

国際演劇年鑑 2017

Theatre
Yearbook
2017

Theatre
in japan

日本の舞台芸術を知る

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

公益社団法人 国際演劇協会日本センター
ITI / UNESCO

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Published in March, 2017

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Commissioned by the Agency for Cultural Affairs,
Government of Japan in the fiscal 2016
under the Human Resources Development Programme
for the Next Generation of Cultural Creators.

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Plate-making	Yubido Co., Ltd. Yamamura Printing Co., Ltd.
Printing	Sankyosha Co., Ltd.
Binding	Wincam Co., Ltd.

Printed in Japan

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 2016, the ‘Theatre Born in Conflict Zones’ series was carried out for the eighth consecutive year and two new plays from Iran and Belgium 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, 2017

In commemoration of the World Theatre Day

Nagai Taeko
President

Japanese Centre of International Theatre Institute

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Names are presented in the style of the person's country of origin.
For Japanese names, the order is family name followed by given name.

舞臺芸術
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**Shots from the Performing Arts in Japan
in 2016**

Noh and Kyōgen



Kagekiyo (General Kagekiyo)
2nd Ōtsuki Bunzō Yūichi no kai,
Ōtsuki Bunzō
© Moriguchi Mitsuru



Wakana (Wine, Women and Spring) Reconstructed Kyōgen, National Noh Theatre Regular Program, Yamamoto Yasutarō
© National Noh Theatre



Ômu Komachi (Komachi's Parrot-Reply Poem) Kahō-kai, Nomura Shirō © Suzuki Kaoru

Noh and Kyōgen



Dai Dengaku Yorozu Kyōgen Special Program : The 13th Memorial Program for Manzō VIII, Nomura Man and others
© Yorozu Kyōgen Company



Tenku (The Drum from Heaven) Memorial Program for Kanze Toyosumi/ Hōshō Kan/ Sowa Hiroshi at the 22nd Nohgaku-za Jishukōen, Kanze Tetsunojō © Yoshikoshi Ken



Utsubo-Zaru (The Monkey Quiver) The name-taking ceremonial programs of Shigeyama Sensaku V and Shigeyama Sengorō XIV, Shigeyama Sengorō XIV, Shigeyama-Kyōgen-kai © Uesugi Haruka

Noh and Kyōgen



Hōshō Kan Kagekiyo (General Kagekiyo)
on December 11th, 2015
Tessen-kai 90th Memorial Program of Noh
© Yoshikoshi Ken



Ioriume (The Plum Blossom Hut)

The name-taking ceremonial programs of Shigeyama Sensaku V and Shigeyama Sengorō XIV, Shigeyama Sensaku V, Shigeyama-Kyōgen-kai
© Uesugi Haruka

Kabuki



Kamakura Sandaiki
(The Three Generations of Kamakura Shōguns)
Nakamura Kichiemon (left), Nakamura Jakuemon V (right)
© Shochiku



Ichinotani Futaba Gunki Kumagai Jinya (Chronicle of the
Battle of Ichinotani Kumagai's Battle Camp)
Nakamura Shikan VIII © Shochiku

Kabuki



Arashi no Yoru ni (One Stormy Night) Onoe Matsuya (left), Nakamura Shidō (right) © Shochiku



Koharu Nagi Okitsu Shiranami Kogitsune Reiza (The Magical Thief, Kogitsune Reiza) Onoe Kikunosuke (centre)

© National Theatre



Genroku Chūshingura Ohama Goten Tsunatoyo Kyō (The Treasury of Loyal Retainers in the Genroku Era Lord Tokugawa Tsunatoyo) Ichikawa Somegorō (left), Kataoka Nizaemon (right) © Shochiku



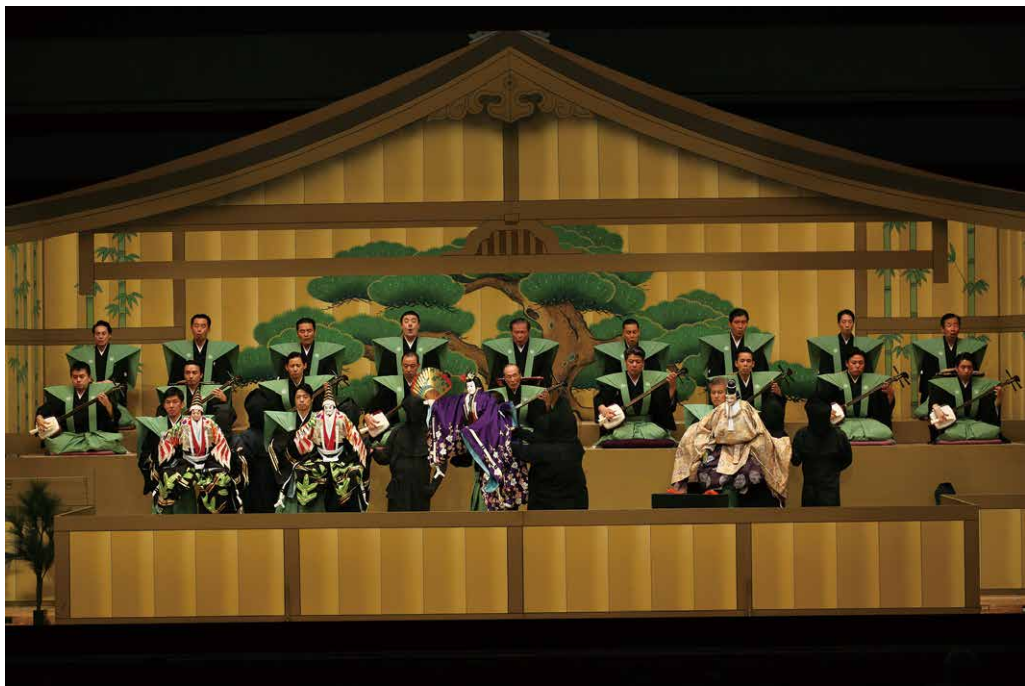
Kanadehon Chūshingura Yoichibei uchi Kanpei Harakiri no ba (The Treasury of Loyal Retainers Kanpei's Suicide in Yoichi-bei's House) Onoe Kikugorō (centre) and others © National Theatre

Bunraku



Imoseyama Onna Teikin (Mt. Imo and Mt. Se: An Exemplary Tale of Womanly Virtue)

© National Bunraku Theatre cooperated with NPO Ningyo Joruri Bunrakuza Mutsumi-kai



Kotobuki Shiki Sanbasō (Long Live Sanbasō) © National Theatre cooperated with NPO Ningyō Joruri Bunrakuza Mutsumi-kai



Kanadehon Chūshingura (The Treasury of Loyal Retainers)
© National Theatre cooperated with NPO Ningyō Joruri Bunrakuza Mutsumi-kai

Bunraku



**Toyotake Shimatayū VIII on his Retirement Stage,
*Sekitori Senryō Nobori***

(The Sumo Wrestler's Banner)

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

Yoshida Bunjaku (1928 - 2016)
Hanakurabe Shiki no Kotobuki, Sekidera Komachi
(The Celebration of the Four Seasons,
Komachi at The Sekidera Temple) on January, 2015
© National Bunraku Theatre
cooperated with NPO Ningyo Joruri Bunrakuza
Mutsumi-kai



Musicals



Kinky Boots Amuse, Inc./Fuji Television Network, Inc./Sunrise Promotion Tokyo, Inc. © Hikichi Nobuhiko

Musicals



The Bells of Notre Dame Shiki Theatre Company © Uehara Takashi



Jersey Boys 2016 © Toho Co., Ltd. Theatrical Division



For the People : Lincoln, the Man Who Sought Freedom Takarazuka Revue Company © Takarazuka Revue

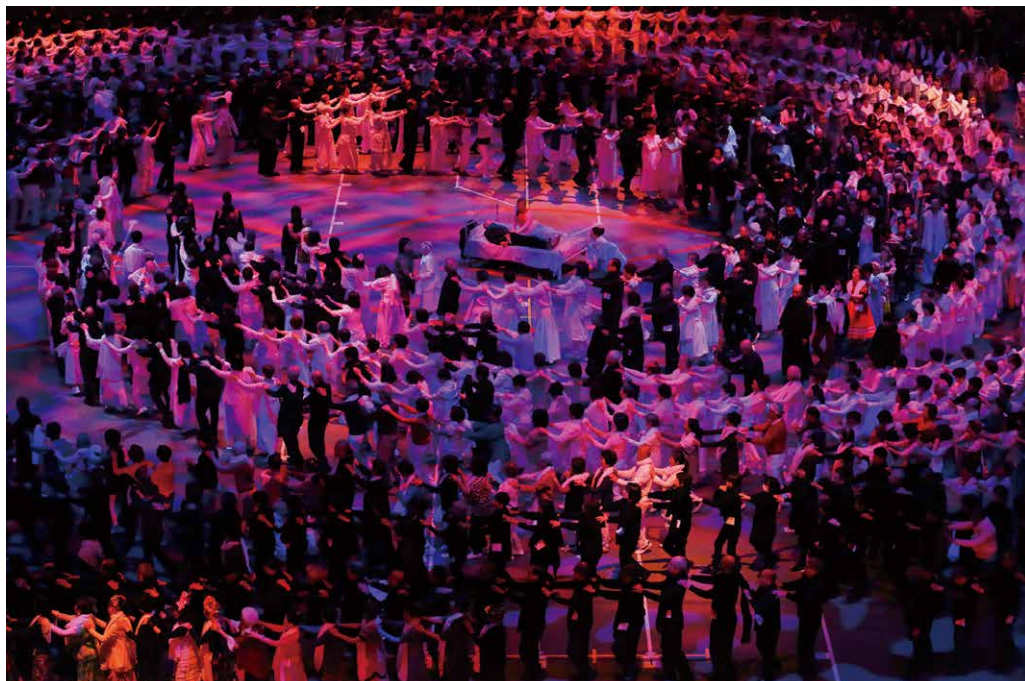


Grand Hotel Umeda Arts Theater © GEKKO

Contemporary Theatre



Sai-no-kuni Shakespeare Series #32 **Measure for Measure** Saitama Arts Foundation, HoriPro Inc © Watanabe Takahiro



The 10000 Gold Theater 2016 **The Gold Symphony -my dream, your dream-** Saitama Prefecture, Saitama Arts Foundation
© Miyagawa Maiko



Cressida Cat Produce Co., Ltd. © Oka Chisato



Amahara Ishinha © Inoue Yoshikazu

Contemporary Theatre



Disgraced Pasona Group © Yano Tomomi



Gekirin (Imperial Wrath) NODA MAP © Shinoyama Kishin



The Husband and Wife hi-bye © Aoki Tsukasa



Setagaya Public Theatre+KERA•MAP #007 *Cinema and the Lover* Setagaya Public Theatre © Midoh Yoshinori

Contemporary Theatre



Ninagawa Yukio (1935 - 2016)
© Ninagawa Mika

Matsumoto Yūkichi (1946 - 2016)
© Inoue Yoshikazu



Children's and Youth Theatre and Puppet Theatre



Shinigami (The God of Death) Puppet Theatre PUK © Yoshikawa Yasushi

Children's and Youth Theatre and Puppet Theatre



Chiisai 'Tsu' ga Kieta Hi (The Day All the Little 'Tsu's Disappeared) Gekidan Nakama © Hiyaama Takashi (A-I Co., Ltd)



Yoake no Rakugo (The Dawning of Rakugo) Gekidan Urinko Theater Company © Oota Masahiro



Inochi no Matsuri (The Festival of Life) Theatre Tampopo © Yamazaki Kazuo

Japanese Classical Dance



Shibon Fujikage Seiju (right), Fujikage Shizuaki (left) © Okuda Shotaro



Yūko no kai Gen-ya (The Plain) Nishikawa Yūko © Video Photo Saito



Japanese Traditional Dance Troupe Kikunokai **Performance in Sri Lanka** © Kikunokai



Sonokisuke Create & Dance **Osozakura Teniha no Nanamoji (Late Cherry Blossoms in Seven Letters)**
 Hanayagi Sonokisuke (left), Fujima Kanza (right) Office Taku © Ishikawa Masakatsu

Ballet



The Little Mermaid Jinushi Kaoru Ballet Company © Obana Aoi



Asuka (Asuka Story) Asami Maki Ballet Tokyo © Shikama Takashi

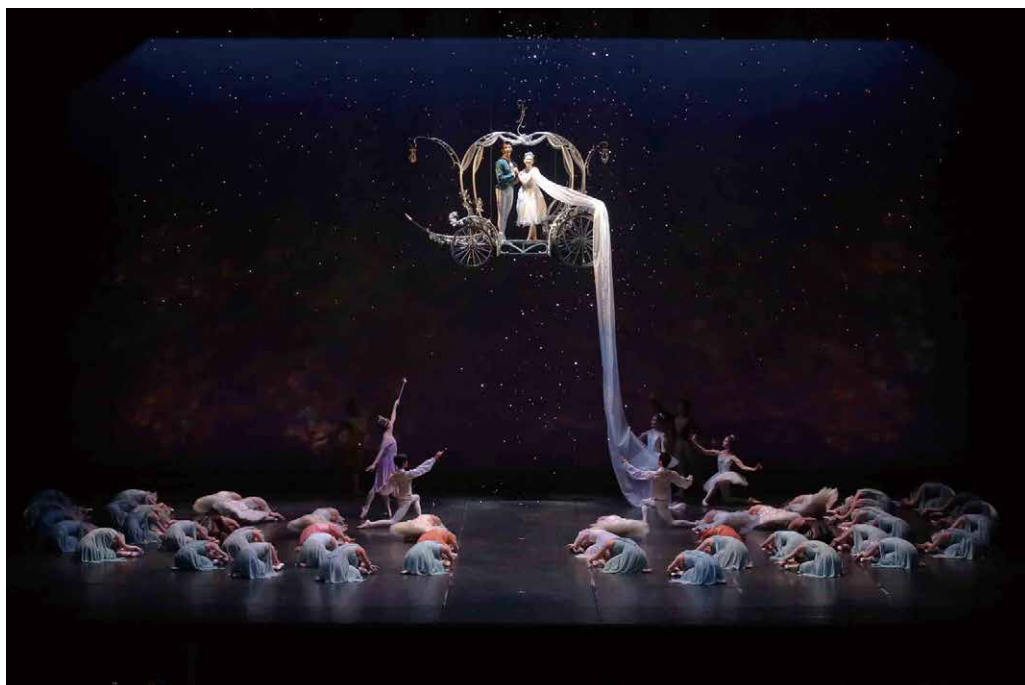


Romeo and Juliet Matsuyama Ballet Company © Hiyama Takashi (A-I Co., Ltd)

Ballet



Letter to His Father Tokihiko Sakamoto & Hisako Takabe Climb Rejoice Company © Tanioka Hidemasa (Staff Tes)



Cinderella Reiko Matsuoka Ballet Company © Murahashi Kazuaki

Contemporary Dance and Butoh



Gegeki dance, Saburo Teshigawara x Yosuke Yamashita **up** Tokyo Metropolitan Theatre / KARAS © Abe Akihito



Dairakudakan Temptenshiki **Paradise** Dairakudakan © Kawashima Hiroyuki

Contemporary Dance and Butoh



***ASTERISK Goodbye, Snow White** Tokyo Gegagay / Parco Co., Ltd © Kamiyama Yosuke



La Bayadère – Nation of Illusion Noism © Shinoyama Kishin



The World has Shrunk, and Only a Certain Fact Remains Nibroll © Miyawaki Shintaro



IKINONE (Breath of Life) Co.Yamada Un © Hatori Naoshi

Contemporary Dance and Butoh



GEAR Art Complex © Inoue Yoshikazu



Lung Ta (Wind Horse): Blow a Strong Wind
Performance Troupe TAIHEN
© bozzo

舞臺芸術
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The Japanese Performing Arts
in 2016

Noh and Kyōgen

A Rich Variety of Noh Programs

Nishi Tetsuo

Awards received

In 2016, the *shite* (main role) performers Nomura Shirō and Ōtsuki Bunzō were designated, ‘Preserver of Important Intangible Cultural Properties - Individual Certification’ (National Living Treasure). This brings the total of those who have been awarded this honor to 43 persons, 11 of whom are currently living.

Nomura Shirō was born in 1936 and is a *shite* performer of the Kanze School. He is the 4th son of the Kyōgen performer Nomura Manzō 6th of the Izumi School. His first stage appearance was in the Kyōgen play *Utsubo-Zaru* (The Monkey’s Quiver) in 1940. He has since then successfully performed such great works as: *Dōjōji* (The Serpent Demon at Dōjōji Temple), *Sotoba Komachi* (Komachi at the Stupa), *Higaki* (The Woman of the Cypress Fence), *Obasute* (The Old Woman on Obasute Mountain), *Sekidera Komachi* (Komachi at Sekidera Temple) and others. Nomura Shirō is a member of the Kanze-kai as well as the Tessen-kai, and he is also a Professor Emeritus at Tokyo University of the Arts and President of the Japan Nohgaku Society.

Ōtsuki Bunzō was born in 1942. He is a *shite* performer of the Kanze School. The eldest son of *shite* performer Ōtsuki Hideo, his first stage appearance was in 1947 in *Kuramatengu* (Yoshitsune’s encounter with the Goblin of Kurama), in which he appeared as a *kokata* (child performer). He has also successfully performed the

works *Dōjōji*, *Sotoba Komachi*, *Higaki* and *Sekidera Komachi* mentioned above. In addition, he is a member of the Ōtsuki Kanze-kai and the Administrative Director at the Ōtsuki Sei-in Noh Theatre.

The Japan Art Academy Prize was awarded to *shite* performer Takahashi Akira of the Hōshō School. He was born in 1934. The eldest son of Takahashi Susumu, he received instruction from Hōshō Kurō 17th, Hōshō Fusao, Kondo Kenzō as well as his father.

The Award of the Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology to New Artists for the Encouragement of the Arts was given to *kotsuzumi* (small shoulder drum) performer Narita Tatsushi of the Kō School. He was born in 1964, and received instruction from Sowa Hiroshi and Sowa Masahiro.

The Grand Prize for Excellence at the Arts Festival of the Agency for Cultural Affairs (Theatre Division) was awarded to Kyōgen performer Zenchiku Ryūhei of the Ōkura School.

The Hōsei University Nohgaku Award in Memory of Kanze Hisao was presented to *taiko* (stick drum) performer Kotera Sashichi of the Kanze School and *kotsuzumi* performer Ōkura Genjirō of the Ōkura School.

Kotera Sashichi was born in 1946. He was the eldest son of *taiko* performer Kotera Shunzō, and received instruction from Kanze Motonobu 16th.

Ōkura Genjirō was born in 1957. He was the second son of *ōtsuzumi* performer Ōkura Chōjūrō 15th, and was instructed by his father. He is now the 16th head of the Ōkura School (*kotsuzumi*) as well as the acting head of the Ōkura School (*ōtsuzumi*).

The Saika Award of 2016 was given to ‘Nagomi Kyōgen-kai

Czech’.

‘Nagomi Kyōgen-kai Czech’ is a professional Kyōgen troupe that performs in the Czech language in the Czech Republic as well as in other countries all around Eastern Europe, their spokesman is the Kyōgen performer Ondřej Hýbl.

The appointments of new officers in the Nohgaku Association were also announced in the course of the year. The new Chairman is Kanze Tetsunojō, Managing Director Honda Mitsuhiro, and new Executive Directors are Takeda Munekazu, Kagawa Seiji, and Kunikawa Jun. In addition, there were 18 Directors and 2 Auditors appointed as well. Kanze Kiyokazu, Kongō Hisanori and Nomura Man received appointments as Advisors.

Exhibitions and Symposiums

The National Noh Theatre’s exhibition “Noh in the Houses of the Early Modern Feudal Lords” was conducted from January 6th to March 27th in the National Noh Theatre Material Exhibition Room.

Various materials, such as: correspondence between Noh performers and feudal lords as well as other high ranking members of the warrior class, Noh programs, masks and costumes, as well as *katatsuke* (manuals for movement) and *utaibon* (written chant texts), in all, 66 items from the early to the late Edo Period were on display for inspection.

The Yokohama Noh Theatre featured a special performance series called ‘Traditional Noh and Kyōgen Masks’ on June 11th, July 17th, August 21st and September 24th. Masks passed down within each school and each house were used in performances, which

featured famous masks such as: *Hakushiki jō* (Old Man - white), *Kokushiki jō* (Old Man - black) made by Nikkō, used by *shite* performer Umewaka Genshō in a performance of *Okina*; *Yuki no Ko-omote* (Young Woman of the Snow), made by Tatsueemon was worn by Kongō Tatsunori in *Kakitsubata - zōgen no hyōshi* (The Spirit of the Iris) and the mask *Fushiki-zō* (Middle Aged Female) made by Zōami and worn by Hōshō Fusao in *Yuya* (The Lady Yuya). In addition, Kanze Tetsunojō wore the mask *Kawazu* (Haggard Man) made by Himi in *Fujito* (The Tragedy at Fujito)

The Nohgaku Performers Association hosted a symposium called, ‘*Shikigaku* (Ceremonial Music) of the Edo Period and the Present Day’ at the National Noh Theatre on February 4th, which was presided over by Noh *shite* performer Kanze Yoshimasa, Kyōgen performer Nomura Man, the former director of the Agency for Cultural Affairs Kondō Seiichi and former CEO of the 2020 Olympic Committee Mizuno Masato.

Successions of Heads of Schools (Sōke)

In 2016, the *waki* (supporting role) performer Hōshō Kinya was named the 13th Head of the Hōshō School. He was born in 1967, and is the eldest son of Hōshō Kan.

Kanze Shinkurō, a *kotsuzumi* performer of the Kanze School, became the 19th Head of that school. He was born in 1965, and is the eldest son of Kanze Toyosumi.

Taiko performer Komparu Kuninao of the Komparu School became the 24th leader of the Komparu School. He was born in 1987, and is the eldest son of *taiko* performer Komparu Kunikazu, who recently passed away.

Finally, the *ōtsuzumi* (large hip drum) performer of the Kadono School, Kamei Hirotada became the 15th head of the school. He was born in 1974, and he is the eldest son of *ōtsuzumi* performer Kamei Tadao.

Performances of Great Works in 2016

I will now mention some of the performances of the most important works of the Noh repertoire in 2016. In the career of a Noh performer, the first performance of *Dōjōji* is an important milestone, however, I will list all performances throughout the year, whether first time or repeat performances, in chronological order (variant performances are omitted).

Umewaka Genshō	(March 21st, Umewaka-kai Special Program)
Yabu Katsunori	(March 27th, Hōshō-kai Special Program)
Tatsumi Manjirō	(April 17th, Manjirō no Kai)
Mikata Shizuka	(April 30th, Program of Noh Commemorating Kichibē's 60th Birthday)
Umewaka Motonori	(May 14th, Umeda Noh)
Takushima Noriko	(May 28th, Shōfū-kai Special Program)
Nakamori Kanta	(June 19th, Program for beginners of Noh)
Katayama Kurōemon	(October 8th, Nobeoka-Tengaichi Takigi Noh)
Sakai Ototaka	(October 9th, Hakushō-kai)
Kawamura Kazuaki	(October 9th, Kawamura Family Special Memorial Program)
Ōnishi Fumihisa	(October 22nd, Umeda Noh)
Kanze Atsuo	(October 30th, 17th Memorial Noh for Kanze Tetsunojō Seisetsu 8th)
Kanze Yoshimasa	(November 26th, Know-Noh Noh)
Tatsumi Manjirō	(November 26th, Manjirō no Kai)
Yamanaka Kazuma	(December 17th, Ō-Ei-kai)
Aoki Ken-ichi	(December 25th, Aoki Tadaichi 50th Memorial Program of Noh)

Next among the great works I will list those dealing with old-woman sometimes referred to as ‘old-crone plays’ (variant performances omitted).

Ōmu Komachi (Komachi's Parrot-Reply Poem)	Kagawa Seiji (January 30th, The Yokohama Noh Theatre Regularly Schedule Program) Kanze Kiyokazu (May 21st, Fukuoka Kanze-kai) Tsumura Reijirō (July 2nd, Ryokusen-kai Special Program) Nomura Shirō (July 10th, Kahō-kai) Hayashi Kiemon (October 23rd, Kyoto Kanze Noh)
Obasute	Kanze Yoshimasa (March 20th, Kamiasobi) Kanze Yasuhide (September 19th, Yasuhide no Kai) Ōe Matasaburō (October 9th, Ōe Noh Theatre Jishukōen) Saeki Kikuko (November 26th, Saeki Kikuko no Kai)
Sotoba Komachi	Mikata Ken (April 3rd, Mine no Kai) Katō Shingo (May 5th, Mei no Kai)

New Compositions (Shinsaku) and Reconstructed Works of Noh and Kyōgen

Under the heading, New Compositions, I have included not only ‘newly-composed’ works as the expression ‘*shinsaku*’ suggests, but also works that have been performed previously, although they are not part of the standard repertoire.

New Noh Plays

Inoue Hirohisa	<i>Teishō Nonme (Plum Trees in the Garden)</i>	January 16th, in praise of Nijijima Jō
Umewaka Genshō	<i>Meifu Kō – Nekia (Nekyia – Odysseus Journey to Hades)</i>	January 20th, Shinsaku Noh: <i>Meifu Kō Nekia</i>
Asami Masakuni	<i>Shōji no Kawa-Takasebune-kō (Thoughts on the Boat Crossing the River Styx)</i>	April 21st, 7th Memorial Program for Tada Tomio

Ōshima Masanobu	<i>Fukuyama</i>	July 16th, Shinsaku Noh Fukuyama Premiere
Ueno Tomoyoshi	<i>Ikukunitama</i> (Ikukunitama Shrine)	August 11th, Osaka Takigi Noh
Aoki Michiyoshi	<i>Eiketsu no Asa</i> (The Morning of a Long Farewell)	October 29th, Tōsei Noh
Yamamoto Akihiro	<i>Mizu no Wa</i> (The Waterwheel)	November 4th, Mizu no Wa Beyond 2020
Kanze Tetsunojō	<i>Chinkon (Requiem)</i>	November 14th, <i>Auschwitz/Fukushima no Noh</i> by Jadwiga Rodowicz
Tatsumi Manjirō	<i>Osero (Othello)</i>	December 3rd, Shinsaku Noh Osero
New Kyōgen Plays		
Inoue Matsujirō	<i>Kaneshibari</i> (Sleep Paralysis)	October 6th, Rōsoku Noh
Shigeyama Senzaburō	<i>Ibaraki Dōji 2016</i> (The Demon from Ibaraki 2016)	October 23rd, Shinsaku Kyōgen
Shigeyama Senzaburō	<i>Kamiasobi</i> (The Entertainments of the Gods)	October 29th, Tōzai Kyōgen no Kyōen.
Nomura Mansaku	<i>Narayama Bushi-kō</i> (The Ballad of Narayama)	November 27th, Mansaku wo Miru Kai

Reconstructed Noh and Kyōgen Plays

Umewaka Kishō	<i>Kikujidō Tekkenzan</i> (The Boy of the Chrysanthemum Leaves at the Tekkenzan Mountain)	February 3rd, National Noh Theatre Regularly Scheduled Program. This work was first reconstructed in 2004 by Umewaka Rokurō (Genshō), who produced, composed and choreographed it.
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Umewaka Genshō/ Ôtsuki Bunzō	<i>Natori no Rōjo</i> (The Old Woman from the Natori Village)	March 25th/26th, National Noh Theatre Regularly Scheduled Special Program. This work is also known as <i>Go-ō</i> (Protected by Buddhist Law) or <i>Natori Ōna</i> (The Old Woman from Natori), and was reconstructed by Shigeyama Sensaku 4th in 1993, with direction and script by Oda Sachiko and Kobayashi Kenji.
Aoki Michiyoshi	<i>Tetsumon</i> (The Iron Gate)	June 5th, Experimental Program of Reconstructed Works. The piece was written by Takahama Kyoshi and was first performed in 1916. The performance in 2016 marks 100 years since the work was first staged.
Katō Shingo	<i>Fushiki Soga</i> (The Tale of the Soga Brothers at Fushiki Village)	November 26th, Shōnan Hiratsuka Noh/Kyōgen
Uzawa Hisa	<i>Matsura Sayohime</i> (Princess Sayo from Pine Bay)	December 11th, Uzawa Hisa no Kai
Yamamoto Yasutarō	<i>Wakana</i> (Wine, Women and Spring)	February 3rd, Reconstructed Kyōgen, National Noh Theatre Regular Program. This play was first reconstructed in 1987 at the National Noh Theatre, with a script and direction by Yamamoto Tōjirō, and Noh music setting by Yamamoto Noritada. The research for the reconstruction was conducted by scholars Koyama Hiroshi and Ogasawara Kyōko.

Memorial Programs of Noh and Kyōgen

There were numerous commemorative programs of Noh and Kyōgen during 2016, listed chronologically below, naming the *shite* actor of the main work performed:

Ueda Teruya 33rd Memorial Program of Noh	(January 17th)	Ueda Takuji performed <i>Koi no Omoni</i> (Love's Heavy Burden).
Sugiura Motosaburō 3rd Memorial Program of Noh	(January 31st)	Sugiura Toyohiko in <i>Sotoba Komachi</i>
13th Memorial Program of Noh remembering the 24th head of the Ōtsuki Family	(February 14th)	Ōtsuki Yaemon in <i>Sanbon no Hashira</i> (The Three Pillars)
Yoshinami Jun-ichi 33rd Memorial Program of Noh	(March 20th)	Yoshinami Toshiaki in <i>Ataka</i> (Yoshitsune and Benkei at Ataka)
Katayama Yūsetsu 1st Memorial Program of Noh at the Katayama Regularly Scheduled Special Program of Noh	(March 26th)	Takeda Kunihiro in <i>Hajitomi</i> (The Episode of Hikaru Genji, Lady Yūgao and the Latticed Shutter)
25th Memorial Program to remember Kanze Sakon Osaka Kanze-kai	(June 11th)	Kanze Kiyokazu in <i>Miwa</i> (Blessings of the Goddess Miwa Myōjin)
Tatsune no Kai remembering Morita Mitsuharu	(June 19th)	Katayama Kurōemon in <i>Miwa</i>
Yorozu Kyōgen Special Program : The 13th Memorial Program for Manzo 8th	(July 23rd)	Nomura Man in <i>Dai Dengaku</i> (Grand Music for Rice Planting)
Memorial Program for Kanze Toyosumi/ Hōshō Kan/ Sowa Hiroshi at the 22nd Nōgaku-za Jishukōen	(July 31st)	Kanze Tetsunojō in <i>Tenko</i> (The Drum from Heaven)
Yamamoto Noritada 7th Memorial Program of Noh	(August 11th)	Yamamoto Yasutarō in <i>Rice Fields</i> (Onda)
Katayama Keijirō 7th Memorial Program of Noh	(September 22nd)	Katayama Shingo in <i>Kinuta</i> (The Fulling Block).
Kawamura Family Special Memorial Program	(October 9th)	Kawamura Kazuaki in <i>Dōjōji</i>
27th Memorial Program of Noh for Kanze Sakon 25th	(October 22nd)	Kanze Kiyokazu in <i>Miwa</i>
Yamamoto Masayoshi 17th Memorial Program of Noh	(October 30th)	Yamamoto Akihiro in <i>Sotoba Komachi</i>
Ōshima Hisami 13th Memorial Program of Noh	(December 23rd)	Ōshima Iori in <i>Tsunemasa</i> (The Fall of Prince Tsunemasa)

Nohgaku Performers/ Related Individuals who passed away

Nohgaku performers and related individuals who passed away in
2015 - 2016:

Kusafuka Kiyoshi (October 10th 2015). Nohgaku Critic. 89 years old.

Sowa Hiroshi (December 2nd, 2015). *Kotsuzumi* performer. Preserver of Important Intangible Cultural Properties - Individual Certification 90 years old.

Hōshō Kan (February 1st, 2015). Preserver of Important Intangible Cultural Properties - Individual Certification *Waki* performer Important Intangible Cultural Asset - Individual Certification. 81 years old.

Ishii Nihē (February 1st). *Ōtsuzumi* performer and head of the Ishii School. 80 years old.

Mikawa Izumi (February 13th). *Shite* performer of the Hōshō School. Preserver of Important Intangible Cultural Properties- Individual Certification. 94 years old.

Kanze Toyosumi (February 18th). *Kotsuzumi* performer and head of the Kanze School. 81 years old.

Kita Roppeita (February 21st). *Shite* performer and head of the Kita School. 91 years old.

Yamasaki Yūichirō (April 26th). Former Director of the Yokohama Noh Theatre and Nohgaku critic. 102 years old.

Hoashi Masanori (June 1st). *Nohkan* (Noh Flute) performer of the Morita School. Composer of new Kyōgen plays such as *Shinigami* (God of Death) and *Harabe Yama* (Mount Harabe). 85 years old.

Kano Shūhō (July 24th). *Shite* performer of the Kita School. 79

years old.

Horigami Ken (November 30th). Professor Emeritus at
Kokugakuin University. Nohgaku Scholar. 85 years old.

Nishi, Tetsuo

Nohgaku Scholar. Born in 1937. Graduated from Saitama University. Has worked for Tokyo-dō Shuppan Publishing House; as a part-time instructor at Musashino University; 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 Shobō).

(Translation: James Ferner)

Kabuki and Bunraku

Two great name-taking ceremonies and the 50th anniversary of the National Theatre.

Mizuochi Kiyoshi

The big events on the Kabuki scene of 2016 were the name-taking ceremonial programs (*shūmei*) of Nakamura Shibajaku, who became Nakamura Jakuemon 5th, and Nakamura Hashinosuke, who became Nakamura Shikan 8th. Shikan's three sons also took the names Nakamura Hashinosuke 4th, Nakamura Fukunosuke 3rd, and Nakamura Utanosuke 4th respectively at the same occasion. These ceremonies were both conducted over several months.

The program for Nakamura Jakuemon began in March at the Kabuki-za. In June it moved to the Hakata-za in Kyushu, continuing on to the Shochiku-za in Osaka in July, after which, it went on tour for the rest of the summer, ending up at the Pontochō Kaburenjō Theater in Kyoto with a spectacular program that brought all the big stars together in December. At the Kabuki-za, Jakuemon performed the big onnagata (female) roles: Princess Tokihime in *The Three Generations of Kamakura Shōguns* (*Kamakura Sandaiki*) and princess Yukihiime of *The Golden Pavilion Temple* (*Kinkakuji*) with the great stars Onoe Kikugorō, Nakamura Kichiemon, Sakata Tōjūrō, Matsumoto Kōshirō and Kataoka Nizaemon to make this name-taking ceremony a lively extravaganza. Jakuemon went on to perform one great onnagata role after another, demonstrating his great abilities during the year.

The name-taking ceremony program of Nakamura Shikan, both

father and sons began in November and continued for two months at the Kabuki-za. In October Shikan played Genji general Kumagai Naozane from *Kumagai's Battle Camp* (*Kumagai Jinya*); in November, Genji general Sasaki Moritsuna from *Moritsuna's Battle Camp* (*Moritsuna Jinya*), two big historical drama (*jidaimono*) roles, as well the role of gallant townsman Banzui Chōbei from the domestic (*sewamono*) play *The Renowned Banzui Chobei*. He also performed *The Lion Dance* (*Renjishi*) from Japan Classical Dance (*Nihon Buyō*), with his sons, adding decor to the great event in which all the leading figures of Kabuki joined their efforts.

The other important event of the year was the commemorative program for the 50th anniversary of the National Theatre. The National Theatre celebrated over a period of three months, starting in October with a complete performance of all eleven acts of *The Treasury of Loyal Retainers* (*Kanadehon Chūshingura*). This was also done back in 1986, when the theatre celebrated its 20th anniversary, at that time also staging the same play over a three-month period with all the big names of the world of Kabuki participating. The present complete staging of the work, after a long hiatus, was a performance truly befitting the commemoration of half a century. In October, the opening act (*daijo*) through to Act 4 was performed, with Matsumoto Kōshirō in the role of lead avenger Ōboshi Yuranosuke and Nakamura Baigyaku in the role of lord Enya Hangan. In November, the *Fugitives* (*Ochūdo*) section with the 5th, 6th and 7th acts were performed with Onoe Kikugorō as loyal retainer Hayano Kanpei and Nakamura Kichimon as Yuranosuke. In December, the section from the 8th act until the final departure scene was performed with Matsumoto Kōshirō as retainer Kakogawa Honzō and Nakamura Baigyaku as Yuranosuke. The play was performed with the peripheral

roles taken by rising younger and middle-age actors.

During 2016, the Kabuki scene smoothly passed through a period of transition, with these events at the center. The programs each month at the Kabuki-za were staged by different members. Although the big stars all joined together during the name-taking programs, the big names tended to perform in tandem with the younger actors, except in September when Nakamura Kichimon and Bandō Tamasaburō performed *The Yoshino River* (*Yoshinogawa*) together. In May Ichikawa Ebizō, Onoe Kikunosuke and Onoe Shōroku, who are considered as the leaders of the next generation of actors, performed together and in June, Ichikawa Somegorō and Ichikawa Ennosuke took the main roles in a performance of *Yoshitsune and a Thousand Cherry Trees* (*Yoshitsune Senbonzakura*), with middle-level and younger actors stalwartly providing support. Programs such as these are increasing in number year by year. In October, Kataoka Nizaemon starred together in *The Treasury of Loyal Retainers in the Genroku Era* (*Genroku Chūshingura*), a performance which was very well received.

There were many newly written Kabuki plays performed in the past year. To list them by name: *New Version of 'The Tycoon's Exploits'* (*Shinsho Taikōki*, February), *Kūkai's Feast with Demons in China* (*Genshōshin Kukai*, April), *Shank's Mare* (*Tōkaidōchū Hizakurige*, August) and *The Story about Courtesan Urazato* (*Sato no Urasa Yamanaya Urazato*, August) were performed at the Kabuki-za and at the Shinbashi Enbujō. In addition to that in January, there was a performance of the resurrected play *Seven Masks* (*Nanatsu Men*). Other performances included works staged for the second time, such as: *Grand Thief Ishikawa Goemon* (*Ishikawa Goemon*), which was restaged performed in October at the Shinbashi Theatre. The kabuki

play *One Piece*, based on the popular manga with the same name, was restaged in March at the Shōchiku-za, continued to the Hakataza in April, and was edited and broadcasted as movie in the *Cinema Kabuki* series, which is shown all over Japan. In December, the second adaptation from a children's story called *One Stormy Night* (*Arashi no Yoru ni*) was staged at the Kabuki-za. This shows that Kabuki have begun to draw their material from a wide variety of genres and there have also been a number of new experimental productions making use of film.

At the National Theatre in January, the work *The Magical Thief, Kogitsune Reiza* (*Koharunagi Okitsu Shiranami*) by Kawatake Mokuami was refurbished, making use of the newest technology to depict the changing of the four seasons creating scenes that overflowed with visual beauty.

Kabuki actors perform in other genres more frequently every year. Ichikawa Ennosuke appeared in the contemporary theater play *Forest of the Thousand-Year Love* (*Genroku Minato-Uta*, January, Theatre Cocoon), and in November and December, at the Setagaya Public Theatre he performed in *The Great Enokeso* (*Enokeso Ichidaiki*), a performance for which he was given Kinokuniya Theatre Award for contemporary theatre. Also Nakamura Kankurō performed the main role in the contemporary play *The Ten Heroes of Sanada* (*Sanada Jūyūshi*) at the New National Theatre, as well as a variety of other roles in other venues including such projects as appearing in video footage of Kabuki in the observatory tower of Tokyo's Sky Tree. Nakamura Kazutarō performed in Shakespeare's *Richard the Third* (*Sandaime Richard*) in November at The Tokyo Metropolitan Theatre.

Furthermore, there was an international collaboration involving

Japan, Singapore and Indonesia in which a kabuki play written by Noda Hideki was directed by Singapore's Ong Keng Sen. Ichikawa Ebizō produced a program aimed at popularizing classical works entitled 'Invitation to the Classics' together with Noh and Kyōgen performers that was performed in various places, and in May, Ichikawa Somegorō produced a Kabuki Show in Las Vegas called, 'The Essence of Kabuki' where he performed, *Kabuki Lion Shishiō: The Adventures of the Mythical Lion*. In May, father and son Bandō Yajūrō and Bandō Shingo too performed Kabuki dances together in Switzerland, France and Spain.

With the increase in the number of tourists visiting from foreign countries and the Tokyo Olympics/Para-Olympics due to be held in 2020, the production of English audioguides and sub-titles has increased at all Kabuki theatres. The Kabuki-za also offers three-part programs for the easier enjoyment of Kabuki in June, August and December. To that, the National Theatre held a Program of Kabuki for foreigners with explanation in English, Chinese and Korean in June.

Bunraku puppet theatre was performed five times at its home base, the National Bunraku Theatre in Osaka and four times at the National Small Theatre in Tokyo during 2016. A Bunraku group also toured various regional theatres around the country. Until now, audience attendance in Osaka has been low compared to that in Tokyo, but during 2016, Osaka gradually experienced an increase in audience numbers.

The January program at the Bunraku Theatre presented three well-known works during the morning show: *The Love of Osome and Hisamatsu (Shinban Utazaimon)*, *The Sumo Wrestler's Banner*

(*Sekitori Senryō Nobori*) and *Fishing for Wives* (*Tsuri Onna*). Part two consisted of just one work, *The Battle of Coxinga* (*Kokusenya Kassen*) by Chikamatsu Monzaemon. During these performances, the audience registered at 69.4% of the capacity, which is a rise from the previous year. Chanter Toyotake Shimatayū (83 years), announced his retirement due to age and made *The Sumo Wrestler's Banner* his final performance. In March puppeteer Yoshida Bunjaku (88 years), also announced his retirement for the same reason. With his wealth of knowledge of all things concerning Bunraku, he is especially considered to be good at deciding on the heads (*kashira*) of the puppets that were to be used in a particular performance (*kashira-wari*). Shortly after announcing his retirement he became ill and passed away. With the elders of Bunraku retiring in this way during the year, it has meant a sudden shift in the supporting ranks to the younger generation. In April Chikamatsu Hanji's masterpiece *Mt. Imo and Mt. Se: An Exemplary Tale of Womanly Virtue* (*Imoseyama Onna Teikin*) was performed in its entirety. It has been quite a while since the whole piece was performed in this way in Osaka, but it was very well received and the recorded audience numbers exceeded expectations. In June, according to custom, as part of the Bunraku Appreciation Workshop, *The Dance of Sanbasō* (*Ninin Sanbasō*), a lecture and *The Summer Festival at Naniwa* (*Natsumatsuri Naniwa Kagami*) were performed. This program was done twice, in the morning and the afternoon, and though the plan was primarily to attract high school students, the event sold out, with many regular fans also crowding in. The same program was performed on the 7th and the 13th in the late afternoon from 6:30pm as the 'Introduction to Bunraku for Working People' and on the 12th from 2pm with English explanation as the 'Introduction to Bunraku for Foreigners'. In each instance there was

a large crowd present to enjoy the performances. In July, there was a three-part program entitled, 'The Summer Vacation Program of Bunraku': the first part consisting of 'The Theatre for Parents and Children' with the work, *The Gojō Bridge (Gojōbashi)*, a play that even children can enjoy, and *Pilgrimage to the West (Saiyuki)*, as well as a lecture entitled: 'Guidance for Bunraku Beginners'; the second part, 'Great Works of Bunraku' had performances of, *The Story of Kasane (Meiboku Kasane Monogatari)*, and *The Bloodthirsty Sword (Ise Ondo)*. Part three was 'The Summer Late Show' with a performance of a work by Inoue Hisashi entitled *The Story of an Old Miser (Kanatsubo Oyajī Koino Takehiki)*, which was based on, *L'Avare (The Miser)* by Moliere. In the October program, to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the National Theatre, part one staged *Shidōjji Temple (Shidōji)*, *The Love-Inspired Murder (Koimusume Mukashi Hachijō)* and *The Cherry Trees along the Hidaka River (Hidakagawa)*, and in part two, *Honzō in the Detached Palace (Honzō Shimoyashiki)*, *The Sake merchant (Sakaya)* and *The Subscription List (Kanjinchō)* were performed.

In Tokyo, at the National Small Theatre, the February program first featured *The Monkey-Skin Quiver (Utsubo-Zaru)* and *The Battle of Kawanaka Island (Shinshū Kawanakajima Kassen)*, secondly *The Inauspicious Sword (Sakuratsuba Urami no Samezaya)* and *The Sumo Wrestler's Banner*. The third part featured a performance of *Yoshitsune and a Thousand Cherry Trees (Yoshitsune Senbonzakura)*. As it turned out, the performance of *The Sumo Wrestler's Banner (Sekitori Senryō Nobori)* was the farewell performance of Toyotake Shimatayu. In May, the same 'Bunraku Appreciation Workshop', which is usually put on in December, was presented together with a program featuring the younger performers to accommodate the commemoration of the

50th anniversary of the National Theatre's opening, staged in December. The 'Bunraku Appreciation Workshop' was staged twice, with a performance of *The Love Suicides at Sonezaki* (*Sonezaki Shinjū*) along with a lecture both in the morning and in the afternoon. The same program was performed on the 13th, 16th and 20th, at 6:30 in the evening, as the 'Bunraku Appreciation Workshop for Working People', and on the 23rd at 6:30 in the evening with an English lecture as the 'Bunraku Appreciation Workshop for Foreigners' too. All of these programs were completely sold out. The program for younger performers featured a performance of *The Tycoon's Exploit* (*Ehon Taikōki*). In September, the first part of the celebrations of the National Theatre's anniversary featured a performance of the first two sections of *The Battle of Ichinotani* (*Ichinotani Futabagunki*), the second part *Long Live Sanbasō* (*Kotobuki Shiki Sanbasō*) and the third section of *The Battle of Ichinotani*. In December there was a performance of the most famous work *The Treasury of Loyal Retainers* (*Kanadehon Chūshingura*). The first part ran from the opening (*daijo*) to the sixth act and part two consisted of acts seven until act eleven, thereby performing the entire work over a period of eleven hours. In Tokyo, the popularity of Bunraku has always been high and paid attendance for all the programs exceed 90% capacity, but in the December program was completely sold out in the advance ticket sales.

After the retirement of Shimatayū, the eldest member of the Tayū (reciter) camp is Toyotake Sakitayū. Sakitayū has now become the leader, reciting the most important acts of each work. From the following generation, Takemoto Chitosedayū has shown himself to be the most accomplished reciter. Takemoto Mojihisadayū and Toyotake Hanabusadayū seem to be in a slump and so it is rather the

likes of Toyotake Rosetayū from the middle-age ranks as well as the younger performer, Toyotake Sakihodayū who have been showing their strengths and are being assigned some of the more important recitation scenes. In addition to their rich voices, they have a passion for studying the roles. Among the younger performers, Toyotake Yoshihodayū and Toyotake Yasutayū are also coming along.

The eldest of the Shamisen players, Tsuruzawa Kanji is in good health. And Tsuruzawa Seiji from the next generation has also been giving some excellent performances. In addition, with the likes of, Toyozawa Tomisuke, Tsuruzawa Seisuke, Nozawa Kinshi and the younger performer, Tsuruzawa Tōzō, the lineup of personnel is richly filled out.

The eldest performer of the puppeteer group, Yoshida Minosuke is not as active as he was previously, but as always, he still crafts beautiful female characters. In the next generation, Yoshida Kazuo has shown some solid performing ability. Yoshida Tamao who takes the lead roles in the historical pieces was awarded a Commendation by the Citizens of Osaka City. Kiritake Kanjūrō, whether taking on male, female or even comic roles has shown a superb flexibility of technique and received the Mainichi Art Award. These three performers make up the backbone of the puppeteer camp but in the group of middle-aged performers Yoshida Tamaya and Toyomatsu Seijūrō, as well as the younger performers Yoshida Tamaka, Yoshida Ichisuke and Yoshida Kōsuke have also been adding their strength. We have much to look forward to in the years to come.

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. Currently he is Affiliate Member of the Editorial Board. From the year 2000, he was a professor at J. F. Oberlin University, retiring in 2007 as Professor Emeritus. His writings include: *Kamigata Kabuki*, *Bunraku*, *Heisei Kabuki Haiyu-ron* and others.

(Translation: James Ferner)

Musicals

Musicals Going Against The Trend of Narrow-Mindedness

Hagio Hitomi

Narrow-mindedness is spreading all over the world and it could be felt even stronger in 2016. I wonder how much performing arts can fight off the tendency towards discrimination and exclusivism. The reason that musicals presented in 2016 dealing with subject matters of LGBT and minorities appealed to us all the more, is probably not completely unrelated to such narrow-minded atmosphere.

***The Hunchback of Notre Dame* Becomes Serious**

The Hunchback of Notre Dame, which opened in December, was one of the best shows in 2016. It was presented as a new production of Shiki Theatre Company's Disney musical series that started off with *Beauty and the Beast* (Japan premiere in 1995) and includes *Aida* (2003), *The Little Mermaid* (2013) and *Aladdin* (2015). With the exception of *Aida*, all of them were musical adaptations of Walt Disney's animation films. The music for *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (composed by Alan Menken and lyrics written by Stephen Schwartz) is based on the preceding animation version (1996).

However, the stage version of *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* was a challenging piece that was quite different from the animation film. Not only was the order of the numbers changed, but also the script (written by Peter Burnell, script and lyrics translated into Japanese by Takahashi Chikae) went back to Victor Hugo's original novel, and as

a result, it was turned into a vivid new production, quite different in terms of colour and drama. To put it shortly, you can say that it has now turned into a musical that protests against the intolerance that is spreading all over the world today. Scott Schwartz's direction made this point very clear.

The story is set in Paris at the end of the 15th century. The bell ringer at Notre Dame Cathedral called Quasimodo (played in turns by Kaiho Naoto and Iida Tatsuro) has a deformed physical appearance by birth. He has been brought up by an archdeacon named Claude Frollo (played by Shiba Kiyomichi) and is also controlled by him. One festival day, Quasimodo goes to town, disobeying Frollo's order for the first time, and comes across a Gypsy dancer named Esmeralda. Unlike many past film and stage productions based on the same novel, in this production, the story evolves around how Quasimodo becomes aware of himself.

The way Quasimodo makes his first appearance in the opening scene is quite striking. A healthy-looking dignified young man appears from upstage, twists and bends his body while he smears his face with black ink and morphs into the deformed Quasimodo. In the staging, we see how a person changes into something else instantly, from beautiful to ugly, from positive to negative and from normal to abnormal. The director's point is that differences and boundaries causing discriminations actually do not exist in reality, and this point is repeated in the last scene. This time, every character except for Quasimodo make their faces dirty as they curl up their bodies and turn into deformed figures.

Up till 'Someday', which is a number near the end, the musical straightforwardly appeals to us about the stupidity of discrimination and exclusion. It even makes you think that it was meant to appear in

the musical scene now, at this timing.

Two Musicals Dealing with LGBTs as the Subject Matter

Kinky Boots and *Pricilla, Queen of the Desert*, depicting LGBTs, or rather gays and drag queens as their main characters, opened in Japan as well. Both of them are film-based musicals, which is a recent trend. The U.S. tour version of *Kinky Boots* (music by Cyndi Lauper) also came on tour to Japan. Both the Japanese and U.S. versions basically traced the original film, including the direction and choreography (by Jerry Mitchel).

The story is about Charlie (played by Koike Teppei), a successor to a near-bankrupt shoe factory, who encounters a drag queen called Laura (Miura Shunma) and starts manufacturing boots for men who like to dress like women. The story of the musical version is the same as the film (2005) but the friendship between the two main characters and their conflicted feelings toward their fathers are emphasized. The theme of recognizing and accepting people who are odd ones out is very typical of Harvey Feuerstein's scripts. This theme is reflected with clarity in the number 'Hold Me In Your Heart' with the lyrics saying, "just the way that I am". However, in the directions, there seemed to be more focus on entertainment rather than putting a strong emphasis on the theme. I had the same impression when I saw the show on Broadway.

Other than the two actors playing the leading roles, Sonim's wonderful performance was worth watching. Above all, Miura Shunma, who took on the challenge of performing in a full-scale musical for the first time, was appealing. His glamorous presence changed the atmosphere instantly, and the way he danced in heels was a delightful surprise.

In 2006, *Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* was made into a musical in Australia, where the original film *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* was made. It was mounted in Japan after having run in London (2009) and on Broadway (2011). The story is based on a 'road movie' about three 'buddies' that are drag queens called Tick (played by Yamazaki Ikusaburō), Bernadette (played by Jin-nai Takanori) and Adam (played in turns by Jung Yoon-Hak and Furuya Keita), who travel across Australia on their own special bus.

Naturally, the key point is that each of the three characters finds out what is important for them through both the discrimination and the kindness they experience along the way. Personally, the film version of this story was the most compelling. Old Bernadette's wiliness and sadness, young Adam's impulsive behavior from not having a place where he can be himself, and self-searching Tick, who was once married and had a child, loomed out with clarity. Seeing the London version, then the Broadway version and now the Japanese version, the sadness and conflicts seemed to have gradually faded away, but perhaps it was because I had got used to it after seeing it a number of times.

In the Japanese version (directed by Miyamoto Amon), original ideas were added, such as painting their bus, which had been pink since the original film, in LGBT's symbolic rainbow colour. Nevertheless, to be honest, I felt that it lacked something.

***Jersey Boys* and Other Musicals Directed by Young Directors**

The Japan premiere of the Broadway musical *Jersey Boys* was worth watching. It is a so-called 'catalog musical (jukebox musical)', depicting the career of an American band called The Four Seasons that came up with hit songs one after another during the 1960. This

musical won the Tony Award in 2006 and was made into a film by Clint Eastwood in 2014. The Japanese version was directed brilliantly by Fujita Shuntaro, who has previously shown his talents in directing the musical *The Beautiful Game* in 2015.

The staging was marvelous. The scenery was made up of three layers and the video monitors set on both sides of the stage were used tactfully, turning the audience into witnesses as though they were living in that period of time. Nakagawa Akinori, who played the leading role of Frankie Valli, led the stage, singing with his fabulous high-pitched voice in a free and easy manner. The other actors of the double cast performing in turns were also impressive. To be honest, it was a good production that expressed both youthful sparkle and sadness more than the Broadway version.

In 2016, works by other talented young directors like Fujita became prominent. For instance, there was Harada Ryō, who wrote and directed *For the People - Lincoln, Jiyū no Motometa Otoko* (*For the People: Lincoln, the Man Who Sought Freedom*, performed by Flower Troup of Takarazuka Revue). Harada started to show his talent a couple of years ago, and he succeeded in the challenge he took on with *Lincoln*. In no way was the subject matter characteristic of Takarazuka Revue, as it was conservative and plain. Nevertheless, he catered it for Takarazuka with a sweet and colourful tone, while still maintaining the central theme of a man who fought for freedom.

Other young directors besides Harada Ryō are emerging one after another from Takarazuka Revue. One of them is Ueda Kumiko, who has shown her excellent caliber for writing tightly-woven plots and fluid staging in every production she has worked on since *Tsukigumo no Miko: Soto-ori Hime Densetsu Yori* (*Prince Cloud-Covered Moon: From the Legend of Princess Soto-ori*, 2013), which was her debut

musical as a writer and director. In 2016, many promising young directors kept on appearing and among them was Ikuta Hirokazu, who directed *Shakespeare: Sora ni Mitsuru wa Tsukisenu Koto-no-ha* (*Shakespeare: The Sky Filled With Eternal Words*). Of course, there must be other up-and-coming directors.

The world of Japanese musicals has been suffering from a lack of directors for quite a long time. There are veteran directors like the distinguished Koike Shūichiro, who became famous for directing *Elisabeth*, and Ogita Kōichi, who showed his particular ideas in *Crest of the Royal Family* in 2016, but a blank period lacking mid-range and young directors has continued for a while. The long-awaited new wave of talented young directors is likely to make the Japanese musical scene more interesting in the future.

In musicals, music is of course an element that is very appealing but it would be pointless if the script and direction cannot make use of the music. Unlike straight plays, the music can also save the musical as it sustains the show. Nevertheless, I would like to see more musical productions with staging clearly hammering out the themes and creating more depth like *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* and *Jersey Boys* described earlier.

Thom Southerland's direction of *Grand Hotel* was also interesting. It is a musical portraying the people who come and go through Grand Hotel in Berlin at the end of the 1920s. Originally, *Grand Hotel* opened on Broadway in 1920 and was directed by Tommy Tune. It was Takarazuka Revue that presented *Grand Hotel* in Japan for the first time back in 1993, which was also directed by Tommy Tune himself. Later on, the same title was directed by a different director and presented with a different company. This time, however, it was presented with two groups of casts. Southerland's direction,

especially the edgy stage direction for one of the groups, was stimulating. The last scene, in which the characters with various emotions and life stories disperse in different directions, was depicted boldly by making apparent the rise of the Nazis and racial discrimination.

Popular musicals such as *Edith Piaf: The Musical*, *Jekyll & Hyde*, *Sweeney Todd*, *Elisabeth*, *Sister Act* and *Miss Saigon* were revived this year as well. There were also many popular titles that were newly produced, such as *The Scarlet Pimpernel* and *Sweet Charity*. Amongst them, I was a bit disappointed with *Scarlet Pimpernel* (directed by Gabriel Barre). Although good actors like Ishimaru Kanji and Aran Kei were casted, it was a pity that the staging lacked details and no clear intensions were indicated. There must be many other directors who can direct it better. Right now, there is a great need for finding the right people and nurturing young talents.

Lastly, I would like to quickly add that the place of origin of musicals, including the production of original works, is becoming even more diverse. Ambitious Off-Broadway musicals such as *Murder for Two* and *Murder Ballad*, Korean musicals such as *Finding Mr. Destiny* and new original works such as those constantly produced by Musical-za as well as 2.5-dimensional musicals based on comic books, are giving greater variety to the musical scene in Japan.

Hagio, Hitomi

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

(Translation : Sumida Michiyo)

Contemporary Theatre

Overcoming Immense Losses

Yamaguchi Hiroko

2016 saw the loss of several giants of the performing arts world in Japan, not least the directors Ninagawa Yukio and Matsumoto Yūkichi, and the actor Hira Mikijirō.

A Spirit that Lives on in the Next Generation

All three continued to work with unwavering energy and ambition right up until the end of their lives.

From early 2015, Ninagawa started attending rehearsals in a wheelchair with an oxygen tank. Even after illness got the better of him, he continued to finalize his directing plans from hospital. In January, he breathed new life into a classic by directing *Genroku-era Harbor Song* (*Genroku minato uta*), written by Akimoto Matsuyo and with Ichikawa Ennosuke in the lead role. In February, he revived *Richard II* (Saitama Next Theatre, Saitama Gold Theater), which was then acclaimed at its appearance at the International Shakespeare Festival in Romania in April. In May, he directed his last production, the Shakespeare comedy *Measure to Measure*. On May 12th, shortly before the first night of his final production, the Shakespeare comedy *Measure to Measure*, he died at the age of 80, though nonetheless the show did go on. In the white bird that was Tabe Mikako's heroine as the curtain went down, Ninagawa's vestiges were clear.

His spirit carries on through the people he taught and who worked under him.

Directing duties for the 10-Thousand Performers Gold Theater project, which was an extension of Ninagawa's efforts with making theatre with older actors, were handled by Nozoe Seiji, who had penned the script. On December 7th, the epic ensemble play *Gold Symphony: My Dream, Your Dream* (*Kiniro kōkyōkyoku—watashi no yume, kimi no yume*) was realized at Saitama Super Arena, which roared with the vitality of around 1,600 people aged from their sixties to nineties recruited from the general public.

Ninagawa's role as artistic director of the Sai-no-kuni Shakespeare Series, which had staged all but five of the Bard's 37 plays by the time of his death, was assumed by the actor and director Yoshida Kōtarō.

The work of Ninagawa's long-time assistant director, Fujita Shuntarō, has also been striking. He directed the musicals *Letter* (*Tegami*) and *Jersey Boys* as well as the drama *Take Me Out* (written by Richard Greenberg). In these three excellent productions, he showed how he has inherited his teacher's accessible approach to theatre and use of dynamic movement, to which he has added a unique sense of rhythm and youth.

We are reminded of something Ninagawa once said: "Pass behind you like you are playing rugby."

The sudden death of Hira Mikijirō in October was a jolt, depriving us of someone who had long helped bring Ninagawa's theatre to life with its Japanese-inspired, beautifully rendered interpretations of classics from the Western canon, and grand presentations of big Japanese plays. He starred in the play *Cressida*, written by Nicholas Wright and directed by Mori Shintarō, until two weeks before his death, giving us a masterful and physically supple performance that belied his 82 years of age. From his appearance to his voice, his skill

with dialogue, intellect and passion, the loss of a truly multi-talented actor at the pinnacle of his craft has left many in shock.

Matsumoto Yūkichi died of esophagus cancer on June 18th. He led the Osaka-based Ishinha, which is known for its massive outdoor performances that start with the company constructing a whole new theatre. Matsumoto was just 69 years old and had directed a new play, *PORTAL* (written by Hayashi Shinichirō), in February and March. News of his death came during preparations for a production in the autumn at the remains of Heijō Palace in Nara. In October, Ishinha followed his plans to stage *Amahara*, written and conceived by Matsumoto, which evoked the idea of an Asia that is connected by the seas. With this, Ishinha brought its activities to a close.

An Increasingly Intolerant World

Globally the year increasingly seemed to exclude tolerance of others. The UK voted in a national referendum to leave the EU while the presidential election in the United States saw the victory of a man who has divided society with his cruel language. The far right is also extending its power in Europe.

In Japan, the Abe administration has continued to railroad bills through parliament; public discourse and diversity are diminishing. Although examples of theatre have emerged confronting this social situation, we have yet to see an artistically satisfying engagement with the issues. In fact, it was rather productions of superb translated plays that made us think profoundly.

Written by Ayad Akhtar and directed by Kuriyama Tamiya, *Disgraced* was set in New York and fixed its gaze at humanity and the world through two married couples from the social elite. The four all have different backgrounds: Pakistani-American, WASP,

African-American, and Jewish. While the all-Japanese cast could not show these racial differences visibly, this only helped to test the depth of the audience's imagination and thinking about the inner depths of the human mind. Kuriyama also had hits with his productions of Tom Stoppard's *Arcadia*, the British masterpiece in which the 19th century and present day overlap, and Lee Kang-baek's *Head of the Blowfish* (*Dara Dara*), a South Korean play that allegorically portrays a contemporary sense of hopelessness.

The production of Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* by the British director Jonathan Munby vividly expressed rising peer pressure in society. Meanwhile, the Japanese premiere of Bulgakov's *Zoyka's Apartment*, directed by Kurosawa Seri for the company Jikandō, which disbanded at the end of 2016, depicted the lives of people under mass surveillance. Although originally written against the backdrops of, respectively, the Red Scare in America and the socialist society of the Soviet Union in the 1920s, these productions resonated eerily with present-day Japan. Chiba Tetsuya directed and starred in a production of the British playwright Joe Penhall's *Landscape with Weapon*, in which an engineer grapples with a moral dilemma over the military use of his research. This also intersected with the situation in Japan, where a debate now rages over whether it is right or wrong for universities to accept research funds from the Ministry of Defense and US military.

One artist who has continued to present sharp messages both internationally and domestically is Noda Hideki. His latest play, *Imperial Wrath* (*Gekirin*), which he wrote, directed and starred in, diffused a range of images such as an aquarium and a group of dancing mermaids, from which emerged the tragedy of so-called "human torpedoes" during the Second World War.

Noda is also in charge of Tokyo Caravan, a cultural event being organized in the lead-up to the 2020 Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games. The project is traveling around, creating encounters with people through art. It intermixes a wide range of elements, including regional traditional performing arts, contemporary theatre, dance, robots, Noh, Japanese and Western music, and visual art. The “caravan” even visited Rio de Janeiro, showing us the lithe ability of the arts to oppose those powers that are attempting to build new barriers.

Meticulously, Dynamically

Among new Japanese plays, those dealing with themes of familiar human relations attracted attention.

Hi-Bye’s Iwai Hideto wrote and directed *Husband and Wife* (*Fūfu*). Though dominated by a fight against a father who ruled his household like a tyrant, the superb play closed with a discovery of humanity when, after the patriarch’s death, the formerly enslaved mother indicated how she had relied on her husband’s professionalism. Hōrai Ryūta wrote and directed *Oh, now it’s love. (Aa, ima dakara ai.)* for the company Modern Swimmers, as well as writing the Parco productions of *On a Mother and Planet, and a Record of Women Who Revolve* (*Haha to wakusei nitsuite, oyobi jiten suru onnatachi no kiroku*), directed by Kuriyama Tamiya, and *Celestial Tropic* (*Hoshi-kaikisen*), which he directed himself. In this series of plays, he meticulously depicted the recovery of humanity and the rifts that arises in close relationships, such as those between husbands and wives or parents and children. Iwamatsu Ryō, meanwhile, wrote and directed *Domestic Disappearance* (*Kateinai shissō*), densely portraying the inscrutability of humanity through a twisted married couple.

Same Dream (Onaji yume), written and directed by Akahori Masaaki, explored the frustrations that arise within families and between men and women.

One new, highly individual play that left a strong impression was *Go Go Boys Go Go Heaven (Gō-gō bōizu gō-gō heben)*, written, directed and starring Matsuo Suzuki. Its daring narrative, which featured as its protagonist a male writer who becomes enamored with a beautiful male prostitute in a country in a state of civil war, deftly depicted a conflict that exists side by side with everyday life as well as the exploitation of human nature.

Cinema and the Lover (Kinema to koibito), written and directed by Keralino Sandrovich, was good-quality entertainment. Love literally leapt out from the silver screen into the dull life of the heroine, enveloping the audience in a blissful comedy through its witty development and directing. Sandrovich also displayed his skills with his staging of *August: Osage County* by the American playwright Tracy Letts. Mitani Kōki has enjoyed acclaim for scripting the Taiga period drama series *Sanada Maru* broadcast on NHK, and at the end of the year he also wrote, directed and starred in *Enokeso Ichidaiki*. In the lead, Ichikawa Ennosuke vibrantly embodied the joy and sadness yet also madness of a man who tries to become the popular comic star Enoken (Enomoto Kenichi).

The visual artist Yanagi Miwa has also worked in the theatre for some time and this year she directed and designed a stage adaptation of Nakagami Kenji's novel *Wings of the Sun (Nichirin no tsubasa)*, working from a script by Yamasaki Nashi. A specially made trailer was loaded with a cargo container, which opened up to reveal a stage with a gaudy picture and illuminations. This trailer then toured Yokohama, Wakayama and elsewhere. Shimori Roba wrote and

directed *Okinawa* 1972, which energetically depicted the titular prefecture as it turbulently reverted back to Japanese sovereignty.

Setagaya Public Theatre gave us some colorful productions of new plays in *Radiant Vermin*, written by Philip Ridley and directed by Shirai Akira, and *Tono Monogatari Kikkai Part 3* (*Tōno monogatari kikkai sonosan*), written and directed by Maekawa Tomohiro.

Among the *shingeki* companies, Bungakuza showed stability in its output. In particular, its younger directors Inaba Kae and Gonohe Marie left particularly fresh impressions with their respective productions of Ibsen's *The Wild Duck* and Kubota Mantarō's *Rudder (Kaji)*. Gekidan Mingei actively engaged with staging new productions, including Tennessee Williams' *The Two-Character Play* (also known as *Out Cry*) with Naraoka Tomoko and guest performer Okamoto Kenichi, and Osada Ikuo's *Sōetsu: White Sun of Korea* (*SOETSU, karakuni no shiroki taiyō*), both directed with Tanno Ikumi, and *Awful (Berabō)*, written and directed by Nakatsuru Akihito. Gekidan Subaru welcomed Bungakuza's Kamimura Satoshi to direct a production of *The Greeks*, an epic trilogy of plays lasting around eight hours and bringing together ten Greek tragedies. Theatrical group En's Hashizume Isao starred in *Kagekiyo*, adapted by Fujino Satsuko from Chikamatsu Monzaemon, giving a performance of great dignity in the role of an old warlord narrating the vicissitudes of his life. Director Mori Shintarō's deftly staged the play with a giant puppet that the actor controlled.

Expectations for New Leaders

In April, Shirai Akira became the new artistic director of Kanagawa Arts Theatre. With his productions of Strindberg's *A Dream Play* and Brecht's *Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny*, he

incorporated vibrant elements of music, stage design and dance to show the appeal of theatre as *Gesamtkunstwerk*. His proactive approach to using the whole of the theatre facility is notable, such as the production of *Roots* (*Rûtsu*), written by Matsui Shû and directed by Sugihara Kunio, and working with young theatre companies.

The New National Theatre, Tokyo announced the next artistic director, Ogawa Eriko, starting in 2018. There are high expectations for this director in her thirties, who is known for her graceful staging and is also a prolific translator. In 2016, she directed Michael Frayn's *Copenhagen* and her translations of *Landscape with Weapon* and *Take Me Out* met great acclaim.

Notwithstanding the quality of some of its productions, such as the revival of a trilogy by Chong Wishin, including *Yakiniku Dragon* (*Yakiniku doragon*), and Uyama Hitoshi's staging of the Shakespeare history plays *Henry IV Part 1* and *Henry IV Part 2*, the only premiere of a work by a Japanese playwright staged by the New National Theatre, Tokyo was Betsuyaku Minoru's *Moon Like This, Wind Like That* (*Tsuki kôkô, kaze sôsô*), directed by Miyata Keiko. The theatre's programming has lacked ambitious work.

In March, Kôkami Shôji became the new chair of the Japan Playwrights Association, following Sakate Yôji's ten years in the role.

The annual international performing arts event Festival/Tokyo was held between October and December on the theme of "Beyond Borders." It included many overseas productions, such as the over four-hour *Woodcutters*, directed by Poland's Krystian Lupa. One of the visiting productions, *All the Soldiers are Pathetic*, was written and directed by Park Kun-hyung, who attracted attention after he was blacklisted from receiving national subsidies for satirizing the former president in a previous play. This issue was also put on the stage by

the Korean theatre group Dreamplay These21 and performed at Ueno Storehouse in November as part of a week of Japanese and Korean theatre. Kim Jae-yeop's *Censorship: Their Words* conveyed facts in an indifferent manner while also expressing anger toward the authorities that intervene in artistic expression and freedom of speech, but its tone had a suppressed yet gentle humor. One could not help but empathize with the tough, mature spirit of Korean theatre practitioners, who are opposing these inexcusable events through their intellect and art.

In Kyoto, a new cultural hub opened in January in the form of ROHM Theatre Kyoto, which is the main venue for the international performing arts festival Kyoto Experiment. In Tokyo, Shibuya's Parco Theater closed in August for reconstruction, having served as a center of the city's culture since opening in 1973. Although it will reopen in 2019 as a larger space, many theatre people and audiences regret the loss of its intimate 458-seat auditorium.

Hakusuisha, the publisher that organizes the Kishida Kunio Drama Award, commemorated its 100th anniversary by publishing a mammoth encyclopedia detailing around 1,000 playwrights and their major plays from the early Meiji period (1868–1912) to the present day.

Yamaguchi, Hiroko

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

(Translation: William Andrews)

Children's and Youth Theatre and Puppet Theatre

Working for Unity by Organizing TYA Japan

Yokomizo Yukiko

Theatre for children and youth, including puppet theatre, has been heavily affected by the reduced numbers of children in Japan. Theatre performances in schools had been a regular event in the Tokyo region, but now only 50% of schools are continuing with it. It is difficult to measure the success of emotional and aesthetic education, so schools are emphasizing such academic abilities where results can be seen immediately.

With the reduction of classes and events in schools relating to the performing arts, children's theatre troupes are seeing a drastic decrease in the number of performances and are finding it more and more difficult to operate. This means a lack of support for young playwrights and plays that can indicate what the future will be. This vicious cycle is repeated over and over. It is a very difficult situation and children's theatre cannot survive on passion alone.

There is also a new government policy that will impact all performing groups, not just children's theatre. On March 22, the government issued its plan to move government agencies out of Tokyo. This is to try to reduce the over centralization of government agencies in Tokyo, but the government is insisting on moving the entire Japanese Cultural Agency to Kyoto. In response to this, the "Cultural Promotion Forum" (Nomura Man, Chairman) put up a protest on September 2. It suggested that while the accounting sections of the

Cultural Agency could be moved to Kyoto, “functions that are closely related to supporting artistic and cultural activities and managing copywriting issues” should remain in Tokyo as before. Also, with the slogan of “Cultural Ministry by the Year of the Olympics, “ it strongly recommended that in order for Japan to become a truly cultural and artistic nation, the Cultural Agency should be its own ministry, rather than being a part of the Ministry of Education and Science as it is now.

To prepare for making a bid for making Tokyo the venue for the twentieth world conference of ASSITEJ (International Association Theatre for Children and Young People), which is held once every three year and is scheduled for May 2020, six children’s theatre troupes united in the “TYA (Theatre for Young Audiences) Japan” on April 7. The six troupes included *Jienkyō* (the *Nihon Jidō Seishōnen Engeki Kyōdō Kumiai* or Japan Union of Theatrical Companies for Children and Young People), *Seionkyō* (the *Nihon Seishōnen Ongaku Geino Kyōkai* or NPO Japan Music and Entertainments for Youth Association), *Zenninkyō* (the *Zenkoku Senmon Ningyō Gekidan Kyōgikai* or Japan Puppet Theater Conrenence), the *Nihon Jidō Seishōnen Engeki Kyōkai* (Japan Association of Theatre for Children and Young People), *Zenjien* (the *Zenkoku Jidō Seishonen Engeki Kyōgikai* or All Japan Children and Youth Theatre Association) and the Japan center of ASSITEJ. TYA Japan will become a seventh group and will aim at including a wide range of individual members with not only artists in children’s and youth theatre, but also dancers and traditional Japanese performers. It plans to send 100 people to participate in the 19th ASSITEJ World Conference, which will be held in May 2017 in Cape Town, South Africa and who will work for the

success of Tokyo's bid to host the twentieth world conference.

As a pre-event to the world conference, TYA Japan is making preparations to hold the "Asia Children and Youth Stage Arts Festival 2018" centered at the Youth Education National Olympics Memorial Youth Center and with performance in schools around Tokyo in February 2018. In addition there are plans for an "Asia Children and Youth Stage Arts Conference."

An arts festival that began in 2016 in Beijing and rotates around the three countries of Japan, China and South Korea will also be held in Japan in February 2018.

There are theatre festivals all around the country in summer and this is energizing for the many children's theatre and puppet theatre troupes that participate. The "Summer Vacation Children and Youth Theatre Festival" (July 21 - August 4, Tokyo Zenrōsai Hall and Puk Puppet Theatre) sponsored by *Jienkyō* was held for the forty-fourth time. There were 21 theatre troupes from Gekidan Haikyō's "Mischievous Musical Experience: Slowly Resolving (*Itazura Bōken* Musical: *Kaiketsu Zorori*)" to Puppet Theatre Puk's "The Daruma and the Tengu Goblin (*Daruma-chan to Tengu-chan*). There were also workshops like "Theatre Experience for Parents and Children Together (*Oyako de Issho ni Gekitaiken*)" (Gekidan Kaze no Ko), and "Let's Become Clowns! (*Piero ni Narō*)" (Gekidan Han Mime Kōbō) and there were 5,000 participants.

The "Forum for Children to Encounter the Stage Arts (*Kodomo to Butai Geijutsu Deai Fo-ramu*)" (National Memorial Olympic Children and Youth Center: July 28 - August 3) is in its 17th year. In 2016, there were 35 works to introduce children to the joy of live theatre, including "Japanese Dance Looks Great!" organized by

classical Japanese dancers, which showed pure dances in formal kimono together with lectures. The “Puppet Theatre Gallery (*Ningyō Geki Gyarari*-)” featured junior high school students performing “Awaji Bunraku (*Awaji Ningyō Jōruri*)” and exhibits and performances by Puppet Theatre PUK, Puppet Theater Hitomi-za, Hipopotaamu, Kai-no-Hi and Edo Ito Ayatsuri Ningyō marionettes. To help expand the imaginative world for children, the “Art Experience Square (*A-to Taiken Hiroba*) featured ballet, rakugo storytelling, pantomime and magic. There were also five symposiums on such topics as “Towards Thinking About the Significance of Theatre Aimed at Infants” and “What Will Be the Meaning of Theatre Performances in Schools in the Future?” These events attracted more than 10,000 participants.

The “Nissei Theatre Family Festival (*Nissei Gekijō Famiri-Fesutivaru*)” is in its 21st year. There were 4 pieces to show solid live stage performances in a gorgeous theatre. The classical concert “Alice’s Big Music Composition Campaign (*Arisu no Sakkyoku Daisakusen*)” was a participatory that combined composing methods and musical performance with an adventure story. Hitomi-za presented a puppet musical from the “I am the King (*Boku wa Ōsama*)”-series: “King of Detectives (*Ōsama · Meitantei*).” The musical “The Three Musketeers (*Sanjūshi*)” featured a very talented and experienced cast: Onoda Ryūnosuke as d’Artagnan, Kon Takuya as Athos, Nadagi Takeshi as Porthos and Uehara Rio as Aramis. The cast was so fine that it was a shame there were only five performances over three days (August 6 - 8). The performances of “The Nutcracker (*Kurumiwari Ningyō*)” by the Matsuyama Ballet Company featured Morishita Yōko.

There were many summer theatre festivals originating in the

rural regions of Japan. The 17th “21st Century Theatre from Kitakata” (August 5 – 8) has become established as a large-scale summer event. It had 24 venues centered on Kitakata Plaza and including public halls, public health centers and sake breweries. There were 81 separate pieces with 115 performances. Theatre productions included Gekidan Kazenoko’s “Bearcub Woof (*Kuma no Ko U-fu*)” and Gekidan Urinko Theatre Company’s “Friends! He’s a Friend Too! (*Tomodachi ya -Aitsu mo Tomodachi-*)” and there were many puppet troupes participating like Puk with “The Happy Violin (*Ukare Baiorin*)”, attracting a total audience of 8,814.

The city of Saku in Nagano Prefecture started a new theatre festival for children and youth titled “Kid’s Circuit in Saku (*Kizzu Sa-kitto* in Saku)” (August 5 – 7) in 2016. There were altogether eight venues, with the Cosmo Hall in Ueda City (Nagano prefecture) as the main venue along with the Sakudaira Kōryū Center. There were 22 pieces each performed, including Masuku Purei no Theatre Company Hikōsen’s musical “Little Red Riding Hood (*Akazukin*)” with all characters in full body suits, Gekidan Chōjū Giga’s “Shakespeare for Three (*Sannin de Sheikusupia*)” and Puk’s “The Pink Dragon (*Pinku no Doragon*)” for a total audience of 5,000.

The “World Festival of Children’s Performing Arts in Toyama” (July 30 – August 4), which is held once every four years, was held for the 3rd time. There were participants from 25 local groups, 44 groups from Toyama Prefecture, 16 groups from outside Toyama Prefecture and 23 groups from abroad, and a total of over 1500 children participated.

The “Regional Tour of Children’s and Youth Theatre (*Jidō Seishōnen Engeki Chihō Junkai Kōen*)” sponsored by the Japan Children and Youth Theatre Association (Nihon Jidō Seishōnen

Engeki Kyōkai), which is intended for children living outside the big cities, was held for the 57th year. In the spring, 7 troupes, including Enzeru and Popura, and in the fall, 13 troupes, including Nakama and Yūgensha, toured. The “Tour of Children’s and Youth Stage Arts (*Jidō Seishōnen Butai Geijutsu Junkai Kōen*)” of the rural areas and remote islands that is part of the “Strategic Project for the Encouragement of the Creation of Artistic Culture (*Senryaku-teki Geijutsu Bunka Sōzō Suishin Jigyō*)” sponsored by the Japanese National Cultural Agency is in its third year. 13 troupes participated including Urinko and Ningyō Gekidan Kyōgei.

Among large international theatre festivals, the “Rikka Rikka * Festa” (July 25 – 31) held in Naha City has grown into a festival that can send performances of children’s theatre to Asia and the world. There were 15 pieces from 10 countries, including Sweden and Belgium, and among the 15 pieces performed by Japanese troupes, 4, including “*Les Misérables (Re Miseraburu)*” were performed by ACO Okinawa.

The Tokyo Metropolitan Theatre (*Tokyo Geijutsu Gekijō*)’s 7th “TACT / Festival 2016” (May 5 – 8) is a festival that invites high quality performances from outside Japan. This year, there were 5 pieces from 3 countries, France, Brazil and Canada. Among them, Canada’s “*The Sheep (Les Moutons)*,” is already a frequent visitor and also appeared at the “Rikka Rikka * Festa.” France’s Cie Les Gums’s “*Stoik*” attracted laughter with the unbalance between a very large actor and very small actress.

Since 1959, Gekidan Nakama has presented Samuil Marshak’s “*The Woods are Alive (Mori wa Ikite Iru)*” (original title: *The Twelve Months*) at the end of every year. This year, they reached the record of 2,087 performances (Kinokuniya Southern Theatre, Tokyo,

December 21 – 27, 2016) altogether.

In Japan there are innumerable puppet theatre troupes, both amateur and professional troupes, some with many members, and some with only two or three members. The major puppet theatre troupes like Puk, La Clarté and Hitomi-za have struggled with extreme financial difficulties to continue to create high quality puppet theatre for young audiences.

Puppet Theatre Puk celebrated its 45th year and with its own theatre as home base, it staged 28 different pieces, with two or three groups touring the country in 2016. There were 399 days of performances, 494 performances in total, staged by a company of 77 people working full time. There were 2 new works produced as well. One for children, “The Emperor’s New Clothes (*Hadaka no Ōsama*)” (original by Hans Christian Andersen, which was dramatized by Kawajiri Tōji and directed by Miyao Yoshiaki, and one for adults, which was a dramatization of the classic Rakugo story “The God of Death (*Shinigami*)”, dramatized and directed by Shibasaki Yoshihiko. Especially the puppet design of the God of Death was very innovative. The most frequently performed piece was “A Story I Heard from the Mist and the Wind (*Kiri to Kaze kara Kiita Hanashi*)” based on the children’s story by Miyazawa Kenji, together with “The Happy Violin (*Ukare Baiorin*),” which was performed 103 times during the year. Among pieces for adults, “The Miser with a Pot of Gold and the Negotiations of Love (*Kana Tsubo Oyaji Koi no Tatebiki*)” by Inoue Hisashi was particularly popular and has been performed repeatedly. “Torchfire in December (*Jūni no Tsuki no Takibi*),” based on a folk tale from Slovakia, has been performed every December since 1979. This is a fantasy that helps everyone to

welcome in the New Year on a happy note.

The Credo Theatre troupe from Bulgaria visited Japan again. They performed Gogol's "The Overcoat (*Gaitō*)" and Andersen's "Father's Always Right (*Otōsan no suru koto wa Itsumo Yoshi*)" at the Puk Theater on September 25 and 27.

Hitomi-za, which is using the puppeteering technique of a single puppeteer maneuvering the puppets, called "Otome Bunraku", used the stage direction of lead Bunraku puppeteer Kiritake Kanjūrō to take on the challenge of producing two classical plays, "The Japanese Twenty-Four Examples of Filial Piety (*Honchō Nijūshi Kō*)" and "The Money Courier of Love (*Keisei Koi Bikyaku*). The Edo Ito Ayatsuri (marionette) Yūki-za collaborated with the Vietnam Children's Theatre to create "Wild Duck Addiction (*Nogamo Chūdoku*)" (March 16 - 21, Tokyo Metropolitan Theatre, Theatre West). This was an experimental play written and directed by Sakate Yōji and was based on "The Wild Duck" by Ibsen.

The biggest event for puppet theatre is the "Iida Puppet Theatre Festa 2016 (*Iida Ningyō Geki Festa 2016*)" (August 2 - 7), which had 257 theatre troupes including amateurs and professionals, and staged 500 performances. There are all kinds of venues used throughout Iida City (Nagano Prefecture). In 2016, the theme was "Kansai Puppet Theatre." The Kyōgei puppet theatre troupe had been awarded a prize for revitalizing a region and commemorated it with a performance of "I'm Going to Become a Manzai Star (*Manzai no Hoshi ni Narun ya*)" (Iida Bunka Kaikan Hall). To support the recovery efforts from the Kumamoto Earthquake, the Seiwa Bunraku Troupe was invited from its home base in Yamato Town, Kamimashiki, Kumamoto Prefecture. There were troupes from 6 countries, including Germany and Laos.

The UNIMA (Union Internationale de la Marionnette) gathering is held once every 4 years, the 22st UNIMA Congress (May 28 – June 5) and the World Puppetry Festival” were held in Tolosa and San Sebastien in Spain. Puk’s Onagi Tamiko gave the report of the women’s committee. 32 theatre troupes from 15 countries participated, and from Japan, the Kakashi-za performed.

Although it is very difficult to make a choice, here are my picks for the best three in children’s and youth theatre in 2016:

Gekidan Urinko Theatre Company’s “The Dawning of Rakugo (*Yoake no Rakugo*)” (original by Miura Karen, script and direction by Kitamura Naoki) was a heart-warming play that showed fourth grade girls trying to learn traditional rakugo comic storytelling as they struggle on despite difficulties and failures. The story was depicted with a lot of humor and the ensemble featured actors in their twenties to actors in their sixties.

In Japanese, a little character “*tsu*” after a syllable doubles the consonant. This became the theme of Gekidan Nakama’s “The Day All the Little ‘*Tsu*’s Disappeared (*Chiisai ‘Tsu’ ga Kieta Hi*)” (original by Stefano von Loe, script and direction by Suzuki Yūta). This story has the fantastic premise of all the turmoil in society if the little *tsu*’s used in writing Japanese suddenly disappeared. The production included song and dance to make a play that could be enjoyed by both children and adults. It was a play that left a strong impression even though it did not emphasize its message.

Theatre Tanpopo’s “The Festival of Life (*Inochi no Matsuri*)” (dramatized by Kuno Yumi and Matsushita Noriko, production supervised by Fujita Asaya and directed by Ōtani Kenjiro) was a play

commemorating the 70th anniversary of the founding of the troupe and featured the work of two young playwrights. Ōtani studied directing in America and deftly introduced a collaboration with puppets into the production and puppet techniques to create a new and simple world.

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 and the 26th prize was awarded to Theater February's Nitta Megumi. She was awarded the prize for her work as an actress and for simultaneously handling the business end of the troupe and also working contributing to the improvement of children's theatre overall.

Yokomizo, Yukiko

Yokomizo Yukiko is a theatre critic and regular director of the Japan Theatre Association, member of Tomin Gekijō series evaluation committee, and member of Kabuki Circle Productions. After being an editorial executive at the Jiji Tsūshin 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 Shinkō Kikin (Arts Culture Foundation) and a lecturer in the Arts Division of Nihon Daigaku University. She is a member of the Buyō Hihyōka Kyōkai (Dance Critics Association), Saitama Bungeika Kyōkai (Saitama Prefecture Writer's Association) and the Kokusai Engeki Kyōkai (International Theatre Institute). Her published translations include *Practical Stage Make-Up* (joint translation) and her books include *Actors Talk of What They Dream of Doing* (*Yume o Kataru Yakusha-tachi*).

(Translation : Mark Oshima)

Japanese Classical Dance

It's Time to Reevaluate Nihon Buyō from the Standpoint of What is Ordinary and Extraordinary in the Past and Present

Hirano Hidetoshi

Books on Japanese traditional performing arts often have not thought carefully about the essence of the arts they present. This is because Japan has conducted a policy of Westernizing and modernizing ever since the Meiji Restoration in 1868, and in addition to that, the accelerating globalization since the 1970's, has led to that most Japanese think traditional dance styles are basically similar Western styles of dance. One reason is that the English word "dance" is the most familiar word for such Western styles as ballet, educational dance and street dance. So it is easy to think that Western dance = *buyō* (Japanese classical dance), but that is not true, and now it is vital to correct this misapprehension, and think about what *buyō* fundamentally is.

The word "*buyō*" was invented in the Meiji Period, by theater scholar and translator Tsubouchi Shōyō. The reason he coined this word was to be able to discuss two forms of early modern period dance, each with roots that go far into the past, but cannot be totally separated. These styles are "*mai* (which can also be pronounced '*bu*')" which was typical of the Kamigata region around Osaka and Kyoto, and "*odori* (also pronounced '*yō*'))", which was typical in Edo (now Tokyo). Shōyō simply combined these two characters and suggested the use of the word *buyō* or *buyō geki* (dance play). But in the process of establishing this word, the word *buyō* also came to be the

translation of the Western word “dance” referring to Western dance styles, so the term “*Nihon buyō*” was invented to refer to purely Japanese styles. But originally, *buyō* only meant Japanese classical dance, comprised of the more or less different styles of *mai* and *odori*.

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One-Hundredth Anniversary of the *Shin Buyō* Recital, “*Fujikage-Kai*”.

One hundred years have passed since a geisha in the Shinbashi district in Tokyo named Yaeji, who was a holder of the Fujima School dance name Fujima Shizue (later Fujikage Seiju I), held the first “*Fujikage-Kai*” recital at Tokiwagi Club (Nihonbashi) to mark her independence as a dancer in May 1917.

In the “*Sōke Fujikage-Kai* Recital Commemorating the 100th Anniversary Since the Founding of the Fujikage School of Dance” (August 20, National Theater) Fujikage Seiju III, the nephew’s daughter of the first Fujikage Seiju, recreated a representative dance of Seiju I, “*Shibon*,” an adaptation of a famous Chinese Kunqu opera about a Buddhist nun who starts to feel strong emotions and desires that make her abandon the temple. “*Shibon*” is an epoch-making piece created by Shizue I in 1921 as a way of experimenting with new techniques of dance expression. To mark the hundredth anniversary of the Fujikage school, the dance was reworked to fit the stage space of the National Theater and the music recomposed in the nagauta style. The original lyrics were by Takeshiba Shinkichi (Hirayama Shinkichi) and Maehara Kazuhiko created additional material for the revival and directed the production. The music for the original was very ambitious, with traditional musicians seeking to create new possibilities for

traditional styles of music. These musicians were Sugano Ginpei (Nishiyama Ginpei) of the Itchū school of shamisen and singing and Ochiai Yasue of the Yamada school of koto music. To this original cast, nagauta musician Kineya Hiroki provided additional music. The music was arranged by Kineya Katsuhiko and also percussion music created by Nakamura Jukei was incorporated into the performance.

In the program for this revival Maehara wrote that “when she created the piece, Shizue I overlapped her memories of her own youth into the feelings of the protagonist.” Maehara reevaluated this piece from a contemporary standpoint and created this revival. The fact that the role of the young nun was played by Shizue III, head of the Fujikage-Kai, was also significant from the standpoint of looking back at this significant piece. Her three granddaughters Uchida Sakie, Moeka and Emiyu danced and her daughter Fujikage Shizuaki danced the role of the Rakan priests. Maehara also enhanced the drama by adding a scene in the second half, where, after the man and woman having seen their fantasy of love, return to reality as they are, and are sent to the “Burning House of Five Mortal Conditions.”

Death of Hanayagi Shigeka on September 10th, Presentation of Her Trademark Dance “*Gen-ya*”

In Fujima Shizue’s birth as a “*Nihon buyō*” dancer, the fact that noted Western style painter Wada Eisaku was a part of the set design staff for the “*Fujikage-Kai*”, played a large role. Such staff members as Wada’s student Tanaka Ryō and Tōyama Shizuō, who later became a lighting designer, studied the innovations in dance made by kabuki actors Ichikawa Ennosuke II and Onoe Kikugorō VI and long worked to create “*shin buyō* (New Japanese Dance)” or “*sōsaku buyō* (Creative Japanese Dance).” As practical artists, this line of effort was

very different from the work of the intellectuals and critics in Tsubouchi Shōyō's "*buyō kaikaku* (dance reform)."

Hanayagi Shigeka was one of the people to emerge in the "*Shin Buyō*" movement. She was guided by Tanaka Ryō, Tōyama Shizuō and lyricist and critic Katori Sennosuke. She created a very unusual method with her very individual sense of music, incorporating traditional techniques into Western techniques of breathing and timing and highlighting the beauty of a woman wearing a kimono. Her distinctive piece "*Gen-ya* (The Plain)," was danced by Nishikawa Yūko from the Sōke Nishikawa school of dance at her "*Yūko no Kai*" (November 1, National Theater Small Hall). The piece takes the theme of a fox in the fields of northern Japan, a theme that still remains vibrant in the deep level of the Japanese psyche. The imposing figure of human desire and redemption were splendidly recreated in the standing poses and sharply dynamic movements of the dance.

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Connecting Urban and Rural Regions: A Recital Commemorating the 7th Anniversary of the Death of Hata Michiyo

Kabuki actor Onoe Kikugorō VI learned from the kind of "*buyō kaikaku*" of his teacher Ichikawa Danjūrō IX and the female writer Hasegawa Shigure. Kikugoro famously danced "*Inyō* (Yin and Yang)" to music composed by Hirota Ryūtarō at the "*Tōei-Kai*" *shin buyō* recital for young kabuki actors. At the time, Koderā Yūkichi, a student of Tsubouchi Shōyō criticized this pairing of *buyō* and Western-style music as "a reckless effort with no knowledge of the history and regional culture from which Western music developed." In 1922, Koderā expanded on Shōyō's "*Shin Gakugeki Ron* (A Theory of New Musical Theater)" in his "*Kindai Buyōshi Ron* (A Theory of

Modern *buyō* History).” Kodera argued that what was necessary for the spiritual support of the regions of Japan in modern times could be found by investigating the folk performances of the regions that transcended age and physical barriers and explored them going from the present backwards in time. Kodera’s criticism of the easy collaboration of Western music and *Nihon buyō* was probably based on his idea that the source of artistic creation needed to be rooted in what for him was the core of the identity of a region, its life style and local culture.

After the Great Kanto Earthquake, Onoe Kikutarō, a former student of Kikugorō VI, succeeded as the second head of the Hanayagi school of classic dance as Hanayagi Jusuke II. In 1924, he established the “*Hanayagi Buyō Kenkyū Kai* (Hanayagi *buyō* Study Group)” and also, together with his brother-in-law Hanayagi Tokutar worked with all the members of the Hanayagi school to send dance teachers to geisha districts throughout Japan to spread out the culture of *buyō* from where it had been centered in Tokyo to the regions of Japan, thus through the artistic management of the Hanayagi school connect Tokyo and the culture of the rural regions. Other dance schools followed suit and the classical schools like Wakayagi and Fujima and then the Shin Buyō schools did the same and eventually *buyō* culture expanded to every part of Japan. Two of Kikugorō VI’s students, Onoe Shigeru and Onoe Kotojirō, studied *buyō* with Fujima Kanjūrō VI. Eventually Shigeru became the second head of the Nishikawa school in Nagoya under the name Nishikawa Koisaburō II. Kotojirō took the name Onoe Kikunojō and became the head of the Onoe school, a dance school founded by Kikugorō VI himself. In this way, the teachings of Kikugorō VI, which were the spiritual support of the culture of a modernizing Tokyo, spread to all the geisha districts of Japan and led to the flourishing of the many schools

of Nihon Buyō established in the Showa period.

However, the popularity in the Taisho period of dances for children done to newly created *dōyō* songs for children, marked a decisive break from the traditional way of teaching dance to children going back to the Edo period. In the old days, instead of dances specifically meant for children, the schools of dance used simple dances originally created for adult dancers. Probably this change is connected to the emergence of *shin buyō*. The traditional dance world did not understand that educating children in physical expression had to be the core of artistic creation. The dancer Onoe Kikunori who had studied dance with an Onoe school teacher and who is better known under his real name of Hata Michiyo organized the “*Japanese Traditional Dance Troupe Kikunokai* (Chrysanthemum Recital)” and for educating children in physical expression not only used the traditional beginners’ dances of *Nihon buyō*, he had them study regional folk dance and music. This is none other than a merging of the two ways of tying together Tokyo and the rural regions according to the ideas of Kikugorō VI and Kodera. By creating works based on regional folk performances and presenting them as examples of Japanese culture both in Japan and abroad, the achievements of the Kikunokai are very many. They include works like the Japanese-style dance drama “*Katcha Yukanu ka Kono Michi o*” (written and directed by Misumi Haruo, first performed in 1978) which was based on observation of the “*Oni Kenbai* (Demon Sword Dance)” preserved in the Kitakami region of Iwate Prefecture. It is heartening that Hata’s work was remembered this year in such performances as “*Nihon no Odori* (The Dance of Japan)” (August 26, Asakusa Kōkaidō), a performance by the Kikunokai commemorating the 7th anniversary of Hata’s death and performances by the Kikunokai in Sri Lanka (November 2 – 8).

***buyō* as Ordinary and Extraordinary Activity**

One thing that is notable about the *buyō*, which expresses the hearts of the Japanese people, which is the core of Hata's expression, is that it is very different in the big cities and in the rural regions.

The *Suito Edo Bunka Isanjuku Jikkō Inikai* (Committee for the Study of Cultural Heritages of the Water Capital Edo) reconstructed dances that were performed at the Kanda Festival and performed them in the framework of project called “*Edo no Sairei to Geinō* (Festivals and Performances in Edo)” in 2015 with the support of the Japanese cultural agency (November 12, Main Hall of the Kanda Shrine). What was most striking were the processions and performances of the graduate students from the University of Tokyo Cultural Resources department. Their everyday bodies were transformed into something extraordinary and seemed to sparkle. There was a visible difference from the dances of the professional *Nihon buyō* dancers who were enlisted to do the reconstructed dances. This probably comes from the difference between the techniques of dance expression of amateurs and professionals. The graduate students worked on reconstructing the Kanda Festival as part of their ordinary studies, but when the actual performance came, they wore ceremonial festival costumes and with the presentation at the shrine of these extraordinary processions and performances dedicated to the gods, their bodies became empty vessels and this is why they seemed to sparkle. This is very different from the way that *Nihon buyō* dances view the ordinary and the extraordinary.

The reality of *Nihon buyō* lessons is that it is no longer a common part of the lives of ordinary people. The daily life of *buyō* lessons almost exclusively a training ground for professional dancers and the perspective of amateurs has disappeared. Once *buyō* lessons were a

normal part of people's lives less for the dances themselves than as a way to learn to wear kimono properly, etiquette and deportment and emotional education. Even the wearing of kimono has become an extraordinary experience for most Japanese people today and the domination of the *iemoto* or heads of schools means that the course to becoming a professional is fixed. It is worth carefully examining to what extent the world view of these professional supports of the classics and traditional performing arts actually contributed to the reconstruction of the Kanda Festival.

50 Years of *buyō* at the National Theater

When it opened in 1966, the National Theater began by presenting a commemorative recital, "*Tōzai Kaomise Buyō* (Face Showing of Top *buyō* Dancers from the East and West of Japan)." The National Theater began with the type of performances and definition of *buyō* held at the time by Shadan Hōjin Nihon Buyō Kyōkai (Japanese Classical Dance Association). With that mindset, the National Theater has produced a great variety of performances of *buyō*, including "kabuki *buyō*," "Kamigata *mai*," "*su-odori* (dance in formal kimono rather than stage costume)," and also newly composed dances and lecture-demonstrations.

However, it has not considered *buyō* as it actually is in modern times for the Japanese people, a thought Kōdera Yūkichi found to be so important. On the occasion of its fiftieth anniversary, it might be worth looking more closely at the rich range of dance culture in Japan. The New National Theater opened in 1997, but the only performances of dance there are ballet and contemporary dance. It ignores the *buyō* culture with deeper roots in this country. The government should rethink what Japanese dance is related to the histori-

cal and cultural conditions throughout the country.

In the dances to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the National Theater, two striking performances by professional *buyō* dancers, “*Yakko Dōjōji* (Male *Dōjōji*)” by Hanayagi Motoi (September 10, Large Hall of the National Theater) and “*Kigisu*” by Inoue Yachiyo (November 26, Large Hall of the National Theater) can be mentioned. To that, dances for banquets in geisha district performed by two currently active geisha, “*Izaya Sumiyoshi*” by Umemoto Baiei (November 26, Small Hall of the National Theater) and “*Kiku no Tsuyu* (Chrysanthemum Dew)” by Inoue Mametsuru (November 27, Small Hall of the National Theater) were impressive. All of these gave the impression of the true art of physical expression.

Topics

There were three recitals of dance in memory of three Living National Treasures. One commemorated the 27th anniversary of the death of Fujima Kanso II (September 26 and 27, Kabuki-za), the “*Jakuseikai*” (May 8, Large Hall of the National Theater) was in memory of Nakamura Shikan and one was a recital of Kyōmai (December 18, Rome Theater Kyoto South Hall) in commemoration of the 13th anniversary of the death of Inoue Aiko (Inoue Yachiyo IV). These performances commemorated consummate artists in fields of *buyō* with strong connections to the world of kabuki or the world of Kyoto *geiko* and *maiko*. They were like festivals of the classical schools of *buyō* and were shining performances as far from the daily world as could possibly be imagined.

At the same time, even though the *shin buyō* movement grew out of the awakening to the thoughts and feeling of the individual in the Taisho and early Showa periods, and produced many great artists that

presented their work in individually sponsored recitals, by the first decade of the 21st century, *shin buyō* became totally separated from the lives of ordinary people and only survives now as one of the genres of traditional performing arts. The extraordinary occasion of the recital has lost its excitement.

In his recital “*Sonokisuke Tsukurū Odoru: Henge Buyō no Miryoku* (Sonokisuke Creates and Dances: The Charm of *Henge* Transformation Dances,” Hanayagi Sonokisuke performed all of the dances in “*Osozakura Teniha no Nanamōji* (Late Cherry Blossoms in Seven Letters),” a kabuki dance where originally one actor appeared in all seven characters appearing in the piece, changing fast from one character to another. He deserves a prize for effort, first for a *buyō* dancer trying to recreate the charm of this late Edo period genre of kabuki dance and also for his stance of research. It is a shame that there was not a bit more of the aesthetic spirit of kabuki. In the last dance “*Shu Shōki* (Red Shōki, the Demon Queller),” everything is revealed to be just the dream of a courtesan, returning to the setting of the first dance. This lacks the power of devices like *yatsushi*, where a character disguises his or her essence, or *mi-arawashi*, where a character reveals his or her essence and also was not quite in keeping with the original spirit of these transformation dances. But his efforts were rewarded and Sonokisuke received the prize for excellence in the annual arts festival sponsored by the Japanese National Cultural Agency, along with Wakayagi Ginsai, who won the prize for excellence in the Kansai division.

In 2016, Fujima Rankō won the Select Prize awarded by the National Cultural Agency and he staged “*Nobunaga*” which took as its theme his first meeting with the ballet dancers Farukh Ruzimotov and Iwata Morihiro. In recent years, it has become very popular for

the *buyō* world to stage collaborations like this, showing the meeting of Western and Japanese styles. To do this, it is really necessary to think carefully about the essence of the two styles. Otherwise it may actually be counterproductive to the goal of new artistic creation.

If you define *Nihon buyō* very broadly, then the performance of “*Rakuami Shō*” (Kawase Junsuke no Kai, November 9, National Noh Theater) was interesting as *buyō*. This was based on a section of the classical noh play “*Rakuami*” where the main character is a shakuhachi player. The performance took the interlude in the middle of the play, which is usually performed by kyogen actors, and made it into a separate play. The play was arranged by kyogen actor Zenchiku Jūrō and scholar Tanaka Hideki and the shakuhachi music was composed by Kawase Junsuke. It showed the ghost of the shakuhachi player Rakuami, combining noh-style chanting, narrative singing and shakuhachi music. The kyogen actor became a splendid *Nihon buyō* dancer.

Also in 2016, the Yokohama Noh Gakudō and the Dentō Kumi Odori Hōzonkai (Traditional Kumi Odori Preservation Group) teamed together to start a five year project called “*Noh no Goban Chōkun no Goban* (The Five Play Program of Noh; The Five Play Program of Chōkun).” Chōkun was a dancer in the court of the Ryūkyū king and he originated the classical *kumi odori* style of Ryūkyū dance, which was heavily influenced by noh. The first in this series showed the noh play “*Hagoromo* (The Feathered Robe)” and the *Ryūkyū kumi odori* “*Mekarushi-*” (January 16, Yokohama Noh Gakudō). Both noh and *Ryūkyū kumi odori* were ceremonial performances closely associated with their respective national centers of power, and these performances also aim at exploring the significance of this.

Hirano, Hidetoshi

Nihon buyō (Japanese classical dance) critic. Born in 1944 in Sendai and graduated from the theater division of the literature department of Waseda University majoring in kabuki. Worked for a publishing house as an editor for such periodicals as "Okinawa Performing Arts," the quarterly journal "Folk Performing Arts," the monthly magazine, "Japanese Music and Classical Dance." As a critic, his interest is in investigating the art of physical expression. He is a member of advisory committees for the Japanese Cultural Agency and the Society for the Advancement of the Arts in Japan.

(Translation: Mark Oshima)

Ballet

Ballet World Stays Active Under Difficult Circumstances

Urawa Makoto

Introduction

In 2016, many unforeseeable phenomena occurred globally, including the aggravation of indiscriminate acts of terrorism by ISIL, Brexit (Britain's withdrawal from the European Union) and Donald Trump's victory in the U.S. presidential election. In Japan, Abenomics (Prime Minister Abe's economic policy) has not generated expected results, making the gaps in economy and welfare widen even further. Moreover, the areas afflicted by the Great East Japan Earthquake and the following nuclear accident in 2011 are far from restored, and further natural disasters like the Kumamoto earthquakes and those caused by climate change do not seem to end. Additionally, the severity of the situation surrounding people's everyday life, culture and the arts is worsening due to the confusions surrounding the preparations for the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games. The decline of the birthrate and the economic recession is still continuing, which has led to continuous decrease in the number of children likely to take ballet lessons, although they create an important foundation to sustain the ballet world. The disparity among private schools in terms of the number of pupils is widening in particular.

Nevertheless, the ballet world and ballet market in Japan have not noticeably lost its vibrancy. Particularly in the urban areas, the

number of ballet companies and ballet performances still surpasses those of other areas, and many foreign ballet companies and individual ballet dancers have been invited to perform during 2016. Though the boom of organizing ballet competitions have now calmed down in Japan, many Japanese ballet dancers are producing good results in competitions held overseas. Moreover, concert-style performances are frequently held in various parts of Japan, in which young dancers performing or training abroad take part when they return to Japan for the summer holidays. However, when you look at the situation in detail, the number of performances and recitals held outside the large metropolitan areas is gradually decreasing. Even in the large city areas, a decrease in the number of performance days has been seen. Famous large-scale theatres did not close during this year, but some small theatres were shut down. There are also ongoing plans to renovate several theatres in order to make them more earthquake proof, or because the buildings are getting old, making it difficult for various groups to secure venues.

The Tokyo Metropolitan Area

Here, I would like to cover some topics, which I think deserve special mentioning.

In the Tokyo area, besides The National Ballet of Japan attached to the New National Theatre, there are more than ten private ballet companies performing on a regular basis. However, there are not many companies that mount their own productions more than ten times a year and there are quite a number of companies that rely on meager public subsidies, including those based in Kansai and Chūbu areas, where ballet is relatively active.

The recent trend of ballet companies based in the Tokyo metropolitan area is that they rarely present new or newly produced works. The majority of the companies present full-length productions from their repertoire instead, and new pieces would be presented at most as part of triple-bill programmes.

Let us take a look at each company. Firstly, the New National Theatre, Tokyo has been led by Ōhara Noriko in her second and third season as the Artistic Director of Ballet and Dance. While the contemporary dance department has made many new attempts, The National Ballet has been focusing on remounting works in its repertoire. Competent young dancers that have completed the ballet school attached to the state-run theatre or from outside have joined the key principal dancers Ono Ayako and Fukuoka Yūdai, and the ballet company itself has also developed further, presenting classical and contemporary pieces from its repertoire such as Kenneth MacMillan's *Romeo and Juliet* that has been highly acclaimed as productions worth seeing.

Considering notable activities of private ballet companies, firstly, Maki Asami of Asami Maki Ballet realized her long-held wish to remount a Japanese piece titled *Asuka Monogatari* (Asuka Story), which premiered in 1957 starring her mother Tachibana Akiko. Under the new title of *Asuka*, it was revived in a contemporary style, such as using projections, and attracted a wide audience. Matsuyama Ballet Company's legendary ballerina Morishita Yōko still performs the main characters in classical ballet productions, having danced professionally for over sixty years. In Shimizu Tetsutarō's masterpiece *Romeo and Juliet*, she danced her most notable title role for the first

time in many years, which pleased many fans. NBA Ballet Company, which is the only company in the Tokyo metropolitan area based in Tokorozawa City in Saitama Prefecture, is following its own unique path such as hosting ballet competitions, while creating contemporary works in cooperation with video artists. Ballet Chambre Ovest based in Tokyo's Hachioji City has also been presenting new mid-length original works every year, alongside hosting competitions and holding an outdoor ballet event every summer. They build a special stage on Kiyosato Plateau in Yamanashi Prefecture and attract a large audience every year. The Tokyo Ballet lost its founder and producer Sasaki Tadatsugu and held a memorial gala to mourn his death, which doubled as the thirtieth premiere anniversary of Maurice Béjart's *The Kabuki*. K-Ballet Company, led by Kumakawa Tetsuya, casts young dancers around Nakamura Shōko and has been very active staging performances. As for Tani Momoko Ballet, its founder Tani Momoko passed away the previous year and for her memorial performance, Act Two of *Giselle* was presented, as the title role was one of her most successful parts. Other major companies include The Inoue Ballet Foundation, Noriko Kobayashi Ballet Theatre, Tokyo City Ballet, Star Dancers Ballet, which are all member companies of The Association of Japanese Ballet Companies, a congregation of professional ballet companies founded in 2014 for the purpose of promoting ballet. Further, the Tokyo Komaki Ballet has a special connection with Mongolia, which it has used to its advantage, and the nationwide Japan Ballet Association, which is comprised of ballet-related people, staged performances and hosted competitions during the year, indicating that they are engaged in unique activities respectively.

Other matters worthy of special mentioning are as follows:

Firstly, Yoshida Miyako, who used to be a principal dancer at The Royal Ballet alongside Kumakawa Tetsuya, is still popular and she collaborated with the former New York City Ballet (NYCB) dancer Horiuchi Gen in *Ballet for the Future 2016*, which was presented in Tokyo and Kanazawa. This production was sponsored by Chacott, a company which manufactures and sells ballet items. Besides its main business, Chacott has opened ballet studios across Japan, and has now started to produce ballet. As for The Royal Ballet, Hirano Ryōichi and Takada Akane were both promoted to principal dancers and it became a big topic.

NHK (Japan Broadcasting Corporation) has also been hosting a ballet festival at NHK Hall under the name *Ballet no Kyōen* (literal meaning: Ballet Feast), inviting major ballet companies and dancers from various parts of Japan. This year, besides inviting professional ballet companies, a new project was added in which Manuel Legris was asked to instruct junior dancers to put a piece on stage.

In Tokyo, new full-length ballet productions have not been seen for quite a long while, but in Kanagawa Prefecture, Shinohara Seiichi, who has been involved in a wide range of activities as a choreographer, presented *Yami no Mukou no Sono Hikari no Hate* (literal title: ‘At the End of the Light Beyond Darkness’) with Kanagawaken Geijutsu Buyō Kyōkai (Kanagawa Prefecture Artistic Dance Association), an organization bringing together dancers of classical ballet and modern dance. Centered on dancers with an overflowing stage presence, such as Shimomura Yukie and Takagishi Naoki, the awe and threat of nature was depicted on a large scale. Gotō Sachiko, who is also another choreographer with many experiences, presented *A Slice of*

Life for the first time in many years with Sakai Hana dancing the main role and it won the Arts Festival Prize from the Agency for Cultural Affairs, showing that she is still active. As for remounts, there was Franz Kafka's *Letters to My Father*, which is one of the most successful works of Sasa Tae, who has continued to present groundbreaking choreographies. Due to its creative content, the revival had been awaited for many years and it was presented in almost the same way as in the premiere, with the same cast, including lead dancer Sakamoto Tokihiko, and by the hands of the original choreographer. It was presented as the first production of Takabe Hisako's newly founded Climb Rejoice Company and the value of this work was reaffirmed.

Other Regions

Recently, ballet companies based in Kansai and Chūbu areas have been producing more high-quality full-length pieces than proven companies based in Tokyo and this trend is still continuing. The first noteworthy company is the Osaka-based Jinushi Kaoru Ballet Company. Jinushi Kaoru has turned Hans Christian Anderson's *The Little Mermaid* into a three-act ballet, sticking closely to the original story. The dance was entertaining, the storyline was moving, the music was chosen appropriately, the set design was full of ideas, and the performances of the dancers, including Okumura Yui, who performed the mermaid, was wonderful, for which it won the Award for Excellence at the National Arts Festival under the auspices of the Agency for Cultural Affairs. It was the company's second time to get an award at this festival, as they also won the Grand Prize for the production of *Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves* two years ago. As for large-scale narrative ballet, Ballet Next's Ichikawa Tōru, who

continues to create works of narrative ballet in Nagoya, adapted *A Dog of Flanders* into a ballet using his unique style of integrating realism and symbolism, and it was very successful. Also in Nagoya, Théâtre de Ballet Company, after many years, revived *The Rite of Spring*, through which Fukagawa Hideo paid homage, so to speak, to Ballets Russes, and also presented a new production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, which was compactly trimmed by Inoue Hiroyuki.

In the Kansai region, the Kōbe-based Sadamatsu-Hamada Ballet is the most active company. This year as well, the company presented modernistic works by both Japanese and foreign choreographers and Sadamatsu Shōichiro himself created a new production of *Romeo and Juliet*. Also in Osaka, the long-established Hōmura Tomoi Ballet Company presented *Bayaderka* and Sasaki Michiko Ballet presented Shinohara Seiichi's popular work *Romeo and Juliet*. Osaka Ballet Company presented *Raymonda* and Noma Ballet Company based in Sakai City presented *La Fille mal gardée*, which was the first time for both companies to present the respective titles. In Kyoto, the former Kyoto Kaikan hall was fully redesigned and reopened as ROHM Theatre Kyoto. At this new venue, Kyoto Ballet Company presented *Don Quixote*, inviting many Étoiles-class dancers from the Paris Opera, including Karl Paquette and Hannah O'Neill, who won the Benois de la Danse prize this year, danced the part of Kitri. It was much talked about and also covered by a television network. As part of ROHM Theater's opening programme, a Kyoto-based dancers' association called Zen Kyoto Yōbu Kyōgikai (All Kyoto Western Dance Council) presented *Swan Lake* choreographed by Fukagawa Hideo, who added unique quality while faithfully following the original ballet. Additionally, Higaki Ballet presented Konishi Yūko's The

Lady of the Camellias, which was favorably received when it toured to Europe and it drew the audience's interest through the unique staging, such as adding Armand's hallucination scene in Act 2.

In the Chūbu region, besides the two Nagoya-based companies mentioned above, Ochi International Ballet has continued to put on performances led by Ochi Kumiko, the artistic director of the company, even after losing its leader Ochi Minoru. For the compelling staging of *Cinderella*, Matsuoka Reiko Ballet that follows Ochi International Ballet as a leader in this region won an award at Nagoya City Art Festival and Matsuoka Reiko, who leads the company, also won Tōkai Television Culture Prize. Moreover, Sumina Okada Ballet focuses on full-length classical ballet pieces, Keiko Miyanishi Ballet and Setsuko Kawaguchi Ballet is characterized by their contemporary pieces and also Sasa Chieko Ballet was very active during this year.

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In regions outside these large city areas, it is quite difficult to put on ballet productions due to economic circumstances and audience attendance. However, Chida Masako, who leads the Hokkaido-based Sapporo Buyōkai, created an interesting and much talked about dance piece dealing with the story of *Carmen* with a sci-fi approach, and associating it with AI (artificial intelligence). Noism, which is the resident company of Niigata City Performing Arts Center, has been active not only in Niigata but also in the Kantō region under the leadership of its artistic director Kanamori Jō, and it presented *La Bayadère*, remaking it into a story about present-day racial conflicts.

Many foreign ballet companies visited Japan as well during the year. The major lineup alone includes Hamburg Ballet that toured to

Japan during the first half of the year, the tour of The Royal Ballet from U.K, the 'All Star Ballet Gala', inviting top stars from around the world such as Nina Ananiashvili and Alessandra Ferri, and 'Étoile Gala' with the participation of the key members of the Paris Opera Ballet and Hamburg Ballet was held during the middle of the year. In autumn, ballet companies such as Milan's La Scala Theatre Ballet fascinated the audience. Moreover, the Japan tour of Matthew Bourne's *Sleeping Beauty* should also be noted in this report.

Urawa, Makoto

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

(Translation : Sumida Michiyo)

Contemporary Dance and Butoh

Modern Dance Retrospection, Contemporary Dance Maturity: Dance Confronting Society at a Crossroads

Tsutsumi Hiroshi

In 2016, the Japanese contemporary dance world witnessed many developments that conveyed a sense of having reached certain milestones: Retrospection on dance history, the maturity of contemporary dance, the decline of corporate patronage and the expansion of publicly funded projects, the clusters of art festivals, technology and dance crossovers, and initiatives looking ahead to the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. Let's examine each of these in turn.

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A Genealogy from Modern to Contemporary Dance

To mark 30 years since the death of Butoh founder Hijikata Tatsumi, a Butoh monument was erected at his grave in Izu and the Kamaitachi Museum of Art opened in Ugomachi, Akita Prefecture, which was the location for the images included in the photo book Kamaitachi. Akita, the birthplace of both Hijikata and modern dance pioneer Ishii Baku (Ishii Bac), also hosted a new international dance festival, Odoru Akita (Dance Akita), which will be held every three years.

The Kazuo Ohno Dance Studio's Dance Archive Project 2016 presented three lecture performances: Ohno Yoshito's *That was like this* (*Sore wa kono yō na koto data*) was a commentary on *Forbidden Colors* (*Kinjiki*), generally regarded as the first example of Butoh;

Murobushi Kō's *quick silver* was remade by Mukai Kumotarō as *Butoh? Presentation Show* (*Butō? Purezentēshon shō*); and Kino Saiko staged *Dance is Physical Education* (*Dansu wa taiiku nari*), in reference to Ohno Kazuo, who was a physical education teacher. Following the sudden death of Murobushi Kō in 2015, an online archive of his work (<http://www.ko-murobushi.com>) was launched. In addition, the Eguchi Miya Archive, a project that passes on the achievements of modern dance practitioners Eguchi Takaya and Miya Misako, revived *The Fire of Prometheus* (*Puromete no hi*).

During the year, Kurosawa Mika died at the age of 59. Born to Kurosawa Teruo, who studied under Ishii Baku, and Shimoda Eiko, she started learning modern dance from the age of five. She was based in New York from 1982 to 1985, where she was heavily influenced by her encounter with the Judson Dance Theater. After returning to Japan she formed her company, Mika Kurosawa & Dancers, and pursued a form of dance centering on improvisation. The cause of death was multiple organ failure resulting from the advance of cancer in her left breast, though she had continued to perform while receiving treatment after 2000, when her cancer first appeared. Embodying the currents of dance history that shifted from modern to postmodern and contemporary styles, she was known as the “Godmother of contemporary Japanese dance.”

Contemporary Dance Reaches Adulthood

Now 30 years since Teshigawara Saburō won at the Bagnolet International Choreography Competition, and Japanese contemporary dance finally seemed to enter adulthood in 2016. Teshigawara himself had a packed and impressive year. He premiered his silent dance *Quiet* (*Shizuka*) and then developed this into *Tranquil* as a

commission from GöteborgOperans Danskompani (Gothenburg Opera Dance Company). In Japan, he directed a production of the opera *The Magic Flute* at the Aichi Triennale. For *up*, which he created with jazz pianist Yamashita Yōsuke, he brought a live horse on stage while Satō Rihoko unveiled her superb equestrian skills. At a recital with the Reigakusha Gagaku Ensemble, Teshigawara and Satō danced to *In an Autumn Garden* (*Shūtei ga ichigu*), written by Takemitsu Tōru as *gagaku* (classical imperial court music and dance in Japan). He also staged an adaptation of Bruno Schulz's *Cinnamon* (also known as *The Street of Crocodiles*) at Theatre X (cai) and performed 13 pieces at his home space of Karas Apparatus, which marked its third anniversary since opening.

Ōshima Sakiko's H.Art Chaos presented a new work, *Eternity* (*Etaniti*), for the first time in six years, with Shirakawa Naoko's solo dance painting a portrait of perpetuity and the spark of living in finite time. Ide Shigehiro's idevian crew marked its 25th anniversary with the theatrically polished pieces *Howling* (*Hauringu*) and *Blind Spot* (*Shikaku*). Kondō Ryōhei's Condors marked its 20th anniversary by taking *GIGANT* on a revival tour around Japan, staging *LOVE ME TenDER* for a limited run in Saitama, and touring a 20th-anniversary revival of *20th Century Boy* to 10 cities around the country as a "best of" from its nearly 100 previous works, as well as staging the fan favorite *20th Century Toy*. Younger members of Condors Hirahara Shintarō and Suzuki Takurō are also working with their own companies (respectively, OrganWorks and CHAiroiPLIN). Hirahara won twice at the Toyota Choreography Award with the Next-Generation Choreographer Prize and Audience Prize. Furuie Yūri's Project Ohyama commemorated a decade of activities with *Even so, dance* (*Soredemo odotte*). Company Derashinera's Onodera Shūji premiered

La Dame aux Camélias and revived *Romeo and Juliet*, among many theatre appearances. Itō Kim formed a new group, Physical Theatre Company GERO. In other developments, Asai Nobuyoshi launched a mobile theatre group, Tsukiakari Theater (literally, Moonlight Theater), while Yokoyama Ayano and Kigawa Sei formed, respectively, the companies *lal banshees* and *DE PAY's MAN*. Other artists and companies who garnered attention during the year, revealing the depth of the scene, included Fukaya Masako's *Dance Dog All is Full*, Takahashi Jun's *Junjun Science*, Seki Kaori's *PUNCTUMUN*, KENTARO!!'s *TOKYO ELECTROCK STAIRS*, Okuno Miwa, Ōzono Kōji and Hashimoto Noriyasu's *Kaeru P*, Kitao Wataru's *Baobab*, and Tamura Kōichirō's *Revo*.

Newly Socially Aware Dance

Socially conscious, frank styles of dance also came to the fore. Kasai Akira published *Body and Life: Theory of Super-era Dance* (*Karada to seimei-chōjōidai dansu-ron*), assiduously discussing his unique vision of the body. Though his *Tonight is Nasty* (*Konban wa are-moyō*) from last year won the 47th Dance Critics Association Award, Kasai also caused a stir for rejecting the prize because he felt that the officially stated reasons for his selection were not respectful. His meticulousness about language and dance as well as society and the body were also prominent in the eurythmic version of *Dance the Constitution of Japan* (*Nihonkoku kenpō o odoru*) by his company, Tenshikan. Maro Akaji's *Dairakudakan* premiered *Paradise* (*Paradaisu*). A hyper-real world, though nonetheless fundamentally connected to contemporary society, unfolded on stage, featuring projections of the Rousseau painting *The Dream* and various scenes entwined with the titular motif, while also evoking the case of an

abducted female junior high school student in Saitama that came to light in March.

Kawaguchi Takao and Jonathan M. Hall staged the LGBT-informed *Touch of the Other* (*TOUCH OF THE OTHER—Tasha no te*), recreating the research that American sociologist Laud Humphreys conducted into male sexual encounters in public toilets in the United States in the 1960s. The work of Maki Munetaka was also conspicuous. In *Asterisk: Goodbye, Snow White* (**ASTERISK Goodbye, Snow White shinshaku shirayukihime*) he portrayed a dark fantasy of a star actress jealous of the rise of a young idol. Maki directed his own group, Tokyo Gegegay, in *Tokyo Gegegay Opera Company* (*Tokyo gegegi kagekidan*) as well as a performance by dancers from Taiwan, the Philippines, Malaysia, and Japan in the festival DANCE DANCE ASIA—Crossing the Movements in Tokyo. This belied its ostensible genre as street dance to beguile Maki's many fans with a style inspired by gay club culture. Another dancer heavily influenced by nightclub culture, Higashino Yōko, fully launched her new company, Antibodies Collective, which she had formed in 2015 as a development from her previous unit, Baby-Q. It staged the outdoor performance *A Neighborhood* (*A kawaii*) at Zamza Asagaya, a fringe theatre in Tokyo, and in the surrounding area.

Miura Hiroyuki's Works-M staged *Garden of Qualia* (*Kuoria no niwa*). The movements of the body created a portrait of Gotō Kenji, the Japanese journalist captured and killed by ISIL (ISIS) in Syria in January 2015, out of the image of simultaneously encouraging both the clash and development of civilizations. Kitamura Akiko partnered with the Cambodian photographer Kim Hak, who has documented the memories and histories of people killed in the 1970s genocide under Pol Pot, to create *Cross Transit*, which intermixed music and

dance with video footage. Suzuki Yukio revived his version of *The Rite of Spring* as part of the omnibus-style performance *warp mania #1*, referencing the figures who brought great change to society in the same way as Ballets Russes. For *warp mania #1* he also staged a work in tribute to Yoyes (María Dolores Katarain), the Basque-born Spanish political activist, as well as a new work, *Differential Sedimentation* (*Bibun no taiseiki*), which cited Svetlana Alexievich's *Chernobyl Prayer*. The Austria-based Matsune Michikazu performed the Japanese premiere of *Dance, if you want to enter my country!* (*Odore, nyūkoku shitakereba!*). Based on the real-life case of a dancer for Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater who, suspected as a terrorist by immigration officials at an airport in Israel, was told to prove he was who he said he was by dancing for them, Matsune created a piece that re-inquired into the nature of global expression. Iida Shigemi is a dancer who has led workshops all over the world. He formed a new company, *kochi gumi* (literally, East Wind Group), and staged *small stars; in east wind* (*Kochi fuku naka, chiisana hoshi*), a piece of documentary-dance-theatre employing dance and music from the various homelands of the international company. Hasegawa Nay's Fujiyama Annette, which advocates a theatre-dance crossover style, revived *Attack on Dance*. Through a process of auditions, Hasegawa selected dancers from varying styles, such as ballet, contemporary dance, jazz and ballroom dancing, who then responded during the performance to a series of questions ("What inspired you to start dancing?", "What do you think about when dancing?", "Can dance change the world?", and so on). The piece was then adapted with local casts in China and Brazil.

From Corporate Sponsorship to Public Enterprises

Kanamori Jō's dance group Noism, which is based at Ryutopia Niigata City Performing Arts Center, revived its productions of *Carmen* and *The House of the Spirits*. The theatrical dance piece *La Bayadère: Nation of Illusion* (*Ra bayadēru—maboroshi no kuni*) had a script by the playwright Hirata Oriza and attracted buzz as a modern adaptation of the ballet masterpiece. It was set in the former Japanese puppet state of Manchukuo, where it imagined five ethnic groups (Japanese, Korean, Manchu, Mongol, and Han Chinese) existing side by side. The production included actors from Shizuoka Performing Arts Center (SPAC) in a face-off between theatre and dance. Directly showing a situation where those in power have language while the oppressed are unable to speak, it also demonstrated the eloquence of dance as a form of wordless expression that uses the body. Both *La Bayadère* and *The House of the Spirits* were performed as part of BeSeTo Theater Festival, which is organized jointly by committees in Japan, China and South Korea, sounding a warning to the international state of affairs today whereby ethnic and religious conflicts are rampant, and the memory of history no longer certain.

The premiere of *Move/Still* appeared at JAPON dance project, which was organized mainly by Koike Mimoza, who serves as the performing arts director of Le Logoscope, an arts research laboratory in Monaco, and is also a principal dancer with the Les Ballets de Monte Carlo, the official national company of Monaco. Koike was joined by Endō Yasuyuki (former of the Ballet National de Marseille) and Kodama Hokuto (Royal Swedish Ballet) as well as Shimaji Yasutake (formerly of The Forsythe Company), and the National Ballet of Japan dancers Ono Ayako, Yonezawa Yui, and Yahata Akimitsu, and others. Its motif of planting trees in a park

was a metaphor for the performers who dance for public theatres in various countries, though it also somewhat cynically elucidated their will to continue moving and dancing. The piece was much acclaimed by audiences.

Ōue Shintarō, who has experience with prominent overseas dance companies, revived dan-su, which he created with Moriyama Mirai and Hirahara Shintarō, for a 24-performance tour to 15 cities around Japan. Ōue's C/Company also staged *Forget/Bolero (Wasurerō/borero)*, which attempted to deconstruct the superiority and relationship between Ravel's music and dance.

The end of March saw the closure of Asahi Art Square, while Kid Ailack Art Hall shut its doors for good at the end of December. The demise of the Toyota Choreography Award, which has promoted the next generation of dance talent over its ten iterations, also brought to a close 15 years of history. We might speculate that the reason for the decision to stop the award was the fall in profits of its sponsor, Toyota, due to the strong yen as well as its recent commitment as the top sponsor for the International Olympic Committee in anticipation of the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. It seems, then, that we are in the midst of a large shift from the corporate sponsorship that had become prominent in the 1990s towards the publicly funded model that emerged from the 2000s. Major examples of the latter include the clusters of art festivals that now happen around Japan and 2016 also witnessed several, including the Setouchi Triennale, Aichi Triennale, and Saitama Triennale. In these events, art projects are implemented as a means for local governments and authorities to revitalize regional areas, and engage local residents to create works of art that are rooted in the community. Dance is also programmed in these festivals and plays its part in attracting audiences.

Yanaihara Mikuni's Nibroll appeared at the Setouchi Triennale, presenting the outdoor performance *The World has Shrunk, and Only a Certain Fact Remains* (*Sekai wa chijinde shimatte aru jijitsu dake ga nokoru*) on Inujima in Okayama Prefecture. Inujima is an island that prospered during the Meiji period (1868–1912) with its quarrying and bronze refining industries, but went into decline during the Taishō period (1912–1926). Its population of some 5,000 at its peak has now dropped to a mere 50. Tripping over or kicking the black slag left by copper refining, the dancers illuminated the history of an island abandoned by the times. As the Aichi Triennale, Co.Yamada Un premiered *Breath of Life* (*IKINONE*), based on research into the folk performance custom of the *hana-matsuri* (flower festival), which has continued in the Okumikawa area of Aichi for over 700 years and is influenced by the mountain ascetic practice of Shugendō. The Amsterdam-based pianist Mukaiyama Tomoko often collaborates with dancers. For the festival Dance New Air she created *La Mode* as well as the solo dance piece *HOME* for Yuasa Ema at the Saitama Triennale.

Dance and the Socially Vulnerable

As we head towards the 2020 Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games, a wide range of initiatives has started. No doubt hoping to attract tourists coming to Japan from overseas, Kyoto Butoh-Kan, Japan's first specialist Butoh theatre, opened in Kyoto. Ima Tenko of the troupe Kiraza started an open run of performances. Perhaps it is no surprise that it is the brainchild of producer Kohara Keito, who also created the unusually long-running *GEAR* in Kyoto. That popular production is a non-verbal show mixing pantomime, break-dancing, magic and juggling into a story along with cutting-edge

technology such as projection mapping, a dress that flashes with LED lights, and laser beams. It opened in 2012 and celebrated 1,000 performances in 2015, and has now been seen by over 100,000 people. Since it has no dialogue, it is a successful example of a tourist-friendly performance that can be enjoyed by everyone from children to adults regardless of nationality.

There has been attention recently on crossovers between dance and the latest technologies as well as on art for the disabled. *On-Myaku 2016* was an attempt to stage an interactive performance between live music played by pianist Nakagawa Kenichi, dance by Shirai Tsuyoshi, and various sensors. Takatani Shirō premiered *ST/LL* in Japan, following its world premiere at Le Volcan (Le Havre, France) in 2015. He also revived *CHROMA*. The Berlin-based Kawaguchi Yui's MatchAtria, co-created with the video artist Ishibashi Yoshimasa, returned to Japan for a new run. Through holding "heartbeat perception" devices that worked in synch as well as a binaural soundscape and 3D video effects, the audience experienced the multimedia, multi-sensory performance while intimately connected to the physicality of the dancer.

At TPAM, the Japan Foundation presented Disability x Performing Arts Series 2016, including a demonstration of Reactor for Awareness in Motion (RAM), an ongoing research project developed by Yamaguchi Center for Arts and Media and the dancer Andō Yōko. RAM captures the movements of dancers and then converts them in real time into video, music and more. A tool kit was also shown to the public. During the development process, Jareo Osamu was also involved with experimental research with the physically disabled, capturing and visualizing the actions of those with disabilities in the hope of improving mutual understanding and empathy. In 2016, Jareo

published *Faltering Dance, Born at a Nursing Home* (*Rōjin hōmu de umareta totsu totsu dansu*), a record of his workshops with physically immobile residents at a nursing home in Kyoto.

The physically disabled group Gekidan Taihen staged its first Tokyo performances in 12 years with a revival of *Lung Ta* (*Wind Horse*): *Blow a Strong Wind* (*Runta [kaze no uma]—ii kaze yo fuke*). Led by Kim Manri, the group's use of silent physical actions to express dance has overturned stereotypes to much acclaim at home and abroad. The Sagami-hara stabbings massacre in Kanagawa Prefecture at a disabled care home in July, committed by a former employee who believed in eugenics, sent shock waves through Japanese society. As a memorial and requiem as well as encouragement for disabled people around the country traumatized by the event, Kim revived a solo dance called *Universe of Joy* (*Kotobogi no uchū*). Hearing-impaired artists also attracted attention. Makihara Eri and the Butoh dancer Dakei co-directed a film, *Listen*. All the directors and cast are deaf, expressing a “visual music” whose rhythm and melody is sensed without dialogue or voices but through movement incorporating the entire body and spirit. The London-based Minamimura Chisato premiered *The Sea of Noise* (*Noizu no umi*), expressing a world of noise that can be “heard” by sight, sound and touch. Both Kim and Minamimura have said that the alternative perspectives of those with disabilities have the potential to introduce social innovation. Indeed, the socially vulnerable also possess such an “alternative perspective.” The dance group Shinjin H Sokerissa!, which is led by Aoki Yūki and features performers with experience of being homeless, won the Grand Prix at the Konica Minolta Social Design Award, which highlights art that endeavors to improve society.

Dance that sincerely confronts the reality of our world also helps

restore our spirits. Following the Kumamoto earthquake, dance workshops led by the likes of Condors gave cheer to local children. At the disabled care home in Sagamihara, a dance classroom was opened five months after the massacre and dance was able to bring smiles to the faces of the residents.

Tsutsumi, Hiroshi

Born in 1966 in Kawasaki City. He graduated from Bunka Gakuin's theatre course. He is an editor and performing arts critic. After serving as an editor for art, entertainment, theatre and drama magazines, he now works freelance. His writing and editing includes *The Flying Dangorō Party in the Sky: The Rebirth of Acharaka* (*Sora tobu kumo no ue dangorō ichiza: Acharaka saitanjō*), *Performing Arts Magazine Bacchus*, *Performing Arts in Germany Today* (*Gendai doitsu no pafōmingu ātsu*), and *Peter Brook: The Way of Creation* (*Pitā burukku: Sōsaku no kiseki*).

(Translation: William Andrews)

Television Dramas

When Imagination Is Tested for the Benefit of Human Dignity and Greatness

Kotaki Tetsuya

In Japan, the major news topics during 2016 were natural disasters, such as the Kumamoto earthquakes, and political events, such as the movement toward revising the Constitution and the Emperor announcing his intension to abdicate. Donald Trump's accession to the U.S. presidency also had a major impact on both Japan and the world. Trump's politics holds the goal of making America great again, giving first priority to white people and rejecting other races, and it makes us wonder how it is going to effect democracy, human rights, cultural diversity, environmental preservation and autonomy of the media alongside other issues, as well as what kind of influence drama could have in these turbulent times. One may say that the power of imagination to work for the benefit of human dignity and greatness has never been tested as much as now.

Meanwhile, in the world of television, the form of viewing is changing from real-time viewing to time-shift viewing, due to the fact that recorded viewing is taking root and thus spread of delivery service to include those who missed the real-time broadcast of the programme. This trend will also possibly affect the way television dramas are made, changing from dramaturgy based on the assumption that people will be 'viewing in real time while doing other things' to dramaturgy tailored to 'viewing by giving exclusive attention', which is like watching a film in the cinema.

Looking back at television dramas broadcast in 2016, as with the recent trend, dramas made by NHK overwhelmed those made by commercial television stations in terms of both production quality as well as entertainment.

Amongst NHK's dramas, *Natsume Sōseki no Tsuma* (literal title: *Natsume Sōseki's Wife*, screenplay written by Ikehata Shunsaku and directed by Shibata Takeshi) was the best and the portrayals of the conflict between the two main characters, who were a married couple, were overwhelming. The story depicts the relation between Meiji period's great writer Natsume Sōseki (his real name is Natsume Kin-nosuke) and his wife. The way in which the dreadful conflict and ultimate love between the husband and wife was portrayed, struck a chord with the viewers, as it could be related to various aspects of marital relationships. Kin-nosuke (played by Hasegawa Hiroki) was deprived of parental love and does not know how to treat his wife, although he has yearned for a family. He merely snaps at his wife to let out his agony of not being able to realize his dream to become a novelist and settling instead for the position of a teacher. On the other hand, his wife Kyōko (played by Ono Machiko) has been brought up in luxury and does not understand Kin-nosuke's complex about family life. Neither does she understand why Kin-nosuke is suffering because of his dream to become a novelist, as she has no knowledge in literature. Having been ignored by her husband, Kyōko suffers from loneliness and attempts suicide. Moreover, Kin-nosuke becomes physically and mentally sick when he goes to England to study and repeatedly falls into a state of frenzy, seized by delusions and hallucinations. In the drama, the couple's hellish scenes are depicted in a ghastly way but the tension is broken at times through their little kindness and smiles, offering glimpses of their love which

gradually overflows. The best part of it is not only the portrayal of their solitude and conflict due to their differences but the ultimate love that connects the couple all the same. The drama goes beyond the relationship between Natsume Sōseki and his wife and brings home the universal reality of married couples. This drama won the Monthly Award of the Galaxy Awards.

The New Year's drama special titled *Fuji Family* (screenplay written by Kizara Izumi and directed by Yoshida Teruyuki) is a domestic drama gently heartening those who cannot find their way out from their daily lives. At the foot of Mount Fuji, there is a convenience store called 'Fuji Family', where three beautiful sisters used to live. The second-eldest sister has died, while the youngest sister has got married and moved out. Currently, it is run by Old Emiko (played by Katagiri Hairi), who is the younger sister of the sisters' deceased father, as well as the second daughter's ex-husband, a part-timer called Kasumi (played by Nakamura Yurika) and the eldest daughter called Takako (played by Yakushimaru Hiroko), who comes to help after work. Everyone there is in a stalemate, being at a loss about what to do with their lives. The daily lives of such characters are depicted and woven into it are several layers of encouraging scenes that go straight to the viewers' hearts. For instance, to Kasumi, who has the habit of saying, "It's okay," Takako says, "You should say 'It's not okay' when it's not okay." However, it is Takako herself that is afraid to say, "It's not okay," because she is the one looking after everyone. Old Emiko, on the other hand, feels inferior because she has grown old, but when she encounters 'a robot that *has to be taken care of*', which was made just for the sake of causing trouble to people, she starts thinking, "Perhaps it is alright for me to be here." The

screenwriter Kizara Izumi always encourages people who are bogged down by their ordinary lives. This programme received the ATP Award for Best Drama.

A one-off drama broadcast in the summer titled *Kidnap Tour* (based on the novel by Kakuta Mitsuyo, adapted into a screenplay and directed by Kishi Yoshiyuki) is a pleasurable summer-long fairy tale. A fifth-grader called Haru (played by Toyoshima Hana) has made no plans for the summer holiday. Her mother is busy working, while her father has left home and is living separately. However, her father (played by Tsumabuki Satoshi) suddenly shows up and says, "I'm going to kidnap you." Haru is fed up with her whimsical father, but since she has nothing else to do, she says, "I'll keep you company," and decides to be kidnapped. The conversation between the annoying father and the uninterested daughter is what makes the drama interesting. The reason why the parents have split, or the demand that the father has made to the mother when he kidnapped their daughter is not explained, which has made it into a good storyline. It has also turned the kidnap journey into a so-called 'road movie' that allows the viewers to focus just on the father and daughter. Soon Haru is having fun with her father by the sea at night and is moved when she sees fireflies flying near the temple where they are staying. She gradually opens her heart to her father and eventually comes to think that her father is a cool guy. There is a scene in which her aunt (played by Kaho) says that it is 'a miracle' to have met her boyfriend. The joys and sensations that Haru has experienced while traveling are also miracles. Perhaps children are always seeking for such miracles from their parents.

NHK's 'Morning Drama Series' remains successful. *Asa ga kita*

(*Here Comes Asa* broadcast from September 2015 till the beginning of April 2016) kept the viewers interested until the end, depicting how the strong heroine got through some turbulent times. The drama is modeled on Hiro-oka Asako, a business woman who started a coal mining business, an insurance company and a women's college during the transition from the Edo to the Meiji period, depicted in a novel by Furukawa Chieko. Firstly, Ōmori Mika's screenplay added high-spirited charm to the heroine. Asa (played by Haru), who is the second daughter to a Kyoto-based business tycoon, has been a tomboy that liked doing sumō wrestling since early childhood and is the exact opposite of her quiet sister Hatsu (played by Miyazaki Aoi), who likes to take culture lessons. Soon Asa marries Shinjiro (played by Tamaki Hiroshi), who is the second son to an exchange broker in Osaka. Shinjiro, however, is easygoing and only interested in the arts. Therefore, Haru reorganizes the family business and starts new businesses one after another on her own. Ōmori highlights the charming heroine by portraying the people around her plentifully, such as adding dramatic tension caused by the different attitudes of her sister and husband (directed by Nishitani Shinichi and others). Since none of the productions in the morning drama series had been set in the time between the end of the early modern Samurai period and the beginning of the Meiji era, it was quite a challenge, and to add to that, the way the heroine was highlighted was the strongest appeal of *Asa ga kita*. The series won the Grand Prize in the Serial Drama category of the Tokyo Drama Awards 2016.

The seven-episode *Totto Terebi* (*Totto Television* based on a novel by Kuroyanagi Tetsuko) was modeled on a popular television personality called Kuroyanagi Tetsuko (born in 1933), who has appeared on

the radio and television since the early days of television, and is still active. It was a drama trying to convey how programmes were made passionately back then. Actually, Kuroyanagi herself appeared in the drama, playing the part of the old female narrator. The drama about the making of television programmes begins from around the scene in which a radio programme is being recorded. The drama then starts focusing on Totto-chan, the nickname for Kuroyanagi Tetsuko (played by Mitsushima Hikari), and the story zips along scene after scene, depicting the hectic creation process, episodes with Mukōda Kuniko, Ei Rokusuke, Atsumi Kiyoshi and Morishige Hisaya, and a crowd gathering around a street television. In terms of ‘the world of television bustling with excitement’, the heat of the time was conveyed vividly, sense of nostalgia and excitement were induced through Nakazomo Miho’s script that made the viewers feel as though they were watching a revolving lantern. Inoue Tsuyoshi’s nicely paced staging gave shape to the script, and it was nice to watch Mitsushima Hikari playing the part of Kuroyanagi articulately. Recently, the power of television is weakening but this drama made us think about what is lacking, and it won the Monthly Award of the Galaxy Awards.

In the Premium Drama *Kiseki no Hito* (literal title: *The Miracle Man*, screenplay written by Okada Yoshikazu and directed by Kariyama Shunsuke), consisting of eight episodes, the portrayal of miracles that could only be brought about by a loser was compelling and moving. Ittaku (played by Mineta Kazunobu) is a man who dreams of being a musician, but he actually does nothing, does not think about anything, nor does he know what to do with his time. One day, a foolish man like him falls in love with Hana, who used to be a delinquent girl (played by Asō Kumiko), and starts babysitting

her only daughter named Umi (Sumida Moeno), who is both optically and aurally challenged and also unable to speak. As he keeps Umi company, he causes miracles to happen without thinking. In the second episode, Ittaku tries to teach Umi how to eat soup with a spoon but he struggles and the way it is portrayed is really something. With his finger, he writes 'spoon' on Umi's hand and tries to make her use it but she runs wild and does not obey him. Ittaku repeats it over and over again until the neighbours living in the same flat start complaining. Finally, he manages to make Umi eat soup with the spoon and smile. Being a foolish man that does not think much, he was able to succeed, whereas other people would not be able to cope with it. The way their seemingly endless struggle was depicted in the second episode was more than enough to make this point clear and the realistic portrayal made this miracle story ever so moving. The drama won the Grand Prize at the National Arts Festival.

The eight-episode samurai drama series titled *Chikaemon* is about Chikamatsu Monzaemon, a writer of 'ningyō jōruri' (puppet theatre) during the Edo period. The dramatization of how Chikamatsu overcame his slump period was interesting. While Chikamatsu (played by Matsuo Suzuki) has fallen into a slump and cannot write new plays, a queer-beer man called Mankichi (played by Aoyama Munetaka) that sells 'fukōtō' (literally meaning 'undutiful sugar') appears. Inspired by Mankichi's mockery of being filial to one's parents, loyalty and other traditional values, he writes his masterpiece given the title *Sonezaki Shinjū* (*The Love Suicides at Sonezaki*), which goes down in history. It is said that Chikamatsu wrote *Sonezaki Shinjū* based on a suicide for love that actually occurred. Though Fujimoto Yuki's script is based on such historical fact, she also creates a storyline that suggests

Chikamatsu's artistic theory saying, "Art abides in a realm that is neither truth nor fiction," which makes us laugh, and in the end, makes us think about what it is like for writers to write. The way Matsuo Suzuki plays Chikamatsu's gripe and clever quip, and contemporary J-pop and other pop music used in a casual way in Kajiwara Toki's direction works as titillation. Mankichi's presence, however, is the most striking. The presence of unconventional characters such as the stupid rock 'n' roller in *Kiseki no Hito* and the fukōtō vendor in *Chikaemon* per se was indeed dramatic, and *Chikaemon* won the Award for Excellence at the National Arts Festival.

NHK continues to broadcast dramas from its regional stations across Japan. One of the local dramas broadcast in 2016 was from Okayama and was titled *Indigo no Koibito* (*The Indigo Lovers* produced by NHK Okayama), in which the portrayal of how the characters faced their troubled pasts left a strong impression. Harada Kenji (played by Arai Hirofumi) works as a craftsman processing denim in Kurashiki City in Okayama Prefecture and he falls in love with a painter called Nonaka Miyuki (played by Minami), who has moved to Kurashiki. The drama is about how the two characters overcome their pasts through their love relationship. Miyuki has a troubled past of abandoning her daughter for not being able to bring her up, while Kenji has harbored ill feelings for having given up his dream to become a jazz pianist. *Indigo no Koibito* makes us feel how they came to accept their pasts through their dialogues related to work, such as "Damages and dirt give denims extra value. Perhaps it's the same with people, too." In other words, they come to terms with their traumatized and blemished pasts and try to live anew in the reality at hand. A man and a woman trapped in their pasts are liberated in the drama, using Ōhara

Museum of Art and the local industry in Kurashiki as its backdrop. Arai Shuko's script and Izunami Takamasa's direction left the viewers with a pleasant feeling, and the drama won the Local Production Drama Award of the Tokyo Drama Awards 2016.

Amongst serial dramas produced by commercial television stations, there were two love stories, namely *Itsuka Kono Koi wo Omoidashite Kitto Naite Shimau* (Fuji TV) and *Nigeru wa Haji daga Yakunitatsu* (TBS), which evoked various heartrending sorrows of love from totally different angles.

Itsuka Kono Koi wo Omoidashite Kitto Naite Shimau (Love That Makes You Cry, literal title: *When I Remember This Love, I Will Surely Cry*) is a love story set in Tokyo, depicting the agonies of young people who have come to Tokyo from rural areas. Soda Ren (played by Kōra Kengo), who has been brought up in a farming village in Fukushima, and Sugihara Oto (played by Arimura Kasumi), who has run away from her adoptive parents in Hokkaido, get to know each other through a certain incident and start going out as they work in the metropolis. However, living in Tokyo is very tough. Ren works at a freight company and Oto at a nursing-care facility, living days on low wages and overworking themselves, and by the time they return to their cheap flats, they are utterly exhausted. Nevertheless, both of them try to look forward and live cheerfully by thinking of each other. Ren's grandfather, who does farming in Fukushima, talks about depopulation and lack of successors. Oto has been nursing her foster mother in Hokkaido and it is now followed by a hard working life in Tokyo. In this love story, besides those harsh realities, other young people around them (played by Takahata Mitsuki and others)

are portrayed, making the unforgettable pangs of love seep through (directed by Namiki Michiko). Sakamoto Yūji, who wrote the script, drew attention for adapting Saimon Fumi's novel into the screenplay for *Tokyo Love Story* (Fuji TV, 1991), which was a love story between a woman, who was a returnee and had Westernized set of values, and a simple and honest young man. *Itsuka Kono Koi wo Omoidashite Kitto Naite Shimau* can be regarded as Sakamoto's original version of *Tokyo Love Story*, and it won the Best Drama Award in the Serial Drama category of the Tokyo Drama Awards 2016.)

On the other hand, *Nigeru wa Haji daga Yakunitatsu* (English title: *We Married as a Job!*, literal title: *It is Embarrassing but Useful to Flee*, based on a comic book by Umino Tsunami) is a drama delicately depicting the sadness of love, extracting today's romantic circumstances. The heroine Moriyama Mikuri (played by Aragaki Yui) is a highly-educated woman, who has finished graduate school but cannot get a job, so she reluctantly starts working for a homemaker service agency. However, her employer called Tsuzaki Hiramasa (played by Hoshino Gen) is a strait-laced person, who can only see things logically. Soon, the two of them, who have not had any romantic experiences, start a common-law marriage by signing a full-time housewife contract. The first thing that makes it dramatic is how the personalities of the two characters and the situation are set. A man and a woman that are not romantically interested in one another gradually start to care for each other's feeling, become sexually aware and feel jealousy. The viewers can relate to the extremely pure aspect of the drama because an employment relationship is set at the beginning and the screenwriter Nogi Akiko delicately and thoroughly depicts how they start to have romantic feelings. Another major point is that the

script delivers the joy of being thanked and the importance of trying hard through depicting Mikuri working as a homemaker and contracted housewife. In other words, it is a drama that heartens those who are not living on their own terms. Moreover, television programmes such as *Jōnetsu Tairiku* (*Continent of Passion*), in which professionals and activists in various fields are followed and interviewed, are used to titillate delusions about work and the cast dancing ‘koi dansu’ (love dance) at the end makes it even more enjoyable to watch (directed by Kaneko Fuminori and others). This drama won the Monthly Award of the Galaxy Awards.

In *Nigeru wa Haji daga Yakunitatsu*, Nogi Akiko’s adaptation of the original comic book stood out. The screenplay for the preceding drama titled *Jūhan Shuttai!* (based on the comic book *Second Print Run Confirmed!* by Matsuda Naoko, directed by Doi Nobuhiro and others, TBS) was also written by Nogi. A newly employed staff called Kurosawa Kokoro (played by Kuroki Haru) used to be a judo candidate to represent Japan but she had to end her career as an athlete due to injury. In complete contrast, she finds a job at a major publisher, where she starts working in the editorial department for a weekly comic magazine. The drama is set in a workplace, where an ex-athlete editorial staff stimulates fellow editorial staff and comic artists with her never-give-up attitude. In order to find out how comic books are dealt with at bookstores, she checks a hundred and twenty stores on the list of bookstores and visits them, crossing several pedestrian bridges. As mentioned above, Nogi carefully depicted the romantic situation in *Nigeru wa Haji daga Yakunitatsu*, but in this drama, the new editorial staff’s everyday life is portrayed carefully instead, and the way Kokoro performs her job is realistic

and compelling. Kuroki's performance that is full of cheerfulness and bursting with energy against the backdrop of carefully depicted everyday workplace scenes is moving, as it makes us feel good to watch someone 'doing their best'.

Yutori desu ga Nanika (*We're Millennials. Got a Problem?*, directed by Mizuta Nobuo and others, NTV) is an ensemble drama depicting young people categorized as 'Yutori generation'(*). Three young people of the first wave of the Yutori generation (in their late twenties), namely Sakama Masakazu (played by Okada Masaki), who is the second son to the owner of a sake brewery and now working at a food company, Yamaji Kazutoyo (played by Matsuzaka Tōri), who is a primary school teacher, and Michigami Maribu (played by Yagira Yūya), who works as a gee man of a dodgy hostess bar without fully becoming mature as a person, get on with their lives despite adversities related to work or relationships at their workplaces. The portrayal of the three characters and their exchange of quips are interesting, and also the problems of their families (played by Takahashi Yō, Yoshida Kōtarō and others), and their bosses and colleagues (played by Andō Sakura, Taiga and others) at their workplace are tactfully entwined. At first, the viewers may feel reluctant to lump characters of a certain generation together but gradually the theme is linked to the society itself that has not fully matured, giving a light but deep impression to the drama, which is also the unique characteristic of Kudō Kankurō's writing style. This production won the Best Drama Award in the Serial Drama category of the Tokyo Drama Awards 2016.

In 2014, Yamada Taichi (screenwriter) portrayed the traumas of many people after the Great East Japan Earthquake occurred on

March 11, 2011 through families that were afflicted or managed to escape harm in his work *Toki wa Tachidomaranai* (literal title: *Time Does Not Stop*, TV Asahi). In the Yamada Taichi Drama Special *Gonen me no Hitori* (literal title: *The Fifth Year Alone*, TV Asahi), which was made two years later, Yamada once again quietly looked at the traumas from the earthquake disaster. Kizaki Shūji (played by Watanabe Ken), who has lost eight family members in the earthquake disaster, becomes captivated by Matsunaga Ami (played by Makita Aju) when he sees her perform a dance at the junior high school culture festival, because Ami looks exactly like his deceased daughter. He speaks to her on her way back from school, and after while, Shūji, who has been deprived of everything by the earthquake disaster, is moved by the kindness of Ami, who is unconnected with the disaster, comes to terms with his losses and takes a step toward the future. Above all, the portrayal of Ami, played by Makita, expressing her kindness bluffly and gradually easing Shūji's heart is discreet but compelling. The way Horikawa Tonkou directed the drama with a subdued tone also made a good impression. There is a scene in which Shūji and Ami nervously look at the photograph of Shūji's daughter, and even in such seemingly small details, it makes us feel strongly that endless time is needed to accept the loss. The quiet and gentle way that Yamada Taichi had been watching time pass by after the disaster came as a surprise again, and the drama won the Award for Excellence at the National Arts Festival.

In order to distribute Japanese TV dramas abroad, many rods (frequency of broadcasting) are required. TV dramas in Southeast Asia are often broadcast on weekends (two episodes in the weekend.) Therefore, if the series only has eight or ten episodes, it would only

last for a month or so, making it unrealistic to get the customers to buy it. In this respect, the fact that the pay-TV station WOWOW took on the challenge of making a twenty-episode serial drama with the title *Shizumanu Taiyō* (literal title: *The Never-setting Sun*, known as *The Unbroken* in the U.S., based on the novel by Yamasaki Toyoko, screenplay written by Maekawa Yōichi and directed by Mizutani Toshiyuki and others) had great significance. WOWOW's programming of serial dramas consists of large scale human dramas with social themes, and this drama also unveils the backstory about poor working conditions behind the tragic plane crash. Hajime Onchi (played by Kamikawa Takaya), who used to be the chairman of the airline's labor union, goes through hard struggles after he clashed with the management team and it is depicted with depth and in detail over twenty episodes. The series won the Best Drama Award in the Serial Drama category of the Tokyo Drama Awards 2016.

* Yutori education: The education policy adopted by the government from around 1980 to the beginning of 2010s following a curriculum guideline aiming for 'pressure-free schools' to focus more on experiences that would develop the capacity to think rather than cramming, through which the time and content of learning were reduced. It was also criticized for lowering academic ability.

Kōtaki, Tetsuya

Kōtaki 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, 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 *Handbook of Television History* (*Terebishi Handobukku*) (Jiyū Kokuminsha) and was a co-writer on *The Fifty Years of Writers for Television* (*Terebi Sakatachi no Gojūnen*) (NHK Publishing).

(Translation: Sumida Michiyo)

トピックス

Developments in Japan and Overseas

シアター

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Valery Gergiev, Artistic Director of the Mariinsky Theatre, makes his speech at the opening of the exhibition. Photo by Valentin Baranovsky © State Academic Mariinsky Theatre

Developments in Japan and Overseas

100 Years of Russo-Japanese Cultural Exchanges in Ballet: The First Ballet Performance at the Imperial Theatre in Japan

Kawashima Kyoko

For about a month starting on June 16th, 2016, the Mariinsky Theatre in St. Petersburg hosted an exhibition titled the “Pure Art (Geijutsu no Seizui): Dedicated to 100 years of the first Russian ballet’s tour to Japan.”^(*) This exhibition was about the first real ballet in Japan; it

was performed by Elena Smirnova and Boris Romanov who, 100 years ago, had been invited by the Imperial Theatre in Tokyo. The hall on the second floor of the Mariinski Theatre displayed the performance programs, newspaper articles, fan letters, and references of their visits to Japan, all of which were discovered in 2015.



In the history of ballet in Japan, the first “western dance” performed in the country was “Flower Dance” at the inauguration ceremony of the Imperial Theatre – the first western proscenium stage in Japan – on March 1st and 2nd, 1911. Dancers were the actresses of “School of Arts Affiliated with the Imperial Theatre,” founded prior to building the Imperial Theatre. An Australian dance teacher, Ms. Mikusu (unknown spelling in English), choreographed and taught the work. Subsequently, from May 10th to 17th, 1911, “Crowd Ballet”, a work choreographed by Ms. Mikusu was performed. This was the first time when the term



The exhibition in the Mariinsky Theatre

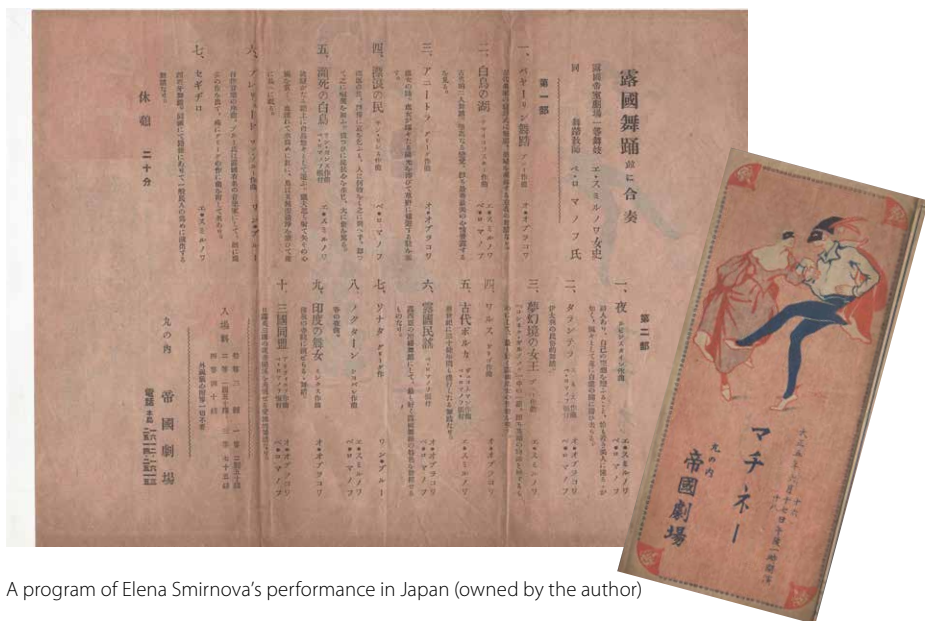
“ballet” was used to describe a theatre work in Japan. However, based on the surviving pictures and the reputation of Ms. Mikusu, it seems likely that the work was far from an orthodox ballet.

The newly opened Imperial Theatre had an agenda of “creating Japanese operas,” and established an opera department. In October 1912, Giovanni Vittorio Rosi was brought to the Imperial Theater as the replacement for Ms. Mikusu. Rosi, a disciple of Enrico Cecchetti, the notable ballet teacher in the Milan Scalar Theatre, had been an active choreographer and dancer in London. He was noticed by the former managing director of the Imperial Theatre, Nishino Keinosuke. With his rich experience in ballet, Rosi could be considered the “first” ballet teacher in Japan. However, his strict teaching methods were neither understood nor well received by his students in Japan, where nothing regarding ballet had ever been seen. They rebelled against Rosi and ballet, and in turn they became interested in modern dance as a counter theatre dance to ballet, with the guidance of the Japanese theatre intellectuals who had been abroad such as composer Yamada Kōsaku and director and playwright Osanai Kaoru. The Imperial Theatre Opera Department headed by Rosi was dissolved in May 1916, and he was dismissed. A month later modern dance in Japan started at the Imperial Theatre. Coincidentally, Ishii

Baku, a first generation student of the Imperial Theatre Opera Department School who was the most rebellious against Rosi, presented his own work “A Page in the Diary” as the first Japanese creative dance in “The New Theatre (*Shin gekijō*)”, a group formed by Ishii, together with Osanai Kaoru and Yamada Kōsaku.



Elena Smirnova (left) and Boris Romanov (right)



A program of Elena Smirnova's performance in Japan (owned by the author)

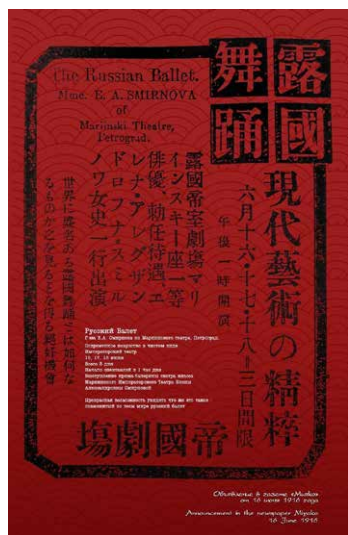
At this point, synchronicity occurred in the western dance history of Japan: in the same month - June 1916 - Elena Smirnova gave the first ballet performance in Japan.

Her performance was realized with the support of Ambassador to Russia Motono Ichirō, as a part of cultural exchanges under the fourth Russo-Japanese Agreement, which was signed on July 3rd, 1916. During three days from the 16th to the 18th of June, 1916, five Russian ballet artists visited Japan: Smirnova, Boris Romanov, pianist-dancer Olga Oblakova, pianist Van Brugh, and costumer Bohinova.

The exiting program notes of their performance in Japan mentions 17 pieces: 'Pas de deux' from the ballet "Swan Lake"; "The Dying Swan"; "Seguidilla"; "Night"; 'The Fairy Queen' from the



Elena Smirnova in 'The Fairy Queen' from the Ballet "The Little Humpbacked Horse"



A newspaper advertisement of Smirnova's performance in Japan ("Metropolitan Newspaper [Miyako Shimbun]", on June 16th, 1916)

ballet "The Little Humpbacked Horse"; "Nocturne", and others. "The Triple Alliance", a special piece created for their tour to Japan, was the choreography by Romanov with newly composed music by Boris Asafiev.

Smirnova and Romanov (who later became a married couple), the Mariinsky Theatre's dancers, had joined Ballets Russes. Smirnova was one of the principals together with Adolph Bolm in the inaugural performance of Ballet Russes in 1909. Previously she had danced in "Polka With A Little Balls" in 1905, and "Divertissement—the Valse Fantasia" in 1906 as a dance partner to Vaslav Nijinsky under the direction of Mikhail Fokin. She, who clearly had had a prestigious career in Russia, danced "The Dying Swan" in Japan. Romanov had been a character dancer and choreographer and eventually became a director of the Mariinsky Theatre. He choreographed "La Tragédie de Salomé" in 1913, and "Le Rossignol" in 1914 for Ballets Russes. It could be said, based on their established, high profile careers in dance as well as the pieces performed, that this June 1916 performance was the first

orthodox ballet concert presented in Japan.

However it is hard to say that this performance was properly appreciated at that time. Although many newspaper companies had welcomed their visits to Japan, there were very few positive reviews. In the review dialogs between Yamada Kōsaku and Ishii Baku, the leaders of western dance in Japan, Yamada said, “I was rather disturbed by the form of Smirnova’s showing her back and movements from her shoulders to her wrists that expressed a dying state, because they were too realistic. I could not help thinking that the old-fashioned dancers in the Russian ballet did not truly understand music.” Ishii said, “I thought so. In their performance music was just a mere accompaniment to movement. Music and movement must be more intimate.” (‘Dance of Smirnova, the Russian ambassadorial actress’ from the “New Theatre Arts (*Shin-engei*)”, August 1916.) Thus, they were highly critical of the performance. Ashihara Eiryō later stated, “There were very small audiences, and little feedback of this performance. It was totally forgotten. Japan had not yet entered its receptive state. No fruits came out from it.” (‘On Foreign Ballet’ from the “Japanese Ballet Yearbook of 1972”, p. 248, May 1972.) This performance came to Japan too early, did not seem to leave any footprint to the history of ballet in Japan, and has not been well remembered. Therefore, this latest exhibition in Russia on this performance was such a bolt out of the blue.

As previously discussed, the Russian ballet dancers’ visits to Japan had a diplomatic purpose, and was viewed as one of the ongoing Russo-Japanese cultural exchanges; Smirnova met many people and participated in cultural exchange activities. She went to Kōyō-kan, the high society club in Shiba, together with the Imperial Theatre

actresses Mori Ritsuko and Murata Kakuko, and learned from the entertainers how to throw a Japanese dance fan (*ōgi*), and how to play a hand drum (*tsuzumi*). Also, there was a heart-warming description that she studied with Fujima Tōzō, the Japanese traditional dance master, and practiced a traditional Japanese dance piece, “A Lover’s Eastbound Boat (*Asazuma bune*)”, wearing a kimono. On the other hand, the Mariinsky Theatre exhibition revealed the relationship between Russo-Japanese diplomacy and this ballet performance. The visit of Grand Duke George Mikhailovich of Russia in the previous year had greatly contributed to the successful conclusion of the fourth Russo-Japanese Agreement. In September, a few months after the Agreement was signed, Kaninnomiya Kotohito, the Imperial prince, visited Russia as the return delegate. Smirnova’s Japanese performance occurred between Grand Duke George Mikhailovich’s visit to Japan and the Agreement signing. This 2016 exhibition newly revealed the fact that ballet played a role in diplomacy during the visit of the Japanese Imperial prince to Russia. On September 18th, 1916, the Mariinsky Theatre invited Prince Kaninnomiya to the performance of a special version of a Russian ballet piece, “The Little Humpbacked Horse (Конёк-горбунок)”, in which a Japanese dance was added to the divertissement of folk dance in Act Five, the wedding scene. Of course, Elena Smirnova danced the Japanese dance. The dance was titled “Hokushu (Японский танецъ Хоку-сю)”. The newspaper advertisement described it as “the piece re-staged by Boris Romanov at the suggestion of choreographer Tozo in Tokyo; music was composed by Boris Asafiev based on a piece by composer Kōsaku Yamada.” This description and the Japanese news articles on the Russian dancers’ visit indicate that Tozo was Fujima Tōzō who taught the Japanese traditional dance to Smirnova. Early

modern Japanese theatre scholar Tove Bjoerk suggests that it was the kiyomoto piece “Northern Pleasure Quarters (*Hokushū*)” which was performed. Smirnova then showed the result of her study in front of the Japanese prince. Saitō Keiko, a scholar who researched the Russian ballet and Japonism, found that Japanese music had already been used in Russian ballet by the time of Smirnova’s performance. However, this ballet performance was probably the first Japanese dance performed in Russia.

Thus, gradually the way was paved for Russo-Japanese cultural exchanges in ballet, but the following year, 1917, the Russian Revolution suddenly closed the way.

However, the transplanting of ballet from Russia to Japan ironically intensified, because exiled Russians supporting the old regime came to Japan, and toured across Japan in various civilian cultural exchange events. In 1922 Anna Pavlova and her group came to perform in Japan, and in 1925 Elena Pavlova established the first ballet school in Japan. In 1936 Olga Sapphire established the ballet team of the Japan Theatre (Nichigeki) Music Hall. Thus, the development of ballet in Japan was largely influenced by Russia. Ballet gradually settled in as a



“New Performing Arts (Shin Engei)” August 1916

new culture, rising in popularity to the level of a fad in the 1950's after the Second World War. Forty years after Smirnova's performance at the Imperial Theatre, in 1956 the Japan-Soviet Joint Declaration led to restoration of diplomatic relations. One year later in 1957, ballet performances in larger scales were conducted as diplomatic cultural exchanges in both Japan and the Soviet Union, that is the Bolshoi Theatre ballet's first performance in Japan. So-called "propaganda ballets" full of energy and dynamism had a huge impact on their Japanese audiences, especially on the Japanese ballet world. Natalia Kasatkina, the Bolshoi soloist, danced "Cherry Blossoms (*Sakura sakura*)" in a kimono every night to enhance the celebratory mood of restoration of diplomatic relations between Japan and Soviet. This year - 2017 - marks the 60 year anniversary of this performance. In June, the Bolshoi Ballet will produce a 60th anniversary performance of its first tour in Japan.

*This exhibition was held for about a month at the Mariinsky Theatre in St. Petersburg, and then it was brought to the State Academic Mariinsky Theatre Primorsky Stage in Vladivostok. In the end of 2016 - at the time of Russian President Putin's visit to Japan - it premiered in Japan at the Russian Embassy on December 26, 2016. At these exhibitions, the film featuring Elena Smirnova, "Ballerina's Roman" (Роман балерины)(1916)" and the film of Prince Kaninnomiya Kotohito's visit to Russia were shown together with the other resources.

Kawashima, Kyōko

Kawashima Kyoko, PhD., currently serves as a visiting scholar at Waseda University's Tsubouchi Memorial Theatre Museum. She is also a lecturer at Waseda University, Kyoritsu Women's University, and Senzoku Gakuen College of Music. She specializes in dance studies, especially the history of ballet in Japan. She was a visiting scholar at Columbia University in New York City, a lecturer at Hosei University, and an assistant professor at Waseda University's School of Humanities and Social Sciences. Her book, *Elena Pavlova: the Mother of the Japanese Ballet* was published in March 2012.

(Translation: Satō Michiyo)



Amakudari no Mai performance at the MCYCD Theatre

Developments in Japan and Overseas

Fujairah International Arts Festival Report

Sota Shuji

In February of 2016, the first Fujairah International Arts Festival was held in Fujairah of the United Arab Emirates, and the Hayachine Take Kagura Troupe (The Take Kagura Preservation Society, Hanamaki City, Iwate Prefecture) participated.

This came about as a result of the response of the International Theatre Institute (ITI) Japan Centre to the request of the actor and director, Ali Mahdi Nouri (United Nations Goodwill Ambassador)

from Sudan, whom the ITI in 2015 invited as a special guest, and who happened to be a committee member of the said Festival. (The ITI Japan Center had sent him a letter of invitation in December of the same year, to take part in their project, ‘Theatre Born in Conflict Zones’ - a link in the chain of their ‘initiative to train up-and-coming artists in order to create culture of the next era’, sponsored by the Agency for Cultural Affairs).

Hayachine Take Kagura is a representative of Japan’s Folk Performing Arts, and is also well-known abroad. In 2009 it was designated a ‘World Cultural Heritage’ by UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization) and as the country hosting the selection committee at that time happened to be the United Arab Emirate, there was already a connection, and so the troupe graciously made the decision to participate in response to the sudden invitation.

The United Arab Emirates overall consists of seven Emirates in the Arab Peninsula forming one Federation. Generally, among the Emirates, Abu Dhabi and Dubai with their large international



Opening Show – an introduction to the history of the founding of the country



Gongen Mai performance at the MCYCD Theatre

airports are the best-known. Fujairah, in comparison could not be considered to have quite as high a profile. As one would expect, it's a small country with a population of less than 120,000 people, amounting to 3% of the total population of the United Arab Emirate. On this occasion, the Hayachine Take Kagura Troupe (Oguni Tomomi, the chairperson and 10 members) arrived in Dubai Airport on February 18th, and from there made their way by car through the rocky desert to Fujairah.

Fujairah is a modern city built in an oasis. Along the way, large posters and banners advertising the Arts Festival hanging by the side of the road, caught our eye. Upon entering the hotel room, there were TV commercials advertising the Festival; it was clear that the government was making an effort to play its part in ensuring the success of the event.

The Hayachine Take Kagura performances were held twice, on February 20th and 21st. The venue for the first day was the MCYCD Theatre (Ministry of Culture, Youth and Community Development,

approx. 200 seats) located in Fujairah City. This being a Theatre of the Emirate (not of the king), there is, hanging at the front entrance, a portrait of the Emir and his family. There were three pieces performed: *Mountain God's Dance* (*Yama no Kami Mai*), *Dance of the Descent of God from Heaven* (*Amakudari no Mai*) and *The Buddha Avatar Dance* (*Gongen Mai*). The performance was covered by a local television station. After the performance, the sponsors presented Oguni, the leader of the troupe, with some gifts.

On the second day, the performance was held at the Mono-drama House, a theatre located in the town of Dibba, a short distance from Fujairah.

Within this structure, apart from the theatre, there is also an open-air stage facing the courtyard. There were a number of food stands and stalls set up for the occasion and the turnout was quite large for the performance that was held in a relaxed atmosphere. The program on this day began as the sun was setting. There were four



Oguni onstage being presented with a memento after the performance

pieces performed: *The Dance of Sanbaso (Sanbaso Mai)*, *Dance of the Five Grains (Gokoku Mai)*, *The Prayer Dance (Fūshō no Mai)* and *The Buddha Avatar Dance (Gongen Mai)*. For these performances, as an aid to help audience understanding, a simple commentary was provided before each piece. The interpreting for this occasion was done by Watanabe Maho who stood at the side of the stage dressed in the costume for the Female Dance of the Kagura (the Take Kagura Troupe had brought all their costumes over from Japan) and read the commentary aloud in both Arabian and English. Hayachine Take Kagura, an example of a folk performing art that has been handed down within a modern local community, while preserving its tradition from ancient times. The troupe has had many opportunities to perform abroad and so it seemed ideally suited to be a guest at Fujairah's first International Arts Festival.

Glancing at the list of theatre companies taking part in this arts festival, besides those from the UAE, in the Music category, we see participants from Saudi Arabia, Oman, Jordan, Lebanon, Georgia, Morocco, Spain, Brazil, Costa Rica, Japan, India and the Philippines, a total of thirteen countries represented. In addition, at the same time that this festival was being held, the Fujairah International Monodrama Festival, held once every two years, was also taking place. This year marks the seventh time Fujairah has sponsored this event, which had fourteen works participating.

For the first-time festival, a preliminary report publication (booklet) was issued every day and there was a staff made up of University students helping out as volunteers, which gave an air of a real international festival to the operations.

The festival held its opening performance near the center of the town, where a special outdoor stage had been set up for the occasion



Gokoku Mai performance at the Outdoor Stage of the courtyard of the Monodrama House

on February 19th, and the Emirate of Fujairah attended. There was, as one often sees in international cultural events such as this, a show, which was a collection of episodes surrounding the history of the building of the nation in a gigantic production; the space set aside for the television cameras was quite enormous.

Incidentally, during this same period, the ITI Board of Directors was also being held in Fujairah. In the capital of Armenia, Yerevan, at the ITI World Congress, Ramendu Majumdar, who had served for a long period as the President of the International Theatre Institute, stepped down and from among the Board in November 2014, and Mohammed Saif Al-Afkham of the United Arab Emirates was appointed as the new ITI President at ITI headquarters. He comes from the vantage point of being Fujairah's Director General of the Culture Media Department.

In their hosting of this festival, we can say that we have observed the enthusiasm of the ITI Fujairah Centre for encouraging a much

greater awareness of the Middle East/Arab region than previously. We hope to see the spirit embraced by this festival leading to more attention being given to Middle Eastern/Arabian theatre and dance news in the future.

Sota, Shūji

Professor at Atomi University Faculty of Management (2002-). From November 2009, the Secretary General of the International Theatre Institute Japan Centre, becoming, on the occasion of its incorporation (2013), this Centre's Managing Director. On the Board of Directors of the Japan Association for Cultural Policy Research; The Japan Society for Social Design Studies etc. and a member of committees of numerous municipalities.

(Translation: James Ferner)



The Front of the MCYCD Theatre



The "Umeda Bunraku 2016" performance at the Knowledge Theatre, which is directly accessible from Osaka Station. Photo courtesy of Umeda Bunraku.

Developments in Japan and Overseas

Bunraku: Recent Challenges & Developments

Kameoka Noriko

Reduction of Osaka Municipal Subsidy Sparks Crisis

The Bunraku puppet theatre (*ningyō jōruri*) was created in the city of Osaka. Its history dates back over 350 years. In 2003, it was added to UNESCO's list of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. In the mid-eighteenth century, it was said that the puppet theatre eclipsed even kabuki in popularity, creating a string of dramatic masterpieces including *The Treasury of Loyal*

Retainers (Kanadehon chūshingura), Yoshitsune and the Thousand Cherry Trees (Yoshitsune senbon zakura), and Sugawara and the Secrets of Calligraphy (Sugawara denju tenarai kagami).

However, since the late 19th century, in spite of nurturing many outstanding performers, Bunraku has faced more trying times. With the growth of labor unions after the end of the war, the theatre even split into two rival factions for a time. But through each period of crisis, Bunraku has always been able to rally and survive, and to continue to attract adoring audiences.

In recent years, however, Bunraku has been threatened by an unprecedented crisis. Since 1963, Bunraku performers (chanters, shamisen players, and puppeteers) and provincial performances have been managed by a non-profit foundation called the Bunraku Kyōkai which is supported by subsidies from the Japanese state, and the Osaka prefectural and municipal governments. But in late 2011, the municipal government of its now ex-mayor Hashimoto Tōru suddenly announced that it wanted to review the subsidy it provides to the Bunraku Kyōkai. After various twists and turns, including a meeting between Hashimoto and the performers, the two sides finally agreed on an incentive scheme. Over the next two years, the payment of the subsidy would depend on increased audience numbers. In 2013, the subsidy was reduced but in 2014 the target was exceeded and a full subsidy was received.

However, the fundamental problems of funding have not yet been resolved. In 2015, the subsidy that covered the running costs of Bunraku Kyōkai was withdrawn, meaning that the organization must now apply for funding for each event it wishes to organize. Still, even if all funding for the Bunraku Kyōkai were to be withdrawn, performances would not immediately cease. Regular performances in Osaka

and Tokyo and the management of Osaka's National Bunraku Theatre are under the control of the Japan Arts Council (Nihon Geijutsu Bunka Shinkōkai), an administrative organization under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology's Agency of Cultural Affairs, but provincial and overseas performances are organized by the Bunraku Kyōkai itself, so these activities would almost certainly be affected by any loss of funding. Many other issues remain, such as the Bunraku Kyōkai's role as the umbrella organization for the performers.

But there are also ways in which silver linings have been found in the funding crisis. The performers and the National Bunraku Theatre organization discovered a common interest in pulling together to promote Bunraku to the outside world. Citizens' groups to support the theatre were formed. As the unique art of Bunraku tries to chart the course to its future survival, these endeavors will increasingly become points of focus and expectation.

New Works: Comedies, Translations, and Family-Friendly Plays

One of the most notable recent developments has been the creation of new plays for Bunraku. Regular programs are mainly composed of classical works first performed in the Tokugawa period, with very few newly written plays. Comedies are equally rare. So the creation of a new comic play for Bunraku, entitled *Much Ado about Love Suicides* (*Sorenari shinjū*) by Mitani Kōki, one of contemporary Japan's most popular dramatists, attracted much attention.

The play opened in 2012 at the Parco Theatre in Tokyo's Shibuya district, and the theatre was packed with young people and fans of modern theatre who had never seen Bunraku before. The play was a comedy, ripe with Mitani's very distinctive brand of humor, and based

on Chikamatsu Monzaemon's classic *The Love Suicides at Sonezaki* (*Sonezaki shinjū*, 1703). Mitani has been a fan of puppets since childhood and is interested in Bunraku, so his staging was respectful towards the theatre genre, while still succeeding in reducing the audience to fits of laughter. The play broke new ground for Bunraku in several ways. Bunraku chanters and shamisen players always sit at stage-left, but Mitani instead placed them on a mobile platform at the rear of the stage. In one scene he even had the puppets swimming. "He succeeded in destroying our accepted ideas, but still retained the essence of Bunraku," commented puppeteer Yoshida Ichisuke who performed the lead role. It is equally good news that the play has been revived several times since its first run.



Mitani Bunraku, {Much Ado about Love Suicides}, July 2016 performance in Osaka. Produced by Parco Co., Ltd., Kansai Telecasting Corporation, and Sunrise Promotion Osaka, Inc., with the cooperation of National Bunraku Theatre, Bunraku Association. Photo by Osako Futoshi.

Another important development is "Sugimoto Bunraku", directed by the internationally renowned contemporary artist

Sugimoto Hiroshi. The first performance premiered in 2011 and was another adaptation of Chikamatsu Monzaemon's *The Love Suicides at Sonezaki*. Sugimoto's staging included a revival of the opening *Kannon Pilgrimage* (*Kannon meguri*) scene that had fallen out of contemporary performance. Other innovations included digital projections by the avant-garde artist Tabaimo, and the use of one-man puppetry techniques that were in use when Chikamatsu was writing. Sugimoto's approach to Bunraku was thus a blend of old and new, East and West (the heroine, Ohatsu, wore a Hermes scarf as part of her costume). Overseas performances in Paris and other European cities were very well received.

In kabuki too, the younger generation of stars have recently begun to stage new plays, for example Ichikawa Ennosuke IV's Super Kabuki play, *One Piece*, which is based on a popular manga. Bunraku's creation of new plays must be seen in this context, as part of a wider move towards the new in Japan's traditional performing arts.

Even the National Bunraku Theatre has been adding performances of new plays to its regular schedule. Every year since 2014, the summer performances have showcased a newly written play for parents and children. *Thunder Drum* (*Kaminari taikō*), by the *rakugo* writer Osada Sadao, delighted audiences with its gentle humor. This was followed in 2015 by Takeda Masako's *The Amazing Bean Tree* (*Fushigi na mame no ki*), an adaptation of the fairy tale *Jack and the Beanstalk*. In 2016, an adaptation of the Chinese classic *Journey to the West* (*Saiyūki Go West!*) showed the passionate commitment of Bunraku's backstage staff and performers to create something new in its script, music, production and staging.

While not strictly speaking newly written works, there were two other performances that should be mentioned. The 2016 summer late

show saw the first staging of an adaptation of Molière's *The Miser* (Japanese title: *Karatsubo oyaji koi no tatehiki*), the only Bunraku play by one of Japan's leading contemporary dramatists, Inoue Hisashi. *Falstaff* (*Farusu no taifu*), a play featuring Shakespeare's famous character but set in Japan, was staged at the National Theatre's Small Theatre in Tokyo in 2014. With their biting satire, both works pointed to a new direction for adult-orientated new plays.

Self-help Strategies: Funding from Private Organizations; the Creation of New Audiences

Another important recent development has been the increase of performances held outside of Bunraku's normal theatres. In March 2015, Bunraku held its first ever outdoors performance, on a temporary stage of cypress wood erected amid the high-rise buildings of Tokyo's Roppongi district. This "Nippon Bunraku" performance was funded by The Nippon Foundation, one of Japan's largest non-profit organizations.

One of the more groundbreaking elements of this event was that members of the audience were free to eat and drink during the performance. People often have a perception of Bunraku as being difficult to understand, but this event allowed them to have a drink and approach the drama in a far more relaxed frame of mind. As such, it succeeded in showing some of the pleasures of Bunraku to spectators who were encountering it for the first time. The Nippon Bunraku performances have continued: in October 2015 in Osaka, and October 2016 in Tokyo's Asakusa district. It is planned to continue these performances nationwide until the Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics in 2020.

In 2015, five of Osaka's private broadcasters joined hands to stage



The temporary cypress-wood stage erected amongst the skyscrapers for the "Nippon Bunraku in Roppongi Hills" event. Photo courtesy of Nippon Foundation.



Performance of *The Two Sanbasōs (Ninin Sanbasō)*, bunraku's first ever outdoor performance, part of the "Nippon Bunraku in Roppongi Hills" event. Photo courtesy of Nippon Foundation with the cooperation of Ningyō Jōruri Bunraku-za Mutsumi-kai.

"Umeda Bunraku" in the Knowledge Theatre in Grand Front Osaka, a commercial complex near Osaka Station that is very popular with young people. The event showcased the skills of the younger generation of performers, those in their twenties, thirties and forties. The event has become an ongoing one, and 2017 will see the third run of performances.

Against this background of increased privately funded performances, I should also mention the activities of the Ningyō Jōruri Bunrakuza, a

non-profit organization run by performer volunteers with the aim of spreading knowledge about Bunraku. In 2014, the organization began mounting a series of "One-Coin Bunraku" performances. The aim is to attract new audiences to Bunraku, and they target workers and students under the age of thirty, who live in the wider Kansai area.



The young performers from the Umeda Bunraku performance supported by Mainichi Broadcasting System (Osaka), Asahi Broadcasting Corporation, TV Osaka, Kansai Telecasting Corporation, and Yomiuri Telecasting Corporation.

For just 500 yen, they can watch a Bunraku performance from the best seats at the National Bunraku Theatre. This initiative was funded with help from donations from private companies, organized through the non-profit organization Arts Support Kansai.

In these ways, Bunraku is creating multiple new routes for people to come into contact with the theatre, particularly those who have never seen a Bunraku performance before.

Turning a Minus into a Plus: Retirements and Name Changes

In the middle of all these crises, this has also been a period of generational change for Bunraku. 2014 saw the much-lamented retirement of the chanter Takemoto Sumitayū, a Living National Treasure who had reigned for many years as the theatre's top performer. He was the face of Bunraku, a performer who enchanted fans with the richness of his narration. Sumitayū was also the first Bunraku performer in the theatre's history to be awarded the Order of Culture.

Sumitayū was followed into retirement by another Living National Treasure, the chanter Takemoto Gendayū, as well as the

chanter Toyotake Shimatayū, and the puppeteer Yoshida Bunjaku. All four were mainstays who had led the theatre since the post-war period, and their retirement triggered a generational change for Bunraku.

The April 2016 performance of *Mt. Imo and Mt. Se: An Exemplary Tale of Womanly Virtue* (*Imoseyama onna teikin*) provides a good example of this change. When the play was last performed in 2010, the central scene was chanted by Gendayū and Sumitayū, who were then in their late seventies and early eighties respectively. But in 2016, this scene was chanted by Takemoto Chitosedayū and Toyotake Rosetayū who are both still in their fifties. Both chanters threw all they have learnt into their performances and audiences were greatly moved.

There have also been some notable name-taking (*shūmei*) ceremonies. In 2015, puppeteer Yoshida Tamajo succeeded to his teacher's famous name, becoming Yoshida Tamao II. In April 2017, Toyotake

The name-taking ceremony for Yoshida Tamao II. Photo courtesy of National Bunraku Theatre with the cooperation of Ningyō Jōruri Bunraku-za Mutsumi-kai.



Hanafusadayū will become Toyotake Rotayū VI, a name previously held by his grandfather, the Living National Treasure Toyotake Wakatayū X. It has also been announced that in January 2018 Toyotake Sakihodayū will become Takemoto Oritayū VI, and in April the same year the puppeteer Yoshida Kōsuke will succeed to his grandfather's name and become Yoshida Tamasuke V.

Name-taking ceremonies are important in terms of publicity, as they attract attention even from people who are not regular theatregoers. They are even more important at this particular moment, when Bunraku audiences are rising. It's wonderful to see the full complement of Bunraku's performers aggressively trying to usher the puppet theatre into a new age of prosperity.

Kameoka, Noriko

Senior staff writer in the Culture Department, Sankei Shimbun. Born in Osaka in 1958. Graduated from the Department of Japanese Literature, Rikkyō University. In 1990, she started to work at the Osaka head office of the national newspaper, *Sankei Shimbun*. She has written widely on traditional drama including kabuki, Bunraku, and noh, and published several books including *Bunraku zanmai* (*Devoted to Bunraku*) and *Yume: Heisei no Tōjūrō Tanjō* (*Dream: The Birth of a Heisei Tōjūrō*), both published by Tankōsha.

(Translation : Alan Cummings)



Ninagawa Macbeth, produced by Toho Co., Ltd. (1985, Amsterdam Municipal theatre, the Netherlands) : Hira Mikijirō (as Macbeth) and Kurihara Komaki (as Lady Macbeth) taking a curtain call. © Toho Co., Ltd. Theatrical Division

Developments in Japan and Overseas

Ninagawa Yukio : From 1960s Theatre Artist to Global Star

Takahashi Yutaka

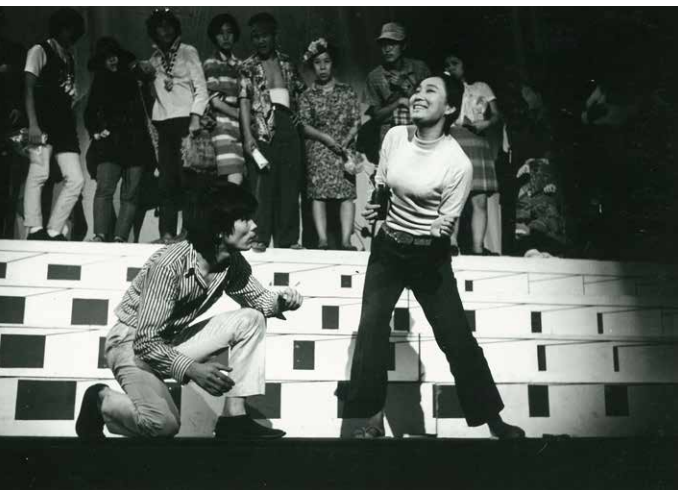
The contemporary theatre world in Japan lost many great talents in 2016. In May, the director Ninagawa Yukio, who was acclaimed as a global star, died at the age of 80. In August, he was joined by the 82-year-old Hira Mikijirō, an actor who frequently played lead role in Ninagawa's productions. Both were giants of the theatre who were active in their fields for their entire lives.

I would like to look back on Ninagawa's career, examining his work as a director and its significance.

The first half of his life was filled with setbacks and difficulties. While a student at Kaisei Academy he failed to get into Tokyo University of the Arts, so he became a trainee at the *shingeki* company Gekidan Seihai. New actors were supposed to help backstage, but Ninagawa never took up a hammer nor did a part-time job, acquiring the sobriquet of the "Aristocrat Actor." Instead, he attended a research group led by the company's director, Kurahashi Takeshi, who was a translator and lecturer at Waseda University, where the process of thoroughly analyzing the script was drummed into him. In later years, this experience became the foundation for how Ninagawa could always straightaway answer any question from foreign actors when he was directing in the UK or elsewhere.

It was through Kurahashi that Ninagawa met the playwright Shimizu Kunio, who would be known as Ninagawa's close ally. Shimizu was then still a student at Waseda but Ninagawa recommended him to the company as someone who could write plays for them. Though Shimizu wrote a script, it was criticized by the members of the predominantly socialist-realist company as "lacking in hope for the future" and only four members, including Kurahashi and Ninagawa, vouched for it at a general meeting.

The internal cracks in the company started to come to the surface. The director, Kurahashi, was angered by the lead actors who did not heed his feedback on their flaws, and left the company. Already over 30, Ninagawa wanted to make the switch from acting to directing—and he asked Shimizu to write a play for him. Shimizu wrote through the night, producing *Such a Serious Frivolity* (*Shinjō afururu keihakusa*), but the company would not give Ninagawa



Such a Serious Frivolity, Ninagawa's debut work as director with Gendaijin Gekijō (1969, Art Theatre Shinjuku Bunka, Tokyo) Young Man: Kanie Keizō (left), Woman 0: Mayama Tomoko (right) Photo courtesy of Ninagawa Company

permission to direct it. Directors who come from acting, they said, are famous actors, such as Senda Koreya of Haiyūza or Uno Jūkichi of Gekidan Mingei. "As an actor, you are far from their level of talent, so directing is also beyond you," he was told.

In 1968, Ninagawa left Seihai and founded

Gendaijin Gekijō (literally, Modern Man's Theatre). The following year, he made a stunning directing debut with a staging of *Such a Serious Frivolity* at Art Theatre Shinjuku Bunka.

The second half of 1960s witnessed the peak of dissent from the young, especially in Tokyo's Shinjuku district. Not only political struggles and campus movements, this period also saw a flowering of theatre that rejected the conventional style of *shingeki*, which was the mainstream at the time. Important companies appeared in quick succession: Kara Jūrō's Jōkyō Gekijō (literally, Situation Theatre), founded in 1963; Suzuki Tadashi's Waseda Shōgekijō (Waseda Small Theatre), founded in 1966; Satoh Makoto's Jiyū Gekijō (Freedom Theatre), founded in 1967; and Terayama Shūji's Tenjō Sajiki (Ceiling Gallery), also founded in 1967. Although disparaged as "underground" (*angura*), some of the groups that emerged from this movement were later able singlehandedly to tour overseas and a better label is perhaps

more simply “1960s theatre.”

In this respect, the appearance of Gendaijin Gekijō in 1969 felt somewhat late to the game, though actually seeing its productions I admired how it excelled at bringing the audience into the experience of live theatre. The performance started at 9:30 p.m., after the film screening was over, and when the long line filed in to take up the seats a few men and women started to fight in the passageway. When the curtain finally went up, the audience was faced with a meandering line of people on stage. Even after the play finished, the audience was still in for another surprise when they were suddenly surrounded by staff dressed up as riot police!

Art Theatre Shinjuku Bunka was ostensibly a cinema, so the stage only had a depth of 4.5 meters. The set could take up a mere 2.5 meters. Even so, Ninagawa would astonish audiences with visuals, such as the mountain of stupas he used for the Shimizu play *Memories of 10,000 Years of Japan* (*Omoide no nihon ichimannen*). He also borrowed techniques from Kabuki, such as the “curtain drop” to reveal a new setting in a stunning way.

He continued to stage work that explored themes closely connected with the anti-establishment movements at the time, eventually going on to disband Gendaijin Gekijō and form a new group, Sakura-sha (Cherry Blossom Company). His production of *Won't you cry? Won't you cry for 1973?* (*Nakanai no ka? Nakanai no ka, 1973 no tame ni?*) in 1973 was his last in Shinjuku.

At the start of 1974, he was contacted by a producer, Nakane Tadao, in the theatre department of Tōhō, asking him to direct a production of *Romeo and Juliet* at the Nissay Theatre. He accepted. “It’s no good only keeping your expectations realistic,” he reasoned. “It

might transform me as a director by meeting new kinds of people. Then I'll return to Sakura-sha."

Romeo and Juliet would become Ninagawa's first commercial theatre production and his first time working in a large-scale venue. For Ninagawa, who had demonstrated his ability to use space so well in small venues, we can sense how he now wanted to stretch his wings. Cloaked in darkness and silence, the stage was suddenly filled with dazzling light. The sounds of bells rang out and a plaza filled with a crowd of people. The stage featured a three-layered semi-circle, around which the careening love story unfolded. In what would become known as a characteristic of Ninagawa's work, the three minutes after curtain-up already had the audience gripped, the stage overflowing with a mob of people and deftly illuminating the social classes that exist in the background of the story through the use of layers and steps.

After the Nissay Theatre run was over, a general meeting of Sakura-sha was held, during which many members criticized Ninagawa for venturing into commercial theatre. The result was the disbanding of the company. Ninagawa would later recall that he felt ostracized, like he had been treated as a traitor. For the wounded Ninagawa, salvation came in the form of the playwright Kara Jūrō, who asked him to direct his new version of *The Water Magician* (*Taki no shiraito*).

Ninagawa's production of the Greek tragedy *Medea* premiered in 1978. The titular character kills her children in order to take revenge on her faithless husband. In Ninagawa's staging, the lead was played by Hira Mikijirō and all the other female roles were also played by men. Though Ōtake Shinobu did later play the role in a revival, at that

time the director felt that Japanese actresses lacked the ability to express the sorrow, enmity and magnitude of revenge exacted by this abandoned and betrayed woman.

Double Suicide, After Chikamatsu (*Chikamatsu shinjū monogatari*), which premiered in 1979 at the Imperial Theatre, marked a decisive point for Ninagawa's reputation as a director. Adapted from the work of Chikamatsu Monzaemon, it was written by Akimoto Matsuyo, a playwright regarded as somewhat aloof. "I turned to the world of Chikamatsu,"

Ninagawa said, "because I wanted to make a piece of popular theatre examining why double suicides are so admired and idealized by the Japanese." He used water effects and 1.5 tons of confetti to create the falling snow for the double suicide scene. But even more emotionally powerful was the theme song by Mori Shinichi, "That is Love."

Premiered in 1980, *Ninagawa Macbeth* used the name of the director in the title not in the commercial theatre sense of a "star" but to symbolize who was responsible for making the production as the leader of the creative team. And appropriately as a way of introducing Ninagawa's style, the staging featured plenty of his original touches and later toured to Shakespeare's home country of Britain.

Though following the original Shakespeare text, the production transposed the period and setting from medieval Scotland to Japan during the Azuchi-Momoyama period (1568–1600), and became a



Medea, produced by Toho Co., Ltd. (1983)
Medea : Hira Mikijirō (right), Aegeus : Ōtomo Ryūzaburō (left)
© Toho Co., Ltd. Theatrical Division

story of warriors who lived at the time. It was made further easier to understand for Japanese audiences by converting the entire stage into a giant *butsudan*, a type of Buddhist altar typically found in homes and temples. Staging the play in this way on a *butsudan*—a place where the living and the dead meet—added a new depth and aesthetic to *Macbeth* through an Oriental outlook on life and death that cannot be found in British culture.

It was the producer Nakane who steered Ninagawa's productions overseas. His idea was first to perform them in the countries from which the work originated. This began in 1983 with *Medea*, which toured to two cities in Italy and Athens. In 1985, *Ninagawa Macbeth* was performed in the Netherlands and then invited to Edinburgh

Medea has been presented all over the world since 1983. Photograph taken during the fit-up at Roman Theatre in Jerash, Jordan. © Miyauchi Katsu, courtesy of Nakane Tadao



International Festival, where it was highly acclaimed.

One of those beguiled by Ninagawa's staging in Edinburgh was the British theatre producer Thelma Holt. Holt was in charge of planning and publicity for the International Festival held in 1987 at the National Theatre in London, which featured the work of directors and companies from four countries, including Ninagawa. "Ninagawa's work," Holt said, "is visual and a delight to watch but also overflows with stimulation for the mind. The use of music is also superb and it is easy to understand for British audiences. I originally intended only to invite *Ninagawa Macbeth* but was impressed by my later viewing of *Medea*, so I negotiated with producer Nakane to bring both to London." The International Festival was a great success and Ninagawa was nominated for Director of the Year at the Olivier Awards that year. While the award ultimately eluded him, his acclaim among the British theatre world grew and he established himself as a global director.

In 1991, he directed a British cast in Shimizu Kunio's *Tango at the End of Winter* (*Tango, fuyu no owari ni*) for a two-month run in London's West End. The epoch-making production came about through the partnership of two producers: the Japanese Nakane and the British Holt. It was unconventional not only for being Ninagawa's first time directing a cast of foreign actors

Tango, the End of Winter, co-produced by Thelma Holt Co., Ltd. & Point Tokyo Co., Ltd. (1991, Piccadilly Theatre, London) Photo courtesy of Nakane Tadao



chosen by audition but also for its story of a retired actor at a dilapidated cinema in a small town along the Sea of Japan. The experience of the various clashes of culture he had with the British performers also contributed to Ninagawa's continued development as a director.

From 1999 to 2000, Ninagawa became the first East Asian director to stage Shakespeare's *King Lear* for the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC), one of Britain's most important theatre groups. As Ninagawa commented on his sense of elation that relished the challenge: "It's kind of like a British director staging *Chūshingura* at the Kabuki-za." The Japanese-British co-production saw the RSC cast work with a Japanese crew for rehearsals at the Saitama Arts Theater in Saitama City. Following performances there, the much-discussed production then toured to London and Stratford-upon-Avon, the birthplace of Shakespeare and RSC home base.

Subsequently his work continued to tour overseas right up until his last years, including *Poison Boy* (*Shintokumaru*) in London in 1997 and Washington DC in 2008, *Musashi* in London and New

York in 2010 and again in 2013-14, and *Kafka on the Shore* (*Umibe no kafuka*) in London, New York, Singapore and Seoul in 2015.

Though they had parted company when Sakura-sha disbanded, the partnership of Shimizu and Ninagawa



Kafka on the Shore (2015, Barbican Theatre, London) Kiba Katsumi (to the right) © Shu Tomioka

was restored in 1982. While his health later prevented Shimizu from writing new plays, Ninagawa returned to his early work to direct them in new ways. In particular, Ninagawa revived *Ravens, We Shall Load Bullets* (*Karasu yo, oretachi wa tama o komeru*) in 2013 with Saitama Gold Theater, his troupe comprising only senior performers. For someone who had seen the original Gendaijin Gekijō production, the new staging brought tears to the eyes. That same year the production premiered overseas in France, where it was performed at Maison de la Culture du Japon à Paris, followed by tours to Hong Kong and Théâtre de la Ville – Paris in 2014. Casting senior performers in the roles of the old women that were once played by young actors felt natural and revitalized the play. I was touched by the friendship between Shimizu and Ninagawa, who prayed for his long-time associate to be able to start writing again.

The sheer breadth of Ninagawa's directing can be seen in his career trajectory that started with *shingeki* before moving into *angura* theatre as well as commercial theatre in large and medium-sized venues, and then also small-scale theatres with modestly sized, nonprofit companies in his final years. Entering the 21st century, he launched two new groups: the aforementioned Saitama Gold Theater in 2006, featuring performers with an average age of



Saitama Gold Theater's *Ravens, We Shall Load Bullets* (2014, Kwai Tsing Theatre, Hong Kong) © Miyagawa Maiko

77, and Saitama Next Theatre for young actors in 2009. Ninagawa successfully staged Shakespeare's *Richard II* as a joint production with both troupes, receiving the Hayakawa Tragedy and Comedy Award and then visiting the International Shakespeare Festival in Romania in 2016. This last triumph came exactly a month before his death.

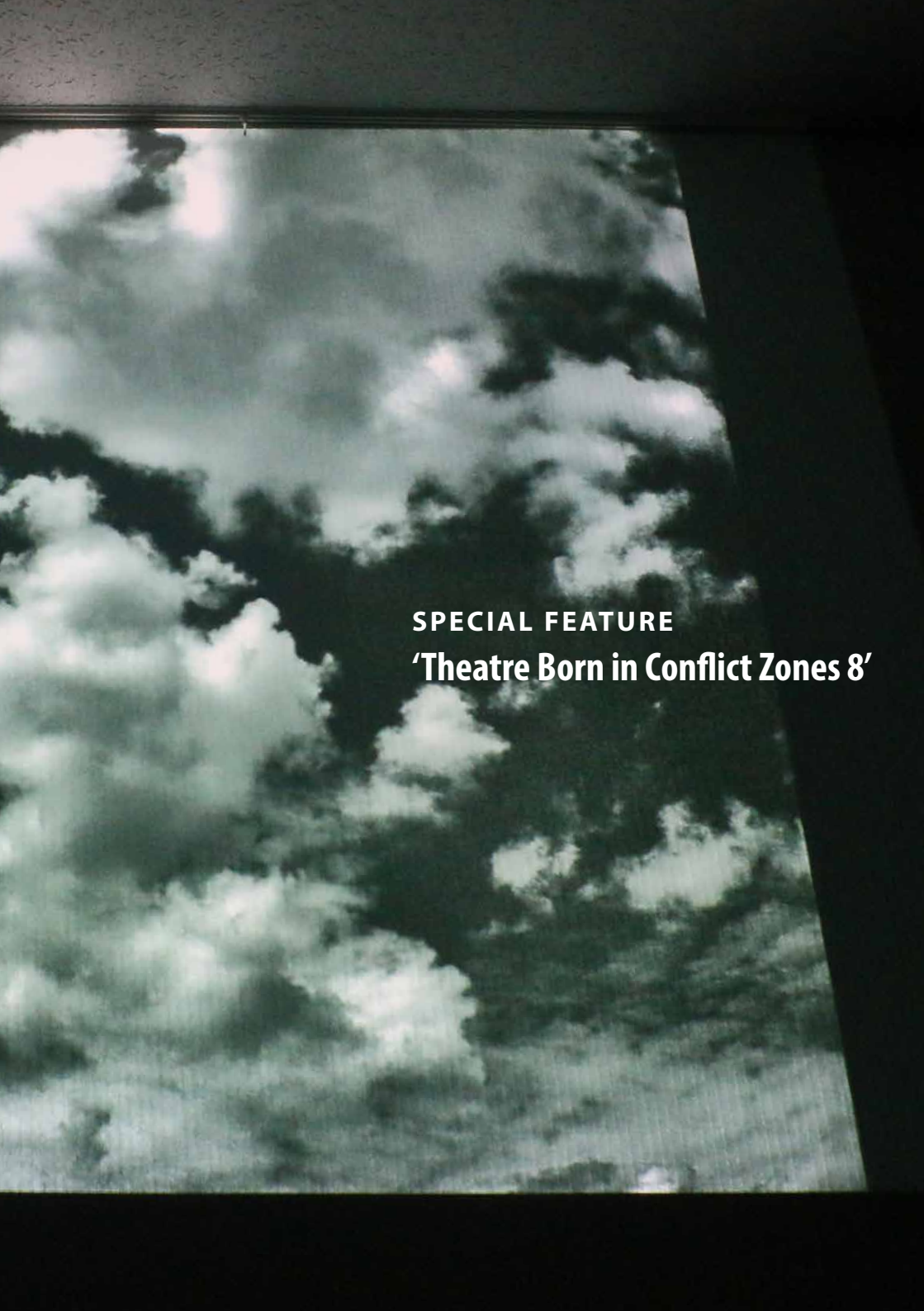
Takahashi, Yutaka

Theatre critic, born in Yamagata Prefecture in 1945. He graduated with a degree in French from Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, going on to cover contemporary theatre and musicals for the *Mainichi Shimbun*. He is currently a visiting member of the editorial board. His publications include *Chasing Phantoms: The Half-Century of Actor Nakadai Tatsuya* and *The Legend of Ninagawa Yukio*.

(Translation: William Andrews)



Taken during rehearsals of *Peer Gynt* at Royal Shakespeare Company's rehearsal room (1994)
Photo courtesy of Nakane Tadao



SPECIAL FEATURE

'Theatre Born in Conflict Zones 8'

*Djihad* © Ishizawa Chieko

SPECIAL FEATURE

A Report on 'Theatre Born in Conflict Zones 8' Theatre Standing Against The Time of Peril

Hayashi Hideki

During 2016, the world was shaken by conflicts, refugees and terrorism. Countries in Europe were overwhelmed at having to deal with floods of refugees, which rekindled prejudice, discrimination, exclusionism and nationalism. In the 21st century, the world has been heading toward coexistence of multiple cultures but as though it is going against the times, we are now in danger of division and

opposition. In 2016, ITI Japan Centre made an attempt to respond to this trend with two plays.

ITI Japan Centre is an international NGO under the umbrella of UNESCO and has continued to carry out a series called ‘Theatre Born in Conflict Zones’ (jointly hosted by Tokyo Metropolitan Theatre, i.e. Tokyo Metropolitan Foundation for History and Culture) since 2009 as part of the research and study project for ‘Theatre Yearbook’, which is a project commissioned by the Agency for Cultural Affairs. Through the project, good plays still unknown in Japan have been discovered, translated and introduced by means of readings and at the same time, in order to provide platforms for cultural exchange, playwrights and other people concerned have been invited from abroad to give lectures and to take part in round-table talks. Throughout the seven years since the series started, nineteen plays have been introduced, out of which fourteen have been published as collections of plays. Amongst them are plays from countries and regions, of which the theatre or performance cultures have not often been introduced.

In the preamble to the UNESCO Constitution, which was founded after the Second World War with the aim of not repeating the tragedies of war, it is clearly written as follows: “Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defenses of peace must be constructed.” For ‘Theatre Born in Conflict Zones 7’ held in 2015, we went back to the original objective of the project and moved on with the planning based on such spirit. We invited Mr. Ali Mahdi Nouri (Sudan / UNESCO’s Artist for Peace and Goodwill Ambassador) from UNESCO’s headquarters and in the talk session,

he said, “It is easy to start a war but difficult to rebuild peace. That is why artists and theatre is needed.” Hearing these words from the man who has continued peace-building activities through theatre in the conflict-torn Sudan, where people have suffered for many years, I was reminded again about the significance of this project.

While division and conflict is worsening due to increase in poverty and widening of disparities, the role of theatre to promote mutual understanding and reconciliation crossing national boundaries is becoming even more important. Bearing in mind such mission of today’s theatre, we introduced two plays, one from Iran and the other from Belgium, which were translated into Japanese and presented for the first time in Japan at Atelier West of Tokyo Metropolitan Theatre between December 14th (Wed) and 18th (Sun). After the opening night, as the reputation about the project spread through social media, the tickets for every performance got sold out and there were even some standees.

<Performance>

White Rabbit, Red Rabbit (Iran)

Written by Nassim Soleimanpour

Translated by Seki Tomoko

Performed by Hori Genki (Saitama Next Theatre): December 14

Urabe Fusako: December 15

Takata Keitoku (A Laboratory of Play: Ban’yu Inryoku): December 16

Mikari: December 17

The young Iranian playwright named Nassim Soleimanpour (born in 1981) was twenty-nine years old when he wrote a play about



White Rabbit, Red Rabbit - Lineup of the cast: Hori Genki (upper left), Urabe Fusako (upper right), Takata Keitoku (lower left), Mikari (lower right)
Production shots were not taken by a professional photographer so as to maximize the characteristic of the play.

travelling around the world while remaining in his own country, as he could not leave his country for having refused to serve in the army. This play is 'unusual' in many aspects. Without any rehearsals or directions, the actor cannot read the script before standing in front of an audience. Those who have performed on stage can presumably understand how much psychological pressure the situation would create on the actors if they cannot read the script before the performance let alone not memorize the script. It is incomparable to nightmares that actors often have for not having memorized their lines in time for the performance. The actor has to stand before an audience knowing absolutely nothing about the play. Was it intended to make the actors share some sort of stringent 'reality' felt by the writer through putting severe psychological pressure on them?

Soleimanpour wrote this play in 2010. He allegedly wrote it in Shiraz where the ancient city of Persepolis is located. Moreover, he wrote it in English, which was probably not an easy task for him by any means. Perhaps it was because he had hoped someone outside Iran would pick up his message, become his voice and send out his words. In 2009, the year before the play was written, there was a movement for democratization in Iran known as the ‘Green Movement’. After the pro-reform democratic presidential candidate was defeated by a conservative hard-liner, demonstrations swept across the nation, as people protested against the fraudulent election. The Internet is said to have played a major role in the reform-seeking movement, which occurred before the ‘Arab Spring’. However, the connection between the real events and the play is not mentioned at all. Whether the writer was involved in this incident or not is not told either. Nevertheless, although it is only my guess, I think there must have been some sort of deep connection,

In theatre, it is the actor that exists before an audience. When the actor speaks, the audience accepts the story on the premise that the actor has turned into someone else. However, in *White Rabbit*, *Red Rabbit*, the writer himself every so often intervenes during the course of the play, constantly reminding us of the theatrical convention that “the actor is the one who speaks the writer’s words,” which we would like to forget during the play if possible. What exactly is the purpose though? For instance, it says in the script, “I’m in Siraz” and “The day that I’m writing this part of the play is April 25th, 2010.” When the writer intervenes into the play, we become aware that there is a temporal and spatial gap as well as a disconnection that is difficult to cross. By bringing out the convention needed for the

fiction of theatre, the 'space' between fiction and reality is turned into an issue. Yes, it is the actor that exists as a mediator in this 'space'. The actor exists, so to speak, as a bridge over the 'space' between the psychological 'reality' of the writer and the 'reality' of the auditorium.

The writer suddenly starts to speak about himself. When the audiences hear phrases such as "I'm not free" or "There are lots of young people like me," they become curious. They associate it with incidents happening around the writer, the writer's past and the time and place that the writer exists. While the audiences imagine these things, they listen to the performance as well as the allegorical narration that is taking place before their eyes and start prying various things from the not so concrete but allusive fragments of information. The audience's story-searching performance unfolds at the level of their imagination as well. Without even noticing, our own imagination is being tested between the two 'realities'.

The writer uses a writing style that is not straightforward by any means. In a society where writers could be questioned and punished for what they have written, the choice of 'writing style' is important. The 'writing style' would differ between writers who live in developed nations, where the freedom of expression is guaranteed in the society, and those who do not live in such society. With the latter, using metaphor and adopting the form of fantasy is



White Rabbit, Red Rabbit - Talk session :
(from the left) Kono Takashi and Seki Tomoko

important. One must not watch this performance with inattention. The writer is making an emergency call, so to speak, urging us to use our imagination.

In order to cross the borders of ‘realities’ of the individuals, it is necessary to understand that the ‘realities’ do not exist separately but are integrated in a world made up of several layers. For that objective, theatre is extremely effective. “You must cross the borders, starting first from your own ‘reality.’” I was probably not the only one who could hear such voice calling out from *White Rabbit, Red Rabbit*. It is not about escaping from reality. It is about crossing the borders to gain freedom.

<Reading>

Djihad (Belgium)

Written by Ismaël Saidi

Translated by Tanokuchi Seigo

Directed by Setoyama Misaki (Minamoza)

Performed by Kusakabe Sō, Mori Ryūji, Moto-ori Saikyō Satoshi and Nakata Kenshirō

Performed on December 17th and 18th

Ben, Reda and Ismaël, who are second-generation immigrants living in Brussels and look like ordinary young men, head toward Syria, a country struggling with civil war, for the sake of ‘jihad (holy war)’. However, they arrive at a place where drones suddenly attack. Their comrades are shot by invisible snipers and die a meaningless death, while Ismaël is the only one who survives and returns to Belgium, where he is put in prison. Why did they go to Syria in the

first place? They are young second-generation immigrants, who cannot gain a sense of belonging in the society, face identity crises and feel displaced wherever they go.

In *Djihad*, Ismaël Saidi (born in 1976), who himself is a second-generation immigrant from Morocco, has portrayed the heart-rending feelings and the absurd realities of second-generation immigrants that are suffering from prejudice and discrimination because of their innate religion and racial background, which was expressed in a point-blank manner while adding some humor. The play attracted a great deal of controversy and sympathy in French-speaking parts of Belgium. It was premiered in December 2014 and since then, after experiencing the simultaneous terrorist attacks on November 13, 2015 in Paris and the series of terrorist attacks on March 22, 2016, over 70,000 people in total have seen the play.

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Mr. Saidi said that he was shocked when he was watching television and saw footage of his classmate from high school holding a Kalashnikov rifle, having become a fighter for 'Islamic state'. Furthermore, when he saw Marine Le Pen, the leader of France's far-right party Front National (FN), commenting about the second-generation immigrants who had gone to Syria, saying, "I don't care



Djihad © Ishizawa Chieko

less as long as they don't come back," he decided to make this play.

Ms. Deborah de Lieme Abisoror, who is the producer and tour manager for *Djihad*, visited Japan in time with the reading performance and took part in the talk session. When she was working for the European Parliament, she met Mr. Saidi and became the producer for *Djihad*. She said that she approached politicians and ministries to realize the mounting of *Djihad*, which eventually led to a total of over 70,000 people seeing the production. More than 40,000 teenagers have seen the play and taken part in the debate after the performance. Ms. Abisoror emphasized, "Just putting on the play will not change anything. Education is more important." In a newspaper interview, Mr. Saidi answered, "I don't think that this play alone can stop people becoming extremists but I hope it will generate discussions to think

about why young people become extremists." The post-performance discussion with young people is an integral part of their activities. Therefore, in the last scene, the protagonist is urged to make a choice out of two options, but he does not give an answer in the play so as to leave room for discussion.

To my question, Ms. Abisoror answered that the performance of *Djihad* had become a social phenomena and there had been many offers to present the play, but she

Djihad © Ishizawa Chieko



would decline the offer depending on the hosting organization and the intention of putting on the play. For our project, Mr. Saidi wanted to talk to either the producer or director from Japan beforehand to share the intention of the play, so we asked the director, Ms. Setoyama Misaki, to go to Belgium.

Just presenting the play *Djihad* will not provide an answer. It is therefore important that the audience ‘discover’ the issues that have been raised in the play and start having a dialogue. By means of theatre, the issues of immigrants, discrimination, prejudice and multi-faceted and multi-layered ‘realities’ of various communities can be mutually shared to help improve understanding. Unfortunately, Mr. Saidi had to cancel his visit to Japan in time for the reading performance due to health reasons but he took part in the post-performance talk using Skype. Through the talk session, I personally felt that the style of this play is linked to Bertolt Brecht’s ‘learning play’ and Augusto Boal’s ‘forum theatre’. The artistic values of works are of course important but I think that this play gave a good example of an attempt to change society through theatre.

I have thus far reflected on the two plays that were presented in 2016 under the series and lastly, I would like to add how I have



Djihad © Ishizawa Chieko

answered the question that I, as the producer of this series, have been asked over and over again. ‘Conflict’ does not just mean issues concerning particular regions. It indicates factors veiling the world and producing crisis, and also the outcome. Theatre can exist as a way to pursue the true nature of issues and as an effective means to cross the borders of different ‘realities’ that have turned into ‘walls’ blocking our paths ahead. ‘Theatre Born in Conflict Zones’ is a theatre project to stand against crises. I think it is going to become even more important in the future in order to share the issues that we face and to promote better understanding.

Hayashi, Hideki

When he was a student at Waseda University, he founded Theatre Company Asia Theatre, where he was in charge of playwriting and directing. Later on, he founded Theatre Company Terra Arts Factory, serving as the representative. Other than putting on performances, the company has carried out various types of exchange programmes through theatre and theatre workshops both in Japan and abroad. He is the Director of ITI Japan Centre and the Producer of the series Theatre Born in Conflict Zones.

(Translation: Sumida Michiyo)



Djihad - Talk session : (centre) Ismaël Saidi on Skype, (from the left) Setoyama Misaki, Sumida Michiyo (interpreter), Deborah de Lieme Abisoror, Niino Morihiro (moderator)

cover photo: © Ishizawa Chieko

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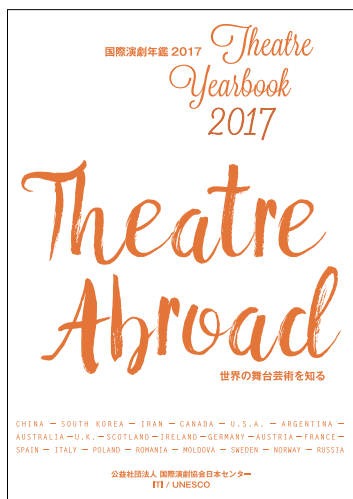
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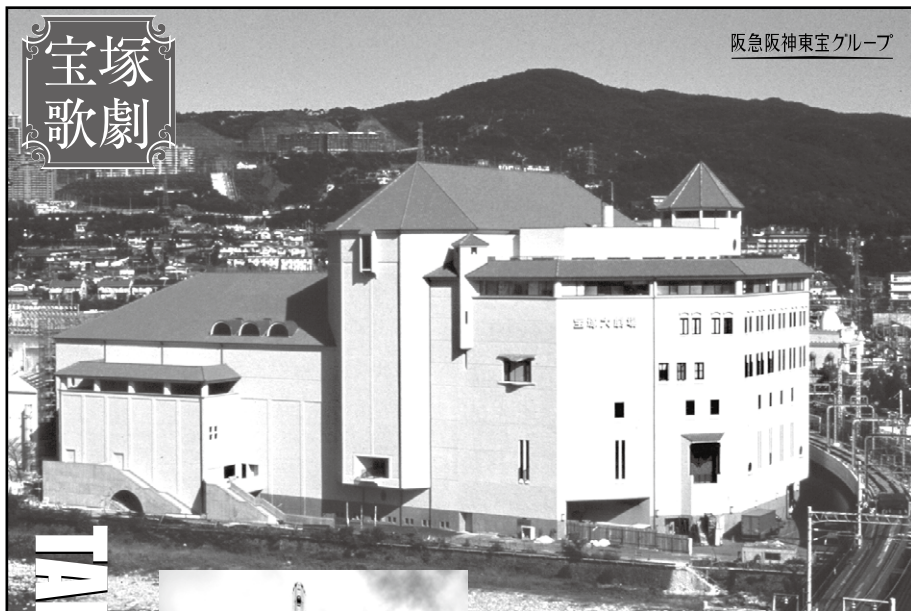
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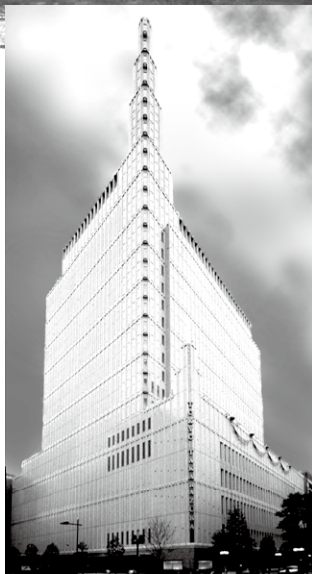


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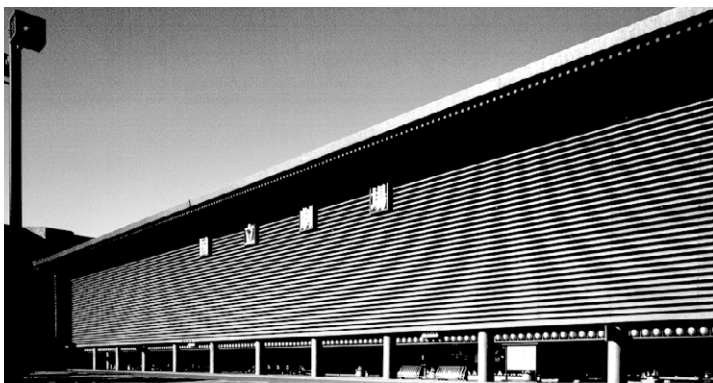
said an ancient opinion leader Yukichi FUKUZAWA. TOMIN GEKIJO has succeeded in keeping this principal by establishing an audience system which consists in distributing booked seats by a rotation system.

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.

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