also directed and choreographed a lot of theatre work during the year. With his troupe Company Derashinera he premiered *Bunshin* (Alter Ego), adapted from Dostoyevsky's *The Double*. He also staged *URA-SHIMA* at Inujima, an island in the Seto Inland Sea, and *Spectator* in New York.

The popular group Condors stages a wide range of work,

including dance, comedy sketches, music performances, and film. This year it performed *Chinmoku no Haru 6.66* (Spring of Silence—6.66) and *Strawberry Fields*, and also toured with *Tomorrow Never Knows* in the summer. Company leader Kondo Ryohei also directed and choreographed *Modern Times* at Tokyo Metropolitan Theatre and “*Fushigi no Kuni no Arisu no Boushiya-san no Ocha no Kai* (The Mad Hatter’s Tea Party from “Alice in Wonderland”)” at Kitakyushu Performing Arts Center. At the New National Theatre, Tokyo’s summer kids’ theatre program, he choreographed *Kagami no Kanata wa Tanaka no nakani* (Beyond the Mirror is Inside Tanaka), written and directed by Nagatsuka Keishi. Another work featured in the program was *Circus*, which was choreographed and directed by Moriyama Kaiji.

Suzuki Takuro also made an impact this year. In *Sakuranbo* (Cherry), for his own company CHAIroiPLIN, and *Chin Ton Shan Beben!*, for Performance Kids Tokyo, he created fun dance adaptations of Rakugo storytelling. With CHAIroiPLIN he also adapted Abe Kobo’s play *Tomodachi* (Friends) on tour and staged a modern version of Brecht’s major work *The Threepenny Opera*. For the Setagaya Arts Foundation’s Setagaya Children’s Project 2015 he playfully staged *Chouju-giga*, Japan’s oldest known example of manga.

Yokohama organized the event *Dance Dance Dance* at Yokohama, which transformed the whole city into the stage for a dance festival. From the Yokohama Dance Parade with ordinary citizens to the Yokohama Bayside Stage and Yokohama Bayside Ballet events on a special stage erected outdoors overlooking Yokohama Bay, as well as a Bon dance choreographed by Kondo Ryohei and a gala performance of Yokohama Ballet Festival with artistic direction by Charleroi Danses’ Endo Yasuyuki, the packed lineup included some 200

vibrant events.

Physical Reality & Documentary-style Techniques

On the other hand, artists pursuing dance expression attempted to interpret the real body through contact with objects and documentary-style approaches. While experimental, performances like *Real Reality* by Nibroll (led by Yanaihara Mikuni), *Meltdown* by Okuno Miwa, *Hara wa Hiza made taresagaru* (A Belly That Droops Down to the Knees) by KITAMARI and Shiraga Momoko, *Attack on Dance* by Fujiyama Annette (led by Hasegawa Nay), *Phantom Form*, *Invisible Move* by ArCairdo (Hasegawa Nay, Iimuro Naoki), *Urban Folk Entertainment* by Neji Pijin, the revival of *Navigations* by Sagami Yujiro, and *Sokode nemuru, kore wo okosu, koko ni okosareru* (Sleep There, Rouse This, Be Roused Here) by Fukutome Mari ultimately ended up as merely small-scale endeavors.

Against this, the launch of Kyo, Japan's first physically integrated dance company where both able-bodied and disabled dancers dance together, attracted much attention. Producer Ijichi Yuko established the group modeled on the UK-based Candoco Dance Company. *Open State* was choreographed and directed by Candoco co-founder Adam Benjamin, while in *Border* artistic director Iwabuchi Takiko superbly composed scenes that utilized each dancer's individuality.

Successes from the Second Generation of Butoh Artists

If there is one type of modern dance that we can truly call "Japanese" it is Butoh. In 2015 it was actually the second generation of Butoh dancers who stood out. Amagatsu Ushio's Sankai Juku presented a new work, *Umi no Nigiwai*, Oka no Seijaku—Meguri (MEGURI—Teeming Sea, Tranquil Land), a co-production with

theatres in Kitakyushu, Paris, and Singapore. The title derives from the character “回”(meguri), evoking images of the circulation of water, the cycle of the seasons, and environmental transitions. Around the rim of the sand-filled stage were corridors, while at the back was a mud wall furnished with pattern of Paleozoic crinoid fossils. The dancers' delicate movements such as playing with water, the energetic ensemble dancing exhausted by drought, and Amagatsu's solo dance looked down on all things from the vantage point of the gods, brimming with a grandeur and profundity meditating on the universe. In 2014, Amagatsu was also made a Commandeur de l'ordre des Arts et des Lettres by the French Minister of Culture.

In *Konban wa Are-moyou* (Tonight is Nasty), Kasai Akira presented a loud comment on female emancipation and liberty. Taking its title from a collection by the poet Shiraishi Kazuko, it was also inspired by the words of Isadora Duncan, who said that a woman's body was free and being itself, also the intellect. The scenes choreographing Kuroda Ikuyo, Terada Misako, Morishita Maki, Uemura Naoka, Shirakawa Naoko, and Yamada Setsuko—six female dancers each different in origin and generation—were linked like an omnibus, finishing with Kasai himself dancing in a pink dress as a woman. Kasai says that unlike men, women do not make war; instead, they are superior to men because they produce life and the planet's culture. He showed us an alternative way to overcome war, a condition that seems to exist permanently in the world.

However, the year's greatest talking point was the sudden death of Murobushi Ko. He passed away on June 18th at the age of 68 from a heart attack while in transit in Mexico City. Born in Tokyo in 1947, he studied under Butoh founder Hijikata Tatsumi and formed

Dairakudakan along with Maro Akaji and others in 1972. After producing *Ariadone no Kai*, a women-only Butoh troupe, he launched Sebi in 1976. His 1978 performance *Saigo no Rakuen* (Le Dernier Eden) in Paris was a success, running a month and becoming one of the triggers for the international recognition of Butoh. In 2003, he formed a new unit, Ko&Edge Co., to pass on Butoh to younger dancers. In 2006, he presented *quick silver* at the Venice Biennale, with his entire body coated in silver. In 2010, he collaborated with BARTABAS (Zingaro) to create *Kentaurosuo to Animaru* (Le Centaure et l'animal), which caused a stir in Europe. His death came all too soon.

During the year, we also lost the ballet dancer and choreographer Ogawa Ayako, who passed away at the age of 81. After time in Komaki Ballet Company, in 1953 she became the first Japanese to study at the Royal Ballet School in the UK. She later became a member of the Metropolitan Opera Ballet, before returning to Japan in 1966 to co-found Star Dancers Ballet Company. In 1982, she opened Studio Ichibangai (later Aoyama Dancing Square), Japan's first comprehensive dance studio, reforming the conventions of the Japanese dance world that previously was similar to the apprenticeship system of the traditional arts. The studio became a nest for nurturing choreographers and dancers active in contemporary dance from the 1990s.

Teshigawara Saburo: An Unstoppable Creative Drive

Similarly to Ogawa, Teshigawara Saburo also started organizing open workshops in the 1980s and has since become a leader in the contemporary dance scene in Japan. His creative drive seems indefatigable and this year alone Teshigawara's output included 94

performances of 13 productions. In March, he premiered his new opera *Solaris at Théâtre des Champs-Élysées*, Paris, based on the science fiction novel by Stanislas Lem and adapted by composer Fujikura Dai. Prior to this, he staged a solo dance by Sato Rihoko, *Hari*, at his creative studio complex Karas Apparatus that formed a preview to the opera, organically linking his Update Dance Series to his fully staged theatre productions.

His series of consecutive performances at Theater X(cai) included the premiere of *Aoi Me no Otoko* (The Man with Blue Eyes), a revival of *Hari*, the Japanese premiere of *Aru hareta Hi ni* (On a Sunny Day) from a novel by Gabriel García Márquez, and a revival of *Waiting for Godot*, an homage to the Samuel Beckett play.

Mizu to Inori—water angel (Water and Prayer—Water Angel) dazzled with its freely paced dance that transformed like the endless flow of water. Sato's dancing was particularly superb, cutting through the space like an impala racing across an African savanna, activating with astonishing agility. Not simply a recreation of fixed choreography, the performance was the best embodiment of Teshigawara's method of autonomous movement.

Kanamori Jo and Noism: Dance and Cultural Policy

It was also an energetic year for Noism, the dance company led by Kanamori Jo that is resident at Ryutopia Niigata City Performing Arts Center. Noism 1 performed *ASU—Fukashi e no kenshin* (ASU—Devotion to the Invisible) in Kanagawa. *Hako-iri Musume* (Sheltered Princess), the first in its new series of modern-day fairy tales, was based on the ballet *The Wooden Prince*, composed by Béla Bartók and written by Béla Balázs. Adding a contemporary interpretation critical of our Internet society, it was a brutal fairy tale that could withstand

adult viewing. Having been selected as Culture City of East Asia 2015, Niigata hosted NIDF2015: Niigata International Dance Festival with companies from Japan, China and South Korea. It welcomed the first performances in Japan by the Daegu City Modern Dance Company from Korea and the City Contemporary Dance Company from Hong Kong, as well as the premiere of a new work, *Ai to Seirei no Ie* (House of Love and Spirits), by Noism's new spin-off company, Noism 0. In an era of increased diplomatic tensions in East Asia, it was a pioneering initiative based on a consideration of contemporary dance as cultural policy. The regional activities of Noism 2 were also lively, with Yamada Yuki becoming its resident choreographer and rehearsal director for the regular performances. The company participated in the Water and Land Niigata Art Festival 2015, held across the whole of Niigata City, collaborated with the folk performance group Eijima-ryu Niigata Tarukinuta Denshou Kai for *Aka furu Koutei, sarani mou ichido, Hi no Hana chire* (Schoolyard Raining Red, Once More, Flower of Fire Scatter).

Street Dance Flourishes

Street dance has thrived in recent years. Groups like DAZZLE, s**t kingz, Tokyo Gege Gay, WRECKING CREW ORCHESTRA, Time Machine, Hilty & Bosch, and Umebou are all active on the scene, with the production company Parco organizing an annual dance event called *ASTERISK as an attempt to fuse street dance with commercial theatre. The Japan Foundation Asia Center has also partnered with Parco to launch DANCE DANCE ASIA, an initiative to share culture across the Asian region through street dance, and holds performances in different countries throughout the year. Arts Council Tokyo has now joined this movement to organize Shibuya

StreetDance Week [sic], a festival turning the Tokyo district of Shibuya into a hub for street dance, and also co-producing the performance *A Frame* as a part of this.

Kawamura Mikiko had a conventional dance education at university but also learnt street dance at clubs, and has now emerged as the enfant terrible of the Japanese dance world. In the Competition I division of Yokohama Dance Collection EX 2015, she received the Jury Prize and French Embassy Prize for Young Choreographer, chosen from 90 entrants from 9 countries. In the same competition, the MASDANZA Prize went to Kajimoto Haruka, and the Sibiu International Theater Festival Prize and Touchpoint Art Foundation Prize to Kurosu Ikumi and Katori Naoto, while Nakayashiki Minami won the Outstanding New Artist Prize in the Competition II New Choreographer Division out of 35 entrants.

Kawamura also stirred up controversy with *Maboroshi no Yoake—Midnight Dreamers* (Phantom Daybreak). The all-standing audience surrounded a square stage that they continued to watch for 80 minutes. The dancers, however, lay on the stage, sleeping like they were dead from the time the venue doors were opened. A nonstop soundtrack featured waves crashing, music, and noise, at times punctuated by the roar of house music. While the colorful lighting and mirror balls moved, otherwise there was almost no action on stage. After 60 minutes, the dancers started slowly and lethargically to raise their bodies, followed the moment they had all stood up by a black-out, ending the performance without a single dance-like movement having taken place. Kawamura often creates bold work as per the circumstances. For *Kawamura Mikiko 61km Festival* at Tama 1km Festival, smiling female dancers appeared in fantasy costumes in front of Parthenon Tama near the amusement park Sanrio Puroland. Just

as they seemed about to make contact with the audience, they then suddenly started to dance a kind of battle of mutual abuse.

At NEXTREAM21, the cross-genre dance contest where Kawamura previously emerged, the top prize was taken by PIERRE MIROIR, a group led by Asai Nobuyoshi, a Sankai Juku alumnus who later trained with Batsheva Dance Company.

A Vogue for The Rite of Spring?

To trace the roots of contemporary dance, it is generally considered that you should start with Ballets Russes. While 2013 saw many performances overseas commemorating the centenary of *The Rite of Spring*, this year seemed to herald a belated wave of remakes of the classic ballet in the contemporary dance scene in Japan.

Unit Kimiho, led by Kimoho Hulbert, produced a new version *The Rite of Spring* alongside a revival of her earlier *White Fields*. Co. Yamada Un revived *The Rite of Spring* with a new piece, *Nanatsu no Taizai* (The Seven Deadly Sins). Moreover, with her new work *Buyou Kisoukyoku Monaka* (Dance Capriccio Monaka) Yamada developed an ensemble dance in pure pursuit of her unique dance language and abstract composition, demonstrating the maturity of the company.

At I Want to See Dance! 17, the latest in the series of events at d-soko, the studio space in Nippori, Tokyo, 12 different dancers and groups created performances inspired by *The Rite of Spring* each day: Mademoiselle Cinema (led by Ito Naoko), Suzuki Yukio, Uesugi Mitsuyo, Iwabuchi Takiko, Kudo Taketeru, Kawamura Mikiko, Shibata Emi, Kei Takei, Kasai Mitsutake and Uemura Naoka, Matsumoto Taiju, Dusha (led by Kumotaro Mukai), and Yamada Setsuko.

Aichi Arts Center and the Tokyo dance studio Architanz co-

presented a touring triple bill of Stravinsky: *The Firebird* by Marco Goecke, *The Devil's Tale* (from *The Soldier's Tale*) by Yuri Ng, and *The Rite of Spring* by Uwe Scholz.

In this way, *The Rite of Spring* and Stravinsky's music continues to feel innovative, though there is also another reason for this series of productions: it is easy to obtain subsidy if you attempt this kind of material. Not only here, we can see a wider trend for delving into the past repertoire rather than producing original new work, and as such there is also increasing interest in historical work and staging revivals, and the archive infrastructures that are needed for this.

Inheriting Legacies and Archiving Endeavors

Kazuo Ohno Dance Studio organized Dance Archive Project 2015 in an attempt to search for the source of modern dance. Oka Toshiko and Kakio Masaru remade Eguchi Takaya's *Shujutsushitsuyori* (From the Operating Room), while Kawaguchi Takao and project Oh! YAMA revived *Ohno Kazuo nitsuite* (About Ohno Kazuo) and *Odoru Baka* respectively. Ohno Yoshito danced his father Kazuo's *Tango*.

The New National Theatre, Tokyo's Dance Archives in Japan 2015 saw a younger generation of dancers recreate Ishii Baku's *Kikai wa ikite iru* (Machines are Alive) and *Masuku* (Mask), Shigyo Masatoshi's *Kyoufu no Odori* (Dance of Terror), Hinoki Kenji's *Tsuribito* (A Fisherman), Eguchi Takaya's *Sukaraza no Maritsukai* (Playing with a Ball at La Scala), and Ishii Midori's *Tai* (Body).

Kurosawa Mika revived *Wave* and *6:30 AM*, the pieces she premiered in 1985 under the influence of American postmodern dance, along with a new work, *Kono Shima de umareta Hito* (A Person Born on This Island).

Dance Archive Boxes, the project produced by the Saison Foundation in 2014, toured to Singapore International Festival of Arts. Proposed by the Singaporean director Ong Keng Sen, the archive project aims not just to preserve but also to stage work in self-contained packages by choreographers. Seven Japanese choreographers (Ito Chie, Kuroda Ikuyo, Shirai Tsuyoshi, Suzuki Yukio, Tezuka Natsuko, Yanaihara Mikuni, and Yamashita Zan) produced works, which were received and staged by seven other choreographers from South-east Asia.

From the inheritance of legacies to the establishment of archives, from the inbound to the outbound, a host of issues need to be addressed. However, surely the greatest task ahead is finding effective ways to inspire the next generation of dance.

Tsutsumi, Hiroshi

Born in 1966 in Kawasaki City. He graduated from Bunka Gakuin's theatre course. He is an editor, 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*, *Gendai Doitsu no Pafo-mingu A-tsu* (Performing Arts in Germany Today) and *Peter Brook: Sosaku no Kiseki* (Peter Brook: The Way of Creation).

(Translation: William Andrews)

Television

Focusing on TV Dramas in 2015

Kotaki Tetsuya

In 2015, the Abe Shinzo Cabinet and the ruling Liberal Democratic Party stepped up their interventions towards the media. The government's intervention had already begun at the end of the previous year (November 10, 2014) when the Liberal Democratic Party (hereafter referred to as LDP) made a request to the programming directors and news directors of Japan Broadcasting Corporation (NHK) and the five commercial TV stations based in Tokyo to cover elections in a fair and independent manner. However, prearranged set-up allegations of the programme 'Close-up Gendai' about distorting the truth in the episode titled 'Follow-up of bonze scam ~ targeting religious corporations,' which was televised on May 14, 2014, became the government and the ruling party's pretext to intervene in the media, and the ruling party started to criticize the TV media one after another on the pretext of concerns over the contents and political criticism in news programmes.

First of all, on April 17, LDP's Research Commission on info-Communications Strategy summoned top-level executives of NHK and TV Asahi, and questioned them about the allegations of excessively staging an episode of 'Close-up Gendai' and the commentator of Hodo Station (TV Asahi), who criticized the government. Then on April 28, Takaichi Sanae, the Minister for Internal Affairs and Communications, handed a letter of censure for administrative

directive to NHK regarding the 'Close-up Gendai' issue. Moreover, on June 25, a remark was suddenly made at LDP's study group called Culture and Arts Social Gathering that the best way to punish the media is to get rid of their advertisement revenue, implying pressure on the economic community.

BPO (Broadcasting Ethics & Program Improvement Organization), which is an independent third-party body organized by NHK and the National Association of Commercial Broadcasters in Japan (NAB), conducted its own survey on this issue and published an opinion paper on November 6, saying that there was a serious violation of broadcasting ethics, such as totally depending on the information provider and a 'hidden-camera'-type of staging.

At the same time, however, the paper raised difficulties over the prime minister and the government intervening in the TV media, saying, "despite the fact that we broadcasters are trying to discover mistakes made in the content of the broadcast and thereby consider measures to prevent recurrence so as to rectify problems, if the government intervenes through administrative guidance during our autonomous action, it would mean violation of the autonomy that the broadcasting ethics code is guaranteeing." It is rare for BPO, which examines the content of each programme, to express such opinion and it means that the authorities' control over the media has increased to such an alarming level that it became a compelling reason to point it out. Incidentally, the government dismissed the paper out of hand.

Early in the morning of September 19, the Abe Cabinet passed and enacted the bill on using the right of collective self-defense, which

the former regimes had been forbidding for seventy years since WWII ended, by means of changing the interpretation of the constitution. The way that the citizens and the media should tackle the crisis related to ‘constitutionalism’ and ‘independence of broadcasting’ is a pressing issue.

Then how has TV dramas contributed to the world at a time when “freedom of expression” is being questioned? The bottom line is that there were not so many dramas that challenged these hard times. However, there were some dramas that seemed to shed rays of light.

Recently, TBS has been televising content-rich dramas, ranging from *The Emperor’s Cook*, depicting a young man’s life in modern Japan, to *Shitamachi Rocket*, portraying the pride of a group of engineers doing subcontracting work at a small factory located in an old industrial neighborhood in Tokyo, which were both enjoyable to watch as pieces of entertainment in every way.

The Emperor’s Cook portrays the life of Akiyama Tokuzo (Sato Takeru), who used to be a hot-tempered good-for-nothing but becomes the emperor’s cook during the turbulent days of the Meiji, Taisho and Showa eras. It is based on Sugimori Hisahide’s novel that has been dramatized in the past, but this time, through Morishita Yoshiko’s script, it was turned into a delightful domestic drama about young people. Morishita has thoroughly portrayed the feelings of the people around the protagonist such as the father, elder brother, wife, cooking master and the other cooks, and alongside the depiction of the ensemble, Tokuzo’s character arc and charm is highlighted. Moreover, the directors, including Hirakawa Yuichiro, have

sensitively captured the feelings among the different characters, and the cast that includes Suzuki Ryohei (playing the part of the sickly father), Kuroki Haru (the reliable wife) and Kobayashi Kaoru (stubborn master) has responded well to their directions. The drama won the Grand Prix of Tokyo Drama Awards 2015 in the Serial Drama category and gained good reputation in Europe and the United States, winning the Grand Prix of MIPCOM BUYERS' AWARD for Japanese Drama that was held in Cannes, France.

Meanwhile, *Shitamachi Rocket* ('Downtown Rocket', based on Ikeido Jun's novel, directed by Fukuzawa Katsuo) was worth watching due to the passionate depiction of the theme and group of characters. A small factory called Tsukuda Manufacturing has been developing bulb systems for rocket engines but is looked down as a minor business by the big companies and main banks. The drama series depicts the factory workers, who are trod down by the big corporations but win in the end thanks to their technical capabilities. The dream of Tsukuda Kohei (Abe Hiroshi), who is the president of Tsukuda Manufacturing, is to manufacture domestically developed rockets and those who work at the factory have pride and passion. These themes are depicted consistently in *Shitamachi Rocket* and expressed vividly in a cartoon-like style, focusing on how the socially disadvantaged have struck back at the big corporations. The TBS drama series *Hanzawa Naoki* that was set in a bank and aired in 2013, became a big hit because the protagonist Hanzawa Naoki (Sakai Masato)'s signature phrase "baigaeshida! (I'll pay you back double!)" attracted the viewers' interest. However, in *Shitamachi Rocket*, it was how the group of people around the main character was depicted that had the cathartic effect instead. For instance, there is a character

called Tonomura, the accounting manager (Tatekawa Danshun), who has been temporarily transferred from a main financing bank and is disliked by his co-workers. However, when Tsukuda, the president, is about to give up on his dream, Tonomura gives him a spur, saying, “I love this company! ...You are loved by your dream. That’s why you mustn’t escape!”

TBS used to be referred to as ‘the station committed to dramas.’ It was because TBS’s home dramas became hits one after another while at the same time, artistic dramas and its group stations’ local dramas were televised. In this respect, for TBS to become ‘the station committed to dramas’ once again, it will have to prepare literary dramas besides dramas for entertainment like *The Emperor’s Cook* and *Shitamachi Rocket*.

Okashi no Ie (‘Taro’s Candy House’, written and directed by Ishii Yuya) was a drama series that fulfilled such expectations. There is a rundown sweet shop in an old part of Tokyo. Sakurai Taro (Odagiri Joe) has succeeded the shop from his grandmother (Yachigusa Kaoru) but all he does is to hang about in the back yard with his friends just like he used to do as a child. Saegusa Hiroki (Katsuji Ryo), an aspiring scriptwriter, Kaneda Tsuyoshi (Maeno Tomoya), who used to be an office worker, and Shimazaki Akira (Shimada Kyusaku), who runs a public bathhouse, hang out with Taro. Though they are concerned about the global situation that is changing very rapidly such as the turmoil in Ukraine, the war in Syria, nuclear power plants, the Japan-U.S. security pact, U.S. military bases in Japan, natural disasters and air pollution, they have lost their bearings and say, “What the heck can we do?” On top of that, they stand motionless when they face

their own severe realities. Taro is wondering what he should do about the sweet shop and his relationship with Reiko (Ono Machiko), who used to be his classmate at primary school. They keep thinking back on the most important things in life and try to resist the fact that they are losing those jewels piece by piece. *Okashi no Ie* quietly speaks to us about the 'vague feeling of anxiety' that people have nowadays by wrapping it with timid kindness and also that it is important to think about others and to stand by them. The atmospheric presence of the dim sweet shop and the timid kindness that could only be conveyed with downcast eyes came out through the script, direction and performance, which were all endearing.

On NHK, *Renzoku Terebi Shosetsu* ('serial TV novel' known as *asadodra*) is by far the most popular drama series in recent years, but among other NHK dramas aired in 2015, *64 (Rokuyon)*, *Dokutsu Ojisan* and *Tobo Nanafun* were worth watching and had fresh appeal.

64 (Rokuyon), original book by Yokoyama Hideo, script written by Omori Sumio) is a drama series about the police pursuing the perpetrator that kidnapped a girl fourteen years earlier (1989, Showa 64) and it is portrayed with dismal tension. Mikami (Pierre Taki) is a public relations officer who was in charge of the case back then. His sense of redemption and pride as a public relations officer, his anger toward the power struggle within the police structure, the cover-up attempt that he experiences during the process and the painful reminder of his own daughter who has gone missing. The drama portrays the conflict in the complex human relationships with scorching suspense and intensity. 1989 is the year in which the era changed from Showa to Heisei. The year '1989' and 'unsolved case' makes us

think about various things that the Showa Era has left behind through the words of Matsuoka (Shibata Kyohei), the head of the Investigation Division, who says “Showa 64 is not over yet. I will drag the criminal back at any cost.” The drama series was awarded the Grand Prix of the Agency for Cultural Affairs Arts Festival 2015.

Dokutsu Ojisan (‘Cave Man’, original book by Kamura Kazuma, script written by Yoshida Teruyuki and others) televised on NHK-BS is a peculiar drama series that starts with a subtitle saying, “This is almost a true story about one man’s strange life,” which sounds like a tall tale. Kazuma is brought up in a poor village deep in the mountains. He leaves his home when he is thirteen years old, because he gets onto the wrong sides of both his classmates and his family, and starts living in a cave. He manages to survive by eating nuts he picks from trees, and snakes and boars that he captures. Before long, he learns how to make money by selling riches from the mountain. In this serial drama, the man’s life is depicted from his boyhood until he reaches middle age but it has a strange feeling because of the way his life in the cave up in the mountains is depicted and the carefree timing of the narrative. When he hits middle age, Kazuma is arrested for stealing money from a vending machine, and during the interrogation, he unveils how he has spent half his life. The portrayal of his life in the cave is realistic and has depth. Nevertheless, the dialogue between the detective (Namase Katsuhisa) and Kazuma (Lily Franky) is played dumb as if they are enjoying his cruel destiny. Lily Franky, playing the part of Kazuma who has reached middle age, speaks in a halting way and plays innocent, which turns ‘the real story’ into an extremely unique fantasy about life. The drama series was awarded the Agency for Cultural Affairs Arts Festival 2015 Award for Excellence.

Tobo Nanafun ('Seven Minutes by Foot', script by Maeda Shiro, directed by Nakajima Yuki) is a drama series portraying, through light and easy dialogues, the subtleties of the feelings of a single woman, who has left her parents' place and starts living alone in a flat. Yoriko (Tanaka Rena) is a thirty-two year old college graduate, who spends idle days alone, as she has no job, no friends or boyfriend. However, she gets to know Sakie (Nahana), a nurse who lives in the room next to hers, and Tanaka (Tanaka Kei), a shy salaried worker, who has moved to the room downstairs. The three of them spend time together in Yoriko's room and also the lunch box shop on the ground floor, and Yoriko gradually starts to open her heart. When I wrote 'light and easy dialogues,' I meant that the dialogues between the three characters were very funny and at the same time full of implied meanings. For instance, when they are talking about a woman whose underpants is in full view, it reminds her that she must live properly, and the weight of the fact that she has left her parents' place is implied when she asks, "how many plastic bottles' worth does it weigh?" It then, without realizing, turns into a conversation about red bean cakes. Moreover, when they are making red bean cakes, Yoriko is not listening while the others talk about their age and parents, and she quickly starts eating the red bean cakes (Episode 6). Though they ramble on, they subtly talk past each other, which simply creates the distance between Yoriko's notion and those of the others. The drama series was awarded the 33rd Mukoda Kuniko Prize.

Renzoku Terebi Shosetsu (NHK) is doing well recently and one reason for its popularity is that the producers are constantly taking on new challenges. In *Massan* (script by Habara Daisuke, directed by Noda Yusuke and others), a non-Japanese actress was casted as the

heroine for the first time in the history of television drama series in Japan. *Massan* is a story about a man named Kameyama Masaharu (Tamayama Tetsuji) who has committed himself to developing domestically distilled whisky and the way his Scottish wife Ellie (Charlotte Kate Fox) devotes herself to help him even more so than the traditionally ideal Japanese woman, is the biggest appeal of this drama series. The series won the Tokyo Drama Awards 2015 Award for Excellence in the Serial Drama category.

BS Channel WOWOW's one-off drama *Totsuki Toka no Shinkaron* ('My Theory of Evolution', script by Sakae Yayoi, directed by Ichii Masahide) is a story about a single woman who is bewildered when she unexpectedly gets pregnant but during the ten month and ten days (i.e., "*totsuki toka*") of her pregnancy, she gradually matures. Kobayashi Suzu (Ono Machiko), is a pig-headed scholar that only understands about insects. She starts working at an insectarium as she has lost her job at the university and there is no other choice. Perhaps it is because she is so depressed that when she bumps into Ando Takeshi (Tanaka Kei), her ex boyfriend that she had to split with for a certain reason, she briefly has sex with him without any feeling of love and gets pregnant. She has conflicting feelings about not being able to tell Takeshi straightforwardly that she is pregnant and is also worried about giving birth alone. The drama depicts dynamically how Suzu gradually opens her closed mind, weaving in computer graphics that show the secrets of new life. Suzu, who has been so pigheaded, not understanding how others felt, gradually softens when she starts reading books on childbirth that includes commentary using computer graphics and learns about the biological reality of insects that she loves, and the way it is portrayed has a unique

originality. This drama is from the scenario that won the Grand Prix of the Seventh WOWOW Awards. WOWOW is providing opportunities for new talents through the awards, which shows how serious WOWOW is about laying the foundation for making dramas. The drama won the 2015 Japan Commercial Broadcaster's Award for Excellence, Agency for Cultural Affairs Arts Festival 2015 Award for Excellence and Tokyo Drama Awards 2015 Award for Excellence in the Single Drama category.

During dark and dismal times, we need cheerful and comical dramas, too, otherwise watching dramas would only make the viewers feel low and gloomy and not able to relax. *De-to-Koi to wa donna mono kashira* (Fuji TV) and *Dokonjo Gaeru* (Nippon Television) were drama series responding to such needs.

Nowadays, many single men and women think they cannot be bothered to enjoy romance, which makes it difficult to portray romantic drama. In *De-to-Koi to wa donna mono kashira* ('Date - What's it like to be in love?', script written by Kosawa Ryota and directed by Takeuchi Hideki) a love story is depicted through unusual setups of the male and female characters and many unpredictable spoken lines. The lead characters, whose names are Yoriko (Anne) and Takumi (Hasegawa Hiroki), are both eccentric and socially inept. Yoriko is a national public servant, who places super-top priority on efficiency and is also a data geek. When she chooses her partner, she says, "Born July 23, 1979, 181 cm tall, weighs 67 kg. My favorite numbers only. They're all prime numbers!" On the other hand, Takumi is a literature freak, calling himself a high-ranking nomad, but he is actually merely a reclusive NEET (Not in Employment,

Education or Training) and he often says things like, “Akutagawa Ryunosuke said that romance is merely beautification of sexual desire!” In the drama, the two characters, who are naïve about romantic relationships, respond to each other but there is always a gap in their conversations and in the end they realize ‘what romance is really about.’ Above all, Kosawa Ryota’s script was engaging. The series received the Tokyo Drama Awards 2015 Award for Excellence in the Serial Drama category.

Dokonjo Gaeru (‘Gutsy Frog’, script by Okada Yoshikazu, directed by Sugawara Shintaro) is a drama series adapting Yoshizawa Yasumi’s popular manga series into live action. The manga became popular when it was made into a TV anime series but it was interesting to see that the live action version had been made into an upbeat youth drama.

Pyonkichi, a frog is strolling around Tokyo’s Shakujii Park, clings onto the T-shirt worn by a junior high school boy called Hiroshi and they start a slapstick comedy together. The story of the live action version begins with the setting that Hiroshi (Matsuyama Kenichi) is still a lazybones even as an adult, and that the Flat Surface Frog called Pyonkichi is about to end his life. Usually, setback and growth is depicted in youth dramas, but this drama is centered on the spiritual growth of Hiroshi, who is a drone, and Pyonkichi, who is near the end of his life, and how Hiroshi becomes aware of his adulthood in midst of the slapstick is depicted in a vivid and comical way. Now and then, Pyonkichi almost comes off Hiroshi’s T-shirt, symbolizing the brevity of life. At the same time, we could feel Pyonkichi’s father-like love, which added some sort of wistfulness to Hiroshi’s growth. The

energetic performance of Mitsushima Hikari who played the voice of Pyonkichi and the forceful tone of her voice was outstanding.

2015 marked seventy years after World War II ended and several documentaries and news reports related to this historical milestone were broadcast, including the NHK Special *Onna-tachi no Taiheiyo Senso—Jugun kangofu gekisenchi no kiroku* ('Women of the Pacific War—War Nurses, Record of the Grueling Battlefield'). Among others, programmes on the theme of 'women's war experience' stood out. The same trend could be seen quite clearly in TV dramas as well although they fell short in terms of the number. One of them is TBS's *Red Cross*.

The two-part episodes of *Red Cross—Onna-tachi no Akagami* ('Red Cross—Draft Papers for Women', script by Hashimoto Hiroshi, directed by Fukuzawa Katsuo) aired to commemorate TBS's sixty-year anniversary, is an epic depicting the harsh realities of life that a war nurse went through during the Manchurian Incident and until the Korean War. Amano Kiyō (Matsushima Nanako) becomes a nurse to fulfill her dream since childhood and goes to the battlefield, committed to the Red Cross's 'spirit of benevolence.' However, the reality she sees at the army hospital in Manchuria ruled by the Kwantung Army is that the field doctors and nurses would be killed if they were to give medical treatment to the local Chinese. After a while, Kiyō marries Nakagawa Wataru (Nishijima Hidetoshi) of a Manchurian settlers' community and gives birth to their son Hiroto, but her husband dies in war and she gets separated from her son Hiroto when the Soviet Troops invade Manchuria. Hiroto lives on as a Chinese and Kiyō moves from one place to another in China as

a war nurse working for the Communist Party. There was a tendency that the laudable way Kiyo tried to save the lives of people regardless of friend or foe out of humanitarianism was too sentimentalized. However, how Hiroto took part in the Korean War as a volunteer soldier and how Kiyo, who had returned to Japan, was caught in the Red Purge was portrayed from a feminist point of view in an easy-to-understand way and it should be highly commended. The drama won the Agency for Cultural Affairs Arts Festival 2015 Award for Excellence.

Lastly, I would like to write out the main points raised at the symposium under the title 'Exchanging Dramas During the Time of Globalism' held at the International Drama Festival in TOKYO, an international project to send out Japanese dramas abroad, in which challenges that Southeast Asian countries have in common were revealed.

Japanese, Korean and Thai producers and scriptwriters took part in the symposium and what they said in common concerning measures for the drama market to get out of the stagnation was that "it is necessary to cultivate new subject matters to make dramas more accessible and appealing." Only the differences in each country's drama scene are apt to be emphasized, but the symposium brought home to me once again that "there are no national boundaries in the world of dramas." The symposium was held on October 22, 2015 at Chiyoda Media Plaza in Tokyo.

Kotaki, Tetsuya

Kotaki Tetsuya is a critic and professor emeritus at Nihon University College of Art, specializing on the cultural history of television. He is also the standing director of the Japan Council for Better Radio and Television, senior advisor to the Executive Committee of the International Drama Festival in TOKYO, director of National Consortium to Promote Archiving of Scripts and a member of the Broadcast Program Collection Advising Committee. He has headed the selection committee for the Galaxy Award and is also a member of the jury in the Arts Festival sponsored by the Agency for Cultural Affairs and is on the Broadcasting Ethics Committee of Broadcasting Ethics & Program Improvement Organization (BPO). Among other books, he has written and compiled "Terebishi Handobukku (Handbook of Television History)" (Jiyū Kokuminsha) and was a co-writer on "Terebi Sakkatachi no 50 Nen (The Fifty Years of Writers for Television)" (NHK Publishing).

(Translation: Sumida Michiyo)



Developments in Japan

Recitation of
These Children's Summer - Hiroshima & Nagasaki 1945
Interviewing Shimoju Akiko (author) and
Obayashi Nobuhiko (film director)

Moderated by Taeko Nagai
(President of the Japanese Centre of the International Theatre Institute)

'These Children's Summer' Seems More Real Than Ever

NAGAI: Thank you for coming to see *These Children's Summer* today despite your busy schedule. So, what did you think of it?

OBAYASHI: I think that the play seems more real to us today than ever before. I

read the pamphlet and it said the play was first performed thirty years ago, in 1985. It was not performed for a while, but has been revived after the Great East Japan Earthquake occurred in 2011. I personally think that 2011 has taken us back to 1945. I have been making films to tell people “the way Japan has been reconstructed since 1945 was a mistake and that we should do reconstruction all over again.” In fact, I’ve been shooting films about Japan during the war and after the war because I am frustrated with today’s Japan.

Recently, junior high school and high school students have started to say: “We belong to the prewar generation.” I saw some high school students handing out leaflets saying: “Our future belongs to us.” I said to them, “I’m an old man but I’m going to work hard with you.” They told me quite bluntly: “We can’t leave it in the hands of the elderly so we are doing it ourselves. Old folks like you belong to the ‘post-war’ generation, but we belong to the ‘pre-war’ generation.”

Because young people and children are relating themselves to war, it has now become even more important that they hear stories from those who have actually experienced war. In this respect, I think this reading performance was truly wonderful.

SHIMOJU: Just as Mr. Obayashi said right now, the 11th of March 2011 should have been a turning point for the Japanese to make amends for the mistakes we have been making after the war. Nevertheless, we have done the opposite. I had imagined that we would be commemorating the 70th anniversary of the end of war more peacefully than we did. At the moment, there is a tumultuous discussion going on about the pros and cons of war. Some young diet members have gone as far as to say, “To say you don’t want to go to war is egoistic.”

There are of course some young people, whose political awareness has awoken. However, according to recent statistics, almost none of the young people were able to answer that the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima on August 6, on Nagasaki on August 9, and that the Second World War ended on August 15. This was indeed a great shock to me as well. How we relay the realities of war to

the younger generation is a challenge and *These Children's Summer* is one of the events that allows us to continue telling about what happened.

OBAYASHI: The children have not been taught about the war but nowadays, children instinctively want to know. When I was watching the peace ceremony held in Nagasaki, it was the children who were watching most earnestly. It was as though they were saying imploringly, “Please teach us, we want to know, we want to participate”.

SHIMOJU: I have heard that children do not learn about the Second World War at



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Obayashi, Nobuhiko

Obayashi was born in 1938. After working as a director for independent films and TV commercials, he began creating commercial films starting from *HOUSE* in 1977. His major films include *Tenkosei* (Exchange Students), *Toki wo kakeru shōjo* (The Girl Who Leaped Through Time), *Sabishinbou* (Lonely Hearts) and others. In his most recent film *No no nanananoka* (Seven Weeks), he depicted Sakhalin after the Second World War ended in August 15. This summer he will start shooting *Hanakatami* (Flower Basket).

Shimoju, Akiko

After graduating from Waseda University, Shimoju joined NHK and worked as an announcer. She then became a free lancer, working as a newscaster for private television networks, and later on started working as a writer. She has also held the post of the Chairman of the JKA Foundation and is currently the Vice Chairman of The Japan P.E.N. Club as well as the Chairman of Japan Travel Writers' Association. Her novel *Kazoku to iu yamai* (The Disease Called Family) became the No. 1 best selling paperback pocket edition in 2015. Among others, Shimoju has written many novels including *Hagane no hito-saigo no goze*, *Kobayashi Haru* (Steel woman, the last goze Kobayashi Haru).

school, because if they start learning from ancient history, they will not make it to that era, perhaps only up to the Meiji or Taisho era. But come to think of it, it was the same during my school days. Although it was only just after the war, we did not study it in school and it made me wonder why.

OBUYASHI: That was what GHQ had intended. In 1947, there was a plan to build a cenotaph for the Great Tokyo Air Raids and we asked GHQ to give us permission but they answered, "As long as the Japanese remember the war, they will continue hating the U.S. If that is going to be the case, neither the occupation policy nor the U.S.-Japan relationship will be successful. Therefore you must not build a cenotaph. Moreover, you must teach the children that the war never happened." That was how GHQ responded. In other words, GHQ had given instructions not to teach children about the war. That is why the Japanese have not been taught anything about the war up till now.

The Difficulties of Passing on the War

SHIMOJU: I cannot forget the day the war ended. My father was a career officer working for the army and I was evacuated to an annex of an inn in Nara with my mother and elder brother. On that day, my mother made me and my brother sit in front of the radio, and we listened to the imperial rescript. After that, my mother said, "Japan lost the war. Wives and children of service men might be raped or treated violently. If you see them coming, first hide inside the bathtub. If that doesn't work and they find you there, you must take this." She showed us a paper with white powder inside. Later on I asked my mother, "What was in it?" She answered, "It was potassium cyanide."

In *These Children's Summer* there were many stories about people who had lost their lives, and for those who were alive, the day Japan lost the war was the biggest turning point in which many people thought about death.

OBUYASHI: I sometimes feel that I have already died once. I was in Hiroshima exactly one week before the atomic bomb was dropped. I had visited my father,

who was a medical officer, and when I saw the round roof of the current Atomic Bomb Dome from the tram, it created an impression on me as a child and I began to yearn for civilization.



These Children's Summer (Setagaya Public Theatre, 2015) © Yako Masahiko

A week later, the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima. I was at my mother's family home together with my mother. It was a big household and men and women took turns to take baths separately, usually starting from the most senior man. My mother said to me, "Let's take a bath together." It was the first time for me to bathe with my mother since I was old enough to talk. After she got out of the bath, my mother cut her long hair and she made me wear a green jacket and a matching pair of short pants, which was the only one I had without any patching. When I went to the sleeping room, there were two zabuton cushions laid on the floor and a dagger placed in between. She said to me, "Tonight we will talk together until morning." Though I was only a child, I thought that my mother was going to kill herself after killing me, because the occupation troops were going to come the next day.

SHIMOJU: Some time had passed since the war ended and my father returned to the inn where we were staying with a big rucksack on his back. He took out some papers from the bag day in and day out and burned them next to the pond in the garden without saying a word. I still remember that they were confidential documents of the military with vermillion covers. Although he spent days and days to burn them, he still could not get rid of them. I remember the hot summer days when the garden was filled with smoke, and for some reason there were lots of red dragonflies that year. It is one of the scenes I still cannot forget.

Like one of the lines in *These Children's Summer* each person had their own memories of defeat in the war and respective memories of the atomic bomb. How to face and convey the war on the individual level is an extremely big challenge
 NAGAI: I am one or two years younger than both of you so I don't remember much about the war.

Seventy years have passed since the war ended and as the journalist Takashi Tachibana has said, "Sooner or later, the day will come when we'll have to say that this person is the last atomic bomb survivor." I also had the same sense of crisis that, if we don't do something about it soon, people will eventually forget that atomic bombs were dropped on Japanese soil.

Not many people know about it, but Mr. Tachibana was invited to the International Youth Conference on Nuclear Disarmament in London when he was a student to talk about what the situation was really like in Hiroshima. When you think about how to pass on the 'memories of being bombed,' I think it is going to be very important from now on to have someone like him who is a 'messenger'.

OBAYASHI: The person who was at the foot of the bridge in the picture referred to in *These Children's Summer* had not identified herself for many years. She had not even told her husband or children about how she experienced the atomic bomb, but she decided that she had to pass it down to the future generations and based on her accounts, the high school students of Fukuyama recreated the moment of the atomic bombing using CG.

In order to recreate the image, they looked at the monochrome photograph and asked her, "What color was this part of the picture?" When she noticed that the students were hesitating whether it was



appropriate to ask her in such details, she said, “99 people out of 100 died. I think God has kept me alive to tell others about what happened so please depict every single detail.” So the students went on to recreate the scene, working on details such as the colour of the hideously burned skin, and that was how the piece was made. However, the woman would say, “Though I’m glad the piece has been completed, it was actually not like this.”

It is really difficult to convey the realities of the war. In 1952, Kaneto Shindo made the film *Children of Hiroshima in Hiroshima*. It was the first time a Japanese filmmaker made a film about the atomic bomb. Up until the independence of Japan, it was probably not possible to depict atomic bombing or its victims. After Japan was defeated in the war, there was a headache remedy called ‘Yoku kiku pikadon’ (note: ‘yoku kiku’ = helps to relieve, ‘pikadon’ = colloquial way to refer to the atomic bomb, ‘pika’ means ‘flash of light’ and ‘don’ is the onomatopoeia of the bombing). In other words, people were not taught about horrors of the atomic bomb, but instead admired its power.

SHIMOJU: That’s dreadful.

OBAYASHI: As Shindo’s films are based on realism, he said he wanted to depict a naked girl getting blasted and killed by the flash and blast wave on the moment of ‘pika’ and ‘don.’ The principal of a girl’s school in Hiroshima cooperated, and one of her pupils actually played the part. *Children of Hiroshima* was sent to the Cannes International Film Festival but the Foreign Ministry of Japan asked the Festival not to accept it. It was due to the ‘consideration’ that if the defeated nation said for itself that it was a victim of atomic bombing, it would stimulate the victor country’s sentiment toward Japan. Cannes, however, did accept the film.

After that, Hideo Sekikawa of Japan Teachers’ Union Productions made the film *Hiroshima*. In this film, too, the director wanted to recreate the bombing scene realistically and around 80,000 people of all ages living in Hiroshima took part in the film, of which around 20,000 people appeared in the same frame.

However, everyone in Hiroshima said, “pika don was not like that at all.” In other words, no matter how realistically one tries to depict the atomic bombing, it was impossible to portray it truly enough.

To Imagine and to Feel

NAGAI: On the other hand, some people in Hiroshima, who have experienced the atomic bomb, respond negatively when it comes to talking about it.

OBAYASHI: It is because there are ungrounded discriminations and biases, such as that women, who are A-bomb survivors, cannot marry into another family forever. At the end of *These Children's Summer* there is a line that goes like this: “I don't want to complain to anyone. I'm going to get better. I'm going to live. I'm going to survive.” Her courage represents determination to fight against discrimination. In other words, it is her declaration saying, “I fully admit that I was bombed and I will tell that to other people. This is how I'm going to live.”

SHIMOJU: If to acknowledge the tragedies of A-bomb victims, was the first step, the next step would be to prepare oneself to live facing adversities. For me the words, “Money was spent on building the monument for peace in Nagasaki but what else could we have done with the same money? The phrase ‘peace’ sounds empty,” which were in Part Three of *These Children's Summer* caught my attention. They seemed real to me in the true sense. We use the word ‘peace’ without much meaning, but in these lines, the word ‘peace’ rings with the nuance of emptiness as if to question what we are doing now and what have we been doing up till now.

OBAYASHI: Peace is the antonym of war and it originally means, “Do not forget there is war”. In other words, there is no peace without pain. Those who advocate ‘peace’ repeatedly without knowing anything about the pains or defeat in war are merely ‘peace refugees’ so to speak.

SHIMOJU: I have a feeling that to say “peace has prevailed for seventy years” means people don't have a sense of crisis, or imagination enough to think about

what would happen, if there was no peace.

OBAYASHI: Actually, imagination is the most important thing. Even with films, no matter how hard one tries, the films never become realistic. Then what can we do? We can use our imagination.

For instance, Isao Takahata made the animation film *Graves of the Fireflies* and when I talked to him about the film, he said that people, who actually experienced war, scolded him saying, “Mr. Takahata, the imageries you’ve used in the film are not right. It wasn’t like what you’ve depicted at all.” Mr. Takahata used a method called ‘cellanimation’ in the film, but actually he wanted to use the pictures in picture-story shows. Pictures in picture-stories are artless but they represent ‘memories.’ Reality is based on records, and when you are dealing with records, you can never recreate them by means of narrative films. However, memories can be recreated. The pictures drawn by the survivors of the atomic bombing may be artless, but they produce a sense of reality, which is very powerful. That is why in my film *Casting Blossoms to the Sky*, I used pictures from picture stories throughout the entire film. Though their skills may not be lasting, I asked the students at Nagaoka Institute of Design to study the facts thoroughly and to draw using their imagination.

NAGAI: ‘The amateurs’ skills’, or in other words, the realities they create, can be quite powerful.

OBAYASHI: I know that my film might seem difficult, but in fact a four-year old child was the best audience member. I heard that after seeing the two-hour-forty-minute film, the child asked, “Dad, am I really alive now?”

SHIMOJU: That’s a wonderful story.

OBAYASHI: Asked by his child, who was still too young to think about what it is to be alive, the father said, “You’re alive, aren’t you. That’s why you’re here with your Daddy today watching a film and we have been talking to each other.” Then the child asked, “How about the girl on the monocycle? Is she alive?” The child was talking about the scene in which a child who died from a war in the past was

riding a monocycle.

Then the father said, “If you don’t forget her, and keep on liking her, then she is alive just as you are alive.” Then the four-year old child said, “Yes, okay. I will love her forever so I can live with her forever.” It meant that everything I wanted to say in the film had gotten through. Not by understanding it, but by feeling it.

SHIMOJU: Yes, it is important to feel.

OBAYASHI: If they feel it, they would also get it.

NAGAI: It is about sharing sensibilities.

SHIMOJU: I think that people actually do not make much progress. As for myself, my methodology may have changed over the years, but the things I am thinking about and my sensibilities have not changed at all since I was a small child. That makes it all the more important to see and experience things that would form the foundation of your sensibilities when you are in elementary school.

OBAYASHI: I think when children come and see *These Children’s Summer* they would feel much more than adults.

NAGAI: I would definitely like many more young people to come and see the reading performance.

SHIMOJU: Do schools come to see the performance?

NAGAI: Yes, they do. We also have a parent-and-child discount rate for spectators, who bring along junior high school students. The director Koichi Kimura has given us permission to use both the sound effects and lighting design as a package, which has allowed an amateur company to present the production in the past. This time, the tanka (thirty-one syllable verse) is read out by junior high school and high school students from the Setagaya ward and neighboring areas.

I personally don’t like productions catered for children very much, and I would lie young people to see high quality productions, productions that grown ups can also enjoy. When children watch them, I think they must feel something.

OBAYASHI: There are things that ‘adults fall for’ but actually there is no such



These Children's Summer (Setagaya Public Theatre, 2015) © Yako Masahiko

thing as what 'children fall for'. Children never fall for the trap.

SHIMOJU: Why don't you let children actually take part in the play, rather than just watching it? I think taking part in it would deliver the message much more effectively, because the experience can be retained in the individual. If the children read this play themselves, they would feel as though they have experienced the things depicted in the play.

History Education Carrying on the Thoughts and Feelings of Each Person

OBYASHI: Last year, I was invited by the National Council of Japan Nuclear Free Local Authorities to give a lecture in Fujisawa on the theme of 'Peace from Fujisawa.' While I was waiting for my turn to speak, two junior high school pupils came along with fierce look on their faces and said to me, "Mr. Director, I want to be a politician and my friend here wants to become an economist in the future. Neither politics nor economics are dreams. They are realities, aren't they? So could you tell us what the Americans, the British and the Chinese, who fought the war with Japan, are thinking about atomic bombs." Their eyes were sparkling when they spoke up to me.

I told the children about the film *Invasion U.S.A.* made in the U.S. in 1952. In the film, a thousand military aircrafts carrying a thousand atomic bombs attack New York. Buildings just fell into pieces, making a clattering noise but there was no sparks of light or blasting sound. In other words, the nuclear damage was not depicted. The film was made to tell the American people that atomic bombs do not cause nuclear damage and that Japan became a country of peace because atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

SHIMOJU: That is what many people still believe. A long time ago, I used to learn English from an American woman, and she organized screenings of *Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes* based on Sadako Sasaki, who became the model for Children's Peace Monument. She was, so to speak, an antiwar warrior. When I was talking with her about atomic bombs, she justified the atomic bombing and said, "The atomic bomb was dropped because of Pearl Harbor." I was extremely shocked.

NAGAI: But in the States, there have been reports on the psychological distresses of those who were involved in the atomic bombings and the theory advocating that the war would not have ended if the atomic bomb was not dropped is gradually changing.

SHIMOJU: Yes. Little by little. In the case of China, magnificent war memorials have been built in various battle sites, including the one just next to Marco Polo Bridge, through which the brutality of the Japanese military is passed down to the children as well. They are educated by showing the traces of war and the results of course are very different from Japan.

OBAYASHI: Both the people of China and South Korea are being taught about the war, be it for better or worse political reasons. Japan is the only country in which war history is not taught. Japanese children do not know that Japan fought with, and was defeated by China and the Soviet Union during the Pacific War too.

SHIMOJU: In Japan, more emphasis is put on the year and date the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima and I think the way history is taught is problematic.

No doubt, facts are important, but I think an ideal history education also passes on the feelings and thoughts of the people who lived during the wartime. The educators do not teach and neither do they try to convey what the people were feeling and thinking during the war.

After watching *These Children's Summer* I thought that similar ways to pass on the emotional experiences should be introduced into the classrooms.

OBYASHI: Especially because the age of information started around the high economic growth period. Information is all about 'particular theories' and particular theories turn into 'pros and cons.'

NAGAI: We are now in the age of the Internet and news has become the particulars.

OBYASHI: However, it is more important to discuss not with 'particular theories' but through 'general theories.' To discuss general theories is to learn from the past, imagine the future and to think of what to do now. In other words, in general theories, the 'I' is involved too. General theories represent 'a balance of mind' and particular theories are 'justice.' 'Justice' is catered to suit each individual. Japan and America went to war based on their respective justices and it so happened that the American justice was right. That is what wars are about. When you get down to it, justice is the cause of war. To keep a balance of mind is to think with general theories, which requires imagination like Ms. Shimoju has said, and also to think about the people who were there.

NAGAI: In the next war, there will probably be nothing but mass destruction.

SHIMOJU: In this play, each and every person, who was there when the atomic bomb was dropped and Japan lost the war, talk about how they felt. We should pass on how individuals, instead of the groups, or the nation as a whole, came to terms with it.

Praying for Both the Perpetrators and Victims through Fireworks

OBYASHI: I fell in love with Nagaoka and eventually made the film 'Casting Blossoms to the Skies', because I went to see the fireworks there. The fireworks

夜空を仰いでみたい
未次 君子



These Children's Summer (Setagaya Public Theatre, 2015) © Yako Masahiko

are set off at half past ten in the evening of August 1, which was exactly the same time as when the bombardment occurred.

SHIMOJU: My work of non-fiction *Steel woman*, the last goze Kobayashi Haru is based on an oral biography of a Nagaoka goze (blind female minstrel) called Haru Kobayashi, who became a living national treasure, and I rewrote the story of her life into a novel. The most shocking scene that took place in Nagaoka was the day when an air raid burnt it down. Though they were blind, she and the other minstrels knew what happened. They could tell from the atmosphere and sounds.

OBAYASHI: I heard that when the fireworks begin, the elderly people living in Nagaoka stay at home and do not look at the fireworks.

SHIMOJU: I can understand how they feel.

OBAYASHI: Nevertheless, those who are committed to pass on the story of the tragic bombings, have become narrators to tell posterity what they experienced. On top of that, Nagaoka is the hometown of Isoroku Yamamoto, who commanded the attack on Pearl Harbor. The Mayor of Nagaoka said, "One day, I want to set off these fireworks at Pearl Harbor. As I am a politician of the

hometown of Isoroku, I must do what I can. I am prepared to do it.” As he said so, I made a promise to him. “Then I’m going to make a film. Let’s do it together at Pearl Harbor.” Those fireworks will be set off on August 15 this year.

SHIMOJU: Really?! Are there going to be fireworks from Nagaoka at Pearl Harbor?!

OBAYASHI: The War Museum in Nagaoka has been working in collaboration with a war museum called Arizona Memorial House in Pearl Harbor, and have been making an appeal to the Japanese people that Japan has been a perpetrator as well and what’s so frightening about war is that one may not just be a victim but also a perpetrator. That is the kind of proper and well-balanced education they provide there. Through the exchanges, Nagaoka became Honolulu’s sister city in 2012 and fireworks were set off on the beaches of Honolulu, though we really wanted to do it at Pearl Harbor but that was not possible, and my film was screened as well. I was scared. In the morning of the day of the screening, I suffered from a nightmare and saw a gun pointed at me throughout my dream. I went to the venue and the atmosphere was quite strange. The mayor next to me was trembling. I was also trembling.

After the screening, a lady around my age came up to me and you could tell that the look on her face had changed. I closed my eyes and imagined that she had a knife in her hand, but that was not the case. She clasped my hands and shook them. “While I was watching the film, I felt uneasy, as if there would be a storm. But now that I have seen the whole film, I think you have given a good gift to the young people in the U.S. and Japan, who will be the bearers of the future. And I believe in it. Thank you very much. Do you get it? My ‘thank you very much’ represents my courage.”

The fireworks in Nagaoka are set off by veterans, who were detained in Siberia, and the fireworks slowly open up and disperse. I think they are very good fireworks.

SHIMOJU: I’ve seen it, too. The biggest firework called ‘San jaku dama’ (three-feet

fireworks) was really wonderful.

OBAYASHI: And those fireworks will be set off at Pearl Harbor this year at last. We need to convey our feelings through these kinds of projects. I also hope that the individual voices on that day will be conveyed to children through *These Children's Summer*

NAGAI: You would notice that Hiroshima has now become a beautiful city and it makes you think whether it was really bombed.

OBAYASHI: The hot weather is the only thing that has not changed. The memory that it was just as hot back then has remained. Objectivity does not work. It is important to convey through universality and in that sense, *These Children's Summer* is among one of the most important activities to relay the realities of war.

(August 9, 2015 at the meeting room of Setagaya Arts Foundation)

(Translation: Sumida Michiyo)





APP Taiwan Camp participants ©Wang Pi Cheng (TW)

Developments Overseas

APP (Asian Producers' Platform): Attempting to Create a Network of Producers in Asia

Yokoyama Yoshiji

APP (Asian Producers' Platform) is an attempt to create a network for performing arts producers in Asia. The network centers on organizations of producers in South Korea, Taiwan, Japan, and Australia (in Japan, the organization is ON-PAM), and since 2014 it has held annual weeklong "camps" in each country in that order. I participated in the camps in South Korea in 2014 and Taiwan in 2015. It is an important endeavor but one that has some aspects hard to understand for non-participants, and so I will here outline APP's activities.

There have rarely been discussions about creating a network of Asian performing arts producers before. There are already international networks of performing arts professionals, such as IETM. Standing originally for Informal European Theatre Meeting, that

association allows those working at European theatres to come together on an unofficial basis to talk about the issues they share. These European theatres have recently started to prioritize building networks with other regions, and today IETM is a global organization with meetings also regularly organized outside of Europe, though the Europeans nonetheless remain the leaders. However, no equivalent organization exists in Asia.

Of course, Japan and Korea already enjoy a fair amount of binational exchange, while there are opportunities for Asian performing arts producers to meet at European and North American theatre festivals, professional fairs, and other platforms. However, until now Asian performing arts professionals had never really taken the lead themselves to come together as a group. But it is actually no easy task for Asians to build a network of performing arts in Asia. There are a number of reasons for this, but the first is that “Asia” is not necessarily a region with a shared culture and history. It is not even clear what exact geographical region is indicated by the word “Asia.” These four countries have now come together for the simple reason that there were friends we could trust in each country. The members who initiated the launch of APP were mainly those based in Korea, Australia and New Zealand who had past experience working together and shared an awareness of the need for such a network in Asia.

APP’s main activity is its annual camp. Coming together for just

under a week each time, the participants engage in discussions about a range of topics (for example, “What is Asia?” “What are the issues of international co-productions?”) as well as conducting research into



Introduction by the writer about World Theatre Festival Shizuoka ©Wang Pi Cheng (TW)

local conditions. The participants number a little under 40. Five participants and two coordinators attend from the four countries mentioned above, joined by several observers (typically members of organizations providing funding and venues). There are also independent participants from Hong Kong, Macau, Shanghai, Malaysia, Singapore, and New Zealand. Participants from Japan include Shimizu Tsubasa (Ishinha), Nishizaki Moe (APAF [Asian Performing Arts Festival]), Uemura Junko (Eisei Theatre Group/Fringe Theatre Project), and Miyauchi Nao (ricca ricca*festa, International Theater Festival Okinawa for Young Audience), and with the planning team comprising Saito Kei (Bird Theatre Company Tottori), Saito Tsutomu (producer), and Nishiyama Yoko (Japan Foundation). For the most part, the producers are rising industry leaders in their thirties and forties who are able to make time to leave the places where they do their work to come together for a week. The best thing is that there is absolutely no hierarchy. When meeting industry peers at theatre festivals or professional events, you unavoidably end up with people buying and selling with each other, and then a strange hierarchy emerges based on relationships of interests and affiliated institutions. But APP aspires firstly to build a personal network among producers. During the first camp held in Seoul in 2014, groups of five or six participants from different countries stayed in the same house, and by doing basic household chores and making breakfast together we were able to build a relationship that was completely horizontal. At APP, the priority is not simply to increase the volume of exchange in the



Discussion sessions are non-hierarchical. Centre, from left: Saito Kei (Bird Theatre Company Tottori) and Shimizu Tsubasa (Ishinha) ©Wang Pi Cheng (TW)



Visiting a new theatre construction site ©Wang Pi Cheng (TW)

same way as professional fairs or international meetings, but rather firstly to increase our number of reliable friends. Due to this, I have made good contacts in close to ten areas over the past two years, communicating regularly through our Facebook group and organizing get-togethers during events such as TPAM (Performing Arts Meeting in Yokohama). These will surely be a great resource for my future work.

At the Taiwan camp in 2015, participants heard from people involved in the opening of four large-scale public theatres about the concepts behind the new facilities, which was very stimulating. Actually visiting where local producers work in Korea and Taiwan, what was really surprising was how activities that transcend national borders are part of the everyday. At the same time, there was a strong sense of crisis aware of the limitations of the intraregional market and that we must not only be content with working internally. The network of Chinese speakers, including Southeast Asia, continues to

deepen at an accelerated pace. The Japanese performing arts scene is somewhat different to others in Asia because a domestic market already exists to some extent. Against this backdrop, it is possible that a network continues to take shape within Asia that excludes Japan. However, the situation in Japan may also change sooner or later. In June 2016 it will finally be our turn to host the APP camp event in Japan (planned to be held mostly in Tokyo and Shizuoka). How will Japan engage with the network that is being drawn in Asia? It will perhaps be a moment of truth for us.

Yokoyama, Yoshiji

Born in Chiba City in 1977, he sits on the board of directors of Open Network for Performing Arts Management (ON-PAM) and is resident dramaturge at Shizuoka Performing Arts Center (SPAC). Since 2007 he has managed the programming for overseas productions at SPAC's WorldTheatreFestivalShizuoka under Mt. Fuji. He holds a doctorate in theatre studies from Paris X Nanterre and is an adjunct professor at Gakushuin University. His specialism is western performance theory and history.

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(Translation: William Andrews)



Building up personal connections: (from left to right) Low Kee Hong, Head of Artistic Development (Theatre), Performing Arts Department of WKDA (West Kowloon Cultural District Authority); Keng Yi-Wei, Artistic Director of Taipei Arts Festival; and the writer. ©Wang Pi Cheng (TW)



Red Tanks © Withit Chantamarit / B-Floor Theatre

Developments Overseas

How Can the Performing Arts Survive in Dystopia?

— Freedom of Expression and Performing Arts

Teerawat Mulvilai

This report is based on the lecture on the theme ‘Art for the Society’ hosted by Pridi Banomyong Institute in Bangkok on September 26, 2015 and it was transcribed by the lecturer.

I am the artistic director of B-Floor Theatre, a company with a history of 16 years of activities. Most of my inspiration for creating theatre comes from true events. I have almost no interest in personal stories or literary adaptations; I rarely finish these because they are not my expertise. For me, the best material for my creative work is

what happens in daily life. I believe that art reflects society and is a record of a certain period of time. As time goes by, art tells you what has happened in the year that we're living in now.

The topic I will discuss today came from when I interviewed various artists on the subject of freedom of expression and the performing arts. It was part of the 2012 fellowship by Art Network Asia and Asian Public Intellectual in 2013-14. I met and talked with performing artists from Thailand, Laos, Myanmar, Indonesia, and Japan, and gathered the information that became today's talk: how can the performing arts survive in dystopia?

For Performing Arts to Live On in Dystopia

Let us start with each word individually. The performing arts is a type of art that is staged for an audience, such as theatre, dance, puppetry, mask, pantomime, physical theatre, musicals and opera. There can be many other types of performing arts. Some serve as media, while others as education or entertainment.

As for the word "survive," in fact most artists or people working in the arts can hardly "survive" if they try to make a living solely through art. So artists really have to have a passion, and also other jobs to earn a living. Then they can set aside some time to make art. This is the real basis of "survival."

But another aspect of survival is: do we still have the freedom to express? Can we still say what we want to say? Can we create and present our work in the way that we want?

Finally, "dystopia" is a place where you don't want to live. It's full of dark elements, violence, and the wreckage of society in every corner. We do not wish for this to happen. But can artists work in a dystopian environment? We have to imagine that the atmosphere of

such utmost despair has happened before, both in the past and present. Many artists have created art under bad conditions and great artworks resulted from it. We can see, for example, Gabriel Garcia Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, which was written during the period of dictatorship in Colombia and became one of the masterpieces of world literature. Abstract art, Dadaism, Fluxus, Surrealism, Absurdism, Butoh, and many others were all born out of harsh periods of war and the contradictions in the world in which the artists lived. Artists convey anger, violence, and the absurdity of the dominant system. Their work is their questioning and frustration at the world.

Meanwhile, utopia is a dream place where mankind can live together in peace. Everything goes as it should. People are kind to each other. A kind of place everyone in every society dreams of.

And which one do we want our society or our world to be?

While artists reflect problems and dark sides of society, how do they dream of their utopia? What do they see in it?

John Lennon wrote about his utopia in 'Imagine'. Through the lyrics, he sent out his message and after a while, the song became a symbol of peace and freedom in the name of humanity. This was the message he wanted the whole world to hear. We must not forget that this was in the 1970s, the time of the Cold War between democracy, as represented by the USA, and communism, as represented by China and Russia. War broke out in many places across the world. For the sake of ideology, war, and power, many innocent people lost their lives. Through this song, the artist attempted to see through the world he was living in, imagining the world that should have been.

But communicating good wishes for society doesn't have to mean only positive presentations. By presenting society's dark side, its

ugliness and decay—in other words, presenting the counter-image of dystopia—can also help trigger society to become more aware and cautious of what could happen.

In Thailand, a prediction was made 300 years ago in the form of poetry. Titled “Ayutthaya’s Prediction,” the poem discusses all the wrongs in society, people’s foul mentalities, and the many different kinds of chaos and disasters that would take place in Ayutthaya, an old capital of Siam. The author of the poem is unknown. His identity may be hidden for security reasons, because composing poetry full of unfortunate predictions about the nation and the rulers was absolutely forbidden and could be punished by death. But it’s clear that the poet intended to deliver a message to people in his society:

Cold arrives, yet it is not time for winter
Not the wet season, yet rain occurs
Every single plant and grass
Has become a disastrous mass
Angels who used to protect the pious
Will turn to favor the unjust
Heroes are defeated by villains
Friends will murder what they once loved
Wives betray their good husbands
And lowly ones will conquer the high
Students fight against their teachers
The poor and depraved to become those in power
Virtuous men to lose their gravity
Philosophers to give in to stupidity
Weighty tiles shall rise and float above all
While gourds deep into the ground shall fall

(Excerpt from “Ayutthaya’s Prediction”)

Of course, the poem presented many twisted and illogical incidents. But the poet was actually trying to reflect the politics in Ayutthaya at the time to reveal how corrupt it was. If such a corrupt state was allowed to continue, the dystopian images in the poem could well become reality. By presenting cruel, dark images, an artist may be able to awaken people's consciousness about society.

About Censorship

When artists try to reflect the truth about society, sometimes there are some things we just cannot speak about directly. Many times people do not want to hear the straightforward truth. Art is therefore another way to code our message before it reaches the audience. And the audience can decode and interpret the message for themselves. Some may get more of the message, while others understand less. And why is it that we cannot talk directly?

When we were young, we were always told what to say and what not to say. We were told at home, school, and by everyone around us. Our words could bring harm or blessing. Some words could hurt others' feelings. It was all about the social etiquette that we had to learn in order to lead a peaceful, normal life in society.

When we grew up, beside the things we should not discuss, we were also told what kind of things we were to know and not to know about. This turned into a society where criticism is not possible. The truth cannot be sought. There is always something that's hidden like rubbish underneath the carpet.

We've also learned that if we discuss something without being cautious, apart from being unable to live peacefully in society, it could lead to life-threatening situations. Some truths stir a creepy feeling of fear in us as we talk about it.

We also have to be careful whom we're talking to, because we fear social sanction or harm brought on by dark powers. It's not just about state authorities; it could well be those around us who hurt us. Your friends and relatives with a different mindset than your own may eventually make you want to censor yourself, even though some things should be discussed and criticized. For example, this may be public policy that affects the lives of many, the use of structural violence that impacts ordinary people, and the deprivation of rights and freedom.

We have often seen "authority" trying to deal with those voices. We have seen the consequences of telling the truth and the harm it could bring. Some have disappeared while others have been imprisoned, insulted, and lost their human dignity. They are isolated and deprived of work, money, and even life. Having seen what results may come back to yourself and those around you, you are forced to choose to stay silent and give up your expression. As time passes, you become indifferent. You get used to it and you let it happen.

It is key to democracy to believe in freedom of expression. Thailand became a democracy 80 years ago, but the obstacles to developing this ideology are endless. They range from military authoritarianism, extreme conservatism, an education system that controls people to follow the state's agenda, and eliminating cultural diversity in small communities to create a singular culture that the state has complete control over. All this leads to inequality in educational and economic opportunities.

Without intellectual freedom, a society cannot be civilized. We're talking about the very basic rights to which we are entitled. But the state has only done the opposite; it controls and suppresses any ideas different to its own. It prohibits discussion and expression with laws

that are against basic rights. The state wants to hear only what it wants to hear, and shuts down all other unwanted voices. This leads to censorship, which is how the authorities examine and conceal information from the intended receiver, since the information can shake the power they have.

Building an armor of prohibition is a tool used to eliminate access to information. The government—a small group of people—has decided for the whole country, using laws for total dictatorial control, claiming that “unlawful” things are against the nation’s peace, harmony, and virtues. And now we are left with countless printed matters, books, media, films, TV programs, and artworks that are chopped up and prevented from being presented in our country. Such an action complete ignores people’s ability to think and judge things for themselves. The state still thinks that people are its children who need to be watched over. They cannot make the right judgment without good advice from the state.

Copyright for Traditional Performing Arts in Thailand

However, we are fortunate that there is still no censorship of theatre in Thailand. This may be because the scene involves just a small group of people and has not led to big impact on the larger community. But with a government with absolute power and a tendency to hunt down any thinking different to its own, it is not very far-fetched to imagine censorship on the Thai theatre scene will appear one day. We can only hope that it won’t happen. And I believe that theatre artists will not support it but rather join forces to fight for freedom of expression.

Two years ago, there was a meeting on “intangible culture,” which aimed originally to protect local cultures around the world.

The project was initiated by UNESCO in order to prevent people from using local culture like songs or performances for commercial purpose and copyrighting them as their own. A sample case is Deep Forest's song for *The Lion King*. Such a case deprives the true owner of the culture of the right to use it without permission from the copyright owner in another country, even though it is an original art that was born out of his community. In Thailand, in accordance with the campaign, many traditional art forms have been registered as national arts, such as Khon, Nang Talung, and types of music. Although it was originally well intentioned as an initiative to protect culture, Thailand has integrated elements of censorship and national security into the campaign. I myself joined this meeting twice two years ago, and such articles continued to exist. I have heard that the Intangible Culture Act has now been verified as law, and this might lead to censorship laws such as those that have been used against films in Thailand, where there is a censorship committee that examines the content of a film and judges its propriety. We all know that this has never helped art to improve in any way.

Personally, I don't mind so much as I don't use national art forms to create work. But I'm thinking about other people who may be applying traditional art forms in their contemporary works. Will this be a problem in the future? To me, this is an entry into what we may think is a "safe zone" in art.

Neighboring Countries, Laos and Myanmar

In this region, I had the opportunity to interview a Laotian artist. The Lao People's Democratic Republic (Laos) is ruled by a communist or democratic centralist government. Everything is controlled and can be inspected by the government. If you want to make

a play, you have to submit your script to the authorities to check whether you are criticizing the government. If they approve it, then you can stage it. Once the rehearsals are done, the authorities will examine again whether the original script has changed from when they first saw it. If they want it fixed, you must fix it, or else you cannot open your play to the public.

As for the Republic of the Union of Myanmar (Myanmar), it was still ruled by a military government until two years ago. It was difficult for artists to express themselves politically, especially in ways that were critical of the government. But because what the government did impacted theirs and people's lives in society, they felt the need to speak up, even if not for themselves. But the government silenced any voice it could with countless arrests and violations of the human rights of those with different ideas from the state for many years. Although Myanmar is now an open country and the atmosphere is getting more relaxed, with elections and a move towards democracy, and some political criminals and artists being released from prison, many others still remain behind bars today.

In this region, the government usually deals violently with people with different ideas to their own. It usually starts with prohibition, violating their rights, shutting down the channels of distribution and publicity, enforcing unjust laws like martial law, changing the law to increase the power of the authorities, and then eventually physical violence and depriving people of their human dignity. This includes public physical abuse, disappearances, and imprisonment, sometimes leading to injury or death.

Belarus Free Theatre

Next, I would like to talk about a theatre company that I met in

Thailand two years ago. Their works are considered harmful because they criticize their country's government. The company is called Belarus Free Theatre. They are a theatre company and a group of human rights activists from Belarus. Their works address taboo subjects in their society, such as minority groups, gender, kidnappings, life sentences, and political prisoners. They have to face constant threats from the Belarusian government, from police raids in the middle of a show to being declared "enemies of the state," forcing some of its members to seek asylum in the UK.

To watch a show by this company, a person cannot just buy a ticket and walk into the theatre. They have to express their intention to watch a performance by calling the company's manager in order to agree on a place to meet. Only some hours before the show will they be contact regarding the meeting place. They will then be picked up and transported to the venue, which may be an abandoned building or apartment—somewhere beyond the gaze of the authorities.

Belarus Free Theatre is considered illegal in its country, since the government only allows state theatres to exist. Therefore, they have always existed underground. Their audience is often advised to carry their ID cards so that, in case of arrest, they can be released sooner.

It is no surprise that Belarus Free Theatre has to face many problems, both in terms of security and finances, in trying to perform in its own country. But their unwavering determination is supported internationally by prominent figures like Hollywood actor Jude Law, Sienna Miller, Czech ex-prime minister and playwright Vaclav Havel, Rolling Stones singer Mick Jagger, and Hollywood director Steven Spielberg.

The Age of New Order in Indonesia

Let's come back closer to home in Asia—to Indonesia. The truly difficult period for artists was the time of Suharto's dictatorship, which spanned over 30 years. Artists and intellectuals were accused of being communists and hunted down. Many political enemies and people who criticized the government were disappeared. Millions of people were killed. Theatre artists were no exception. Many had to flee into the jungle and elsewhere, while others continued to express themselves politically. Some of them rehearsed in the jungle and performed in a barn, or at other times in a cemetery or market for villagers to watch. They made quick public announcements before performing for a short time, similarly to a flash mob. Even so, many were arrested and imprisoned.

One of the arrested artists was called W.S. Rendra. He was a theatre artist, poet, and founder of Bengkel Theatre. He received a government scholarship to study in the USA, and returned to his homeland to find injustice everywhere. Much of his work therefore criticized the government's actions. Rendra's works, which were very popular in Indonesia in 1970, and Bengkel Theatre, fell upon hard times when censorship by the authorities intensified. He managed, however, to create a play where the whole script consisted only of the word "B-Pop." The actors ridiculed Suharto and his dictatorial government in this comedy. With the script consisting only of the word "B-Pop" and nothing else, it could get away with officially "not criticizing the government." The word means nothing, but the audience could understand all the meaning conveyed through just one word. This is an example of indirect communication, a unique character of art created at a time when freedom of expression is non-existent.

Back then in Indonesia, in order to be able to perform a play you

were required to receive six different permissions from the theatre, police station, district office, and provincial authorities. Therefore, it was impossible for artists to criticize the government openly, and there were many examples of punishment meted out by the government to persuade theatre artists not to try. Rendra himself was arrested for his political poetry recitals. There was no such thing as opposition theatre at the time of the New Order in Indonesia because the government managed to suppress everything.

Nano Riantiarno's Teater Koma got away with some things by using humor to make political satire. Putu Wijiya, the founder of Mandiri Teater, said that he could not be like Rendra, because he was too rebellious. Everything he said made him sound like a revolutionary. He sounded violent just reading a poem. So he resorted to making theatre that was easily accessible to people because he wanted to be able to continue to work for a long time. His plays are like chocolate-coated poison that the audience can easily swallow. The message is embedded in the work and delivered to the audience without force. This strategy has enabled him to continue to create works up until today.

As for artists in other disciplines, here is the example of a puppet theatre artist called Opik, which said that in Suharto's time, the New Order was used to explain the period when the government controlled and managed the country's culture to promote its policies. In 1966, a government unit summoned puppet theatre companies in Indonesia for a meeting in Bali. They were forced into an agreement that all puppet theatre companies would support the government. This agreement meant that artists had to tell stories that were in accordance with the direction that the government wanted, as this was the only way to receive financial support. The artists who served the

government became its mouthpiece, losing their own voice to express their opinion about what was happening in society. Meanwhile, there were many other artists who refused to comply. Opik, for example, had a different idea. He believed that the arts, including puppet theatre, were not meant only to entertain or earn a living for the puppet masters, but should be spiritual leaders that open people's minds. He thought that propaganda shows to serve the government were in no way worthy as artworks. His standpoint prevented him from receiving any government support, but he could survive in his own way by creating theatre with the support of his audience.

Then in the late Suharto period, there were various movements by the people. Demonstrations arose in Jakarta, Bandung, and Yogyakarta. The movement that would influence Suharto's fall from power was the student movement. Students gathered and demonstrated nationwide, and were attacked many times by the military.

Another artist that I would like to mention is the mask artist Galis Agus. He was first trained to make traditional masks in Bali. Then he went on to create more contemporary ones. He brought his masks to perform in many places and express his political points of view. All his masks are named and most were made during Suharto's time. One mask was made to tell the story of when students were beaten by soldiers during a demonstration in 1997, one year before Suharto stepped down. Galis joined the demonstration and was an eyewitness to the incident. Soldiers chased students and used clubs to beat them. Some students went down into the canals to hide, but soldiers followed them and stepped on them with their boots. Galis made a mask with a boot footprint on it. This can be considered a record on the artist's experience. He used the mask to perform in the streets and public places. Not long after, Suharto finally stepped

down from power.

Text-based performances always had to undergo the government's inspection and censorship. This resulted in more symbolic scripts being written. During this time, there was another form of theatre that rose to existence. It is physical theatre. With their various traditional dance forms, Indonesian artists already possess extraordinary abilities to express themselves physically. From this, there developed more contemporary physical expressions with contemporary subject matters. For example, Payung Hitam was an active company at the time. Their works were symbolic, using sets, visual elements, and body movements to tell stories. Everything was presented symbolically. Things like a soldier's uniform, the color green, and Suharto's face were prohibited to be expressed in art, among many other limitations, but physical theatre or the use of visual art helped to enable artists to express their ideas in spite of these restrictions. Some theatre companies also made use of foreign plays, such as *Waiting for Godot* by Samuel Beckett, or adaptations of local literature, to reflect the ongoing situation.

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Expressive Art besides Theatre in Myanmar

Now let's come back even closer to home. In Myanmar, there are very few theatre artists compared to performance artists. Perhaps this is because Myanmar was a dictatorship for so long and artists could not express anything directly, and thus performance art was born as it employed more symbols and subtle means of communication, such as poetry. Public art was also a popular form. Alliance Française is considered a safe space for artists to showcase their work. The military is not allowed in the space, so artists can present their work freely here. Therefore, it became the place where artists of many disciplines

would come together. I know an artist called Nyein Way. I first met him in 2003 when collaborating in the Mekong Project. His poetry carries a very interesting point of view. He used to tell me that he once wanted to put his poems together and publish a book. Then the authorities asked to inspect the poems, trying to find out what it meant and whether it had any hidden agenda against the government. The authorities then told him that the poems would be printed on the left and the artist had to provide the meaning of the poem on the right, so that readers would not interpret it in any other way than what the poet already stated.

Some artists in Myanmar who could not talk about politics found an outlet in discussing religion instead. They used religion as a tool to deliver their ideas, employing comparisons and metaphors in order to address politics. This was one of the channels that artists chose.

Student Movement and Theatre in Thailand

Now let us go back to Thailand. What are the performances that could have so much impact that the government would want to step in and take control over them? One that I know of is a play by a Thammasat University student. The October 14th Uprising in 1973 was an incident when students continued to demonstrate until they had defeated the dictatorship. However, three years later in 1976, a rightist movement organized by the government fought against the students; the people were made to destroy each other. Students came together to demonstrate against Thanom Kittikachorn, the dictator ex-prime minister's return to the country, as well as against the fact that a person who put up a poster opposing Thanom's return was killed. After this incident, students created a play to express their

opinion, using this case to reflect on the ongoing violence. However, a student actor was presented by the rightist media as having mocked the crown prince. The government and rightist media then generated hatred through news and publicity, saying that the students were communists who wanted to overthrow the monarchy. Groups known as the Red Gaurs, Nawapol, and Village Scouts got together, besieged the students, and attacked and killed them on October 6th, 1976. This was truly a dystopian incident in our country's history: violence by the people against the people. The same thing has happened in Rwanda, Indonesia, Cambodia, and many other places around the world. We had hoped that we would learn the lesson of history. Instead, history has been repeated too many times as if we have never seen it happen before.

The government has created a discourse that to think differently is something criminal, garnering hatred that can lead to killing and destroying other people who have different ideas from your own as if they were the nation's enemy. This is the dark power that has clouded over Thai society until the present.

Two years ago we had *The Wolf's Bride* by Prakai Fai Theatre. Actually, the group consisted of social activists who were interested in theatre as a medium to connect with society. However, the play led to the group's members being charged with *lèse-majesté* after the play became accessible online. Some members, still students, were charged and imprisoned for two and a half years. This is the very first case where theatre has faced with criminal charges.

If we talk about what should or should not be said in society, it is clear that in this case, they were talking about something they should not. But do we agree with what happened? Isn't there something strange in what happened in this case compared to previous ones?

Codes for intellectual crimes were enforced, sentencing the perpetrators to long prison terms. It is obvious that laws are used to destroy political enemies more than to punish real criminal doing. The court's judgment in this case too appears dubious, as the law was apparently interpreted to allow a harsher punishment than in other, more severe criminal cases.

And this is the freedom of art workers in Thailand. In the future we may witness more "good" art floating up to the surface, and more "bad" art put in jail. It is what we should discuss. How shall we study it and learn from it? It's not a problem just for artists. It's a problem for the whole country.

B-Floor's *Bang La Merd : the land i do not own*

Next I would like to highlight a B-Floor Theatre production titled *Bang La Merd : the land i do not own* by Ornanong Thaisriwong. She directed, wrote, and performed this play, with one scene relating the story of a political criminal who was charged with *lèse-majesté*, sentenced to 10 years in prison, and later left to die in prison. The artist researched information from many people in order to create this piece, aiming to highlight this issue so that it could be discussed. There were always people who agreed and disagreed with the artist in the audience, but the after-talk served as an open forum where people could discuss the taboo subject freely and non-judgmentally. It was interesting that the play's after-talk could create such an atmosphere where people willingly listened to each other at a time when Thai society was heavily divided politically.

In January 2015, *Bang La Merd* was restaged after the coup had taken place. At the time when freedom of expression was at its worst, the venue was inspected by the military. Soldiers were sent to the

theatre before the preview performance, asking whether the production had asked for their permission. It was a shock to the whole team, since this was the first time ever in the 20 years of my theatre career to hear someone demanding we ask their permission to stage a play. But in order to make the play happen, the company finally sent a letter to the Royal Guard Cavalry Division requesting permission to stage the play and submitting the script, showing that it was not intended to cause offense.

Bang La Merd could finally open, with military officers present and videotaping every show. This created a great feeling of fear and intimidation, especially at a time when many academics and citizens who discussed freedom and human rights had been dealt with by the regime's martial law. B-Floor decided to react by inviting various related Thai and international organizations like Human Rights Watch, the United Nations, the European Union, Thai Lawyers for Human Rights, and local and international press to the theatre to see

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Bang La Merd: the land i do not own ©Wichaya Artamat



Bang La Merd: the land i do not own
©Wichaya Artamat

the play. Since that day, no unfortunate incident has happened to the artist or producer, but it indeed raises the question: is it still safe to make art today? How much freedom of expression do we really have now?

At the End of the Lecture

I believe that all artists I've mentioned are working on the dangerous tip of a razor blade. Of course, no one has asked them to do it, but it is their conscience. It's their responsibility to the society they live in. And why do they have to be indifferent? Many people stay in their safe zone and tell themselves to keep quiet and remain ignorant. Whatever happens is not their business. And the gaps between artists themselves grow even wider. Some support democracy, others dictatorship. Sometimes I feel we have lost a common language for communicating, as if we live in totally different worlds.

Finally, artists are only human. They are citizens of a society. They are not magical creatures with special abilities. They are people with families and loved ones. Their voices are just among many others that can reflect society as it is and propose the society that they want to see. It may be a dream of a utopia, yet everyone has their own vision of utopia. I believe that we should be able to coexist even if we have different opinions. We should protect every voice for their right to express before we judge each other.

I still believe that art and culture are a choice that can make society look back within itself, exchange ideas with others, think about social problem, find a solution, and look to the future together.

In the world today, everyone is constantly adapting and finding balance. Being more open to learning can lead to more public

decisions where every voice gets its say. Finally, we can achieve a change that is truly everybody's. But whenever such an opportunity is closed, it is also a close of intellectual light.

I would like to close by quoting an Indonesian theatre critic Harim Hade. He said that when Suharto was in power, artists produced many great works full of subtlety and wit. But after the era of dictatorship, globalization and capitalism kicked in, and it is now hard to find good art. So perhaps, he suggested, artists may actually require difficult, dystopian situations in order to create good art.

I hope that he is wrong, because if he is right, it would not only make things difficult for the artists, but also for everyone and indeed the whole country.

SETAPANA as a Performer

In November, 2014, which was before I gave the lecture, I returned to my home country after interviewing artists in various countries and presented a solo performance series called *SETAPANA* (Establishment). The series consists of two pieces and it was accounted 'a work of courage and humanism' in the Bangkok Post and selected as one of the five best performances in 2014. I would like to end my report by briefly introducing the two works.

Red Tanks is based on a true incident that occurred in southern Thailand about forty years ago. At that time, horror and hate toward communism were implanted in people's minds and they went out of control, massacring people suspected of being communists. Many people were captured and tortured and in Phatthalung Province in southern Thailand it went far as some hundreds of people regarded as suspects squashed into 500-litre oil tins, burned alive and then

abandoned in the mountains. Recently, people who have voiced their objection toward the government are being imprisoned or have gone missing. The incident that occurred in the past has cast a shadow on the current situation.



Red Tanks © Withit Chantamarit / B-Floor Theatre



ICEBERG © B-Floor Theatre

ICEBERG is about a man who has come to a public official's house to deliver ice gradually turning into a monster in the house that is luxurious but as cold as ice. How a man, neither taught nor learnt, transforms into a totally different person is depicted. Any ordinary person can turn into a perpetrator at any time. This play was premiered at Bangkok Theater Festival and was highly acclaimed both by the audience and critics, winning four prizes including the Best Director's Award.

Mulvilai, Teerawat

Co-artistic director of B-Floor. He is a theatre artist working on a variety of projects as a director of physical theatre. He pursues criticism toward the society and politics through his creation and is regarded as "a director who has the strongest critical spirit and has gained high social meaning."

(Translation : Sasapin Siriwanij / Sumida Michiyo)



SPECIAL FEATURE 'Theatre Born in Conflict Zones 7'



Ismail at Isabel ©Suzuki Jun

SPECIAL FEATURE

A Report on 'Theatre Born in Conflict Zones 7' Theatre and the World — Japan Meets the World

Niino Morihiro

The International Theatre Institute (ITI) is a non-governmental organization under the umbrella of UNESCO and various countries' local centres of ITI have been actively involved in projects related to the theme 'Theatre in Conflict Zones' that takes on UNESCO's theme of 'Art and Peace Building'. The Japan Centre of ITI has also acted in concert with this trend and embarked on the 'Theatre in

Conflict Zones' project back in 2009. Tokyo Metropolitan Theatre has been taking part in the project as a co-host since 2012.

'Theatre and the World—Japan Meets the World' was set as the theme for this year's 'Theatre in Conflict Zones' programme. Marking seven years since the project started in Japan, plays written by Nigerian, Filipino and Syrian playwrights were introduced through dramatic readings. Events linked to the project, such as theatre talks, a workshop, lectures and a theatre conference, which were designed to help understand each country's theatre-related situations, were held at Tokyo Metropolitan Theatre from December 16th to 20th. The project drew many people's interest and the event space was almost full every time.

This year, Ali Mahdi Nouri (Sudan / UNESCO's Artist for Peace and Goodwill Ambassador) was invited to the event from the headquarters of ITI. Ali Mahdi started working as the National Director of SOS Children's Village in 1993 and he met child soldiers and war orphans in the conflict zone located in the southern part of Sudan (currently South Sudan). He therefore started helping the children so that they could readjust to the society through theatre activities. Since then, he has been actively engaged in community-based theatre works. Ali Mahdi talked about ITI's 'Theatre Born in Conflict Zone' series and said, "It started off as a project between Sudan, which itself is a conflict zone, and Germany, which is a country that has renounced war." When Ali Mahdi gave a presentation about his activities in Sudan at the ITI's World Congress, Thomas Engel from the German Centre of ITI became interested in his activities, and their collaboration led to the start of the project. The lectures and

workshop gave us an opportunity to get a glimpse of Ali Mahdi's theatre activities in Africa.



Rody Vera (left) and
Ali Mahdi Nouri (right)

<Dramatic Reading>
Madmen and Specialists (Nigeria)

Written by Wole Soyinka

Translated by Aihara Ayako

Directed by Ito Masaru

Music by Wada Kei

Cast : Yokobori Etsuo (Seinenza Theatre Company), Natori Yukimasa (Seinenza), Matsukuma Tsurumatsu (Seinenza), Mizushima Kanna (Shinjuku Ryozanpaku), Hisamatsu Yuko (Seinenza), Yamaga Kazuhiro (Seinenza), Kagoshima Jiro (TRASHMASTERS), Ogino Takatsugu (Staff-Ten), Okinaga Masashi (Bunkaza Theatre Company) and Aoki Kazunori (Bunkaza Theatre Company)

Date : December 16th & 17th

Madmen and Specialists ©Ishizawa Chieko



Wole Soyinka is a Nigerian writer born in 1934 and he has a Yorùbá lineage. He became the first African to be awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1986.

After studying at a university in Nigeria, he went to England to study literature at the University of Leeds and he started writing plays while he was a student there. He worked at the Royal Court Theatre in London and later on he went back to his native country, where he taught at a local university.



Madmen and Specialists ©Ishizawa Chieko

Soyinka was imprisoned due the Nigerian Civil War (Biafran War, 1967-1970) and he wrote *Madmen and Specialist* (premiered in 1970) based on his experiences behind the bars. Set in a home-cum-clinic of Dr. Bero, who has returned from war, the play portrays the conflict between the doctor, whose personality has changed due his experiences at war, and his father. The play brings out the insanity of war that deprives humanity.

The play was featured in the special lecture of the ‘Theatre Born in Conflict Zones 6’ back in 2014 and Arai Jun read a part of the play. Because it was such an interesting story, the organizers decided to introduce the whole play through a dramatic reading a year later, which was extremely gratifying. The director focused on the complicated power relationships in the original play, to which the actors



Madmen and Specialists ©Ishizawa Chieko

added life with their voices and gestures, and the world of the play that is made up of the dark insanity of war mingled with the customs of the Yorùbás was delivered to the audience through a three-dimensional structure.

Meanwhile, as the play was such an epic, it was quite hard to stay focused on a two-hour long play without an interval. If it was put on stage as a full-scale production, the four beggars that appear in the opening scene would no doubt entertain the audience's eyes as harlequins and the fire in the last scene set by two old ladies, who were traditional shamanistic healers symbolizing the heteromorphic super-

natural powers of the African soil, would also become a huge spectacle. Although the reading performance was extremely interesting as it was read by distinctive actors and directed by Ito who has an established reputation for his deep and accurate comprehension of plays, I was left with a impression that the reins of power and the complex reality of wrongness in Africa could not be depicted sufficiently just through a reading. I hope that it will be presented as a full-fledged production some day in the near future.

<Dramatic Reading>
Ismail at Isabel (The Philippines)

Written by Rody Vera

Translated by Chinda Mayumi

Directed by Tateyama Hiromi

Assistant to the Director : Hirata Mari

Cast : Ito Saho, HiRO (Amami Shimauta no Kai), Kondo Jun, Takahashi Maki (Tokidoki-Jido), Kawachi Tetsujiro, Kimura Emika, Iwasawa Yukiko and Sekine Mari

Date : December 18th & 19th

Rody Vera is a Filipino playwright born in 1960, who is also an actor, theatre director and screenwriter. He works as a member of PETA (Philippine Educational Theatre Association) and has received a number of awards. He is also known in Japan's theatre community as he has performed in Japan with the Black Tent Theatre and Theatre Company Rinkogun as well as taking part in 'Asia Contemporary Theatre Collaboration Project' held at Setagaya Public Theatre. When Rinkogun produced a triple bill titled *PHILIPPINE BEDTIME STORIES 2* in March 2006, his play *Ang Unang Aswang* (i.e., The Birth of A Filipino Vampire) was mounted and received favourable comments.

Ismail at Isabel is an allegory dealing with the conflict between Muslims and Christians. Up in the mountains of

Ismail at Isabel ©Suzuki Jun



Mindanao, there used to be a little village where people lived happily together regardless of whether they believed in Islam or Christianity. Based upon this true story, the playwright has created a parable appealing the meaninglessness of religious conflict. Guerilla fighters and the national army come to the village where the villagers live in peace. The village is destroyed and a Christian girl and a Muslim boy, who are good friends, set out on a journey but they lose sight of each other. One day, the boy, who has started working for the guerillas, runs into the girl by chance and saves her, and with the hope of reviving their village, once again they set out on a journey together.

The director Tateyama Hiromi created an enjoyable piece with song, dance and live music, drawing on the versatility of the actors and musicians that included HiRO, a member of Amami Shimauta no Kai. As a result, it kind of went beyond a reading and turned into an appealing performance that could draw a crowd even if it was performed on the streets as it was. In the last scene, the boy and girl go around the houses in the village and knock on the doors to ask whether someone knows a place where everyone is equal and love each other. No one, however, open their doors and all they do is to

watch. This scene overlapped with the reality of Mindanao, where there is an ongoing conflict in the name of religion, and it brought out the cruelty of the world that we live in. It was indeed a well-made play catered for people of all ages and genders that made us think about the realities of life.



Ismail at Isabel ©Suzuki Jun

<Dramatic Reading>

Qabl Al Asaha / Before Dinner (Syria)

Written by Yasser Abu Shaqra

Translated by Udo Satoshi

Directed by Shirai Keita

Cast : Ito Hiroko (Ryuzanji Company), Yo Takashi (Taptips Office) and Shirai Keita (Onsen Dragon)

Date : December 19th and 20th

This is the first play written by Yasser Abu Shaqra, a poet born in Damascus in 1985. His grandfather is a refugee from Palestine and the playwright himself has also been forced to live in exile, leaving his homeland Syria that is currently trapped in civil war.

When I attended the reading of *Qabl Al Asaha / Before Dinner*, I got the impression that the play was imbedded with the agonies of the playwright himself, struggling in midst of the world of Western

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Qabl Al Asaha / Before Dinner ©Ishizawa Chieko



Qabl Al Aasha / Before Dinner ©Ishizawa Chieko

intellectuals, the oppressive system of his homeland Syria and its destruction. It is, so to speak, a farce sprinkled with metaphors for the current situation in Syria. The strange behavior of the son starting to masturbate when his emotional conflict with his mother intensifies and then smearing the wall with his semen is repeated. Every time it is depicted with slightly different variation, through which the playwright is probably trying to denounce the reality of a conflict that is suspended in mid air with no way out.

I could feel the dramatic tastes of the ‘in-er-face theatre movement’ that occurred in London back in the late 1990s, which brought to the world playwrights like Sara Kane who expressed themselves in grotesque and violent manners.

In order to allow the text to be delivered to the audience without dragging the tempo, the director said he made some minor cuts in the play. Moreover, the director himself appeared on stage as the DJ, who gave the cues to restart the story and also read the stage directions. Therefore, an animated feeling unlike conventional readings was created on stage. The audience was drawn into the domestic play around the mother and the son, were appalled and laughing, but behind such surface, the playwright’s heartrending agonies could be felt, and it turned into a special kind of experience.

At the post-performance talk, there were discussions about the son, who persistently accused his seemingly chaste mother about having extramarital affairs after his father was killed and about the links between the current Syrian President Assad, the son's father and the nation. Naturally, the discussions did not lead to just one conclusion and each person probably had their own way to interpret the play. The fact that we could share a contemporary play from Syria, which indeed is currently the hot spot of conflicts, through which the poet in midst of agony was sending out his messages, had a great meaning.

Post-performance talks were held every time after the three plays were presented, and there were heated debates during the Q & A sessions. The theme and guest speakers of the talks were as follows :

**<Theatre Talk 1>
'About 'Theatre Born in Conflict Zones'**

Date : December 16th, after reading performance of *Madmen and Specialists*

Guest speaker : Ali Mahdi Nouri (UNESCO Artist for Peace / Sudan)

**<Theatre Talk 2>
'About *Madmen and Specialists*'**

Date : December 17th, after the reading performance

Guest speakers : Aihara Ayako (scholar of African Literature, lecturer at Hosei University) and Ito Masaru (director)

**<Theatre Talk 3>
'Theatre Exchange between Japan and the Philippines'**

Date : December 18th

Panelists : Rody Vera, Takeuchi Ichiro (playwright and director), Sano Shoko (Senior Programme Officer of the Arts Council Tokyo)

**<Theatre Talk 4>
'Theatre in the Philippines'**

Date : December 18th, after reading performance of *Ismail at Isabel*

Guest speakers : Rody Vera, Sakate Yoji (playwright, director and President of Japan Playwrights' Association)

**<Theatre Talk 5>
'About *Ismail at Isabel*'**

Date : December 19th, after the reading performance

Guest speaker : Rody Vera

**<Theatre Talk 6>
'Theatre in Syria'**

Date : December 18th, after the reading performance of *Qabl Al Aasha / Before Dinner*

Guest speakers : Udo Satoshi (scholar of Arabic and Berber Literature and Theatre, associate professor at Kagoshima University)

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These theatre talks mentioned above except number 3 were moderated and facilitated by Hayashi Hideki (Japanese Centre of International Theatre Institute)

Besides the theatre talks mentioned above, four other events were held.

**<Workshop>
'Forum Theatre in Africa'**

Date : December 19th

Facilitator : Ali Mahdi Nouri (UNESCO Artist of Peace / Sudan)

**<Lecture and Discussion>
'Theatre in Conflict Zones' and Africa's Forum Theatre'**

Date : December 19th

Lecturer : Ali Mahdi Nouri (UNESCO Artist for Peace / Sudan)

<Theatre Conference>

'The World and Theatre—Japan Meets the World'

Panelists : Niino Morihiro (President of International Association of Theatre Critics [AICT/IATC] Japan Centre and professor at Rikkyo University), Seki Tomoko (theatre studies and critique, Japan Society for the Promotion of Science, Waseda University), Udo Satoshi, Ito Masaru, Tateyama Hiromi, Shirai Keita

Moderator : Shichiji Eisuke (theatre critic)

Niino, Morihiro

Incumbent President of the Japan Centre of International Association of Theatre Critics (AICT/IATC) and works as a professor at Rikkyo University. A scholar of German Theatre and the author of *Theaterstadt Berlin* (i.e., Theatre City Berlin). Also works as a translator and has translated *Postdramatisches Theater* (i.e., Postdramatic Theatre, joint-translation), *Die Verstörung* (Irritation), *Das Letzte Feuer* (The Final Fire), *Die dritte Generation* (The Third Generation, introduced at Theatre in Conflict Zones 4), etc.

(Translation : Sumida Michiyo)

Companion Volume
“Theatre Abroad 2016”
(Japanese)

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World Theatre Day Message by Anatoly Vasiliev

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Office at UNESCO UNESCO, 1 rue Miollis, 75732 Paris Cedex 15, France

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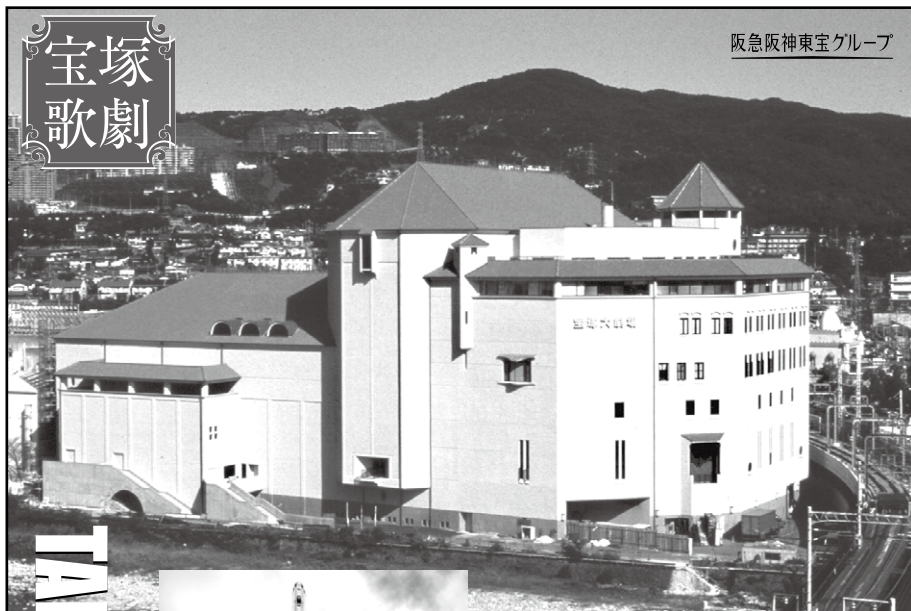
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TOO EXPENSIVE OR NOT, THAT IS THE QUESTION

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

HEAVEN CREATES A MAN NEITHER ABOVE NOR UNDER A MAN

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

WHAT DOES TOMIN GEKIJO MEAN?

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

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

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



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東京都中央区築地四丁目一番一号
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