

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

Since 2009

The Theatre Born in Conflict Zones series is a response to the Theatre in Conflict Zones project organized by the ITI headquarters and Cultural Identity and Development Committee. Launched in 2009, it has now introduced 33 plays from various countries and regions around the world, conveying the raw reality of conflict zones and attracting great interest in the local theatre scene.



**Scripts of Plays in the  
Theatre Born in Conflict Zones Series (2023)**

*Bad Roads* by Natalia Vorozhbit (Ukraine)

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**2019** *Common Ground* by Yael Ronen (Israel/Germany) & Ensemble  
*This Is War* by Hannah Moscovitch (Canada)

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**2020** *Liberian Girl* by Diana Nneka Atuona (UK)

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**2021** *The Murder of Isaac* by Motti Lerner (Israel)

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**2022** Five scripts from *Viral Monologues* by the 24 Hour Plays (USA)  
*This Trip* by Charlie O'Leary / *Unknown Caller* by Dan O'Brien / *Thank You for Visiting Me* by Zhu Yi / *Invincible* by Jessica Blank and Erik Jensen / *The Hardest Part* by Howard Sherman

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Searching for **New Plays**

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

mail@iti-j.org

http://iti-japan.or.jp

The web version of  
the *Theatre Yearbook*  
(full-color, 2014-) is available here.



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**SPECIAL FEATURE "Theatre Born in Conflict Zones 14"**

## Theatre Born in Conflict Zones 14

The fourteenth entry in the “Theatre Born in Conflict Zones” series (a project related to the *International Theatre Yearbook*) was scheduled to be a reading of Ukrainian playwright Natalia Vorozhbit’s *Bad Roads* at Proto-Theater in Tokyo from 9–11 December 2022, but that had to be canceled after a person involved in the performance tested positive for COVID-19. Our editorial department asked director Ikuta Miyuki to write up some director’s notes.

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### Director’s notes

## 200 **Doubting what you know, relating indistinguishability**

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Ikuta Miyuki

I think the announcement that the fourteenth entry in the “Theatre Born in Conflict Zones” series would introduce a Ukrainian play was met with a very strong response. It had been almost a year since the Russian military invasion in February 2022, and I sensed a great deal of public interest in Ukraine and its people. I myself began reading the play with a certain sense of anticipation, and I found myself surprised from the very beginning...

The play is set in the Donbass region of eastern Ukraine in 2014. Eight years before the current invasion, there was already conflict there. Indeed, I recall the annexation of Crimea being reported at the time. But I wonder how many of us had that clearly in our minds when the invasion occurred in February 2022. Many of us who were bombarded with the extensive media coverage that started

in February must have felt as if the invasion had come out of the blue.

But as we read more of the play, we again find our expectations subverted. There is little of what we might expect, such as Ukrainians suffering amidst Russia's unreasonable attack as reported daily in the media. What we instead saw in the script were things like a woman who loses herself in an ill-fated love affair.

The play presents six episodes, starting with a lengthy monologue by a woman. That woman, who seems to be a reflection of the author, leaves Kyiv with a soldier and travels with him to the front lines in eastern Ukraine. Through her eyes, we learn bits and pieces about a front-line base and children involved in the fighting, but her primary interest is in the soldier she is traveling with. She talks eloquently about her desire for him, to the point where one wonders how she can fall so blindly in love while being surrounded by death. But despite his strong patriotism, well-developed body, and heroism, he is unable to get an erection, probably due to psychological stress. The soldier asks the woman to perform oral sex on him, and their journey eventually ends.

The next four episodes are presented as asides about people the woman glimpsed on her journey. Once again, we are confused. From daily news reports, we have become accustomed to blame for the Russians and an emphasis on the tragedy of the Ukrainians. In this play, however, we also see depictions of sexual exploitation and violence by Ukrainian soldiers and varied identities for those living in eastern Ukraine. There are those who support and are involved with Ukrainian soldiers in their work, as well as families who watch Russian television on a daily basis. There are also soldiers who are anxious about fighting "brother against brother," yet shoot at each other nonetheless.

This conflict between pro-Russian and pro-Western factions in Ukraine is very allegorical, especially in the final episode, the only one that takes place before the war. A young woman runs over a chicken kept by an elderly couple and proposes to compensate them with money. The couple at first considers her offer to be some kind of joke, but when the young woman offers them monetary compensation, they start to bicker and eventually force her to offer them her car as well. Then they hear a crying child and its mother's consolations and its mother, and the couple, as if waking from a nightmare, kick the young woman

out, shouting “Get the hell out of here, don't try to entice us!”

I myself understood that last line as a criticism of human desire and the violent nature of capitalism that stimulates it. When people who have lived modestly and within their means are exposed to the more decadent lifestyle that capitalism promises, unlimited desire awakens within them, and the life they have built for themselves is easily destroyed. It was a moment when I, someone living in a capitalist society, could come into contact with a conflict that was happening far away, despite its being reported on in the news every day.

The troupe had many discussions regarding the language used in this play to find a way to bring it to a Japanese audience. Because the subject matter is one that we often see in the media, it was easy to fit it into a composition within the scope of what we know. Ichikawa Nana, the translator, frequently stopped me as I tried to add wording to clarify situations that were difficult to understand. I think it was because Ms. Ichikawa sensed the importance of an “indistinguishability” that the writer was not stating outright.

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The troupe also carefully discussed how to present this play as a reading and how the actors should perform it against a backdrop of images of actual human suffering via television and the internet. The same holds true for other works, of course, but no matter how much we read and imagined the material, there were many aspects we could not fully grasp. I felt bad about acting as if I knew what I was talking about, but a play cannot be conveyed by mere rote reading. In our rehearsals, we searched for ways to utilize the “reading” format to strike a balance between allowing everyone to become as involved with the characters as possible, while at the same time presenting an objective point of view.

It is unfortunate that all our performances were canceled, but I remain convinced that there are many things we could realize by performing this play now. Keeping in mind the danger of oversimplifying complex situations to make them easier to understand, I hope we can someday bring this work to audiences.

## **Ikuta, Miyuki**

Director. Member of the theatre company Bungakuza and the theatre group Riseiteki-na-Henzintachi. M.A. (Music), Tokyo University of the Arts. Among Japanese Centre of International Theatre Institute productions, she directed *"This is War"* (Theatre Born in Conflict Zones 10) and *"Anatomy of a Suicide"* (World Theatre Lab, 2021). Her recent productions include *"Girls in Crisis," "Oroika Song,"* and *"The Architect and the Assyrian Emperor."*

(Translation: Tony Gonzalez)

## **About the "Theatre Born in Conflict Zones" series**

The International Theatre Institute sponsors a worldwide project titled "Theatre Born in Conflict Zones" as an effort to promote peace through theatre. In 2009, the Japan Centre started its "Theatre Born in Conflict Zones" series as part of a survey and research project for the *Theatre Yearbook*. Through activities including translations, readings, lectures by writers and experts, and exhibitions over the past thirteen years, this series has introduced 28 outstanding plays previously unknown in Japan. Since the third year, we have also published collections of plays. If you would like to order the latest edition or back issues containing translations of *Viral Monologues*, please contact the Japanese Centre of International Theatre Institute. —The Editor

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**This year's performances were unfortunately canceled, but the following is a record of the reading performances that could not be presented:**

## **Theatre Born in Conflict Zones 14**

Reading of *"Bad Roads"* (performances and distribution both canceled)

9–11 December 2022

Location: Proto-Theater

Archive distribution: 6 December 2022 (10:00 a.m.) through 9 January 2023 (11:59 p.m.)

Playwright: Natalia Vorozhbit

Translator: Ichikawa Nana

Director: Ikuta Miyuki (Bungakuza)

Performers: Ishimura Mika (Tegamiza), Iwao Kaishi, Kameda Yoshiaki (Bungakuza), Saito Atsushi (Haiyuza Theatre Company), Shibata Minami (Bungakuza), Terada Michie (Bungakuza), Nishioka Mio

Producer: Hayashi Hideki



As a volume separate from the *Theatre Yearbook 2023*, we publish *Collected Plays*, which contains a Japanese translation of *Bad Roads* with commentary by the translator. Please contact the Japanese Centre of International Theatre Institute if you would like a copy.