舞台芸術国際共同制作事業
INTERNATIONAL CREATIONS IN PERFORMING ARTS

FY2021 International Creations in Performing Arts

Process Observer Reports

JAPANFOUNDATION
国際交流基金

Preface

The Japan Foundation (JF) launched a program to promote international creations in performing arts by Japanese and overseas artists in FY2021, ultimately leading to the production of eight diverse works that year.

In addition to the aspect of seeking out new forms of expression through interaction between Japanese and international artists, an observer system has been instituted for the project as a new initiative to record the processes up to the final performances from third-party perspectives and to make them more visible. Eight observers witnessed the creative processes of this year's projects. This is a compilation of their reports. From works whose production was completed exclusively online to those that were successfully staged with international artists visiting Japan under strict measures against COVID-19, the reports show the trial-and-error processes amid the pandemic as well as the possibilities for more universal international exchange. By shining a spotlight behind the scenes of international co-productions, which are also opportunities for international exchange, these reports are aimed at demonstrating the potential of exchange through performing arts and, at the same time, contributing to the further development of international exchange projects between Japanese and overseas artists.

The Japan Foundation　March 2022

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YOKOBORI Masahiko

Graduated from the doctoral program at the Graduate School of Music, Tokyo University of the Arts. Majored in dramaturgy at the University of Music and Theatre Leipzig. Productions he has participated in as a dramaturge include the opera *Yuzuru* (directed by OKADA Toshiki) and Theater Company Q's *The Question of Faeries* (written and directed by ICHIHARA Satoko). Following production work at Festival/Tokyo, TPAM, and the Tokyo Metropolitan Theatre, he currently works as a full-time lecturer at Atomi University in the Faculty of Management.

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OSHITA Yoshiyuki

Ph.D. (Philosophy in Art) holder. An expert on cultural policies. Professor in the Faculty of Economics, Doshisha University. Visiting Professor at the International Research Center for Japanese Studies. Committee member of Council for Cultural Affairs Museum Section. He was Vice-Chair of the Committee of the Shizuoka Cultural Programme for the 2020 Olympics and Paralympics. He has served as an advisor and committee member for many local governments, including as an Advisor of Tsuruoka Creative City of Gastronomy. His publications include *Arts Council: Practical Problems About Arm's Length Principle* (SUIYOSHA Publishing Inc., 2017).

Setagaya Public Theatre and Raphaëlle BOITEL (France)
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KUREMIYA Yurika

Researcher and art manager in the field of dance. Her main area of investigation is contemporary dance. Studied in France on a scholarship from the French government and received her master's degrees from Université Paris 8 and Waseda University. Has been contributing performance reviews, discussions, and interviews to Japanese and international media while also being involved in the production of numerous dance performances and festivals. Is further active in research and the frontiers of the field.

Chelfitsch & Dai Fujikura with Klangforum Wien (Austria)
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SHIMANUKI Taisuke

Born in 1980. Art writer and editor. Moving around between Kyoto, Beppu, and Tokyo, he has engaged in writing, editing, and planning for print and online media including *Bijutsu Techo*, *Tokyo Art Beat*, and *CINRA*. In recent years, he has been active as a member of the research collective "u-ho" with NEJI Pijin and MIEDA Ai.

Photo: ENDO Mizuki

SPAC-Shizuoka Performing Arts Center and
T2G-Théâtre de Gennevilliers-Centre Dramatique National (France)
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HORIKIRI Katsuhiro

Born in 1983. Theater researcher and critic. Translator of *Le Tiers Temps* (*Yell, Sam, If You Still Can*) (Hayakawa Publishing Corporation, 2021), co-translator of *Kabuki and Revolutionary Russia* (Shinwasha, 2017) and *Corpus Jan Fabre* (Ronsosha, 2010), and coauthor of *The Performing Arts in Nordic Countries* (Sangensha Publishers Inc., 2011) and *Encyclopedia of Japanese Plays* (Hakusuisha Publishing Co., Ltd., 2016), among others. His stage translations include *In the Company of Men* by Edward BOND (ZA-KOENJI Public Theatre, 2019–2021).

SCOT (Suzuki Company of Toga) and Restu I. Kusumaningrum (Indonesia)
"Electra"

UCHINO Tadashi

Born in 1957. Received an MA in American Literature (1984) and a Ph.D. in Performance Studies (2002) from the University of Tokyo. He was a professor at the University of Tokyo's Graduate School of Arts and Sciences (1992–2017) and received the title of professor emeritus at the same university (2019). He is currently a professor at Gakushuin Women's College (since 2017). His publications include *The Melodramatic Revenge* (Keiso Shobo Publishing, 1996) and *Crucible Bodies* (Seagull Books, 2009). He is a contributing editor for *TDR* (Cambridge University Press).

Company Derashinera with LEE Ren Xin (Malaysia) and LIU Juichu (Taiwan)
"TOGE"

TAKAHASHI Ayako

Theater and dance writer. Received a Master's Degree (in theater studies and dance) from Waseda University, Graduate School of Letters, Arts and Sciences. Active as a writer mainly on topics related to contemporary theater, traditional performing arts, ballet, dance, musical, and opera. She currently writes regularly for the online magazine *Ontomo*, focusing on theater from an auditory perspective ("*Mimi kara miru butai*,") and the ballet magazine *Swan Magazine* ("*Bare fan ni okuru opera mangekyo*"). First prize winner at the 10th Japan Dance Critics' Award.

Photo:NAKAMURA Yuki

S.C.ALLIANCE Inc.,
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MINAMIDE Kazuyo

Associate Professor (in charge of the Global Studies Course), Department of English, School of Letters, Kobe College. Areas of expertise: cultural anthropology, Bangladesh area studies. PhD (Graduate University for Advanced Studies, SOKENDAI / National Museum of Ethnology). Publications include *Anthropology of 'Child-sphere': Children in a Bangladesh's Rural Society*; Showado, 2014) and *Millennial Generation in Bangladesh: Their Life Strategies, Movement, and Identity Politics* (University Press Limited, 2022). Received the 2020 Daido Life Foundation Award for Area Studies.

PROJECT

“KOTATSU”

Seinendan Theater Company and Pascal RAMBERT (France)

The newest creation by Pascal RAMBERT, one of France’s top playwrights and directors. The Seinendan Theater Company’s first serious international project since the outbreak of COVID-19. This is the first play Pascal Rambert has written for Japanese actors. It is the culmination of exchanges that have taken place since 2006. Rambert created it together with HIRATA Oriza (Co-director and Japanese Language Supervisor) and the actors and staff of Seinendan.
KOTATSU is the story of a family who grew a small company into a major international firm in a single generation, and their friends and relatives who have gathered for New Year’s. It was first performed at the Ebara Riverside Theatre in September 2021.

HIRATA Oriza

Pascal RAMBERT © Vanessa Rabade

Outline of Performances

Date: September 8, 2021 (Wed.)
Duration: 120 min.
Venue: Ebara Riverside Theatre

Credits

Written and directed by Pascal RAMBERT
Co-directed with Japanese language supervision by HIRATA Oriza
Translated by HIRANO Akihito
Performers:
YAMAUCHI Kenji, HYODO Kumi, OTA Hiroshi, CHINEN Mima, SHIN Suhkye, OGINO Yuri,
SATO Shigeru, MORI Issei, NAGOYA Megumi, ASAMURA Kamilla
Stage Design: HAMAZAKI Kenji
Lighting: NISHIMOTO Aya
Costumes: MASAKANE Aya, NAKAHARA Akiko
Sound: SENDA Yuta, AKITA Yuji
Stage Manager: HARIMA Aiko
Props: CHEN Yen Chun
Video: UTAGAWA Tatsuhito
Assistant Directors: OHARA Hana, YAMAGUCHI Keiko
Interpreter: ISHIKAWA Hiromi
Production Coordination: NISHIO Sachiko (Sistema, Inc.), Pauline ROUSSILLE (structure production)

Organized by The Japan Foundation, Agora Planning LTD./Komaba Agora Theater, structure production
Co-produced by The Japan Foundation, Agora Planning LTD./Komaba Agora Theater, structure production


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1. Main graphic © Hirota Seita 2-5. Performance photos © Miula Ulin

Seinendan Theater Company and Pascal RAMBERT (France)

"KOTATSU" First Report: Launch of Project

Author: YOKOBORI Masahiko

Pascal RAMBERT is a playwright and director who was born in France in 1962. From 2007 to 2017, he served as the artistic director of the Théâtre de Gennevilliers, a national dramatic center located in the suburbs of Paris. While there, he worked on several projects, including the first French-language performance of *Sables & Soldats*[1] with the Seinendan Theater Company led by HIRATA Oriza, who is the same age as Rambert. During this time, Rambert also worked together with the Festival d'Automne à Paris on a two-piece performance of Hirata's *Citizens of Seoul* and *Citizens of Seoul 1919*.[2] Rambert held performances in Japan of *The Beginning of Love* at the Komaba Agora Theater in 2007,[3] and *A (Micro) History of World Economics, Danced* in Fujimi, Shizuoka, and Miyazaki in 2010.[4] In 2013, Rambert held performances of *The End of Love*, one of his most acclaimed works, in Shizuoka, Osaka, and Yokohama.[5] (Additional performances were held at the Komaba Agora Theater and Shikoku Gakuin University's Notos Studio from 2016 to 2017.) In 2018, he held performances of *GHOSTs* at the Komaba Agora Theater.

For *KOTATSU*, Seinendan's 2021 international project, five actors will appear who have worked with Rambert before. They are OGINO Yuri, who appeared in *The Beginning of Love*; HYODO Kumi and OTA Hiroshi, who appeared in *The End of Love*; and MORI Issei and NAGOYA Megumi, who appeared in *GHOSTs*. In addition, five actors who have never worked with Rambert before will be appearing. They are YAMAUCHI Kenji, CHINEN Mima, SHIN Suhkye, SATO Shigeru, and ASAMURA Kamilla. In total, ten Seinendan actors will be appearing in *KOTATSU*. All of Rambert's works that have been performed in Japan were first performed in other countries before being translated into Japanese. *KOTATSU*, however, is a new work that was written specifically for the actors of Seinendan to perform. For this first report, I interviewed Pascal Rambert in May 2021 as a record at the time of the project's launch. At this time, the rough translation of the play into Japanese had been completed and discussions with Japanese staff had moved forward considerably. Over about 40 years, Rambert has engaged in international projects in about 30 countries and in over 30 languages. Based on this experience, I asked Rambert about his basic stance toward international productions, and the events leading up to this project's launch.

—The *KOTATSU* project is an international collaboration between you and Seinendan. Please tell me what points you focus on when engaging in an international production.

Rambert: I worked on international productions for 10 years at the Théâtre de Gennevilliers. Even after I became an independent director, I continued to engage in international collaborations. In either situation, however, what I have believed is the most important thing in international productions is that they are based on relationships of friendship. I think that friendships between artists are particularly important. This project is also based in the 20-year-long friendship between Hirata Oriza and me. Under the name of international collaboration, one-time projects have been conducted all over the place in order to stand out. For me, however, it is important to work together with people I personally strongly trust. A moment ago, you told me that you studied abroad in Germany. I get work offers from Germany around two to three times a month, but I refuse them all. I'm not interested in doing projects for fame or money. I think that it is important for artists to recognize each other, for artists who understand each other and who respect each other from the bottom of their hearts to work together, exactly like we have with this project. It is also extremely important for friendship to connect everyone who is involved in a production. I have worked with Production Coordinator NISHIO Sachiko for years.

—You and Seinendan have worked together for a long time. Please tell me about the events leading up to your current project, *KOTATSU*.

Rambert: When we staged *The End of Love*, there were expressions in my play that were difficult to translate into Japanese. There was a phrase in French that, translated literally, meant "Life is not a basket of strawberries." There was a discussion about how best to translate this into Japanese. After consulting Japanese Language Supervisor Hirata Oriza and Translator HIRANO Akihito, we changed the Japanese line to "Life is not eating tangerines around the *kotatsu* (a low table covered by a blanket, with a built-in heater; in winter, families typically sit around it on the floor with their legs under the blanket)." I tell this story all the time when I talk about translating works in countries such as Russia, Italy, and the United States. The word "*kotatsu*" left a deep impression on me then. The result was the play *KOTASU*. *KOTATSU*'s central theme is the *kotatsu*, a piece of furniture that means comfort and relaxation to Japanese people. *KOTATSU* also incorporates Japanese feelings about shame; and the relationship between social media and New Year's, a time that is supposed to be quiet and peaceful.

—In other words, it was your long-term relationships that made this project possible.

Rambert: To date, I have produced or staged five or six works in Japan. Including touring works, the total number of productions in Japan I have been involved in is around 10 over about 20 years. I believe that I understand perhaps a little about Japan, and I love Japan. And because I love Japan, I want to look at it in a way that is a little teasing. I also know that Japanese people love France and sometimes laugh at France as well. Because we love each other, we tease each other. I think that's natural. This project has been in my head for a long time. I wanted to make a new production with the actors of Seinendan who I have worked together with before. For example, I worked with Ogino Yuri on *The Beginning of Love*, Ota Hiroshi and Hyodo Kumi on *The End of Love*, and Mori Issei and Nagoya Megumi on *GHOSTs*. Recently, I created a work for the Festival d'Avignon.[6] This work featured actors with whom I have worked with over the past 10 years. In part because of this, I wanted to gather together other actors with whom I had worked. I also wanted to create a work for the actors of Seinendan. With *KOTATSU*, I was finally able to achieve this.

—I read a rough translation of the script, and noticed the names of the characters are the same as the first names of the actors. What was the relationship between your script writing and the casting?

Rambert: We held auditions to decide on the cast first. I meet face-to-face with many actors before I start my work. Last year, I wrote a work in Mexico,[7] and I met with all the theater's actors then as well. When I make a new work, I like to start creating after I've met people instead of bringing a completed project. With *KOTATSU*, too, I started working on it after I met with Seinendan's actors in Tokyo and Toyooka. *KOTATSU* would not

be the work it is now if, for example, I hadn't met Asamura Kamilla, who is from Uzbekistan; or Shin Suhkye, who has Korean roots. I also remember an incident with Ota Hiroshi when we worked together on *The End of Love*. His character had a huge number of lines. After the first rehearsal (to read through the script) on the fifth floor of the Komaba Agora Theater, Ota said to me, "Why does this character talk so much?" So I proposed that in my next work, I would give him a role that doesn't talk at all, which he agreed to. That was a major starting point for *KOTATSU*. My works are a result of my relationships with people. When I look at cast photos, they tell me everything. Like a shaman, I can feel the energy coming out of those photos. I put words to the various energies and create the script based on the energies that emerge between people.

—When was the last time you were in Japan?

Rambert: I don't remember exactly, but I think it was 2019.

—I believe that you met with the actors then and established the main outline of the project. In the script however, "November 2020" and "January 2021" are written above the cast, as well as several city names between them.[8] I imagine that COVID-19 affected your work in various ways, but does this mean you wrote the script as you traveled to these different cities?

Rambert: COVID-19 didn't change the rhythm of my work. Two productions scheduled for Hong Kong and New York were delayed half a year, but other than that, I have been able to stage all of my works. It is my rule to write works outside of Paris. When I'm in Paris, I value my time with my family, so I write in the morning when I'm staying in other cities.

—When you stage productions outside of French-speaking places, of course you hand the plays you have written over to translators, but what sort of work is involved in delivering your words to local audiences?

Rambert: For me, I solely focus on directing. Very simply, all I think about is the production, as a playwright, and as a director. I don't really think about what to do for the audience, or what I should do to get the audience to like it, or, conversely, what I should do if the audience doesn't like it. When I work, my ethic is to create a piece of art. As far as I remember it, Japanese audiences don't express their opinion very much after opening day. This is different from France. After opening day, French audiences feel the need to talk for hours, and that is difficult for me (laughs). In part because there's this difference, I'm curious how Japanese people will react after seeing this work. When I stage a production, I want to make it direct and real. This work is like a movie, and I think perhaps could even be filmed like a feature film. I was deeply influenced by director OZU Yasujiro's depiction of the lives of people. It is said that Ozu filmed from the perspective of someone kneeling on a tatami mat floor, and I feel that this work was similarly written from a tatami mat perspective.

—At this point in time, I assume that you've begun talking with planners. Are the staff you are working with on this project people you have worked with before?

Rambert: Almost all of them. For example, I've worked with technical director NISHIMOTO Aya for about 20 years. Our relationship is at a point where she knows what I want without me saying almost anything at all. I have very clear images of what I want to do with stage design and costumes, and there are also descriptions in the script. I think that this makes these relatively easy to work on. I'm looking forward to meeting up with everyone in Tokyo in July.

—The first round of rehearsals will be in Tokyo over a two-week period in late July. The second round of rehearsals will be held in Toyooka from late August. However, has COVID-19 caused any changes in your original schedule?

Rambert: No, at least at this point there have been no changes. I am hoping that I will be able to fly to Japan as scheduled in July. At that time, about one month will have passed since I finished getting vaccinated. To date, when working in other countries I have been getting tested every three days, but so far I haven't gotten sick, so I'm hoping we will be able to do this. That being said, there's also the Olympics, so I don't know what effect that will have on the situation going forward. Right now, I hope things settle down and go well.

—Will you be staying in Japan the entire time between the first and second round of rehearsals?

Rambert: No, there's a part of me that's kind of Japanese in that I never take a vacation. At the end of July I will leave Japan and return to Paris, and then I will immediately start rehearsals on another project. This project will be staged immediately following the first performance of *KOTATSU* in Toyooka. Once that is finished, I'm planning on taking a two-week break.

—A moment ago, you said that you don't participate in one-shot-style international projects. Please share if you have any plans to stage this project other than in Toyooka.

Rambert: With regard to that, I would ask you to talk to Nishio Sachiko and Hirata Oriza. I don't talk about such things in advance, so I leave such production matters in the hands of Seinendan and the staff of the Komaba Agora Theater. I would like to concentrate on writing and staging.

Interview and Text: Yokobori Masahiko
Interpreter: ISHIKAWA Hiromi

Note: This interview was conducted over Zoom from 6:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. on May 10, 2021 (Japan Standard Time).

1 http://www.seinendan.org/play/2010/09/2309
2 http://www.seinendan.org/play/2016/11/5312
3 http://www.komaba-agora.com/line_up/2007_06/debut.html
4 https://spac.or.jp/10_autumn/dansee.html
5 http://www.seinendan.org/play/2013/09/2460
6 https://festival-avignon.com/fr/edition-2019/programmation/architecture-2870
7 http://www.teatrounam.com.mx/index.php/component/sppagebuilder/209-desaparecer
8 novembre 2020 / Tallin / Genève / Paris / Rouchut / Paris / Milan / Séville / janvier 2021

Seinendan Theater Company and Pascal RAMBERT (France)

"KOTATSU" Second Report: Rehearsals

Author: YOKOBORI Masahiko

The first round of rehearsals for the Seinendan Theater Company and Pascal RAMBERT's 2021 international project *KOTATSU* were held at the Komaba Agora Theater from July 16 to 30.[1] Originally, it was planned for Pascal Rambert to come to Japan to participate in the rehearsals. However, due to entry restrictions, Rambert ended up participating from Europe via Zoom. Rehearsals were held daily from 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. (10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. in Europe). Several cameras were placed in the Komaba Agora Theater, enabling Rambert to watch the actors' performances from a variety of angles.

Ordinarily, on the first day of rehearsals, a "read-through" is conducted in which the entire script is read from beginning to end. Rambert, however, asked the actors to "be like French actors and not be afraid to ask questions." Accordingly, the scenes were read through one at a time, and, if there were any questions, a thorough discussion was held. On the first day of rehearsals, scenes one through nine were read through in order. On the second day, after reading through from the beginning to scene nine (about 20 minutes; about one sixth of the entire work), they moved on to scene 10 and after. Perhaps because Seinendan is an already-established company, actors and staff proactively asked questions even for scenes they were not involved in. Rambert answered all of their questions earnestly, and I was impressed by his sincere explanations of things such as each character's role. Translator HIRANO Akihito was in the rehearsal space almost every day, and Co-director and Japanese Language Supervisor HIRATA Oriza also came around two times. Together, they carefully adjusted the Japanese dialogue. The latter half of rehearsals was conducted while actually moving on a temporary stage. In the first round of rehearsals, only basic blocking was added. It was decided to add more detailed blocking during the second round of rehearsals to be held in Ebara late the following month.

This second report is a record of the project at the time of the end of the first round of rehearsals. I interviewed three actors from the Seinendan who will be appearing in *KOTATSU*: OTA Hiroshi, CHINEN Mima, and MORI Issei.

—The characters in *KOTATSU* have the same names as the actual actors. Please tell me about the events leading up you being chosen to appear in this project.

Ota: We've held auditions in the company for French works before. Similarly, we held auditions for Pascal's project, with interested company members auditioning either in Tokyo or Ebara.

—What did the auditions involve?

Ota: This time, Pascal's auditions were very unique. I didn't read lines from a script or anything. Instead, Pascal and an interpreter interviewed me for about 10 or 15 minutes and then it was just like "Okay" and it was over.

—Mori Issei, you worked with Pascal before on *GHOSTs*, is that right?

Mori: Yes. I didn't so much audition as I went to go see Pascal for the first time in a long time. All we really did was chitchat and talk about how we had been doing lately. And then at the end it was just "Okay, see you later."

—Chinen Mima, this is your first time working with Pascal.

Chinen: In *The End of Love*, which Ota appeared in, there was a chorus group of mothers who appeared for a moment to sing before leaving again, and I was a member of that group, so I had a very small amount of contact with Pascal through that. Also, when Pascal worked as artistic director at the Théatre de Gennevilliers national dramatic center, several French actors and two Japanese actors appeared in Hirata Oriza's production of Seinendan's *Sables & Soldats*.[2] I took part in that production, so I passed by Pascal several times in the theater.

—I assume that *Sables & Soldats* was performed in French?

Chinen: It was originally a work performed by Japanese actors. When it was performed in France, only the two enemy soldiers were performed by Japanese actors. The two Japanese actors talked to each other in Japanese, but in a scene where they suddenly meet the French actors, they spoke in French. When I was chosen to appear, I didn't speak any French. I was taught French for about a month, but nowadays I don't understand it at all and can only pick up a few words here and there. In my case, because of having and raising a child, I hadn't acted in about eight years. My interview with Pascal took place just after my move to Ebara, the hub

Rehearsals at the Komaba Agora Theater (left: the 2nd floor theater; right: the 5th floor rehearsal studio)

of our company's activities, was decided. Pascal asked me what I did over the past eight years. I told him that I was moving to Ebara soon to restart my acting career. He then asked me why I wanted to return to acting so much. I told him that the plays of Hirata Oriza were very pertinent to me. Also, there is an actress named Audrey BONNET who has worked with Pascal. I appeared with her in *Sables & Soldats* and she is a very charming actress who I like a lot. I asked Pascal how she had been doing recently. Like Mori, my interview ended after some chitchat and talk about recent events in my life.

—I've been watching the rehearsals, and it seems Ota can understand what Pascal is saying in French.

Ota: Seinendan's first international project involving France was *Chants d'Adieu (Songs of Farewell)* in 2007, which I appeared in.[3] The text was written by Hirata Oriza. French actor Laurent GUTMANN appeared in the project. In addition to three Japanese actors, five French actors were in the project, and all of our conversations with them were in French. That was the first time I went to France. After that work's success in France, it toured 17 cities in 2009, so I ultimately stayed in France for about seven months in total.

—And how was your French before that?

Ota: I couldn't speak it at all. I couldn't even read the alphabet. Like with our current project, auditions were held a year in advance. I was told that I would be fine if I went to a French language school during the year before the start of rehearsals, but by the time I went to France, I could barely say my name and read the alphabet. When rehearsals started, I got an unbelievable number of lines. For our first performance, I had a French person record the lines for me. I listened to the recording and ultimately learned the pronunciation.

—Chinen, this is your first project with Pascal; now that you've actually worked with him in rehearsals, what do you think?

Chinen: When I first read the script, I was surprised by how many lines I had. Normally one person doesn't talk so long continuously. I was very confused. I wondered if it would work, if it would be interesting to the audience. However, now that I've learned my lines and have begun saying them, they feel much better than when I was just reading them silently. I have worked with Translator HIRANO Akihito before on another project, so I think that this may be because he translated the French into Japanese with an understanding of who I am. Also, the way Seinendan does rehearsals and the way Pascal does rehearsals are completely different. It's been fresh and surprising.

—The other day when I was talking with Hirano, he also said that Oriza and Pascal's rehearsals are completely different. Could you tell me how they are different?

Chinen: The director talking this much about the script, or about the background behind the creation of the work, or about what they were thinking when they created a scene doesn't generally happen during Oriza's rehearsals. I was very surprised to have the entire journey of the work be so carefully shared with everyone before starting walk-throughs. In Japan, we use the phrase "*damedashi*," which means "fault-finding." I'm used to the director generally skipping over the good things and commenting only about things they didn't like. Pascal, however, also takes the time to praise things and tell us something was well done. At first, this was surprising to me, but now I think that it's very good. If it's connected to the work, Pascal often also talks about himself, and he will even personally demonstrate the kind of acting he wants. This kind of relationship between the director and the actors is completely different from rehearsals with Oriza.

—Mori, while creating this work with Pascal, did you feel anything was different compared with other directors?

Mori: A lot of time is spent on discussion. Pascal takes a lot of time to expand the actors' understanding, talking about all kinds of things concerning the work's background and context. The first project I worked on with Pascal was *GHOSTs*. Before that, I didn't know that he was such a physical person. I thought that he was more of a stereotypical creator type, or a playwright similar to Oriza. Actually working with him, however, I found that he was very interested in the actors' bodies, which was kind of novel or interesting to me. In this project, as well, there are scenes with things like enigmatic dancing, and I'm looking forward to seeing how much Pascal gets involved in the actor's physical aspects.

—Ota, you worked with Pascal on *The End of Love* for a long time, and this project is the first time you've worked with Pascal in a long time. How does it feel?

Ota: Like, that's totally Pascal, is my impression (laughs). The most striking thing is that Pascal will say something like "That's it!" or "Yes!" when I'm in the middle of saying a line. Hirata would never say something like that. I don't know if it's because he's an unusual type even for a French director, but the fact that he gets excited along with us is something that characterizes Pascal.

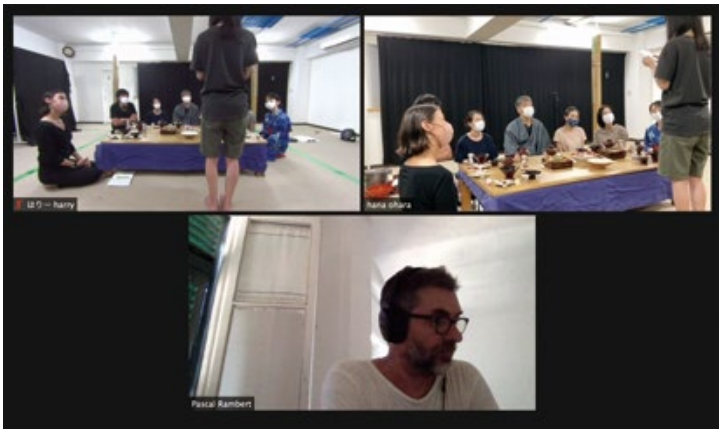
—For this project, your character, Ota, stays on stage the whole time, but says almost nothing.

Ota: I don't think I've ever played a role with so little speaking. I'm really enjoying it. Even now I still feel like I'm constantly searching for what I can do to add to my character. Pascal has said that he was excited to write this work. Like him, I expect that I will continue to struggle right up until the end as to how to bring my character to life on stage.

—Chinen, you play the role of Ota's wife. Having finished the recent two-week round of rehearsals, what are your feelings on the project?

Chinen: The past two weeks it's been all I can do to say my lines. When we started adding blocking at the end, I finally really felt like there were other people around me even when I was making these long speeches. As a result, right now I'm returning to the starting point and rereading the script again. Some scenes involve lots of other characters, and some scenes are just Ota and myself. When I was reading the script alone, I couldn't completely visualize the other characters my character interacts with, but now I can. Right now I still haven't fully taken that in, so I'm a bit nervous as to whether I'll be ready in time for the rehearsals in Ebara.

—Mori, you play the role of their son. It's an important position in the work. How do you feel about the past two weeks?



Rehearsals over Zoom

Mori: The more I read the script, or rather, the more we rehearsed, the more I feel that this is a very strange family (laughs). For example, the father never speaks even though he's there with everyone. It's not Luc BESSON, but I hope that it doesn't end up being the bad kind of image foreigners have when they see Japan. From the start, this project has had an unusual atmosphere, and the unusualness when reading the script and the unusualness when actually enveloped in it have only built on each other in a very interesting way, so I'm looking forward to seeing the end result.

—Recently, there have been all kinds of collaborative international projects, but I believe that most have cast various actors as needed. This project is a collaborative, international work between Seinendan and Pascal. You could say that the general manner of performing is shared between all of the actors; I feel that there is this kind of relationship there and that it is being very well utilized in the creation of the work. For all of you, in this project or a past one, how has working with a French director inspired you, and what discoveries have you made?

Ota: The French people I have met generally graduated from the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique et de Danse de Paris and have been working in the forefront of the field. They are all very intellectual, and most of the actors I've appeared with are selected individuals who have graduated from one of the mere four national drama schools in the country. I've worked with true frontrunners of the industry; when I watch a Luc Besson film, people I know suddenly pop up on the screen. It results in an environment that makes me constantly think about what we can do, and I find it very stimulating.

Mori: When I did *In the Heart of a Forest*, I didn't work with a French director but rather French actors.[4] During that project, we discussed things such as Hirata Oriza's reception, particularly in Europe, and the state of modern theater in France. It was an opportunity for intellectual and cultural exchange, and I found it very interesting.

Chinen: I've only worked with a non-Japanese director once before, in 2011 for Seinendan's international exchange project *L'Echange*.[5] *KOTATSU* is my second time. For me, the biggest thing about participating in a project by another director is that the types of roles that are cast are completely different from those of Seinendan. I find it very interesting and novel. I have an eight-year gap in my career. Even I don't know what my future will be with Seinendan. However, in the time I worked with Oriza, from when I entered Seinendan at around the age of 20 until around the age of 35, I feel like the roles I was cast in and the roles I got through auditions were similar, or rather that they have common features. I feel like I would never have been given the kind of role I have in *KOTATSU*. So when I first read the script, all I felt was worry about whether I would be able to do the role. I wondered what I had said in my audition, what Pascal saw in me. Being able to take on a role that I never would have thought of is something that characterizes a director not from Seinendan and who is not Hirata Oriza, and it's very interesting.

—I heard that Hirata Oriza came to rehearsals on a day I didn't. What were the rehearsals like then?

Mori: When Oriza came, Pascal wasn't there. Oriza and the actors mainly worked on the Japanese lines—things like whether this word was okay, or adjusting things that didn't feel right to the actors. Oriza also had us try adding in some very rough blocking.

Ota: Because we are members of Seinendan, Hirata Oriza knows us very well. Oriza did all kinds of things to retain the taste of the work while changing lines to make them feel less theatrical and translatese. Things like changing words with difficult-to-understand sounds to words that were easier to hear, making the relationships between things clearer, and generally cleaning up lines.

—Your current, international project is taking place during the COVID-19 pandemic. Originally, Pascal was also scheduled to be here physically for the rehearsals in July. Ultimately, however, he participated via Zoom. In closing, please reflect on the rehearsals you did over the past two weeks with Pascal over Zoom.

Ota: This was my first time really doing rehearsals over Zoom. Pascal has a really good ear, and I think that helped in part to make the rehearsals a success. Pascal could understand the nuances we put into the lines, could hear small and subtle changes, so I could tell that the parts we did matched what he wanted. Ultimately, however, this is a play. You need to have everything, including things like seeing a person's body and facial expressions, in order to fully create a character in three dimensions. It made me look forward even more to meeting and performing in front of Pascal next month.

Mori: I had done rehearsals over Zoom since the start of COVID-19. That was things like simple read-throughs, however. This was the first time I ever tried to really work out a play like this over Zoom. Like you would expect, it's kind of strange. We would be rehearsing, but because of the Internet, suddenly Pascal would disappear. It made me wonder if anyone was watching us rehearse at times. It made me realize that it's important for rehearsals to feel the presence of the director. For the director to actually physically be there to watch the rehearsal and just drink something or eat a mint or move around. Also, it was very difficult for Pascal to perceive our reactions. Time and again, we had to make big circles with our arms to say "okay," or make very exaggerated "I understand" expressions. Of course, many very talented staff created this environment for us and made things possible in the first place.

Chinen: I've never done rehearsals with Pascal except over Zoom. I don't know what would have happened if we didn't have Zoom. Also, it's normal now to do rehearsals with a mask on, but this was my first time rehearsing like this with a mask on and using Zoom. It was incredibly frustrating

and difficult.

—It seems that rehearsals in Ebara will also be done with masks on.

Chinen: Yes. Right up until we perform for real, we will be rehearsing with masks and face shields, and we'll also only be taking them off right before a performance starts. I've never done anything like this before, so I'm very nervous. I worry that suddenly taking my mask off will feel like being naked and will mess up my acting senses (laughs). In spite of this, this project requires very subtle emotions from all of the characters. I think that it will make adjusting right before a performance difficult.

—I have watched at the rehearsal spaces as this project has taken shape, and I think that it will be able to overcome the obstacles of the COVID-19 pandemic. I'm looking forward to opening day.

The actors being interviewed

Interview and Text: Yokobori Masahiko

Note: This interview was conducted over Zoom from 10:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. on August 3, 2021.

1 The reporter attended rehearsals at the Komaba Agora Theater's 2nd floor theater on the first day of July 16 as well as July 17; and at the Komaba Agora Theater's 5th floor rehearsal studio on July 22. In order to prevent unnecessary close contact in the rehearsal space, the reporter observed rehearsals online on July 28 and 29.

2 http://www.seinendan.org/play/2009/03/2252
Scenes of rehearsals at the Théâtre de Gennevilliers can be seen in the film *Theater 2* (directed by SODA Kazuhiro).

3 http://www.seinendan.org/play/2009/01/2255
Three members of Seinendan participated: YAMAUCHI Kenji, KAKUDATE Reina, and OTA Hiroshi.

4 http://www.seinendan.org/play/2019/07/6895

5 http://www.seinendan.org/play/2011/04/6354

Seinendan Theater Company and Pascal RAMBERT (France)

"KOTATSU" Third Report: Performance / Fourth Report: Reflection

Author: YOKOBORI Masahiko

The final round of development work on *KOTATSU*, the Seinendan Theater Company and Pascal RAMBERT's 2021 international project, was conducted from August 25 to September 8 at the Ebara Riverside Theatre. The project was originally scheduled to be first performed at the Toyooka Theater Festival from September 9 through 12.[1] After the first round of rehearsals at the Komaba Agora Theater in late July, however, a state of emergency declaration was issued in Hyogo Prefecture covering August 20 to September 12. Based on this, it was announced on August 18 that the Toyooka Theater Festival was canceled.[2] Although the festival was canceled, development of *KOTATSU* continued as planned. The play was scheduled for five performances, and ultimately these were held with almost no audience members.[3]

I visited Ebara twice between late August and early September, watching rehearsals on August 26 and 27, observing the performance on September 8, and attending opening day on September 9. For this combined third and fourth report, I will report on the creative development work I watched in late August. Then I will report on the performance I observed in early September. After that, I will take a look back on the entire project, from launch to performance. In addition, I recorded an interview with Translator HIRANO Akihito for the third report. For the fourth report, I recorded an interview with Pascal Rambert (the second interview with Rambert following my interview with him for the first report) just after the play's first performance.[4]

Development

For the rehearsals at the Ebara Riverside Theatre, staff conducted preparations from August 19 to 22, setting up the set, lighting, and audio the same as for actual performances. Rambert arrived in Japan on the night of August 24. However, the Japanese government required a two-week quarantine for people coming from outside Japan. Accordingly, until the day before the performance, Rambert participated in rehearsals remotely from a room in the same commercial hotel where performers were staying. Like during the first round of rehearsals, two types of camera angles were set up for Rambert, some with views of the entire stage, and some close to the actors.

Rehearsals at the Ebara Riverside Theatre

Every day, Rambert started rehearsals by greeting each actor one at a time by name. After that was finished, Rambert provided detailed direction for each scene. Co-director HIRATA Oriza stayed in the theater much longer than originally planned, taking on the task of adding blocking for scenes with many actors. The actors immediately tested the blocking and lines proposed by Hirata, and Rambert also agreed with Hirata's proposals. Hirata also added small lines here and there throughout the play. One example is in scene 18. In that scene, three women start to perform a *shimai*, a type of Noh dance. Originally, the short period of time when the three women are making their preparations is silent. Hirata added the following short exchange between the other actors, making the time feel more real: "*Shimai*?" "It's like a Japanese dance." "Oh, I thought it was like a *shishimai* [lion dance] or something." "Shut up."

After several rehearsals, it became clear that the play would take over two hours. One thing I remember clearly is Rambert saying the Japanese word *tori* ("birds") during rehearsals, directing everyone to move quickly like birds between scenes to speed things up. I observed the first half of rehearsals. During them, Rambert said that they would run through the entire play several times before opening day in order to help them discover many different things. Toward the end of the project's development, they did indeed run through the entire play multiple days in a row.

Hirata Oriza also participated in the rehearsals.

The Work

KOTATSU is a story set on January 1 in a Japanese family's living room. The head of the family is Hiroshi, the president of a Tokyo construction company. *KOTATSU* opens with a scene of Hiroshi entering the living room in the darkness, apparently in the early morning. Hiroshi is played by OTA Hiroshi. His wife, Mima, is played by CHINEN Mima. Similarly, all of the characters appearing in this work share the same names as the real names of the actors playing them.

The play is around 2 hours and 15 minutes long. The midpoint of the work, scene 18, is a long scene in which all of the performers eat *osechi* (traditional New Year's foods). The play can be divided into three main parts, with this scene being the middle part. In the first half, scene changes are relatively fast-paced. Ordinarily in Japan, New Year's is spent relaxing with family. However, it gradually becomes clear that the Tokyo construction company run by the family has a huge problem. One can feel tension in the relationship between Kumi, Hiroshi's younger sister currently assigned to New York; and Yuri, another younger sister of Hiro-

shi who is in charge of the personnel department. At the end of scene 18, the two sisters are alone after the *osechi* is finished, and tensions reach a peak when they begin fighting. The play is filled with a variety of diverse characters. For example, Kamilla, who works as the babysitter of Hiroshi's daughter Megumi, is from Uzbekistan; and Suhkye, a close friend of Mima, is an ethnically Korean permanent resident of Japan. Although not explicitly stated, this use of diverse characters brings to light various social issues in the world after COVID-19. From beginning to end, Hiroshi says almost nothing. At the end of the play in scene 21, his older brother Kenji appears for the first time. Hiroshi begins to tell Kenji what he's really thinking. The curtain then closes with a hint of what may happen to the family in the future.

HAMAZAKI Kenji's stage design looks like a living room in a large Japanese home. However, things like the locations of the pillars and *shoji* sliding doors are different from a real Japanese home, creating an atmosphere that feels slightly peculiar. The lighting is also provided by fluorescent lights, which Rambert frequently uses in his works. This gives a French aesthetic to things. Similar to the works of Hirata Oriza, the setting is a place where many people come and go. However, differences with Hirata can be seen in the pacing of the work, such as using blackouts to create breaks between scenes. International collaborations often form temporary companies of actors for each project. The actors appearing in *KOTATSU*, however, are all members of Seinendan. Their teamwork as a company establishes perfectly coordinated dramatic tension throughout the entire play.

The play's poster and schedule

Looking Back

To date, I have been involved in several international collaborations. I believe that one evaluation indicator for an international project is what the final work conveys to the people in the audience, who each have their own contexts, and what the audience takes in from the work. This project was started because of the long years of friendship between Pascal Rambert and Hirata Oriza, who are both active in France and Japan. The lines they have put into *KOTATSU*, teasing each other's countries, look at modern Japanese society from a new perspective. A project of these two creators, *KOTATSU* deserves high praise because it achieves a universality that goes beyond the unique qualities of their two countries. This was possible thanks to the efforts of the actors and staff, who had a relationship of trust with Rambert. Of particular note, this international collaboration was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic. Under these circumstances, new problems emerged one after another, but were faced one at a time. What's remarkable is how smoothly the project's development moved forward. *KOTATSU* should be shared as a model case for international collaborative projects. Unfortunately, the opportunity for general audiences to see the work was lost. I only hope that after a short break this play will be performed not only in Japan and France but also many other countries around the world in the near future.

Interview 1: Hirano Akihito

—How much time was spent translating this project?

Hirano: I did the first rough translation in a month. Then I left it alone for a while before working on polishing it. I gave the polished translation to Hirata Oriza. When it came back from Oriza, I worked on improving it more. So revisions took about three or four months.

—During the first round of rehearsals in July, you were in the rehearsal space every day. Pascal Rambert participated over Zoom. Was this your first time working on developing a project using Zoom?

Hirano: No. I also worked on a project involving the Shizuoka Performing Arts Centre (SPAC) in the second half of 2020[5], so I'm a Zoom pro now (laughs).

—In addition to email, you also worked with Rambert over Zoom. Were there more difficulties than compared with, for example, *The End of Love*?

Hirano: Actually, this might have been the easiest project I've ever worked on. However, it's difficult to make a simple comparison. Before, I've always been in charge of translating and interpreting. This time, for the first time I was able to focus only on translating. The first time I worked with Pascal was over 10 years ago. Compared to then, he seems to be much more mellow; it's like he's filled with love. During rehearsals, every day he would say how happy he was to rehearse with everyone. Ten years ago, it might have been hard for Pascal to accept everything like he did with *KOTATSU*. He has always been a good person, however.

—In the international projects you've been involved in as a translator, what has been the most worthwhile or given you the greatest sense of accomplishment?

Hirano: When I create a line that I think is particularly well translated and the actor says it well.

—How did you feel about this project?

Hirano: All of the lines were like that. There's a clear reason for this. All of the actors appearing in *KOTATSU* are actors from Seinendan who I know particularly well. I think ASAMURA Kamilla is the only actor I worked with for the first time. So when I was translating, I could hear everyone speaking the lines. I also know each actor's style of acting, so my translations naturally had a tone that was close to the way they talk. Particularly when I was translating the really interesting lines for HYODO Kumi, I had a clear plan in my head for the tempo I wanted to do. I found myself unconsciously grinning when I heard her saying them because they fit so well.

—What was it like creating a collaborative work together with Rambert and Hirata?

Hirano: This project went extremely well. I think that we all felt a sense of accomplishment in that area as well. Hirata Oriza was also involved in *The End of Love* as Japanese Language Supervisor. *The End of Love* consists of long monologues, a style that is the complete opposite of Oriza's plays. Despite this, Oriza found ways of saying things that really worked well for each key point. One line that symbolizes that is "eating mikan around the *kotatsu*," a line that is directly connected to this project. However, Oriza was mainly involved in key words and phrases. He didn't really revise the overall work. When Pascal wrote this project, however, he was thinking very strongly of Oriza. Because of this, in addition to the play taking place in Japan and being performed by Japanese actors, it also incorporates Japanese-style interjections, small lines, and silences. To put it another way, you could say Pascal's script leaves room for Oriza to add "Hirata-isms" to it. For Oriza, the more space Pascal left for small lines to be added, the more successful his script was. I think for Pascal, as well, Oriza adding his revisions made this feel more like a collaborative project. For me, I tried to translate the script in a way that would allow Oriza to revise it later. I also told Oriza himself this. If I had translated the script with a very translated tone, it would have been difficult to revise later. However, I translated it while thinking about how each of the actors talk. Oriza was then able to easily add in his revisions. In that sense, I think I can say that my translation was successful.

—What was your impression after watching an actual performance with Hirata's added lines?

Hirano: More subtle nuances were added. There were also some conjunctions and sentence-ending particles that I thought were good that were removed. But because it was Oriza who was the Japanese Language Supervisor, I have no complaints at all. Normally, if some nuance was lost by removing words, I would want to speak up and say something, no matter who is doing the editing. This time, however, I didn't experience that kind of stress at all.

—I feel like a very solid production system is a big reason why this project was able to be realized so well. You have been involved in the production of many projects. How did you feel about the project's production system?

Hirano: Through international projects, Seinendan has been performing in France and inviting directors from France since 1999. Pascal has been involved in these projects from very early on, and he has built an exceptionally strong relationship with Hirata Oriza. The heart of this project has been the relationship between Pascal and Oriza. The core staff, however, are people who Pascal knows well and who know how to work with Pascal, such as Production Coordinator NISHIO Sachiko; NISHIMOTO Aya, who again played a key role in technical aspects; and Stage Manager HARIMA Aiko. The staff know what Pascal would want done. Pascal also knows that they will ask them about important things, so there's no need to tell them how to do things they don't ask about. That's the kind of relationship they have. I believe that this project has moved forward smoothly because it was Pascal and this group of people who know him doing it.

—Yes, this play is really a result of their relationship of trust. Looking back on the project as a whole, was there anything that was difficult?

Hirano: Because he's so busy, it couldn't be helped, but I was very anxious when Oriza's translation revisions were late getting back to me. After Oriza checked my translation, I would work on improving it more. However, if Oriza's revisions were very different from the original French, I would have to adjust everything to make it fit, and this required time. In order to make things easier for the actors, I wanted to get the script back to them as soon as possible. However, I think Oriza's revisions arrived about one week before the first round of rehearsals. This was just as I expected, though...

—Lastly, as a translator and interpreter, is there anything you think should be improved on for international collaborative projects like this?

Hirano: I don't have this problem with Seinendan, but in these types of projects, sometimes the terms and conditions of payment are vague. Recently, younger organizations and producers are strongly aware of this issue, so the situation has clearly been improving. Also, there's the issue of crediting. Sometimes the interpreter or translator's name isn't on promotional materials, or I'm not introduced as the interpreter during talks. When this happens, things get off to an uncomfortable start and it makes the proceedings a bit awkward going forward.. So, I try to be on the lookout for that issue. Also, I'm often told of a project-related talk event or interview with participants after everything is already finalized—for example, that there will be two participants from France and six from Japan. In that situation, you need to think about how to make it work with a single interpreter. I'd prefer it if people consulted with me before the event was completely finalized. Then I could suggest that we need two interpreters, or if there is only enough budget for one interpreter, I might suggest shortening the event time to make it work. Sharing the topic beforehand makes it possible to suggest alternative plans or workarounds.

—Translators and interpreters are essential to collaborative international projects, and it has been very valuable having been able to talk with you.

Interview 2: Pascal Rambert (Second Interview)

—I observed the rehearsals several times at the Komaba Agora Theater in July and the Ebara Riverside Theatre in August. I know that with this project, you did rehearsals over Zoom. However, the project is so perfect, I don't think someone who didn't know that would believe that the rehearsals were conducted remotely. What did you feel after seeing the completed project?

Rambert: After you write a script, you won't be able to see it in its completed form for six months or a year. That's both a good thing and a bad thing about my job. *KOTATSU*, however, ended up in a state extremely close to how I imagined it.

—When I talked to you in May, you were planning on coming to Tokyo for rehearsals in July. Of course, there were many challenges between then and now. Looking back on the development process, was there any time you thought that it was in danger?

Rambert: I was never nervous or worried. The COVID-19 pandemic has been going on for 19 or 20 months, but during this time period, all of the international projects I have been involved in have been realized. The reason is that they have all had a solid production system. The same goes for this project. Seinendan was also firmly supported by The Japan Foun-

dation. Many people around the world are saying that it is a very difficult time, but I haven't felt that way at all. I feel that if you do what you need to do, then everything will be alright.

—Was this your first time using Zoom so much in rehearsals?

Rambert: Around the time of the first round of rehearsals in July, I was already making preparations for rehearsals for different works over Zoom in Tallinn, Estonia, and Hong Kong. I also do movie work. When I work on movies, I check the actors' movements using a monitor. When I thought about that, I realized that doing rehearsals over Zoom wouldn't be a very big problem. When things are difficult, people tend to exaggerate and complain. However, when there's a problem, I like finding a solution. In one sense, the more problems there are, the happier I am because I can find all kinds of solutions. I have staged performances in 35 countries. When staging productions outside of French-speaking places, I can't really rely on the words. I rely on my ears. So rehearsals over Zoom weren't a problem. However, with this project, everyone was wearing a mask and I couldn't see the actors' faces clearly. That made things a little difficult.

—When I interviewed you in May, you said that to you, friendships are extremely important for developing international collaborations. I feel that *KOTATSU* is truly a product of your friendship with Seinendan and HIRATA Oriza. Hirata was particularly deeply involved in this project as co-director. How did you feel about your collaborative work with him?

Rambert: We are both realists. I have been coming to Japan for 20 years, and have staged around 10 works here. The theme of *KOTATSU* is New Year's in Japan, and in writing the script I learned about Japanese New Year's from a variety of angles. I researched many things when writing it. For example, what does January 1 mean in Japan? What do people eat on that date? What are the customs and conventions? What I really learned, however, is that I can't really explain Japanese New Year's on a detailed level. That's where Oriza came in with this project. Like someone completing a painting, he took what I had written, which was about 95% to 98% there, and added the finishing touches to it. Oriza's additions were like finishing the faces of the people in the painting. This is the first time I have ever experienced a collaboration like this. It would have been impossible with anyone but Oriza. I think the reason is that we work on things with the same love of words and love of language. It was also possible because of the relationship of respect we have for each other.

Interviewing Pascal RAMBERT in the 2nd floor rehearsal studio of the Ebara Riverside Theatre

—There are all kinds of international collaborations. However, I felt that this collaboration between you, Seinendan, and Oriza was almost the ideal international project. International collaborations often form temporary companies of actors for the project. All of the actors appearing in *KOTATSU*, however, belonged to the same company—Seinendan. What was it like working with them?

Rambert: I think one big thing was that they have all worked with each other for many years to develop projects. As an example, let's use the last scene [scene 21]. In this scene, Hiroshi and Kenji talk with each other. When I wrote that scene, I knew that those two actors had already worked together on other projects for many years. Because of this, I decided to write that scene simply as two people talking to each other. Two people just talking to each other is something that is very common in the world. It is very uncomplicated and very human. In addition, Kumi, Yuri, Hiroshi, Megumi, and Issei are actors with whom I've worked on other projects before. That was very important. In France, as well, I work with actors who I have known for 20 or 30 years. I also frequently develop projects together with people who I worked with on a different project 20 years ago in Spain, Italy, China, South America, and the United States. One thing that made me particularly happy this time was that I was able to work again with OGINO Yuri for the first time in a long time. The last time I worked with Yuri was for *The Beginning of Love* in 2007. I was very happy to be able to see how she has grown and matured. Being able to get close to actors like this and go on a journey together is something I like very much. It's also a source of encouragement for me, and getting close to each other makes the time we spend together more productive.

—There is still no end to the COVID-19 pandemic in sight. I imagine that you will continue to work on collaborative international projects like this going forward. However, I think there are some things that can only be done by physically being there for rehearsals. For example, one thing I thought you couldn't do while watching over Zoom is staging the lighting. However, watching the performance, I saw that scene 20 with just Hiroshi and Yuri is a very darkly lit but beautiful scene. I was impressed that you were able to create that kind of lighting and atmosphere remotely. After going through the rehearsal process for *KOTATSU*, what are your thoughts on things you can only do by being physically present at rehearsals?

Rambert: I have been working in theater for 40 years. Both physically and mentally, theater is my life. In my birthplace in the south of France, physical contact is a natural part of relationships. Because of this, I generally start rehearsals each day by hugging the actors. That's who I am, and so until now, my general stance was that rehearsals over Zoom were hell and I was generally against them. Through the development process for *KOTATSU*, however, I was forced to recognize that project development could be conducted over Zoom, and that you could even stage the lighting in the way that you referred to in your question. When I participated in the first round of rehearsals in July over Zoom, the staging had been developed to a certain level, but I didn't think that we would be able to do the lighting. However, I have worked on projects with NISHIMOTO Aya, who was in charge of lighting, over the past 18 years. She knows what I like, to the extent where it's not even necessary for us to talk about what I want. I also trust her completely. This has enabled us to develop projects together. In terms of lighting, *KOTATSU* is a complicated project, and there were many lighting-related things that Nishimoto made possible. When I saw the play in person, I was able to confirm that the lighting was very close to the image I had working over Zoom. I talked about this during rehearsals as well,

but I think that in three to five years, it will be possible to completely develop projects over Zoom. I also think that doing so may become normal. I think it might be good for the environment because there will be no need to take flights. Of course, it will be unfortunate that we will not be able to meet in person, but I think that's the way things will go.

—I think doing the entire process over Zoom with a project like *KOTATSU* would be difficult. However, in the future, if you were asked to do part of the development of an international project over Zoom, what would you think?

Rambert: I think that I would say yes. In fact, I am scheduled to work on two projects in New York soon. The rehearsals for one of those projects will begin in December. However, because the process of things like getting a visa will be complex, I think the first round of rehearsals for that project will be over Zoom. The United States doesn't have a quarantine period like Japan, so I think the second round of rehearsals will be conducted in New York. Talking generally, I think Zoom might also be incorporated into projects in the future because doing rehearsals using Zoom could also lower production costs. Having said that, doing rehearsals over Zoom might not be easy for a young director who doesn't have much experience yet. *KOTATSU* was developed in Japan, a country I know well. Also, thanks to Seinendan, Hirata Oriza, and others, the production system was very good. I think that development of *KOTATSU* went so well because everyone involved did their jobs perfectly. Having said that, I don't accept a job anyway if the production system is less than perfect.

—A moment ago, I said that *KOTATSU* was almost an ideal collaborative project. One reason I can think of is that this project brought a new perspective. This new perspective was made possible because the project was based on friendship between Japan and France—two countries you know well—yet was written with lines that tease both countries a little. In theater, there is a big gap between what the creator is aiming for and actually achieving that aim. *KOTATSU* was able to achieve the aims of its creators, and I thought that was amazing.

Rambert: Looking back on my project career, there are three important regions: the United States, Japan, and Egypt and the rest of the Middle East. When I was at the Théâtre de Gennevilliers, I invited Oriza to work with me many times. Through this, I built a deep relationship with Japan. *KOTATSU* was a project that I really wanted to make. And for I think the first time in my life, I want to make a sequel to it. Right now, I'm imagining a *KOTATSU* trilogy. Using the same set design and working with the same actors, I would like to make the second part in four to five years, and the third part in 10 to 12 years. I am also thinking of making another, different project with Hirata Oriza. We were both born in 1962, and I want to make a project with him in 2052 when we are both 90 years old. We will sit across from each other at a little table. Oriza will speak in Japanese and I will speak in French. Subtitles will appear over the stage. The stage will be empty and will be lit with fluorescent lights like I often use in my works. We will talk about the parts of our lives that intersect, starting from the time we were born. In Japanese and French, we will talk about things like the Théâtre de Gennevilliers, me coming to Japan, and when our oldest sons were born. Things like that. But that's still 20 years in the future.

—If you were 90, wouldn't that be 30 years in the future?

Rambert: Ah, 30 years! You're right. I'm glad it's 30 years. I would definitely like to receive the support of The Japan Foundation again then.

—I would also love to see the *KOTATSU* trilogy.

Rambert: There are several plot points in *KOTATSU* that could be developed for sequels. The stage space itself could be used for a variety of purposes as well. For example, we could add a wake scene to part two by putting a coffin in the middle and having various people bring flowers. I also think we could add a scene to part three that takes place after a wedding—a quiet moment with only close relatives in the room. The stage design for *KOTATSU* was amazing. It was a perfect realization of my idea. It's a space you could do anything in.

—Earlier, you talked about changing each country's image little by little. It seems to me that the set for *KOTATSU* is one example of this. As a Japanese person, the set seemed like a Japanese home to me, yet there were parts that also felt like they wouldn't be in a real Japanese home. Truly a beautiful set.

Rambert: Thank you. When I was writing *KOTATSU*, I had a lot of doubts and I often asked people if this was how things really were in Japan. Having said that, in theater, I don't think that you perfectly recreate everything. I think that creating forms and telling a story by writing and performing a play is work that creates a gap with reality, and this gap is necessary. And as you said, *KOTATSU* sometimes laughs a little at French things and sometimes laughs a little at Japanese things, but these are a reflection of the things I personally have felt over the past 20 years. So in one sense, these parts convey my reality. They reflect things I feel about Japan, and things Japanese people think about France, and interesting things I have heard and seen.

—You said that both you and Hirata are realists. Observing the development of *KOTATSU*, I felt that you are very good at finding solutions to problems under the conditions you have been given. Conversely, I imagine that you felt that you could have made an even better work if conditions had been a little more this or that way from the start. You have worked in 35 countries over 40 years. Compared to other countries, is there anything you think should be changed in the Japanese way of doing things? Do you have any ideas about how to make collaborative works between Japan and France even better?

Rambert: There is nothing more I want from Japan. Working in Japan is very comfortable. I have developed projects with partners from various countries around the world, and they have all done very high-quality work for me. However, in Japan, people create perfection for me. In many different countries, I will tell people, "Oh, I just got an email from Japan today. It's about a project two years from now. They want to know when and how I would like to do rehearsals." Everyone always laughs about that. Conversely, there are countries like China where you don't know what the situation will be one hour from now. The way people in Japan make thorough preparations in advance is a good match for my personality. I work on 10 new projects a year in 8 to 10 different countries. Because of this, advance preparation is necessary to me. I also like that Japanese people do things seriously and realistically. Accordingly, I have no suggestions for Japan. My biggest wish right now is to take *KOTATSU* on tour in and outside Japan. I think it would be a shame if this work wasn't seen in Europe, particularly France, and particularly Paris. I didn't make *KOTATSU*

specifically for people in Paris. However, after watching it, I felt that *KOTATSU* is filled with things that Parisians would love.

—I believe that good international collaborations convey something to people in the audience, who each have their own contexts, and the audience takes in something from them. I felt that the first part of *KOTATSU* trilogy was just this kind of work. I want Japanese audiences to see *KOTATSU* as soon as possible, and I want French audiences to see it as well. I hope that *KOTATSU* is able to go on tour soon.

Rambert: Me too. Thank you for the work you have done. You performed the job of observer with delicacy and care. It made our work easier. I hope that we can meet again in a year or two.

Interview and Text: Yokobori Masahiko
Interpreter: ISHIKAWA Hiromi

Note: The interview with HIRANO Akihito was conducted over Zoom from 6:00 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. on September 18, 2021. The interview with Pascal RAMBERT was conducted in the 2nd floor rehearsal studio of the Ebara Riverside Theatre from 4:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. on September 9, 2021.

1 https://toyooka-theaterfestival.jp/program-event/221/
2 https://toyooka-theaterfestival.jp/important-notice/
3 Originally, the performances were scheduled to be held in front of students from the Professional College of Arts and Tourism. However, shortly before the first performance, cases of COVID-19 occurred on campus. Accordingly, the student viewings were canceled.
4 This report consists of reports three and four. However, as their content is linked, the choice was made to combine them into a single report. The third report consists of the sections “Development, “The Work,” and “Interview 1: HIRANO Akihito.” The fourth report consists of “Looking Back” and “Interview 2: Pascal Rambert.”
5 https://spac.or.jp/au2020-sp2021/yokainokuni_2020

PROJECT

“The Digital Home”

Saitama Arts Theater and Christopher GREEN (U.K.)

This work is an online performance in Japanese and English of *The Home* by British playwright and director Christopher GREEN.
Expanding on the original work, it is a piece of immersive theater where the world of a residential care home is simulated for the audience. Audiences visit a fictional home for the elderly (The Home) created in a virtual space (via websites and apps) and witness the lives of the residents through various content, mainly video images. There is also an online workshop in which the audience experiences “rehearsals for aging” in an interactive live setting with the facility staff and residents, who are played by actors. Facing the realities of modern aging in both Japan and the U.K., how do you want to age and what kind of care do you want?
The director of the OiBokkeShi theater group, which specializes in aging and drama, SUGAWARA Naoki, wrote the Japanese script and directed the Japanese version. The English version and general direction are handled by Christopher Green. Produced in association with Saitama Arts Theater, The Albany (U.K.), Entelechy Arts, and Christopher Green, the Japanese version is performed by Saitama Gold Theater and other actors.

Sugawara Naoki ©Kazuki Kusaka

Christopher Green ©Sorcha Bridge

Outline of Performances

***The Digital Home* Online Facility Tour**
Available: September 26–December 31

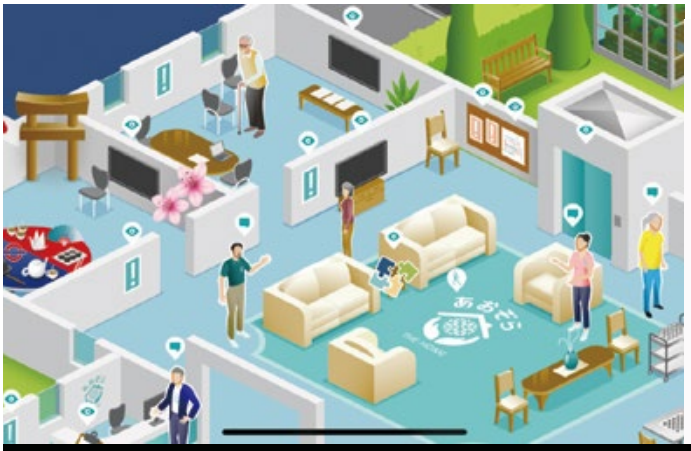
Japanese versions of the online workshop “Aozora Theater”
Dates and times: October 8 (Fri.), 9 (Sat.), 10 (Sun.), 2021 at 11:00, 14:00, and 16:00 on each day (9 times in total)

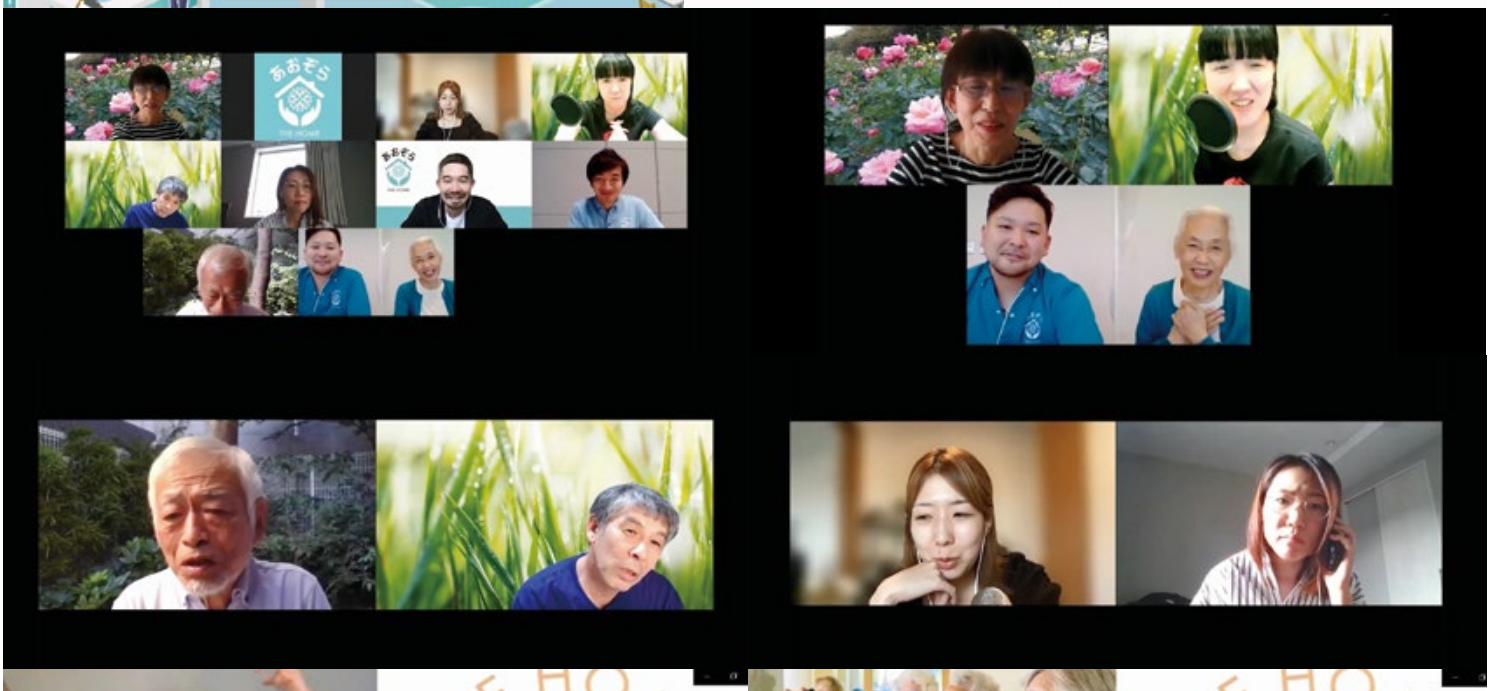
U.K. version of the Zoom session “*The Digital Home Live Experience*”
Performance schedule: November 3 (Wed.) to 7 (Sun.), 10 (Wed.) to 14 (Sun.), 12 performances each day (120 times in total)

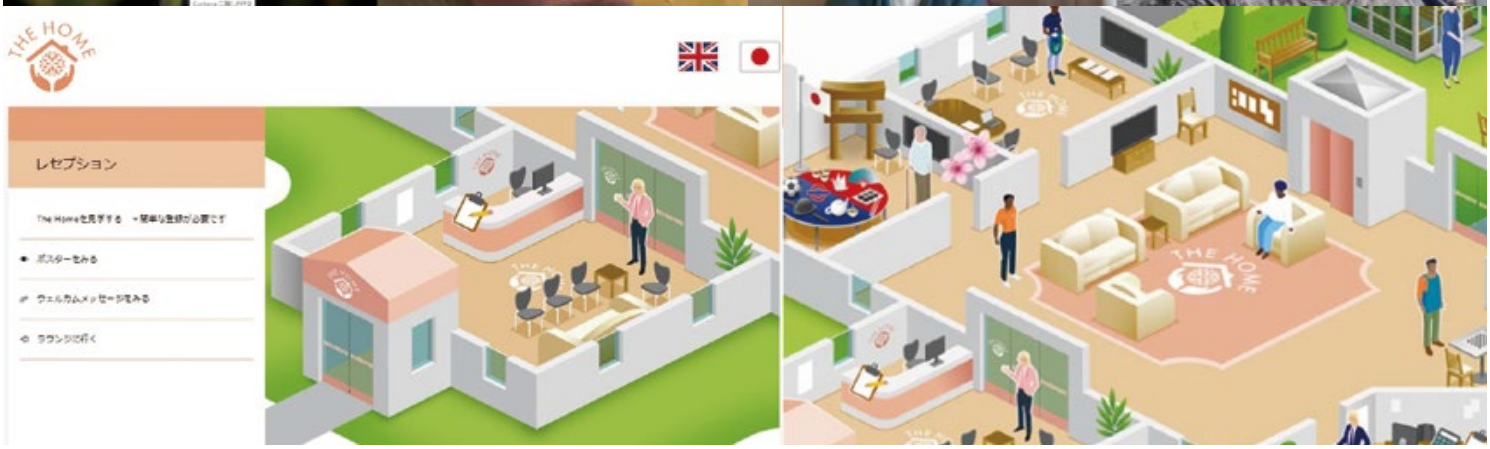
Credits

Original idea and general direction: Christopher Green
[Japanese edition]
Created and directed by: Sugawara Naoki (OiBokkeShi)
Cast: ABE Hikaru, SUZUKI Shinnosuke, SATO Kei, TAKEDA Arifumi
ISHIKAWA Kayo, OGUSHI Miwako, OBUCHI Mitsuyo, TAKIZAWA Tae, TAMURA Ritsuko, HAYASHIDA Keiko, HYAKUMOTO Natsue,
KASSAI Hiromu, KITAZAWA Gasho, TAKAHASHI Kiyoshi, TAKEI Masatake, TOYAMA Yoichi, MORISHITA Ryuichi (Saitama Gold Theater members)
MORISHITA Tamiko (narration), TAKEDA Ikuno
ITO Asa, SON Daisuke
Video Director: TOYAMA Shoji / Filming and editing: KATO Shinsuke
Video production: TAKEDA Tomoya (bench) / Lighting: KAMATA Haruki / Recording: YAMAMOTO Minori / Costume management: YAMAGISHI Yuko
Hair and makeup: MIYAZAKI Tomoko / Video production assistant: SEKI Ayumi / Video production associate: KOMORI Aya (Bench/TASKO)
Digital platform production: Marmelo Digital
Advertising design: hi foo farm / Advertising illustration: ASANO Noi

Planning and production: Saitama Arts Theater
Organized by The Japan Foundation, Saitama Arts Theater
Co-production: The Japan Foundation, The Albany (U.K.), Entelechy Arts, Christopher Green, and Saitama Arts Theater






THE HOME
レセプション

Saitama Arts Theater and Christopher GREEN (U.K.)

"The Digital Home" First Report: Project Launch

Author: OSHITA Yoshiyuki

1. Overview of the Start-up Phase

(1) Overview of the Work

The Home is an immersive theater piece by Christopher GREEN in which 30 audience members spend 48 hours over a weekend in a fictional, but real as a building, home for the elderly. It was performed twice in the U.K. in the fall of 2019. This project aims to produce an online version of *The Home* in Japan and the U.K.

(2) The Main Parties Involved in the Start-up Phase (Titles Omitted)

U.K.
- Original idea and general direction (general director of the work): Christopher GREEN
- Producer: Linda BLOOMFIELD
- Co-production partners
  The Albany Chief Executive and Artistic Director: Gavin BARLOW
  Entelechy Arts Artistic Director: Maddy MILLS

Japan
- Written, directed, and performed (Japanese version) by: SUGAWARA Naoki (OiBokkeShi)
- Producer: UKEGAWA Sachiko (Saitama Arts Theater)
- Production: TANAKA Miki, MAEDA Takako (Saitama Arts Theater)
- IT advisor: HAYASHI Sayaka (Saitama Arts Theater)
- Video production: TAKEDA Tomoya (bench)

(3) Meeting Results (2021)
- March 2: Japan/U.K. Kickoff meeting, confirmation of general plan, etc.
- March 11: Japan side only. Discussion on how to respond to the U.K.'s proposals, etc.
- March 30: Japan/U.K. Discussion of specifications for outsourced web designer, etc.
- May 3: Japan/U.K. Comments on the text prepared by Sugawara, etc.
- May 17: Japan/U.K. Confirmation of future schedule, etc.
- May 31: Japan/U.K. Demonstration of *The Home*, etc.

2. Findings

Given the recent need to prevent the global spread of COVID-19, remote meetings using tools such as Zoom and Webex have rapidly spread throughout the world. This has made it relatively easy to set up multiple meetings with multiple stakeholders across multiple countries and regions, sharing materials, in international co-productions, including this project.

This is one of the few positive social effects brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. On the other hand, because we are able to increase the frequency of communication in this way, the difficulties (i.e., barriers) of international co-productions have become more apparent than before. Below is an overview of four barriers that emerged between translation and creation in the context of the project *The Home*.

The first is the barrier of understanding the existing work. When a work produced overseas is to be reproduced in Japan, or a work produced in Japan is to be reproduced overseas, it is of course essential to have an understanding of the existing work. In the case of a new work being produced in more than one country or region, an understanding of the artist's previous work is also necessary.

In the production of the Japanese version of *The Home*, an understanding of the original performance was essential. However, only the producer of Saitama Arts Theater had actually seen and experienced the original performance. In particular, as the original version of *The Home* was a play characterized by an *immersive* experience in which audience members independently walked around the facility and experienced it for themselves, it was difficult to gain a deeper understanding of the play just with performance footage and materials.

This issue was resolved when Sugawara Naoki, the director of the Japanese version of *The Home*, experienced a remote demonstration on May 31. The demonstration helped Sugawara understand *The Home* much better, and he seemed to finally get it (of course, the same was true for the reviewer, who felt that his uncertainty since the kickoff meeting on March 2 had been cleared).

This is merely hindsight, but if this demonstration had been conducted at the beginning of the meetings, Sugawara Naoki and others involved in Japan would have come to understand *The Home* as a work much more quickly. In the future, the Japan Foundation could be involved in an increasing number of projects to produce Japanese versions of original works, and in those cases, this experience will be very instructive.

The second barrier, which is a present-day theme, is the creation of an online version of the work. The initial assumption, given the recent COVID-19 pandemic, was to create an online version in lieu of an in-person version, but as the discussions between the collaborators in Japan and the U.K. progressed, the work was transformed into one in which the online version is the main focus. As a result, we are now in a situation where it is assumed that the new collaborative work, while in fact using the original version as a starting point, will be a new work, quite different from the original.

As mentioned earlier, the original version was an immersive play, but it is extremely difficult to reproduce this "immersive" feeling remotely. In the original version, the difference between the audience and the actors was, in fact. not clear, which was part of the charm of the piece, but in the online version, it is clear who the actors are. Also, although hopping around in the Web is possible, the scope of the trick is naturally limited. The relationship between the audience and the work is decidedly different between the original version and the online version.

In other words, this project is facing the difficulty of having to make an international co-production in the tricky situation where there is yet isn't an original work. As a reviewer, I think it would be clearer to put aside the original version of *The Home* as an immersive theater production and shift focus to the idea that a completely new online play is going to be created.

The third barrier is the issue of how to express the creativity and originality of the artist, Sugawara, in the Japanese version of a work for which an original version exists. In general, there is a concern that placing too much emphasis on the ideas and taste of the original may limit the artistic ideas and originality of the Japanese version.

In particular, with regard to *The Digital Home* of this project, Christopher Green, the director of the original version, is looking to enhance the reality of the details. Specifically, he has a notion that the creation of a Japanese version of the logo for the fictional senior citizens' home where

The Home is set, as well as the props (employee uniforms, posters, pens, knick-knacks, etc.) with the logo affixed to them, is an extremely high priority. I suppose this to be due to the fact that the worldview of the work is already complete in his mind, so he is more particular about the details.

Green is also unique in that he has a strong and distinctive taste, for example, not to allow the audience to be satisfied within the work itself. There is no right answer to the question of how to deal with such differences in taste among artists and how to harmonize them, so this will likely be an issue for future consideration. Similar issues have surely arisen in other international co-productions.

Finally, the fourth barrier, although it goes without saying, concerns cultural differences between Japan and the U.K. For example, in the process of considering the web design for the online version of *The Home*, there was a discussion about introducing an online game version of the play. While Green and others in the U.K. readily discussed the introduction of a game version, it would be extremely difficult to produce a game of a satisfactory level for viewers in Japan, where game literacy is high.

Also, there seemed to be a difference in awareness between the Japanese and the British teams regarding how to proceed with the project. For example, the British team was the same as the team that had executed the original version of *The Home* and had developed a common understanding of the project structure, including the staff, and took an aggressive and forward-thinking approach, wanting to set a schedule as if it were a job. By contrast, the Japanese team was cautious in its approach to the work, wanting to carefully share an understanding of the fundamentals of the piece.

Furthermore, there were cultural differences in the manner in which professionals work with each other. For example, in creating the videos for the online version, Green only set the artistic goals and left the rest to the filmmakers. He did not even write a script. In Japan, however, it is not possible to produce a video without writing a detailed script before commissioning it. In this way, I felt that there were considerable differences in the way professionals work with each other.

These differences in cultural mannerisms will require both sides to understand the other and respect their respective ways of doing things. Of course, if there are questions about the other side's way of working, it is necessary to clearly communicate the questions (to ask why). At this time, explaining the Japanese side's thinking in a logical manner would help to get the desired answer. In other words, I think that the *ability to ask questions* such that they clarify "which part of your opinion I feel skeptical about" will be tested in the production process.

Saitama Arts Theater and Christopher GREEN (U.K.)

"The Digital Home" Second Report: Production Process

Author: OSHITA Yoshiyuki

1. Overview of the Rehearsal Phase

(1) Overview of the Work

The original version of *The Home* was an immersive theater piece by Christopher GREEN in which 30 audience members spent 48 hours over a weekend in a fictional, but real as a building, home for the elderly. It was performed twice in the U.K. in the fall of 2019. This project aims to produce an online version of *The Home* (video viewing and app experience) in the U.K. and Japan.

(2) The main parties involved are as follows (titles omitted). Since the start-up phase, there are eight new participants, six in the U.K. and two in Japan (TOYAMA and KATO).

U.K.

- Original idea and general direction (general director of the work): Christopher GREEN
- Producer: Caggy KERLOGUE (replacing Linda BLOOMFIELD)
- Assistant producer: Alfie HEFFER
- Digital platform production manager: Luke ALEXANDER (Marmelo Digital)
- Digital production: Abhinav BAJPAI (Marmelo Digital)
- Creative director: Kerry JOYCE (Marmelo Digital)
- Creative technologist: Tatiana DISU (Marmelo Digital)
- Co-production partners
  The Albany Chief Executive and Artistic Director: Gavin BARLOW
  Entelechy Arts Artistic Director: Maddy MILLS

Japan

- Written, directed, and performed (Japanese version) by: SUGAWARA Naoki (OiBokkeShi)
- Producer: UKEGAWA Sachiko (Saitama Arts Theater)
- Production: TANAKA Miki, MAEDA Takako (Saitama Arts Theater)
- IT advisor: HAYASHI Sayaka (Saitama Arts Theater)
- Video director: TOYAMA Shoji
- Filming and editing: KATO Shinsuke
- Video production: TAKEDA Tomoya (bench)

(3) Meeting Results (in which I, Oshita, participated)

- June 18: Japan/U.K. Kickoff meeting with the digital platform production team also attending. Confirmation of two types of work to be done: a website with video viewing capability and a game application. Confirmation and selection of three potential illustrators.
- July 8: Japan/U.K. Caggy Kerlogue replaced Linda as the producer on the U.K. side. Discussion of specifications for commissioning a web designer, etc.
- July 18: Japan team only. Filming of several videos at Saitama Arts Theater and Forest Park.
- July 26: Japan/U.K. Recording of the Friendship Room.
- August 5: Japan/U.K. Confirmation of various rooms in the game app.
- August 13th: Japan/U.K. Exchange of opinions about the game app.
- After that, exchanged emails entirely about translation (English to Japanese, Japanese to English).

2. Findings

Even after moving from the start-up phase (mostly from March to May) to the rehearsal phase, the Japanese production team for *The Home* continued to have worries.

Specifically, the following six points can be mentioned.

First, there is a communication gap due to the time lag between Japan and the U.K. The original production of *The Home* was performed in the U.K., and the online version is being created based on the original version. Therefore, the production of the British version inevitably came first, and it is now being used as a reference for the production of the Japanese version. Against this background, while translating the old version produced in the U.K. and producing the Japanese version, the British version was upgraded and the Japanese side was not informed of this change, resulting in a discrepancy between the Japanese and British versions. Of course, this kind of communication gap can also occur during productions in Japan. However, such discrepancies are more likely to occur in international co-productions.

Second, while the original intention of this project was to bring a production staged in the U.K. to Japan, this was changed to production of online versions in both Japan and the U.K. due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In other words, an entirely new production was to be produced simultaneously in both Japan and the U.K. Naturally, no one, including Green, the writer of the original version, was able to grasp the whole picture of the finished work. The production of the parts proceeded in parallel in Japan and the U.K., referring to the work of the original version. Of course, once a rough whole concept has been determined, parts can be produced. However, whether or not the whole will be optimal when these parts are compiled together is another matter. If time and budget were available, the process would be a back-and-forth one, but in reality, there is no such leeway. In this sense, the entire production proceeded by groping its way forward.

The third point is that the question of whether or not to adjust the taste between the videos produced simultaneously in the U.K. and Japan became a point of contention. The conclusion was that there would be no adjustment of taste between Japan and the U.K. However, even in this case, the issue remained as to what common elements should be used as components to make it the same work, *The Home*. In this regard, Green, the British director, seemed to think that adherence to the basic concept of "not letting the audience become onlookers" and thorough attention to details such as logos and props would ensure a sense of unity and reality in both the Japanese and British productions. We will have to wait until we see and compare the finished works to find out more about this point.

Furthermore, as a fourth point, I can mention the difficulty that this project includes the production of a game app as a major part of it. The other major part, the videos, can be understood as an extension of theater. However, game apps are completely different from theater and video. And while Japanese are familiar with games from childhood, I do not feel that game literacy on the British side is very high. This is a concern. I am looking forward to seeing what kind of game app will be created, and at the same time, I am worried.

As a fifth, albeit minor point, regarding the style chosen by the designer who was eventually selected, no one on the Japanese side seemed to feel that it was good, but it was adopted due to Green's strong insistence that he wanted a "stateless, retro-futuristic" look. Perhaps if the work had

been produced only in Japan, a different direction would have been possible.

Sixth, the final phase of this stage was to put translations on both the Japanese and English content. This did not proceed according to the time schedule. The issue was on the British side. On the other hand, it is often said that the concept of “deadline” is generally different between Japan and other countries. It seems that other countries consider Japanese people to be “punctual.” For example, when one looks at train accidents caused by speeding in an attempt to be on time, or the overcrowded schedules of the Shinkansen bullet trains, one might think that this may indeed be the case. In international co-productions, it may be better to work on the assumption that people overseas have a different sense of time than Japanese people.

In addition, I felt once again that the role of interpreters is extremely important in an international co-production. In this project, the same person handled the interpretation at most of the meetings. This made it possible for the interpreter to provide background information on each person’s comments, which I believe greatly improved communication between the British and Japanese sides.

It should also be noted that at this stage the producer on the British side was replaced. As this change was due to the original producer’s own circumstances, I consider this in itself to have been an unavoidable situation. On the other hand, if the work were being produced only in Japan, this situation would probably not have arisen. To put it bluntly, if I am to say without being afraid of being misunderstood, in general, when working in Japan, one’s family situation does not often take precedence over one’s work. By contrast, it seemed to me that in the U.K., diverse work styles are taken as a given. This social environment makes it relatively easy to replace someone with a new person when the first person’s own circumstances get in the way. On the other hand, the reviewer believes that the producer’s work is a very creative job that requires a high level of professionalism. However, the fact that a job is easily replaceable makes it like a commodity in economics: an economic value or service that can be replaced. I also think the fact that the work is always replaceable by someone else rather takes away some of the dignity and pride that an individual would have in his or her work. Hence, I cannot help but feel

Making of videos (Japanese version)

Making of videos (British version)

uncomfortable in praising “diverse work styles” indiscriminately. Perhaps, if the members around her could have made a commitment in the face of this dramatic replacement, it would have been for all of them to think about how they could work so as to ensure that she could continue to produce. In any case, this situation was one that, through the cultural differences between Japan and the U.K., made me think about the nature of work.

In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, because of it, the piece was created through a series of remote dialogues between Japanese and British artists and producers without ever meeting in person. In this sense, this project can be seen as a work unique to and symbolic of the COVID-19 era.

This sequence of coordination and progress may be likened to “trying to somehow solve simultaneous equations with a large number of variables.” This is probably one of the most difficult projects among the Japan Foundation’s co-production projects this time. Since it is such a difficult project, I am really looking forward to the presentation of the work.

Saitama Arts Theater and Christopher GREEN (U.K.)

"The Digital Home" Third Report: Performance

Author: OSHITA Yoshiyuki

1. Overview of the Results Presentation Phase

(1) Overview of the Work

The original version of *The Home* was an immersive theater piece by Christopher GREEN in which 30 audience members spent 48 hours over a weekend in a fictional, but real as a building, home for the elderly. It was performed twice in the U.K. in the fall of 2019.

This project aims to produce an online version of *The Home* (video viewing and app experience) in the U.K. and Japan. In the Japanese version, audience members will experience a virtual tour of the fictional "Aozora" facility for the elderly. The elderly people in the production are played by skilled actors from Saitama Gold Theatre, giving the audience a glimpse into the real world of aging and caregiving, despite the fact that it is a video production.

The Virtual Facility Tour website was available from September 26 through December 31, 2021. (https://www.thedigitalhome.org/)

(2) Credits are as follows (titles omitted)

- Original idea and general direction: Christopher GREEN
- Japanese version written, directed, and performed by: SUGAWARA Naoki (OiBokkeShi)
- Cast (online version): ABE Hikaru, SUZUKI Shinnosuke, SATO Kei, TAKEDA Arifumi
  ISHIKAWA Kayo, OGUSHI Miwako, OBUCHI Mitsuyo, TAKIZAWA Tae, TAMURA Ritsuko, HAYASHIDA Keiko, HYAKUMOTO Natsue, KASSAI Hiromu, KITAZAWA Gasho, TAKAHASHI Kiyoshi, TAKEI Masatake, TOYAMA Yoichi, MORISHITA Ryuichi
  (The above are Saitama Gold Theater members.)
  MORISHITA Tamiko (narration), TAKEDA Ikuno
  ITO Asa, SON Daisuke
- Video director: TOYAMA Shoji
- Filming and editing: KATO Shinsuke
- Digital platform production: Marmelo Digital
- Planning and production: Saitama Arts Theater
- Organized by: The Japan Foundation, Saitama Arts Theater
- Co-production: The Japan Foundation, The Albany (U.K.), Entelechy Arts, and Christopher Green, Saitama Arts Theater

2. Findings

Japan has become the world's fastest and largest super-aging society. This comes with many issues that cannot be easily resolved. Against this backdrop, it is hoped that through a virtual tour of the fictional "Aozora" facility for the elderly, viewers will be able to grasp an image of their own and their families' lives and caregiving in old age.

Just like a real facility for the elderly, the fictional "Aozora" also has a variety of spaces. Through the experience of visiting each of these spaces (clicking through them like playing a game), audience members can deepen their understanding of the current state and reality of nursing care in Japan.

Incidentally, the website has a rather confusing structure. I presume that the structure was intentionally made difficult to understand in order to reproduce in the virtual world the sensation of visiting and walking through the facility. On the other hand, in contrast to the immersive original work, which required visitors to spend a full 48 hours to experience the real facility, many people may have experienced this work at home or in their spare time while out and about. Considering this, it would have been nice to have a "Quick Guide" or "Recommended Course" menu, for example.

On the other hand, compared to realistic theater productions, it is set up such that the characters often speak directly to the audience. It can be pointed out that this feature allows audience members to immerse themselves in this fictional world as if they were talking to those people.

As stated at the beginning in the "Welcome Message," the assumption within the framework of the long-term care insurance system in Japan is that "plans will be carried out as planned." As a result, many senior care facilities are (excessively) concerned about the health of their residents/users, while their cultural life is not given much attention. However, it would not be sufficient to simply provide a list of things such as meals, bathing, and exercise in a senior citizen facility. By themselves, meals would be little more than nutritional supplementation and bathing reduced to body washing. I believe that it is important for the elderly to feel that their lives are worth living and that they are leading rich and fulfilling lives. Therefore, I believe that cultural experiences and the provision of support options will become increasingly important in the future.

In "Meet our resident Ms. Tamura," resident Tamura says that she moved into this facility because she "didn't want my family to get all messed up." This is a real problem. For example, according to a survey conducted by the website "minnanokaigo" (Care for Everyone), more than 90% (91.5%) of the respondents have experienced family (sibling) problems over caring for a parent.[1] Given this reality, it is expected that more and more people will move into senior care facilities if the financial issues can be resolved.

In "Meet our resident Mr. Kobayashi," a scene is depicted in which the resident, Kobayashi, pees himself. This makes him feel angry with himself, ashamed, and inferior, and he takes it out on his caregivers, finally begging them to "kill me." As depicted, *aging* is a process in which people gradually lose the ability to do things that they used to be able to do normally. The video made me realize that it is necessary to accept such a reality in order to grow old. Conversely, such a video makes us think that our ordinary, everyday lives are very important.

In "Watch a workshop," it was impressive to see the close communication between residents and caregivers. It would be nice if such workshops were conducted in real-life senior citizen facilities, and if the residents' opinions were listened to carefully. The workshop also depicted a scene in which local residents were helping the facility residents in their daily lives. In the real world, there may be barriers such as liability issues, but I felt that the creation of such a connection with the local community is wonderful in itself.

The work also depicted how the lives of the facility's elderly residents have been severely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Because of the pandemic, physical visits with family members are restricted. In "Watch and online visit," a daughter tries to tell the father (a resident) via remote video-phone that her mother (wife for the father) died yesterday, but the father, who is suffering from advanced dementia, is unable to recognize that it is his daughter with whom he is having a conversation. This is a very poignant scene. I assume that these situations occur frequently in real-life elderly care facilities. Dementia may have progressed rapidly in many of the elderly residents who were restricted from seeing their fami-

lies because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Perhaps this reality will become apparent when the pandemic subsides and families are reunited with elderly residents for the first time in a long time.

On the other hand, I also notice that these communication barriers actually occur on a daily basis in communication between healthy people. Specifically, such communication failures may well occur when interacting with others who have different values. Aging may be a process of magnifying these real-life issues. This point is also the theme of a separately recorded lecture on "dialogue" by Dr. TORIYAMA Daijiro. The play included the phrase "what actually happens in the field is mutual learning between teachers and students," and ideally, it would be wonderful if such "mutual learning" could be realized in senior citizen facilities.

The British version, on the other hand, has a very different taste from the Japanese version. The premise of the British version of *The Home* is that a large corporation operates 32 facilities in the U.K., and it deals with problems that arise in nursing care settings in a very corporate-like manner. The British version is also more straightforward in dealing with real-life issues, such as the shortage of nursing care workers and their low remuneration. Through these videos, the work provides an opportunity for the audience to reconsider the relationship between caregiving and capitalism.

In addition, it seems that viewing both the Japanese and British versions made differences in lifestyle practices and attitudes toward aging between Japan and the U.K. apparent. For example, the Japanese version has a generally darker tone in terms of the image of life in old age, while the British version is basically more upbeat. In the U.K., there seems to be an underlying idea of *anti-aging*, or resistance to aging, as symbolized by the active encouragement of exercise in senior citizen facilities. In Japan, on the other hand, the culture seems to be one of acceptance of aging as it is.

Furthermore, the Japanese version had a dedicated (elderly) driver at the senior citizen facility, whereas in the U.K., Uber was used. This foreshadows the future spread of Uber in the real Japanese society as well. Similarly, although this work is fiction, a care robot was introduced in the British version. In general, it seems that in Japan, care provided by humans is regarded as the way it should be, but the introduction of nursing care robots is likely to become a topic of discussion in Japan's elderly care facilities in the future. Or perhaps, as depicted in this work, "one elderly person caring for another," in which healthy elderly people take care of elderly residents, will become more common in senior citizen facilities.

Finally, although the project name "*The Digital Home* Virtual Facility Tour" was indeed listed as "Performance Information" on the website of the Saitama Arts Theatre, at first glance it does not seem clear what it is. I wonder if there were many people who, upon seeing the title, did not think that this was a new type of theatrical work, and simply passed it by.

1 minnanokaigo https://www.minnanokaigo.com/enquete/no6/

From the videos

Saitama Arts Theater and Christopher GREEN (U.K.)

"The Digital Home" Fourth Report: Reflection

Author: OSHITA Yoshiyuki

In this final installment of a total of four reports, I would like to reiterate the purpose of the reports. It is to "share, beyond the framework of the project, the insights and issues that I have come to realize through my participation as an observer, so that they may be used as knowledge for future international co-productions."

Thinking this way, I believe it is appropriate for the final report to be a review of the project as a whole, including a reprint of parts of the past reports, and to summarize "insights and issues related to the project" with regard to points that are not specific to this project but that can be generalized to other projects, rather than the originally designated "responses to the show."

In addition to the "insights and issues related to the project," I believe that it would be beneficial to provide a meta-level summary of "insights and issues related to the process observation itself," as this is an opportunity to do so.

1. Insights and Issues Related to this Project

The following seven points can be identified as insights and issues related to *The Digital Home* Virtual Facility Tour.

(1) COVID-19 Pandemic Turned into a Blessing for Remote Meetings

Given the recent need to prevent the global spread of COVID-19, remote meetings using tools such as Zoom and Webex have rapidly spread throughout the world. This has made it relatively easy to set up multiple meetings with multiple stakeholders across multiple countries and regions, sharing materials, in international co-productions, including this project. This is one of the few positive social effects brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. As such remote meetings will likely become the de facto standard for future international co-productions, it is necessary to consider the nature of international co-productions on this basis.

(2) Absolute Importance of Interpreters

The role of interpreters has always been extremely important in international co-productions, and I felt that their importance has become even more critical with the spread of remote communication. In this project, the same person was in charge of interpretation in most of the meetings. This made it possible for the interpreter to provide background information on each person's comments, which I believe greatly improved communication between the English and Japanese sides. In other words, it would be desirable to establish a system in which a high-level interpreter who is well versed in the art of the field is positioned as a member of the production team and basically participates in all meetings.

(3) Concerns Regarding of the Casualness of Remote Collaboration

The ease with which the frequency of communication can be increased has made international co-productions considerably more casual. Of course, this in itself is a wonderful thing. However, in the past, international co-productions required overseas trips, so a certain amount of careful information gathering and input regarding the culture and artistry of the partner country or region had to be done in advance. By contrast, in the case of remote collaboration, as it is very easy to set up meetings, I am concerned that these preparatory tasks may tend to be neglected. It is necessary to be careful not to become negligent because of the casual nature of remote meetings.

(4) Inherently Different Approaches to *Work*

In international co-productions, one should not assume that "as we're all people, and moreover, the other side are people working in the same field (theater), their way of working should generally be similar to mine." There are cultural differences even in the way professionals in the same field work. In this project, for example, the British director only set the artistic goals for creating the videos for the online version and left the rest to the filmmakers. He did not even write a script. In Japan, however, it is not possible to produce a video without writing a detailed script before commissioning it. In this way, I felt that there were considerable differences in the way professionals work with each other.

(5) Differences in Sense of Time with Respect to Deadlines

The final phase of this project was to add translations to both the Japanese and English content, but this did not proceed according to the time schedule. I surmise that one of the reasons for this was the difference in the concept of "deadlines" between Japan and other countries. In general, it seems that other countries consider Japanese people to be "punctual." For example, when one looks at train accidents caused by speeding in an attempt to be on time, or the overcrowded schedules of the Shinkansen bullet trains, one might think that this may indeed be the case. In international co-productions, it may be better to work on the assumption that people overseas have a different (more relaxed) sense of time than Japanese people.

(6) Need to Cultivate the Ability to Ask Questions

Poet and playwright TERAYAMA Shuji once said, "I want to be a great question." In fact, questions are very important in international co-productions as well. If there are questions about the other side's way of working, it is necessary to clearly communicate the questions (to ask why). At this time, explaining the Japanese side's thinking in a logical manner would help to get the desired answer. In other words, I think that the ability to ask questions such that they clarify "which part of your opinion I feel skeptical about" will be tested in the production process. Unlike when working with other Japanese people in Japan, it is necessary to clarify cultural differences while respecting each other's diversity.

(7) Presenting Cultural Diversity in the Work

Through international co-productions, the artists and staff involved are able to experience the differences in lifestyle and work styles between Japan and their counterparts in other countries and regions. However, it would be a shame to limit this valuable experience to only the small number of people involved. Ideally, the audience should be able to vicariously experience such cultural diversity through the works. I believe that this project revealed the differences between the Japanese and British approaches to aging. It would be wonderful if the audience members themselves come to think about care and control in elder care through such learning.

2. Insights and Issues Related to the Process Observation Itself

In this section, I will provide a meta-level summary of "insights and issues related to the process of observation itself," rather than content

related to individual projects. The reviewer's suggestions are the following two points.

(1) The Number of Reports and the Number of Characters (Words) in the Reports

The core of the request to be a process observer consisted of writing four reports. The timing of these reports was presented in advance as four phases: the process of project launch, rehearsals, presentation of results, and responses to the show. However, when I actually started the work, I felt that these four stages were not well separated and that there were too many.

First of all, regarding the first stage, "process of project launch," a project is actually already launched at the time when the application for a grant is submitted to the Japan Foundation. Therefore, observers can participate only from the stage of concrete meetings.

The next stage is "rehearsals" (in this project, it corresponded to the filming and recording of the videos and the production of the game app), during which various meetings are held regarding the content of the project, and the results are reflected in the actual production (rehearsals).

Moreover, especially since this project is a virtual production, it was not easy to grasp the *responses* in the "responses to the show" stage. That is why this report is written in this manner.

Considering this situation, I believe it would be better to focus on two stages in writing reports: the *process of production* and the *results of the work*.

As for the number of words, it was specified that each report should be "between 4,000 and 6,000 Japanese characters." However, when I sat down at the computer to actually write the reports, I found it quite difficult to write a text of "more than 4,000 characters" because the themes were limited. I think that a sensible number of characters per report would be 2,000 to 3,000.

(2) Viewing of Other Project Works and Exchange of Opinions with Observers

This year there were eight international co-productions followed by observers, including *The Digital Home* Virtual Facility Tour, which I was in charge of. I had already seen *The Cherry Orchard*, a co-production between Shizuoka Performing Arts Center (SPAC) and T2G-Théâtre de Gennevilliers-Centre Dramatique National (France), as I happen to be a member of SPAC's board of trustees. However, I barely even have information about the other six productions.

Under these circumstances, it is unlikely that the symposium (roundtable discussion) in February will deepen the discussion on the insights and challenges of international co-productions beyond the framework of individual works.

It is necessary, I believe, to view not only the work of the international co-production one is in charge of observing, but also other works prior to the symposium. In addition, it is advisable to read the reports of each observer and understand the difficulties and issues behind the production of the works. Without such advance preparation and preliminary study, I am concerned that the symposium will be superficial.

Furthermore, it would have been better if there had been a meeting of the observers at the beginning of this series of projects. Knowing who else had been appointed as observers would have made it easier to understand the backgrounds behind their individual reports when reading them later.

It would also be desirable to hold another (closed-door) informal gathering for discussion with the other observers when the reports from the initial "production process" stage described above have all been submitted. By exchanging views and opinions at this stage, I expect that the observers will be able to approach their own subsequent observations from a more multifaceted perspective.

This process observer system is probably the first attempt of its kind even for the Japan Foundation. I would like to highly commend this itself as an excellent endeavor. I hope that this system will be continued while making further improvements based on the above suggestions.

PROJECT

“Fierce 5”

Setagaya Public Theatre and Raphaëlle BOITEL (France)

Fierce 5 is a Japanese–French collaboration of young circus artists who will be the leaders of the next generation of the contemporary circus world.
Fierce 5 is based on *5es Hurlants* which has been performed around the world and is one of the Company L’Oublié(e)’s most renowned works. In *Fierce 5*, five Japanese circus artists chosen by Director Raphaëlle BOITEL, who also directed *5es Hurlants*, give spirited performances. *Fierce 5*’s main cast members are MINAKAWA Mayumu, HASEGAWA Aimi, SUGIMOTO Shun, MEGURO Yosuke, and YOSHIKAWA Kento.
The theme of *Fierce 5* is the Japanese idiom “*nana korobi ya oki*.” Literally meaning “falling seven times and getting up eight times,” it conveys that life is full of ups and down, and also expresses the idea of never giving up. Combining dance, aerial performance, acrobatics, juggling, and other techniques, *Fierce 5* depicts the world of the circus and the people in it, who constantly face risk to go beyond their limits. *Fierce 5* was first performed at Setagaya Public Theatre in October 2021.

Fierce 5 key visual ©Takehiro Goto

Raphaëlle Boitel ©Louis-Michel Grevent

Outline of Performances

Dates and times: 3:00 p.m. October 9 (Sat.); 3:15 p.m. October 10 (Sun.); 7:00 p.m. October 11 (Mon.), 2021
Duration: 75 min.
Venue: Setagaya Public Theatre

Credits

Composition and Direction: Raphaëlle BOITEL
Lighting and Set Design: Tristan BAUDOIN
Music: Arthur BISON
Assistant and Understudy: YOSHIDA Aki
Assistant: Julieta SALZ
Production Manager: FUKUDA Jumpei
Stage Manager: KIMURA Mitsuharu
Lighting Coordinator: NOGI Fuyuki
Sound Coordinator: ABE Fumihiko
Cast: MINAKAWA Mayumu, HASEGAWA Aimi, SUGIMOTO Shun, MEGURO Yosuke, YOSHIKAWA Kento, YAMAMOTO Hironobu, YASUMOTO Asami

Organized by The Japan Foundation and Setagaya Arts Foundation
Produced by Setagaya Public Theatre
Supported by Setagaya City
Additional support provided by (in Japanese alphabetical order): Toho Holdings Co., Ltd.; Toyota Motor Corporation, and Bloomberg L.P.
Cooperation provided by Tokyu Corporation
With financial support from Ambassade de France au Japon / Institut français du Japon, Institut français

Performance photos ©Yohta Kataoka

Setagaya Public Theatre and Raphaëlle BOITEL (France)

"Fierce 5" First Report: Launch of Project

Author: KUREMIYA Yurika

Fierce 5 is an international collaborative project organized and directed by French contemporary circus prodigy Raphaëlle BOITEL. Based on Boitel's 2015 work *5es Hurlants*, one of her most renowned pieces, *Fierce 5* is a new work that is being developed together with circus artists based in Japan.

SAKAI Atsumi from the Setagaya Arts Foundation gave the following three points as the aims of this project: 1) To expand the breadth of expression for Japanese artists, who tend to focus more on technique; 2) To cultivate theater technicians who have strong technical skills and the ability to think flexibly, and at the same time, to give artists the skills and knowledge needed to be safe and creative; 3) To promote international exchange and the creation of a work that transcends genres through highly imaginative contemporary circus performance. In Japan, it is not so common for technical staff to be involved in the creation process from the early stages, and coordination with technical staff is not sufficient. In Company L'Oublié(e), Raphaëlle Boitel and Technical Director Tristan BAUDOIN cooperate closely. By creating a work with Company L'Oublié(e), *Fierce 5* aims to stimulate collaboration between artists and technicians.

In this report, I will report on the process from the workshop-style auditions held in mid-April to the selection of the cast, as well as the master class held for the cast in late June. The original plan was to do these things with Boitel in Japan. However, due to COVID-19, ultimately they were all conducted online using Zoom to connect the project members in Japan and France.

Auditions (April 16–18)

Fierce 5 depicts the everyday lives of people living in the world of circus performance. Its characters are five circus artists, each with a different specialty. The decision had already been made to cast HASEGAWA Aimi for the role of the aerial hoops artist. Accordingly, auditions were held to select the remaining four cast members. Before the auditions were held, applicants were screened using video submissions. Twelve people passed the video screening. These 12 people participated in workshop-style auditions held in the rehearsal studio of Setagaya Public Theatre (hereinafter referred to simply as "Setagaya").

On the first day, the participants were judged one by one on their tightwire and juggling skills, then, on the second day, on their aerial straps and acrobatic dance abilities. Each of the participants had been sent excerpts from *5es Hurlants*. Based on this, each participant prepared solo performances (for the juggling judging, there was also a duo dance challenge). First, Boitel explained the work's concept and its characters. Next, she asked the participants some simple questions such as what they thought about the video they had been sent, and what their interpretations of the characters were. Boitel also asked the participants why they were interested in this project. Many of the participants gave answers such as they were interested because they had seen *When Angels Fall* and *Drop Shadows* when these were performed in Japan in 2019; because they wanted to take on the challenge of circus performance as performing arts/artistic expression; and because they wanted to collaborate with artists in a genre different from what they were used to.

Next, the participants were asked to give a performance according to set instructions. The participants were instructed to get as close as possible to what they felt when they watched a reference video while adding their own choreography in line with their own body language. The participants were judged in part on how they reacted to these vague instructions. After a participant went through their whole performance, Boitel provided some comments and, if necessary, the participant would re-perform parts as directed by Boitel. The judging time for each participant was 30 minutes. If there was any time remaining after their performance, the participants were also asked to do some improvisational work.

Eight participants passed this round of judging, and on the third day they did group work together.

In all, the remaining participants were given seven tasks. They were informed on these tasks on the morning of the same day. At 1:00 p.m., they began practicing individually in the rehearsal studio. At 4:00 p.m., auditions began. First, Boitel went over additional points she wanted to see with regard to the participants' solo performances. Then the participants began doing group work. There were two types of group work. For one type, predetermined groups of participants had to recreate a sequence from a video. For the other type, all of the participants had to engage in improvisational work together. Lastly, each participant had to give an improvisational performance incorporating everything they had experienced in the audition process.

After the auditions were over, Boitel praised the participants' memorization abilities and how much they had practiced. Setagaya Producer Sakai said that doing the auditions online went smoothly thanks to the participating artists' explosive power and quick response to directions. Sakai said that although there were some difficulties with doing things online, she believed that the Japanese team learning that it was possible to do this much online was one accomplishment of the auditions. Just as Sakai said, the artists participating in this project are all highly experienced. Even before things started, they showed excellent teamwork, and were practicing together in a friendly and unguarded manner. It is also likely the Hasegawa had a positive effect. She knew Boitel and most of the audition participants, and was present each day for the auditions as an assistant.

Cast Selection

It took longer than planned to select the cast. The production staff were unable to finish selecting the cast after an online meeting, and Raphaëlle Boitel and the Setagaya team discussed the matter repeatedly via email over several days.

Based on the comments Boitel wrote about each participant, it seems she had difficulty perceiving things online such as the atmosphere in the rehearsal studio, the participants' understanding of and passion for the work, and the relationships between the participants during group work. The Setagaya team proactively provided supplemental explanations and suggestions in these areas. The Setagaya team knew a lot about the participants' activities outside of the auditions and had also worked with some of them before. The views of such local staff, based on long-term experience, were likely particularly important in this project's situation where the director was participating remotely.

Ultimately, the following artists were chosen as the project's cast:

Tightwire: YOSHIKAWA Kento / Juggling: MEGURO Yosuke
Aerial Hoops: HASEGAWA Aimi* / Aerial Straps: SUGIMOTO Shun
Acrobatic Dance: MINAKAWA Mayumu

Secondaries: YASUMOTO Asami*, YAMAMOTO Hironobu*
Assistant and Understudy: YOSHIDA Aki
*These members were cast before auditions.

Originally, there was no plan to have an assistant and understudy role. It was an idea proposed by the Setagaya team.

The cast composition was well balanced. It was conveyed beforehand that the cast members would be chosen taking into consideration the characters they would play, and my impression was that the focus was on the artists' adaptability and how well they matched the piece's roles. As a result, the artists chosen were the same genders as those who had appeared in *5es Hurlants*. It also seems that the equipment used will also be close to that of the original piece. For example, Yoshikawa Kento used the slack wire in the auditions. However, he is being required to learn the tightwire, which enables more dynamic movement, for the piece.

Master Class (June 23–24)

Raphaëlle Boitel and Technical Director Tristan Baudoin were scheduled to come to Japan for the master class for the chosen cast members. However, travel restrictions remained strict, and it was difficult to obtain permission to enter Japan. Boitel and Baudoin were also unable to schedule enough time for the 14-day quarantine periods before and after. Because of this, the master class was also conducted using Zoom to connect France and the Setagaya rehearsal studio. Accordingly, the master class was shortened to two days from the originally planned three. The content was also significantly revised. The aerial performance part was canceled because it involved learning how to set up and use equipment brought from France. In addition, because the class would be conducted remotely, this would make it difficult for all of the cast members to acquire common physicality through joint exercises. Accordingly, the choice was made to make group work the focus of the class, which would give the participants more autonomy.

There is a seven-hour time difference between Japan and France. This limited the hours during which Boitel could participate. Accordingly, for both days of the class, practice started in the afternoon led by Japanese team Assistant YOSHIDA Aki and with only the cast members. Then, from 4:00 p.m., Boitel would join in on the training. Secondaries (performers providing technical support on-stage as part of the stage management section, such as setting up devices and equipment) YASUMOTO Asami and YAMAMOTO Hironobu joined in on the second day. In addition, acrobatic dancer MINAKAWA Mayumu injured her back. After discussion with the Setagaya team, it was decided she would not attend the first day of class. On the second day, she participated by switching in and out with Yoshida, who was also the understudy, as appropriate.

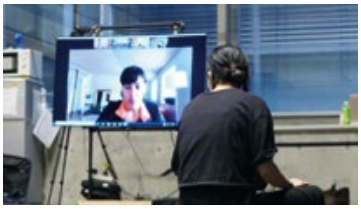
Beforehand, the artists were given a complete recording of a performance of *5es Hurlants*, a run sheet of the course of the show including a program and scene nicknames, and notes Boitel had written for each performer. The cast was given the challenge of working out the choreography composition, including the movements, lines of flow, and cues, using the video and practicing until they were able to do a rough run-through for scenes one through 14 (of the total 16 scenes). These scenes contained many sequences the cast had already tried out during the auditions. Even so, there was a lot of work, and the master class moved forward at a high pace according to a timetable divided into 30- to 60-minute segments.

Boitel stated that the purpose of the master class was to "embed a rough memory" of the entire piece into the minds of the cast. Boitel's aim was to create an opportunity for the entire cast to get together and rehearse and thus get an overall image of the piece, together, and embed this in their memories. Doing this would make it possible to focus on details of the performance and movements details during the development process in September. It would also make it possible to spend more time on adding staging matched to each individual cast member, and on practicing with the devices and equipment that will be used during performances. For these reasons, more time was spent checking group scenes with complex compositions over solo parts in which individual cast members get to show off their specialty skills. When Boitel provided direction, she focused on detailed explanations of her aims, such as the scene's situation, the purpose of the movements, the image she had when writing the scene, and character background. It was a difficult program. However, doing a rough run-through at the end connecting all the scenes made things such as story developments and character relationships much clearer than if the cast members had only rehearsed individual scenes one by one.

Yoshida, a highly experienced artist who possesses numerous skills and is also highly adaptable and quick to understand, was also the perfect rehearsal facilitator. Sakai also praised Yoshida's work in this area. Interacting remotely via interpreter can easily result in directions and communication becoming one-sided. However, Yoshida was effective at facilitating communication with the director, summarizing everyone's opinions and questions. In addition, the fact that the artists had strong relationships of trust not only with each other but also with Producer Sakai helped things to go smoothly. This was concisely expressed by Boitel's remark that they had a "good team."

Conversely, there were issues with numerous requests that the cast members be able to do the same things as the original cast members in *5es Hurlants*. The project's current direction requires not only that the

Taken during the master class (photo credit: Setagaya Public Theatre)


Boitel and Yoshida in conversation


Solo number rehearsal


Choreographing a group scene based on a video


Rehearsal during the second day with all cast members, including the secondaries


Promotional photos taken on the second day of the master class (photo credit: Takehiro Goto)
Right photo: From left to right, Yoshikawa Kento, Meguro Yosuke, Minakawa Mayumu, Hasegawa Aimi, and Sugimoto Shun

choreography composition but also the equipment used and even the techniques in each cast members' solo performances follow the original piece. This makes it hard to see the significance of developing this new piece in Japan. That being said, at the end of the master class, Boitel stated that he felt they would be able to add new, individual tweaks different from *5es Hurlants*, so the piece may undergo detailed changes in accordance with each individual cast member after Boitel comes to Japan. As *Fierce 5* is being developed as a new piece in collaboration with Japanese artists, I hope to see new staging and direction unique to this production.

The Possibilities and Limits of the Internet

In order to conduct the auditions and master class remotely, the Setagaya team set up two large monitors and video cameras at different angles. These were connected to Zoom and could be switched between as necessary. (For the first two days of auditions, only one of each was used.) The video feed was high resolution and there were no connection difficulties. Spikes were added with tape beforehand to show camera angle limits. However, the master class rehearsal studio was small and the cameras could not be placed very far away. This made the acting area very small.

The most difficult part was adjusting the sound. There were various volume problems. During the auditions in April, the music being played over the PA was hard for the French team to hear. Conversely, the sound of rustling clothing was over-amplified. During the master class in June, audio feedback occurred frequently because so many devices were set up so close to each other. It was also difficult to prevent unwanted noise while also delivering both the voice of the interpreter and sounds onstage at appropriate volumes.

Other problems pointed out by Producer Sakai included the amount of time required to communicate and the limited ability of the director to provide demonstrations. Sharing the physicality upon which the work was based and conveying detailed nuance online were especially difficult because the group was developing a project together for the first time.

On the other hand, one merit was increased freedom in terms of spaces. During auditions, some participants did part of their performances remotely from distant rehearsal studios. Being online made it possible to choose a better environment when working with equipment that could not easily be moved or would require a lot of time to set up.

Future Development

Going forward, the cast members have been instructed to repeatedly practice their solo numbers and improve their technical abilities while at the same time also using videos to deepen their understanding of their characters. Detailed notes and questions will be conveyed through Yoshida.

With regard to project development in September, there are two main issues. The first is getting permission to enter Japan. Raphaëlle Boitel, Tristan Baudoin, and Assistant Julieta SALZ are scheduled to come to Japan. As of June, the application process has already been started. However, it is not clear whether they will all be given permission. The application process has not been made public, and the burden on the sponsoring organization is large.

Secondly, the company's schedule has to be secured. At the present time, it is not certain whether they will be able to secure the two-week quarantine period prior to the development process, which is scheduled to start on September 13. In addition to the company being very busy, in France, entry restrictions have already been greatly relaxed. Because of this, it is difficult to get people to understand Japan's quarantine measures and secure enough time for the trip to Japan. Depending on the situation, it is possible that for the first week of the development process, Boitel and her team will participate online from their hotel. For the master class in June, the schedule was only decided less than two weeks before it was scheduled to start. In addition, the start date was set several days earlier than originally planned. From the perspective of the artists' conditioning, however, changing the schedule on very short notice is not good. In addition, the more that work is done online, the more work that cannot be done online has to be left for later. This results in the timetable just before actual performances becoming increasingly busy, which can pose a direct danger in a performance where there is a high burden on cast members and staff, as in this work. Although there are many uncertainties under the circumstances, a schedule with sufficient leeway should be created.

Setagaya Public Theatre and Raphaëlle BOITEL (France)

"Fierce 5" Second Report: Rehearsals

Author: KUREMIYA Yurika

In this report, I will report on the concentrated production development process that took place over about one month. Because entry restrictions remained strict and the French team was unable to secure sufficient time for the quarantine period before the scheduled start, they participated in part of the rehearsals remotely.

Rehearsal Schedule

A period of time was set aside to set up the rehearsal studio and for independent rehearsals. After this, general rehearsals were officially resumed on September 13. Director Raphaëlle BOITEL and Assistant Julieta SALZ arrived in Japan on September 13, while Technical Director Tristan BAUDOIN arrived in Japan on September 19. After their individual two-week quarantine periods, they met up with the rest of the group to participate in rehearsals in person.

Week 1: Resumption of general rehearsals: MINAKAWA, HASEGAWA, SUGIMOTO, MEGURO, YOSHIKAWA, and YOSHIDA joined in.
Week 2: French team participated remotely, YASUMOTO joined in.
Week 3: Boitel, Salz, and YAMAMOTO joined in; stage began being used.
Week 4: Baudoin joined in; sound and lights added.

Week 1 (September 13–17)

In week one, Stage Manager KIMURA Mitsuharu explained the rehearsal studio. After that, the five main cast members and Assistant Yoshida Aki reviewed the work they had done so far.

The rehearsal studio had been reserved for the group's exclusive use for the entire period. The rehearsal studio had ceilings high enough to hang equipment as high as it would be during actual performances. This enabled the group to practice using the equipment and doing aerial performances. In June, tightwire work was only simulated without equipment. This time, however, they were able to train using a tightwire that was as high and as long as it would be during actual performances.

Week 2 (September 20–24)

In week two, similar to the master class in June, each day from around noon, the Japanese team began rehearsing on their own. Then, from 3:00 p.m., Raphaëlle Boitel and the rest of the French team participated over Zoom. Each day, the group engaged in detailed rehearsals of three to four scenes, in chronological order and focusing on group scenes, with the aim of doing a full run-through at the end of the week. Separate, individual rehearsal times were created for each cast member to practice their solos.

Based on the experience from the previous week, this week KURASAWA Eiji, in charge of video shooting, attended rehearsals for multiple days in a row. In addition to shooting video for publicity (released on September 30), he also provided support for Zoom communications. Additionally, Stage Manager Kimura was there each day, and people in charge of lighting and sound were also frequently present, providing technical support as needed. Because of this, things proceeded smoothly, despite the need for the French team to participate remotely.

After the master class in June and the independent rehearsal period, the overall composition of the piece was largely established. Because of this, during this week, much time was spent on stopping for each scene to confirm points that were not clear and to carefully add details of the performance and movements. Boitel talked about her own role, saying, "The artists learn from the image provided by the video. Because of this, if they are wondering why they are doing something in the piece, it means they don't fully understand what's going on. I'm here to convey that information to them." Boitel made efforts to, talk extensively and provide demonstrations over Zoom in order to convey the intentions behind the end result shown in the video.

Meanwhile, Technical Director and performer Tristan Baudoin and Julieta Salz, who had appeared in *5es Hurlants* for six years, provided practical advice, such as equipment operation procedures and lines of flow. *Fierce 5* has many individual performances and also requires flexible responses to unpredictable situations. Because of this, there are many things only those who work on stage can understand. Accordingly, sometimes other cast members from *5es Hurlants* who hadn't come to Japan also participated and helped confirm things. Through this process, the precision of each scene was gradually increased. The concrete advice of Salz and Baudoin, and the words of Director Boitel conveying the piece's image, seemed to have a complimentary effect.

One thing that became a problem as the project moved forward was creating break times. Unlike being there in person, it was difficult to see how tired the cast members were when watching over Zoom. It also made it difficult for everyone to synchronize, and sometimes when things heated up, it was difficult for others to make their voices heard. Because a lack of attention could directly result in a dangerous situation, measures were taken such as taking breaks every 90 minutes, and taking care to ensure that rehearsals didn't last too long.

The Stage Manager explaining the stage layout (photo by the author)

Rehearsals over Zoom (photo by the author)

Week 3: September 27–October 1

In week three, all cast members participated, including the secondaries. All of the equipment, props, and costumes that would be used in performances were also ready. Further, on September 28, after around five months of remote communications, Boitel and the Japanese artists were finally able to meet in person. That same day, work also began on setting up the stage, and preparations for actual performances were fully underway.

This week, there were three main challenges. These were: 1) developing a common physicality among all the cast members through exercises; 2) completing setup in preparation for stage rehearsals starting on September 30; and 3) focusing on the development of the last two scenes, on which work had not yet started—especially the large-scale aerial performance scene called the "spider." At the same time, importance was also placed on repeated run-throughs in order to adjust the overall flow.

Because work would be conducted at the same time in two different locations, it was divided so that Boitel traveled between the rehearsal studio and performance stage, while Assistant Julieta Salz and Interpreter KATO Ritsuko worked on the stage preparation. Because Technical Direc-

tor Baudoin was still in quarantine and participating remotely, each time there was a break in the work, Salz called him to convey questions from the theater's technical team. Salz knows a lot about the piece as well as the stage situation. She served as Baudoin's eyes, and this seemed to make the remote collaboration process go a little smoother.

I will briefly describe the exercises the cast members did. These exercises were the same as Company L'Oublié(e) always does each day before moving on to the project development process. The exercises consisted of two stages. The first stage was solo work, which also served as a warm-up. The cast members did basic exercises such as "become part of the floor," "spiral," and "slide," and had to improvise variations on these based on directions such as "faster," "add pauses," "asymmetrically," and "acrobatically." The aim was for all the cast members to share the same basic physicality. Boitel's ability to move nimbly and precisely is supported by strong inner muscles and was greatly influenced by martial artist HINO Akira. Her explanations also frequently included the phrase "like martial arts."

Next, the cast members did group work to connect with other people—in other words, to build relationships between the cast members. They started with the same simple work they had done during the auditions in April. Then they gradually built on this to ultimately create an experimental scene. According to Boitel, Company L'Oublié(e)'s development process is to research what resources each artist possesses through this work and then incorporate these resources in order to develop the piece.

All of the work was similar to that often done in dance workshops. Not all circus artists, however, are familiar with this kind of work, and it took a lot of time for the cast members to get used to them.

Setting up the stage (photo by the author)

Raphaëlle Boitel directing a group scene (photo by the author)

Week 4 (October 4 –8)

In week four, Tristan Baudoin began participating in person, and the pace of final technical adjustments increased. On October 4, lights and sound were added for the first time. On October 5, the team did its first run-through on stage. On October 8, the team did a dress rehearsal. Each day, technical matters were adjusted in the morning and the cast members rehearsed in the afternoon.

One of the unique characteristics of this piece is the extremely large number of things that must be checked on stage. The piece has the cast members themselves using equipment, ropes, and lighting equipment, and the audience can see them doing these things. Because of this, it is necessary for the cast members to repeatedly practice in a real environment and to become able to use the equipment properly, with precision, and as appropriate to the situation, even with many unexpected things happening around them.

The "spider" scene, the climax of the piece, can only be rehearsed on an actual stage. In the scene, five of the cast members (Hasegawa Aimi, Sugimoto Shun, Meguro Yosuke, Yoshikawa Kento, and Yasumoto Asami) must pull on ropes in synchronization to raise Minakawa Mayumu, wearing a harness, into the air. It is the piece's most difficult and most dangerous scene. Time was taken to practice this scene every day. The scene was finally perfected on the morning of the dress rehearsal.

With opening day almost here, there were four things Boitel emphasized in this week's rehearsals: increasing the precision of sound and light staging, increasing the group's energy, adding emotion to the cast's performances, and getting used to dealing with problems. After each full rehearsal, Boitel gave detailed comments and, while proactively incorporating the cast members' opinions and ideas, made adjustments to the overall piece.

Rehearsing the "spider" scene (photo by the author)

Discussing after going over comments for the entire piece (photo by the author)

Finally, on the morning of the 9th, opening day, Boitel concluded her final comments as follows:

> Some audience members may have avoided going to the theater due to COVID-19.
> I do this job because I want to give people hope that even though there are many difficulties in life, there are also amazing things.
> When you perform, I want you to keep in mind and convey to the audience this message: "Together, we can carry on."

Rehearsal Content

The amount of time available to do in-person rehearsals was a little under two weeks, half that originally planned. This made the overall schedule extremely tight. In addition, the piece makes use of many pieces of equipment and tools that could not be acquired in Japan and had to be brought from France. These tools and equipment only arrived shortly before opening day.

The amount of time to adjust the technical aspects was particularly limited. Technical Director Tristan Baudoin's quarantine period ended on October 4, and he was scheduled to return to France on October 10, the day after opening day. Accordingly, he only really had six days during which he was able to work on-site. It was expected that there would be a shortage of time, but thanks in part to the fact that the same staff members were working in each section as the last time Company L'Oublié(e) staged a piece in Japan, coordination was smooth. Further, all of the artists were highly skilled, and the result was that they were able to pull off all the performances they had planned.

Particular effort was put into the following areas:

Real Emotion

Raphaëlle Boitel highly praised the artists' high professionalism, devotion, and uncommon abilities to concentrate and learn. Their work was extremely meticulous, and Boitel was unable to hide her surprise at their ability to immediately reflect her directions in their performances.

Conversely, the artists' emphasis on performing correctly often made it difficult for their acting to feel natural. As Boitel said, their "technical aims win out over emotion." The artists' performances were also too close to those of the original cast of *5es Hurlants*, which hid their own individuality, and they were frequently caught up in comments from the Company L'Oublié(e) side. I believe that two partial causes of these were that the artists had, for the past five months, constantly rehearsed while referencing videos of *5es Hurlants*; and that during the remote rehearsals, communication was entirely language-focused. Because of these factors, going beyond faithful recreation to achieve realistic acting and adding real emotions on top of skill and accuracy became huge challenges. As the team repeatedly engaged in dialogue and both parties engaged in trial and error with regard to the give and take of communication, these points noticeably improved.

Establishing a Group Consciousness

I frequently heard the phrase "everyone together" during rehearsals. Boitel emphasized that a group's energy can add something extra to the quality of a piece.

It's true that during the early stages, especially during the solo scenes requiring especially high concentration, the relationships between the artists and everyone else tended to become weaker. In group scenes, at first the artists were reserved, taking care not to get in each other's way while learning about how their fellow performers behaved. This made it hard to maintain a rhythm and often caused the group's energy to fall. However, once a real group consciousness began to form, the scenes gained greater depth and the drive of the work overall increased.

Clarifying Aims

Although the team had a limited amount of time, one thing Boitel did not compromise on was how to show the aims of each scene. Boitel made detailed adjustments so that the audience would not have any unintentional misunderstandings. These adjustments included not just the relationships between the piece's characters but also the lighting positioning and even the sounds of breathing and equipment.

Emphasis on Safety

The thing that was given more importance than anything else was safety. The cast members were directed not to take any risks and to personally stop a technique or rehearsals anytime they sensed danger. They were also given advice on how to incorporate a problem into their performance if one did occur.

Another thing that was impressive to me was that Boitel watched and learned about each artist's personality and, when giving them comments, she would adjust her wording and the timing of her comments to match their personalities. Setagaya Producer SAKAI Atsumi says that when they were doing remote rehearsals, she frequently received questions from Boitel about the artists' personalities. Accordingly, the production team provided Boitel with additional information that was difficult for her to understand just by watching the rehearsals via a screen.

From the time that in-person rehearsals began, Boitel was always paying attention to the entire situation, and she spoke to every member of the team, from artists to staff. This can also be seen in the fact that all of the artists praised Boitel, describing her friendly and passionate character by saying that she was "enthusiastic," "filled with love," "energetic," and that "her vision is clear and never wavers."

There is a difference in the amount of information that is conveyed when you are working with someone face to face versus when you are not there in person. In a short yet very dense amount of time, the team rapidly built strong relationships of trust, and as these relationships of trust deepened, the piece's performance also improved strikingly.

Everyone checking the composition while looking at a run sheet (photo by the author)

Setagaya Public Theatre and Raphaëlle BOITEL (France)

"Fierce 5" Third Report: Performance

Author: KUREMIYA Yurika

Director Raphaëlle BOITEL happened to find a Japanese idiom in a book—"*nana korobi ya oki*" ("falling seven times and getting up eight times"). This became the starting inspiration for *Fierce 5*. Day after day, circus artists train, and no matter how many times they slip and fall, they always get up to try again. For them, tools such as the tightwire, hoops, straps, and balls are both objects to pour their passion into and, at the same time, sources of suffering. Therein lies an ultimate love–hate relationship. As they support the other artists who they perform with, they face their own tools, overcome difficulties, and at last achieve success together.

Fierce 5 is an homage to this world of the circus and, at the same time, is a metaphor for life. In the circus, the impossible is made possible with perseverance, courage, and cooperation. The values the circus personifies are a universal message of hope for those who watch its performances.

In this report, I will report on *Fierce 5*'s performance, which was conducted from October 9 through October 11. In total, three performances were held. I attended the first day's performance (held at 3:00 p.m. on October 9) and the third day's performance (held on October 11 at 7:00 p.m.).

The Performance

On each morning of the performances, the team started by reviewing the previous day. Everyone, including staff members, gathered on stage. Director Raphaëlle Boitel gave comments to everyone and went over everything that needed to be checked. They then went over several scenes while performing the actual movements on stage. They went over the "spider" scene, which required all of the cast members to work very closely together, all the way through. Then, having checked everyone's condition, they moved on to individual work.

45 minutes before the performance, the artists and staff checked the preset. 15 minutes before the performance, everyone gathered backstage and formed a circle to affirm their solidarity. Finally, the curtain rose.

The first's day's performance was held on a Saturday afternoon, and because of this, many of the audience members brought their children with them. Accordingly, every action and move on stage had a direct response in the audience. The orderly prologue followed by a silent scene with comical interactions immediately resulted in laughs. The middle group scenes, which focus more on acting, became a little scattered. Toward the end, however, the performance improved again, and at the climax of the piece, the cast's high concentration and teamwork drew the audience in.

Overall, the scenes moved forward precisely and rhythmically, and this highlighted the artists' individual performances. However, some stiffness in their acting remained. In the solo scenes, in particular, the tempo was too fast, leaving little room for emotion to be added to the artists' movements.

On the third and final performance day, right from the start, the audience seats and stage were filled with emotion. The movements, music, and lighting all combined perfectly, making the aims of the performance clear and increasing the dramatic effect. Moreover, each artist shined, and the radiant, realistic depiction of the piece's world was entrancing. Technically, there were some small mistakes, but the performance created a world that was so solid that these issues were of no concern.

In general, the piece has no lines. Regardless, the "conversations" that it feels like one is hearing when watching it are what makes it interesting. Further, the occasional words, grunts, and cries the performers let out go beyond meaning to grip the audience and bring the stage and theater seats closer together. In the climax of the play, MINAKAWA Mayumu, who is struggling while suspended in midair, is finally able to break free from the chaos and, using a rope held out by her fellow artists, climbs upward. During this scene, there were not a few audience members who shed tears.

On both days that I attended, the performances ended not just with applause but, especially on the third day, a standing ovation. After the third curtain call on the final performance day, Boitel spoke to the audience about her thoughts on the project. Without a microphone or script, Boitel spoke sincerely while also mixing in Japanese, and was rewarded with even greater applause from the audience.

The "spider" scene, the climax of *Fierce 5* (photo by Yohta Kataoka)

Evaluation of Piece Selection

The idea for creating a Japanese version of *5es Hurlants* (which premiered in 2015) came from Raphaëlle Boitel herself. For Company L'Oublié(e), it was their third project since their establishment and only the second large-scale project. Setagaya Producer SAKAI Atsumi commented, "It was the piece that brought her worldwide attention and is something she is very proud of." It is truly a condensation of the things that characterize Company L'Oublié(e): A rich language of choreography intermixing the vocabularies of dance, drama, film, and circus; unique production that organically and beautifully displays stage machinery and equipment; and a touch that expresses relationships between people emotionally. Compared to *When Angles Fall*, which Company L'Oublié(e) staged in Japan in 2019, *5es Hurlants*' production composition is simple. This makes it a perfect base for recreation with the aim of cultivating young artists.

Conversely, *5es Hurlants* is strongly colored by the original cast both in technical terms and in terms of characters. Because there was very little time to recreate the piece to match the Japanese cast, it is undeniable that there were some areas where *Fierce 5*'s direction was unnatural and forced. Particularly regarding the technical side, of the five main cast members, two had to use equipment they had very little experience with, something that is quite risky. With regard to the character aspect, all of

the cast members had fun working with their characters, and on the final performance day, their individual uniqueness styles emerged, enabling realistic expression to be achieved. Perhaps because the piece depicts the "backstage," it was easier for the cast members to feel comfortable and familiar.

Contemporary circus incorporates dance, theater, and a variety of other elements and is developing in diverse ways. From the perspective of the possibilities that contemporary circus can show us, *Fierce 5*'s direct story about the growth of young circus artists also seemed to work effectively.

In the epilogue of *Fierce 5*, the cast members put on old-fashioned circus costumes and form a circle, then sit on chairs arranged in a circle on stage. All five of the antique costumes the performers wear were borrowed for the piece from Annie FRATELLINI. Fratellini was the first female clown of a historic circus family. She established France's first national circus school. She also discovered a young Boitel and encouraged her to follow the path of the circus. This scene shows the connections to traditional circuses. Placing it at the end of *Fierce 5* shows great respect for history and also successfully highlights the characteristics of contemporary circus, which has become a creative performing art.

Looking back, Boitel stated that the COVID-19 pandemic might have influenced her choice of this piece. She said that she felt that perhaps its message was especially important now when people were experiencing great stress, and pessimism and division were spreading.

This is truly symbolized in the "spider" scene, which is achieved by all of the artists working together and rising above the differences in their specialties. It is a scene that elicits strong emotions from the audience. Pushed to their very limits physically and psychologically, the artists summon all of their strength, work together and, in the end, overcome a dangerous situation.

> The message we are sharing here might be a small one. We might be small, and this piece might be small, but I believe this message is necessary in order to live in this world.
> —From a post-show discussion (October 10, 2021)

It overlaps with the current state of the world as well as the history of this project, in which the cast and crew arrived at its performance amid a variety of restrictions after "*nana korobi ya oki*" ("falling seven times and getting up eight times"). Because of this, the piece's message hit audiences even harder. With regard to this point, as well, the choice of the piece can be praised for being very timely.

The epilogue, in which the artists form a circle while wearing traditional circus costumes (photo by Yohta Kataoka)

Evaluation of Degree of Achievement

This piece was filled with elements that Japanese pieces frequently tend to lack. These include production created via close collaboration with technical staff, a composition including more group work than solo work for displaying individual specialty skills, and choreography emphasizing a shared baseline of physicality. Achieving these was not easy when both the environment for cultivating artists and the production methods differed completely from those of France. In the end, there were also some elements that had to be eliminated.

A Shared Body Language

In this piece, not only were the artists required to have high technical abilities, but there were also many scenes that tested their form on stage in terms of walking and standing, as well as their ability to handle group work incorporating dance elements. This seems to be a reflection of the French academic training system. In fact, the main cast of *5es Hurlan*ts are all graduates of the Académie Fratellini (France's first national circus school), and they all accordingly possessed a certain level of shared experience. Conversely, in Japan, there is no specific training system, and each artist has trained in a different way and in different amounts. To develop a piece like this in Japan required that the cast members first build a shared physical foundation.

It is regrettable that almost no time could be taken for exercises to cultivate basic physical ability during the remote rehearsals required because of COVID-19. This time, it was necessary to rely on the skills the individual artists had already cultivated. In the future, however, building a shared body language between the cast members would likely improve the quality of the piece even further.

Customizing the Production and Choreography According to the Individual Artists

The project team had their hands full just finishing all of the arrangements and completing development of the piece. They were unable to adjust the production and choreography according to the individual artists. In light of this, it may have been the realistic decision to use all the same circus equipment as in *5es Hurlants*. Forcing the cast members to use equipment they were not familiar with was a heavy burden, but it also had the merit of enabling them to practice based on videos of *5es Hurlants*.

Rehearsal Time for Solo Numbers

As much of the rehearsal time was used for group work, there was less time to rehearse solo numbers, and some of the details were left rough. As all of the solo numbers consisted of a series of high-level techniques, it was also necessary to practice and get used to doing them in the dark as well as under the powerful lights actually used on stage. This time, the artists were unable to take the time to increase the precision of their solo numbers just before the performance.

That being said, given the intense schedule, it was a good decision to choose to focus on certain aspects over others. As a result, the cast and crew were able to achieve sufficient quality for public performance in a short amount of time.

YOSHIKAWA Kento, who originally specialized in juggling and slack

wire, had just five months from auditions to learn the tightwire, a highly difficult skill, and he showed tremendous growth. Indeed, all eight artists had to try new things outside their own areas of expertise. For example, contortionist SUGIMOTO Shun took on the challenge of learning aerial straps. Juggler MEGURO Yosuke handled ropes, and dancer Minakawa Mayumu worked in an aerial harness. In one sense, the project development process was *Fierce 5* itself.

This piece put a great physical and technical burden on the performers. Further, it included elements that were impossible to predict, such as the slipperiness of the floor due to the talcum powder used. Making it possible to stably stage the piece required high-level and detailed adjustments, including in terms of the artists' physical strength. A lot of practical experience must be needed to master the ability to display accurate technical skills and rich emotion at all times while also dealing with daily changes in physical condition and unexpected problems.

In the first week from the start of on-stage rehearsals, the piece showed remarkable progress. In the final performance, it felt like all of the pieces had finally come together. I fully expect that, with this first performance in Tokyo, this piece will develop a good flow as it is performed time and again in the future.

Yoshikawa Kento on the tightwire (photo by DAIDO Hiroyasu)

Meguro Yosuke juggling (photo by Daido Hiroyasu)

Minakawa Mayumu dancing (photo by Daido Hiroyasu)

Sugimoto Shun on the aerial straps (photo by Daido Hiroyasu)

Hasegawa Aimi on the aerial hoop (photo by Daido Hiroyasu)

Yamamoto Hironobu (photo by Yohta Kataoka)

Yasumoto Asami (center; photo by Yohta Kataoka)

Setagaya Public Theatre and Raphaëlle BOITEL (France)

"Fierce 5" Fourth Report: Reflection

Author: KUREMIYA Yurika

Fierce 5 was the Setagaya Arts Foundation's first international project since the COVID-19 pandemic. In this report, I will provide a review of the entire project and summarize its accomplishments, challenges, and future outlook.

Post-Performance Reaction

A review of the piece's performance was published in the *Sankei Shimbun* newspaper on October 14, 2021. In addition, many passionate reactions were posted on SNS and other sites immediately after the opening day performance. Looking at the content of these, many favorable reviews of the following points could be seen.

The Lighting Effects

Conspicuously, many were surprised by the visual effects making powerful use of light and shadow.

The Themes of the Piece

Many stated that they were emotionally moved by the human relationships in the piece. Many posts also presented interpretations of it, and it could be seen that the piece was designed such that it encouraged viewers to imagine many different things.

Making Technical Operations Appear Theatrical

Some also focused on the staging, which made the preparations and assisting work involved in dangerous acts appear as part of the show, and the height of the skills of the cast members, which made this possible and successful. A representative example was the "spider" scene, in which one of the cast members is suspended in air by the other cast members.

In addition, there seemed to be many comments on the seven individual artists appearing in the piece. There were both positive and negative comments regarding details of the artists' acting. In particular, there were several comments pointing out a lack of proficiency with regard to the acting of failures and emotions.

That being said, the piece was highly praised for showing the possibilities of circus as a performing art, and for being a successful large-scale international collaboration during the COVID-19 pandemic. Setagaya Public Theatre Producer SAKAI Atsumi also said that the piece had stimulated artists, presenters, and other people involved in the performing arts scene.

One thing that was unfortunate is that some people mistakenly assumed that this Japanese version of *5es Hurlants* was only created because only a few members from Company L'Oublié(e), instead of the entire company, were able to come to Japan due to the travel restrictions. In Japan, most so-called international projects involve inviting overseas artists to come perform an already-completed piece. The above reactions indicate that the development and creation process is not yet fully understood. However, this was the first year for the Japan Foundation's new International Creation in Performing Arts program, and this perhaps is also why there is not sufficient understanding of the program's framework.

Evaluation by Director Raphaëlle BOITEL

Director Raphaëlle Boitel positioned this project in the fields of "learning" and "mutual understanding."

> Life is a series of encounters, and art is the same. By interacting with people, receiving inspiration, making discoveries, and being influenced, we cultivate our ability to imagine and create, and this makes art richer.
> —From an email interview conducted on October 11, 2021

Two years ago, when Company L'Oublié(e) last came to Japan to perform, Boitel stated that the next time she came to Japan, she didn't want to tour an existing work of her company's but rather collaborate with Japanese artists. This wish was made a reality at a much faster pace than she originally expected. From the first day, Boitel gave detailed comments each day and worked to improve the piece's quality up until the last moment. Immediately after the final performance, Boitel was elated, stating, "The emotion filling the stage reached not just me but the audience in the full house," "The change was clear and distinct," and, "I've been given an amazing present." She also praised the eight participating artists not only for their high expertise and meticulous work ethic, but also for being filled with ambition and enthusiasm.

Regarding the piece's remarkable improvement during the week of performances, Boitel was analytical, thinking it may have been because of the deepening relationships of trust among the entire team, including the staff members; and because the team had gained a shared mind toward the piece. She indicated that conversely, this sort of connection had been missing up until this point. Boitel said that it is truly important to share time together outside of rehearsals and, for example, to drink together and talk about things other than the piece. It is through this process, she said, that one becomes a real "family," and that they hadn't had the time to do that with this project. Looking back on the entire process, Boitel repeatedly said, "If I had been able to be in Tokyo one more month, we could have taken the piece even further."

Project Accomplishments and Challenges

Accomplishments

Boitel and her team were unable to come to Japan for the auditions in April and the master class in June. In turn, these had to be conducted remotely. Of the approximately month-long period they stayed in Japan from September to October, two weeks were taken up by quarantining. The amount of time they had to do work in person was drastically cut. Amid a schedule that was extremely tight throughout, Sakai Atsumi stated, "We prepared for the performance while constantly thinking about when we should stop things." *Fierce 5* is a piece involving risk, both physically and technically. Sakai says that, in order to avoid danger while dealing with a constantly changing situation, they were always considering numerous patterns and developing the project while determining what was and wasn't possible with Raphaëlle Boitel. It is likely that this system of taking all measures to ensure safety first contributed greatly to the success of the project. Specific factors are discussed in more detail below.

The Participating Artists

The majority of the project development process was conducted remotely. This required the participating artists to be highly autonomous

and adaptable, and to have strong communication skills. All eight of the artists selected for the project excelled at all of the above. Spanning experienced veterans to young artists with high growth potential, the team was well-balanced. From the start of in-person rehearsals, as a team they engaged in repeated discussion and together searched for ways to incorporate the director's opinions into their performances.

The amount of time the artists had to practice using the actual equipment was also limited. The result was that the project relied heavily on the artists' individual abilities. For example, the "spider" scene, which involves all of the main cast members, would not have been achievable in such a short amount of time if the cast hadn't included members who understood and were familiar with aerial techniques. The piece's eight cast members were all not only highly skilled but also had a diverse array of experience and were versed in multiple techniques.

The production side prepared understudies just in case, and had staff from the stage management section on standby on-site. Nowadays, even large productions frequently do not establish an understudy in order to cut costs. *Fierce 5*'s choice to hedge risk by having understudies is laudable. There was also always a body trainer on hand in the dressing room providing physical care for the cast members, who were pushing their bodies to their limits. Such support systems are essential for a physically strenuous program, and I hope understanding of this fact will grow in the future.

Above all, the introduction of an assistant to help with rehearsals was highly successful. As the performance approached, the entire team became more rushed. Under this situation, having someone who could stay calm, watch everything going on, and provide support was very important and likely contributed greatly to the project moving forward safely.

Staff System

Amid many uncertain elements, it was necessary to repeatedly engage in discussions with the busy Company L'Oublié(e) team and provide direction to the staff of the Japanese team. Until the Company L'Oublié(e) team was able to do in-person work, it was up to Sakai, thoroughly knowledgeable about the technical aspects of the circus and also familiar with Boitel, to mediate, explain, and persuade. Once the Company L'Oublié(e) team was working in person, the pace of production development picked up, with Stage Manager KIMURA Mitsuharu working closely mainly with Boitel; and Lighting Coordinator NOGI Fuyuki and Sound Coordinator ABE Fumihiko, who both had worked with the company when the company came to Japan in 2019, working closely with Technical Director Tristan BAUDOIN. The technical abilities and responsibleness of the Japanese team staff won the trust of the company team.

In terms of the project moving forward smoothly, interpreter KATO Ritsuko's contribution was also large. She worked alongside the project, providing interpreting, from the auditions in April through the performance of the piece in October. Kato had been frequently involved in the Setagaya Arts Foundation's projects including the last time Company L'Oublié(e) came to Japan. She was deeply trusted not only by the people of Setagaya Public Theatre but also those of Company L'Oublié(e) as well as the artists. Circus and dance rehearsals frequently involves providing explanations while moving. This makes it particularly important for any interpretation to both be near-instantaneous and able to blend in with the surrounding rhythm in order to maintain accuracy and not stop the flow of things. Kato enabled communication that felt like there was no language barrier at all.

The Company

Another important factor was Raphaëlle Boitel, the leader of the team partnering with the Japanese team in this international collaboration, having a strong desire to develop a project with Japanese artists. As I reported previously, the idea for this project's story came from Boitel. Boitel proactively used Japanese during rehearsals and breaks, and also spoke to the audience after performances without a mic. This attitude clearly expressed her passion toward making this project a reality in Japan.

The fact that not only Director Boitel but her company, Company L'Oublié(e), was invited to participate in this project is also praiseworthy. To borrow Boitel's words, this project became an opportunity for both the Japanese and French teams to take a step away from the paths they had so far followed and the environments they were familiar with to discover new ways of doing things and move forward together. Julieta SALZ, who worked as rehearsal assistant for the first time for a project of this size, said with tears in her eyes after the last performance, "There were difficulties, but the artists accepted me with an open mind and supported me. It was truly a good experience."

It was not easy securing a month-long block of time from a popular company during the start of the new theater season in Europe. While Boitel and Salz were in Japan, Company L'Oublié(e) was also staging another piece in Nice, France. Tristan Baudoin, who took part in the Nice production, was only able to work in person in Japan for just six days despite having to quarantine for two weeks. Composer and sound and lights operator Arthur BISON was unable to schedule enough time for the quarantine period and unfortunately was unable to accept the invitation to come to Japan. Even so, having three of the French team's central figures come to Japan was a great accomplishment and was a result of the passion on both the Japanese and French sides.

As a result, there were no major accidents or injuries and the project finished its final performance in good form. All of the participating artists are extensively active and it can be expected that through them this project will have a huge ripple effect on the entire scene going forward. Two of the original goals of this project were 1) cultivating artists, and 3) international exchange and stimulating the performing arts, and I believe it is safe to say that *Fierce 5* achieved these to the maximum extent possible under current conditions. Conversely, the project did not fully realize its second goal of cultivating technicians. I offer the following regarding this point.

Future Challenges

In order to prioritize production safety, there were some elements that the project chose not to implement and leave as a challenge for next time.

Cultivation of Technicians

Alongside the development process, this project also originally planned to create an opportunity for technical staff, production staff, and artists to learn about circus techniques and skills from Company L'Oublié(e). Due to the schedule, however, this was abandoned.

Even with outstandingly skilled artists, without technical and production staff who have the proper skills and knowledge as well as an understanding of the creation process, it is impossible to expand the breadth of a piece's expression. They must be in charge of maintaining safety while at the same time have the ability to accept sudden and unexpected changes with flexible thinking. The artists, as well, must also gain the experience of achieving expression that is one step further through cooperation with technical staff.

For *Fierce 5*, Company L'Oublié(e)'s music and light operators were unable to come to Japan, and the Technical Director was unable to be

present from the second performance day. Coordination and operation of each section was thus handled entirely by the Japanese team's staff. Despite the short amount of time, it seems that many things were gained through the form of this project's international collaboration, which was different from staging existing overseas projects in Japan.

Both Boitel and Saki showed the will and desire to put more effort into international collaboration and cultivating technicians in the future.

Cultivating Artists in the Broader Sense

In planning this project, Sakai asked Boitel for opportunities for as many artists as possible to come in contact with the project development process, such as using a workshop-style for the auditions. Unfortunately, however, this, too, had to be abandoned due to time limits.

France has many circus schools and solid curriculums as well. In comparison, chances for even receiving professional education in Japan are extremely limited. While there are studios that teach specific specialty skills, there are almost no institutions where people can comprehensively study circus techniques. The Sori International Circus School is the only circus school in Japan. According to Boitel, having comprehensive systems and support and a clear career path is not always a good thing. Sometimes, Boitel says, these can result in a lack of independence. However, I feel that it would be extremely regrettable if passionate and skilled artists in Japan were unable to perform on global stages because of differences in educational and production environments.

If theaters continue to take the lead in high-level international productions like *Fierce 5*, it would provide opportunities for participants to improve their skills. It would also stimulate those around the participants, provide a target to aim for, and stimulate the entire scene. In addition, just like with Boitel, such projects can become an opportunities for the strengths of Japan-based artists, within a different culture, to become known by world-class artists over the course of the creative process.

Sakai is concerned that simply inviting overseas companies to perform existing works in Japan will not help the Japanese scene to develop. Her hope is to "increase opportunities to create, cultivate talent, and ensure the safety of pieces created in Japan, and, beyond this, see even greater variation." The Setagaya Arts Foundation respects long-term relationships with artists and organically creates links between multiple projects. Great things are expected from its activities going forward.

The Significance of this Project

This project was the second time the Setagaya Arts Foundation collaborated with Company L'Oublié(e). The company was invited to Japan to perform *When Angels Fall* in 2019. The company also held workshops, and some of the participants became cast members in this project. Concrete discussions regarding this project began in early fall of 2020. Originally, the idea was to start it in fiscal 2022. However, the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in the theater's schedule becoming open. The Japan Foundation also announced that it was accepting proposals for projects like this. Accordingly, it began to seem possible to conduct the project in fiscal 2021. In a short amount of time, the project schedule was quickly adjusted and candidate artists began being contacted around year-end. The project was made a reality in around just one year from project proposal. For a project of this size, this is rare in Japan because large-scale theaters' schedules are usually full for the upcoming two years. It is likely this was possible because there already existed a positive relationship with the company, and because drafts of the plan had already been worked on.

It was also highly significant that the project was realized through collaboration between an artist and a producer in their thirties who will lead the next generation of performing arts. In addition to the cast members, the stage manager and technical staff were also young, meaning that this project will impact the future. Like ballet dancers, circus artists are very hard on their bodies, and this means age is a problem. Waiting for the pandemic to end could have resulted in artists nearing their primes missing an important chance. Sakai said, "Shrinking away because of COVID-19 will shrink everything. I want to move forward even if it has to be done under restrictions." This desire of hers helped push the project forward early on.

This project was a highly physical work, and it was thought that it would be difficult to make it a reality using remote communication. Its success gives confidence and encouragement to the Setagaya Arts Foundation and to the Japanese performing arts scene as a whole. At the curtain call of the final performance, Boitel spoke with strength to the audience, saying, "We have proven that international exchange is possible for the performing arts" even under COVID-19.

Final performance curtain call (photo by Yohta Kataoka); from left to right: Yamamoto, Yoshikawa, Minakawa, Meguro, Sugimoto, Hasegawa, Yasumoto

Future Outlook

Both Raphaëlle Boitel and Sakai Atsumi positioned the performance of this project as a first step and plan on future long-term collaborations. The next development has already been decided. When *5es Hurlants* is performed at the Grand Théâtre de Bordeaux in November 2021, *Fierce 5* cast member HASEGAWA Aimi will perform with the original French cast.

They are also aiming to perform *Fierce 5* at a circus festival in France, and to take it on tour in Asia. Someday, they would also like make this into a project involving staff and artists from a variety of countries, much like how the five main cast members of *5es Hurlants* came from different countries. There is no doubt that using the shared language of physical movement while encountering the differing audiences and cultures of various cities would help *Fierce 5* to develop even further.

This project has also made clear what elements are needed for the Japanese performing arts scene as a whole to develop and grow. Below, I discuss the points that came up during the project development process and in my interview with Producer Sakai.

Creating a Grand Cycle of Creation and Performance

Circus performances cannot be properly rehearsed without sufficient

floor space and a sufficiently high ceiling. The equipment used for things like tightwire and aerial performances also requires the facilities themselves to be strong and sturdy. Accordingly, circus rehearsals continue to face the challenge of there being very few facilities that meet the necessary requirements. In recent years, nongovernment organizations have begun proactively creating and maintaining rehearsal and production environments. These include Setouchi Circus Factory, Circus Laboratory CouCou, and Kansai Aerial. The situation is improving, but there is still a lack of environments for creating large-scale theatrical works.

Creating high-level productions requires time for the development process to be conducted together with technical staff using an actual stage and relevant machinery. Under the current system where facilities are rented out for profit between the theater's own productions, it is not realistic to engage in a long development process while using them. With *Fierce 5*, the company said that stage rehearsals would require a month, but they were only able to secure two weeks. Even a public theater recognized as a top-level space for creative development must engage in the business of renting its facilities for a fee, and there are major problems with this operation system.

While prefacing that there are continued challenges, Sakai stated that the role of a public theater is to create model cases focused on the grand cycle of creation to performance, and to share these models with other theaters. The problem is a lack of staff able to handle performances, as well as presenters who can evaluate circus artists. Solving this problem would definitely expand the field of possible activities. Sakai spoke of an ideal future of a virtuous cycle between talented artists and the theaters that would seek them out: creation and development would be led not only by theaters, but also by artists creating and proposing their own works independently.

Mixing the Audiences for Street and Theater Performances

Today, street performance festivals are being held across Japan, and the potential audience for circus performances is huge. However, there is still a gap in the audiences for street and theater performances. Technically, however, they are very close to each other, and in fact, some of the artists who appeared in *Fierce 5* are also active in the street performance scene.

One of the Setagaya Arts Foundation's strengths is that it has a successful track record of producing outstanding contemporary circus performances in its theater while also having continued to organize the street performance festival "Sancha de Daidogei" for the past 25 years together with local shopping districts. In fact, Sakai became interested in contemporary circus while serving on the production staff for Sancha de Daidogei. She enthusiastically stated, "I hope pieces like this help people see the fun of going to the theater."

Updating the Discourse and Systems Around Contemporary Circus

Sakai said that one thing that was very memorable for her was that all of the artists they had invited said that they called themselves "circus" performers because there was no other appropriate word for it, and not because they wanted to create any boundaries between genres. *Fierce 5* truly is an embodiment of this line of thinking. Some contemporary circus pieces are closer to contemporary dance or theater than they are to so-called "traditional" circus performances. Contemporary circus has both a free approach incorporating a variety of expression styles, and an intense physicality. Its potential is high and it could be a trigger to help revitalize the entire Japanese performing arts scene.

For this to be possible, it will also be necessary to update the discourse and systems that still hold on to vertical divisions. Artists have already moved forward. In order to accept the diverse styles of expression they have created and deliver these to a wider audience, perhaps it is now necessary to look at contemporary circus not as a genre but rather as an approach, and to actively discuss it within the broader field of contemporary performing arts.

Sources of Quotes

Raphaëlle Boitel
- Remarks made during post-show discussion on October 10, 2021 (interviewer: Sakai Atsumi)
- Answers to email interview on October 11, 2021 (interviewer: Kuremiya Yurika)
- Interview for video on October 11, 2021 (interviewer: Sakai Atsumi)
- In-person interview conducted after final performance on October 11, 2021 (interviewer: Kuremiya Yurika)

Other remarks from rehearsals

Julieta Salz
- Remarks made during post-show discussion on October 10, 2021 (interviewer: Sakai Atsumi)

Other remarks from rehearsals

Sakai Atsumi
- Remarks during briefing on May 14, 2021
- Interview over Zoom on November 4, 2021 (interviewer: Kuremiya Yurika)

Artists
MINAKAWA Mayumu, HASEGAWA Aimi, SUGIMOTO Shun, MEGURO Yosuke, YOSHIKAWA Kento, YAMAMOTO Hironobu, YASUMOTO Asami, YOSHIDA Aki
- Interview for video on October 11, 2021 (interviewer: Sakai Atsumi)

PROJECT

“Work-In-Progress for Music Theatre Production”

chelfitsch & Dai Fujikura with Klangforum Wien (Austria)

Vienna-based contemporary music ensemble Klangforum Wien and London-based, internationally active contemporary composer FUJIKURA Dai joined forces with the theatrical company chelfitsch led by playwright OKADA Toshiki to take on the challenge of creating a new kind of music theater completely different from opera in this new work in progress.
Leading figures in the fields of theater and music pursue a new relationship between words and music performed by actors, not singers, using techniques other than the conventional singing of words to a melody and with music detached from the scene or emotions depicted. Following the work-in-progress performance in November 2021, the performance is scheduled to be streamed online.

OKADA Toshiki ©USUYAMA Kikuko

FUJIKURA Dai ©Alf Solbakken

Klangforum Wien ©Tina Herzl

Outline of Performances

Date: 5:00 p.m., Friday, November 5, 2021
Duration: 60–90 min.
Venue: Tower Hall Funabori, Small Hall

Credits

Playwright/Director: OKADA Toshiki
Composer: FUJIKURA Dai
Cast: AOYAGI Izumi, ASAKURA Chieko (absent in work-in-progress performance), OMURA Wataru, KAWASAKI Mariko, SHIIBASHI Ayana, YAZAWA Makoto
Music:
Video Performance: Klangforum Wien / Bernhard ZACHHUBER (Clarinet), Annette BIK, Gunde JÄCH-MICKO (Violin), Dimitrios POLISOIDIS (Viola), Benedikt LEITNER (Cello)
Live Performance: YOSHIDA Makoto (Clarinet), Ensemble NOMAD (String Quartet) / HANADA Wakako, KAWAGUCHI Shizuka (Violin), KAI Fumiko (Viola), HOSOI Yui (Cello)

Dramaturge: YOKOBORI Masahiko / Stage Manager: KAWAKAMI Daijiro
Sound Director: SHIRAISHI Aki (ISHIMARU-GUMI) / Sound Designer: Nagie
Lighting Director: TAKADA Masayoshi (RYU) / Video Director: YAMADA Shimpei (AOZORA)
Sound Operators: KATAYAMA Takayuki, SAKAI Shuji, SAWAGUCHI Keiichi, TANAKA Subaru
Lighting Operators: YAMASHITA Megumi, YOSHIDA Yukio (RYU) / Video Director Assistant: SAITO Shiori (AOZORA)
Shooting Director/Editor: TOMITA Ryohei / Shooting: ENDO Mikihiro, Woomin HYUN, NISHINO Masanobu
Photography: KATO Kazuya / Publicity Design: OTAKE Ryuhei
Social Media Publicity: MIYAZAKI Junko / Publicity Writing: YAMAZAKI Kenta / Producers: OUKI Tamiko, MIZUNO Megumi
Production Managers: ENDO Nanami, BABA Yuina / Project Managers: SAITO Yuri, TAZAWA Mizuki
Production Assistant: MURAKAMI Ema (precog co., LTD.)

Organized by the Japan Foundation
Planned and produced by chelfitsch and precog co., LTD.
In cooperation with OFFICE threel's, KAJIMOTO, CUBE Inc., nakagoo, Steep Slope Studio, and YAMABUKI FACTORY
(*World premiere will be performed in 2023 as commissioned by Wiener Festwochen.)

Performance photos ©KATO Kazuya

chelfitsch & Dai Fujikura with Klangforum Wien (Austria)

"Work-In-Progress for Music Theatre Production" First Report: Launch of Project

Author: SHIMANUKI Taisuke

The Role of the Process Observer

"Process Observer" may be an unfamiliar job title to many, but I feel like it accurately encapsulates what I was requested to do by the Japan Foundation. The contents of that request can be summarized as follows:

To participate in the production process of a collaboration between artists with differing interests as a third-party observer and to conduct interviews and monitor the progress of the project; and to verbalize and report on that process, including any problems or challenges that arise.

Archiving the performing arts has become actively discussed and practiced in recent years. However, unlike formative arts such as painting and sculpture, the results and processes of the performing arts are difficult to preserve in material form. Or rather, because they center around sharing the experience of complementary and continuous collaboration among actors, audiences, and spaces amid the irreversible flow of time, unless a special concept is established in advance, it is extremely rare for the work to be fixed as a physical object. Furthermore, as the performing arts often do not belong to individuals but rather to large groups of unspecified people (the "creator" may sometimes even include the audience), it is by definition impossible to consolidate the creation to a single location. This makes it difficult to convert the performing arts into linear discourse, such that they seem to inherently refuse archiving. Perhaps, that is why performing art creators and researchers have become caught up in renewing understanding of works based on the reproduction of their totalities via fragments that constitute and prove their existence like plays, photographs, video, props, audio sources, and descriptive information such as reviews, as well as approaches toward their origins and the zeitgeist of the time and place. An obsession with archiving the trajectories of works is born.

Here in Japan in 2021, it is "Process Observers" who play a part in the effort to record the generation and transformation of physical expressions that humanity has repeated tens and hundreds of millions of times since the dawn of history. I believe that the fact that the Japan Foundation, which is neither a creator nor a researcher but rather a public institution, has strongly indicated its willingness to lead these efforts lends great significance to the project.

Despite my somewhat long preamble, it is against this backdrop that I was assigned to chelfitsch's *Music Theatre Production*.

At least, that was the title when I was commissioned in the spring of 2021. By the time that the details of the performance on November 5 at Tower Hall Funabori (Tokyo) were released in October of that year, the official title had become *chelfitsch & FUJIKURA Dai with Klangforum Wien: Work-In-Progress for Music Theatre Production*. The phrase "Work-In-Progress" indicates that the performance is not the endpoint of the project. It is with a detailed explanation of this context that I begin my report.

In the Producer's Words

My involvement in the project began in earnest with my participation in about two weeks of workshops from July 12 to 23, 2021, just before the inauguration of the Tokyo Olympics. However, prior to this, I interviewed Producer OUKI Tamiko remotely on June 30 out of my belief that the entirety of a work includes not only the practical creation by the director and actors, but also the planning from which it all started and the management by producers.

According to Ouki, the project originated in a commission from Vienna, Austria.

> Ouki: It all began with a commission from Wiener Festwochen artistic director Christophe (SLAGMUYLDER) to create a new work for the 2022 festival. Initially, the commission was for a work related to music in some way, namely, music of a genre originating in the West. This was connected to the local character and history of Vienna, which is known as the "City of Music."

Wiener Festwochen is an arts festival held annually from May to June. It was founded in 1951 with the aim of reviving culture after World War II. In addition to a program to delight fans of classical music with magnificent concerts by famous conductors and the Vienna Philharmonic, the festival also includes experimental stage productions and operas by diverse artists at the forefront of contemporary dance, theater, and film such as Anne Teresa DE KEERSMAEKER, Romeo CASTELLUCCI, and Michael HANEKE, as well as exhibitions of contemporary art.

Literally translating to "festival weeks," Wiener Festwochen could truly be called a festival in which the city and its inhabitants are blessed with art. At the same time, it has also been characterized by critically and politically provocative content. In 2000, Christoph SCHLINGENSIEF staged *Foreigners out!* (*Ausländer raus! Schlingensiefs Container, 2000*), a legendary work still talked about today, in which immigrants to Austria (played by actors) living in a makeshift container camp (actually a set) installed in front of the city hall were deported one by one through a public vote. His scathing criticism of the right-wing drift in the Austrian political climate resulted in a firestorm of controversy and ended with a left-wing group raiding the venue to rescue the "immigrants," an outcome that surpassed even the creator's expectations. The duality of art is that it can comfort and delight people or challenge society as an external provocateur. In this sense, too, Wiener Festwochen plays an important role.

chelfitsch's *Music Theatre Production* was a work to be created within the context of this city and history.

> Ouki: "A collaboration with music not limited to classical" and "a performance accompanied by live music" were presented as conditions of the project. The next premise was that the players would be Klangforum Wien. When it came to the composer, I remember that FUJIKURA Dai, who had a history of collaborating with them, was named.

From "Objects" to "Sound"

OKADA Toshiki (chelfitsch) has a deep relationship with music. It is well known that the title of his magnum opus *Five Days in March* (premiered in 2004) derives from "Five Days" by the band Sangatsu (meaning "March" in Japanese). In addition to scenography by contemporary artists such as KANEUJI Teppei, TAKAMINE Tadasu, and HISAKADO Tsuyoshi, many of Okada's works were born from collaboration with musicians. *Ground and Floor* (premiered in 2013), for which Sangatsu served as composers, is

such a case in which the organically transforming relationships between the actors, the lines spoken by the actors, and the music that fills the space are intertwined on a high level. Christophe Slagmuylder, the original proposer of *Music Theatre Production*, was also deeply involved in the lead-up to its creation.

Ouki: *Ground and Floor* was the first work commissioned by Christophe while he was the director of Kunstenfestivaldesarts. Sure enough, it was born from a commission to "do something related to music." Christophe and Matthias (LILIENTHAL) have played somewhat of a parental role in fostering Okada's creative work in Europe, and we have immense trust in them. It was therefore clear that their commission represented a high-level challenge, and we were quite naturally able to envision trying something new.

Okada himself is the kind of person who flexibly accepts the limitations he's given and develops his imagination on that basis, so you could say it was an ideal creative environment.

The timing of the commission may have also yielded results. It was around the time when chelfitsch had begun planning *Eraser Mountain* (premiered in 2019) in collaboration with the previously mentioned Kaneuji. The theme of the relationship between "people and objects" was at the foreground of this work, which was created following research into the changing relationship between humans and nature in the wake of the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake, such as the massive levees constructed in devastated areas along the coast as a countermeasure against future tsunami waves.

Taking dialogue as the smallest unit of communication between people and drama as the cultural form in which people receive this as an audience, *Eraser Mountain* sought to establish a dialogic relationship between the actors and various ready-made goods such as daily necessities and sports equipment placed on the stage. For this reason, the performance included attempts to break away from the existing formation of relationships with the audience by having the actors often direct the vectors of their performances far above the stage rather than at the audience. Okada's interest in creating these kinds of "non-anthropocentric" representations seems to have developed radically, particularly in the wake of the 2011 disaster.

It figures prominently in *Ground and Floor* and *Time's Journey Through a Room* (premiered in 2016), which depict ghosts or ghostly presences, and in *NO THEATER* (premiered in 2017) and *Unfulfilled Ghost and Monster - ZAHA / TSURUGA* (performance version premiered in 2021), which reflect Okada's interest in the format of Noh theater, an artistic medium that straddles the border between this world and the next. In *Wakatta-san's Cookies* (premiered in 2015), currently the only children's work of Okada's career, he also experimented with building "imagery" using objects through collaboration with Kaneuji Teppei.

Ouki: At the first meeting for *Music Theatre Production*, we discussed replacing the "objects" in *Eraser Mountain* with "sound" and developing the issue of "humans and sound." Of course, the earthquake wasn't the only turning point, but I believe that awareness of the issue of how to respond to things beyond human control, like the changes in "ways of viewing the world" to which we were awakened by events connected to the disaster, has been fundamental to Okada's works over the past ten years.

chelfitsch as a "Laboratory"

Taking *Music Theatre Production* as a novel work positioned within the lineage of Okada's interest in "humans and objects," or to go one step further, his search for humanity through expressions to materialize impersonal representations (the shifting of persons, diversification of identities, and so on within the work), there is yet another perspective.

Ouki: Music occupies a large part of the production, and constant collaboration with the composer and players who realize that is a major challenge on the production level as well. This is one of the reasons why we had YOKOBORI Masahiko, who is well versed in both contemporary and classical music, join us as a dramaturge.

Although the production is under the name of Okada Toshiki, there's significance in taking on this challenge as "chelfitsch through and through." It's something I discuss a lot with Okada—we think about the group chelfitsch as a kind of "laboratory." We see it as a venue for developing new methods and acquiring new dramatic languages. It's meaningful for us to take on the challenge with actors who have been working on those experiments with us for a long time. That's why for this project, we approached six actors without holding auditions.

Music Theatre Production has six cast members: AOYAGI Izumi, ASAKURA Chieko, OMURA Wataru, KAWASAKI Mariko, SHIIBASHI Ayana, and YAZAWA Makoto. Aoyagi and Yazawa in particular are actors whom one might call Okada's "regulars." The other four have only taken part in one or two works each, but most have experience in roles at the cores of the respective works. Regarding his criteria for choosing them, Okada noted in the workshops and a later interview that "each of them has the power of an original 'voice.'" He also emphasized "having adequate volume for the audience to understand what is being said even when acting with live music." One could say that the cast was assembled for its potential to enhance the accuracy of this experiment while flexibly changing and developing its direction.

Ouki: Another important thing is that Christophe values the experimental nature of chelfitsch. The number of commissions received by Okada personally has increased greatly over the past several years, but Christophe's commissions are always for chelfitsch. I think that's because he understands the importance of the many challenges that Okada has undertaken with his actors.

International Exchange in the Wake of the Pandemic

In this interview, which was conducted before workshops began in earnest, references to Fujikura Dai and Klangforum Wien remained minimal (due to my limited knowledge as a researcher at that point). However, I am sure that I will go into more detail regarding the importance of the musical aspects of the production in the third and fourth reports, which bring up the workshops and subsequent work-in-progress performance held in November 2021.

I would like to conclude this report by touching on the future of Okada Toshiki and chelfitsch's overseas activities. Performances of many works both in Japan and overseas were forced to be canceled or postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic that broke out in late 2019. *Music Theatre*

Production, too, suffered no small impact. The originally planned performance with Fujikura Dai and Klangforum Wien invited to Tokyo was quickly abandoned, and an alternate plan was considered with the Japanese side traveling to Vienna for a local performance. In the end, the format was switched to hold the performance at the Tokyo venue with previously filmed footage of Klangforum Wien playing, live music by Ensemble Nomado, and Fujikura giving feedback via remote connection. Over the past two years or so, the performing arts that arise when performers travel to different places and are received by audiences in each place have been forced into direct contact with a global-scale paradigm shift due to the pandemic. How is chelfitsch confronting this situation?

Ouki: This is something we've been thinking about for a while. The basic premise is that our policy of sustaining global deployment won't change. The issue is finding a way to sustain it more flexibly. In truth, whether or not we can tour with full-scale works in upcoming years like we did in the past has become quite precarious. Although discussion of a future European tour has already begun, we're moving ahead with the discussion with an eye on changes in the situation, ready to partially apply the brakes at some point. We're constantly prepared to propose a "Plan B" in response to the pandemic.

We also have to consider the changing awareness of environmental impacts in Europe. For example, *Eraser Mountain* is one of chelfitsch's most voluminous works, both in terms of the number of people and the amount of art. Now that artists like Jérôme BEL who don't travel by plane are appearing in the performing art world, I feel like we need to call into question the meaning of holding performances that require the movement of people and things, investing huge amounts of money and time, and burdening the global environment.

Okada has earned a solid reputation in Europe through the enthusiasm generated by *Five Days in March* in 2004, *Ground and Floor* inspired by the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake, and *Super Premium Soft Double Vanilla Rich* (premiered in 2014), as well as his four-work repertoire starting with the 2016 remake of *Hot Pepper, Air Conditioner, and the Farewell Speech* (premiered in 2009) for Münchner Kammerspiele and continuing with *NO THEATER*, *NO SEX* (2018), and *The Vacuum Cleaner* (2019). What has been expected of Okada and what he has responded to through these works is representations of Japan and Japanese people as seen by Europeans. Here, I feel that one cannot deny the curious gaze of European exoticism, which still remains deeply rooted. How to relativize this, whether to cover it conversely in the work or to give a completely different answer, will be an issue for Okada and chelfitsch and perhaps an even greater one for critique on the Japanese side.

Ouki: I believe that transposing Japanese contexts into different ones is an intuition, and also a weapon, that Okada has cultivated over about fifteen years of overseas performances. Now that the entire world is facing the same crisis due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the validity of that intercontextuality is something we will need to continue thinking about.

Today, all of humanity has synchronously experienced the pandemic, albeit with various gradations. Given that one of the primary purposes of contemporary art is the discovery of differences through interaction as well as critical dismantling and reconstruction based thereon, what kinds of turns will it take? Although this research is not necessarily an opportunity to approach the answer to that great question, the intersections and exchanges of values that Okada and chelfitsch have implemented may serve as a valid measure for contemplation. I will finally delve into more details of the practical production in the second report. As I proceed with my writing, I hope to continually check my awareness of the issues underlying this process.

chelfitsch & Dai Fujikura with Klangforum Wien (Austria)

"Work-In-Progress for Music Theatre Production" Second Report: Rehearsal, Part I

Author: SHIMANUKI Taisuke

July 12, 2021: Workshop Day 1

The creation of *Music Theatre Production* began in earnest at Steep Slope Studio in Yokohama, a place where many previous chelfitsch works were created. At the same time, with the exception of OKADA Toshiki and FUJIKURA Dai, who had already taken part in several meetings, the actors and nearly all of the staff were meeting for the first time as a cast today. As the starting time of the workshop approached, the six actors trickled in and began their own particular warm-ups.

Fujikura, who is based in the UK, joined via Zoom from London, where it was 7 o'clock in the morning. Sound designer Nagie was also present on the Yokohama side to convey a sense of actually being at the venue both visually and auditorily to the remote location. Microphones were set up throughout the studio to catch every word of the practice and feedback, almost as if a traveling music studio had visited the theatrical space (this setup would go on to be used to even greater effect in the latter half of the creative process in November).

First, Okada explained the principles of the project: that it was commissioned by Vienna and therefore needed to be a work incorporating music, namely, Western music other than rock. However, the assignment was not to create an opera, so the production would aim for musical theater without "singing." What did that mean? Well, it was still only a vague concept, but that was the starting point.

Okada: My image of these actors is that they have rhythm when they speak, their own sort of musicality. But that shouldn't be expressed through singing. And the creation will be based on the format of "musical theater." I think the next two weeks will be spent figuring out more or less what that will look like.

I considered holding a karaoke contest on the first day, but as we're not aiming for "singing," I gave up on that thought. Theatrical lines have a melody that ought to emerge even without music, but it's often accompanied by music. How to link these two aspects will be essential.

Ordinarily, singing consists of uttering words to a melody. Music is a fairly strong condition, with the words fitting into it. But it's possible to reverse that relationship. While I'm saying this, I'm thinking of *Different Trains* by Steve REICH. What I imagine is the "lead-up" to this application of a melody to recorded audio.

Different Trains (1988) by Reich, a pioneer of minimal music, is a piece in which a string quartet performs live while a tape of a prerecorded string quartet, speech by acquaintances of Reich, and fabricated train sounds and sirens plays. Although it is a political work drawing on the themes of Reich's Jewish heritage and the Holocaust, it is also a strongly structured work that creates a sense of urgency, with the preconfigured and live sounds pursuing and breaking away from one another, as well as the in-between space formed by that interplay.

Next, Okada introduced the idea shared during the creation of *Eraser Mountain* of "becoming semi-transparent" (the concept, first proposed by artist KANEUJI Teppei, that relating to objects makes one's own existence become semi-transparent). Okada concluded his opening speech by explaining that although this is not a phrase or idea that everyone can comprehend immediately, the people involved in the creative process need to find some kind of key concept for the production.

First, a workshop was held, partly in order to share chelfitsch's creative process with Fujikura, who was observing it for the first time. In the workshop, the actors were to one by one "describe how you imagine the room in which you currently live or used to live." This format is an old standby of Okada's that he always uses during the creative process and auditions. However, the content seemed like it might resonate with that of *Music Theatre Production*, which was to have a "house" as its main setting. It would also be meaningful in conveying to Fujikura the embodiment and amplification of "imagination" that Okada emphasizes.

OMURA Wataru's turn was first. Although he had experience participating in one of Okada's works with *EIZO-Theater*, this was his first time joining in the theatrical creative process. Omura attempted a performance of interacting with an invisible house. In response, Okada commented that he "might be able to perform more freely by removing the act of touching." What struck me was how by repeatedly asking everyone "Do you understand what I'm saying?" it felt like Okada was restoring the actors' awareness so that the goal would not become too abstract, and at the same time conversely liberating that awareness. When Omura actually tried limiting his "touching" gestures after these exchanges, a chelfitsch-style performance suddenly materialized. I also had the impression that the restrained movements caused the actor's imagination to be more tightly condensed within his mind and body, resulting in a greater density of visual information for the viewer (me).

Okada: It's not that I want to make the audience think that the actor is imagining something, but that's the result. It's important to convey that sense of "Oh, I've got it." Liberating the actor from the specific action of "touching the wall" creates new potential.

While forming a robust axis to his modes of expression, these kinds of indications by Okada were not conveyed homogeneously to all of the actors.

Okada: As these six actors have strong personalities, if left to their own devices, they'll become disjointed in a positive sense. I definitely don't want to force them into the same format; I want to figure out what kinds of directions are interesting to explore without sorting or consolidating them into a clean explanation. Something unbroken with clear logic loses the elements that were haphazard or fragmented in a good way. I want to pursue completion in a different direction, a more mysterious kind of completion.

During the first day's workshop, Okada urged the participants several times "not to rush for completion." What surprised me personally was how at the start of the workshop, Okada set aside the recent trend of invoking the theatrical format exemplified by the face-to-face relationship with the audience inherent in the proscenium arch as well as the modality and spatiality of classical performing arts, and yet sharpening the intensity of the imagery that the performance produces for the audience

through varied introduction and reinforcement of "imagination," as something to be expected. For example, he pointed out that evaluation of the pros and cons of the kind of overly movement-focused performance that Omura attempted in the beginning could fall into the binary of whether or not the imagery portrayed is vivid. Okada stated that rather than the actors full-out driving imagination into their bodies and building it up, he wanted to pursue more relaxed completion keeping a sense of imperfection. (Okada also worded this as "not being dependent." However, he added that dependency is a necessary condition of acting and that it is not usually seen as something negative.)

Okada: Tomorrow, we'll start using the script I've written. Although it's a complicated script, let's think about how to "leave space without rushing." Even though there are pauses, they definitely shouldn't be idle time for expression. These pauses may be meaningful—may be effective—when they're intertwined with Mr. Fujikura's music. Intertwining the script and music in that manner—that's the kind of vision I have right now.

July 13, 2021: Workshop Day 2

On the morning of the second day, Okada, who had been suffering from a sore neck since the previous day, indicated that his discomfort had increased even further. Despite his painful appearance, there was something chelfitsch-style about his shuffling and sliding motions aimed at minimizing the movement of his upper body, reminiscent of Noh theater. (The situation might not have been out of place in one of Okada's plays.) Everyone wished for his recovery.

The day started with a continuation of the previous day's "room" workshop. YAZAWA Makoto enacted revisiting the house where he had lived when he was kindergartner. Okada pointed out that when Yazawa was talking about a photograph, he lifted up his hand. Yazawa replied that he did so because it was on the second floor.

Okada: It's interesting that the memory is above when you try to reenact it concretely, because there's no inherent necessity for it to be above. There's a hint here. Spatializing something that's not a space generates movement. Although it's a violent process, memories and recollections can be spatialized.

Rather than how imagination is reflected in the performance, what I want to question with this lineup is how to use your imagination when talking about something. And now, let's watch a video together.

The video showed composer and pianist TAKAHASHI Yuji playing Bach and talking about contemporary music on the occasion of the release of his album *Yoin to teutsuri* (2018) 1. In the interview, Takahashi is asked about the concept of his playing and composing. He responds, "A work itself isn't something complete, but rather a collection of fragments—notes for what you're planning to do... Bach's music consists of finished works, but in the process of playing them, they're able to become incomplete." In parallel with the interview, Takahashi plays Partita in C Minor, BWV 997, while alternately looking at the sheet music and his own fingering with great care. Okada described this as Takahashi composing right at that very moment and suggested that the practice of taking something complete and making it incomplete would harness the potential of the script that he had written.

Next, a very short play with the provisional title *Never Given* was shared among the actors and staff. This work was to be modified daily with additions and deletions through the workshop. Its title was taken from the container ship *Ever Given*, which ran aground in the Suez Canal in March 2021, causing the long-term obstruction of one of the world's most key shipping routes. Okada said that the title was just something he made up, but he seemed to feel some conviction in it—the grounding of the ship blessed with the name *Ever Given* changing its name to *Never Given*.

The work carries on the themes explored in *Eraser Mountain*, which concerned itself with the "outside" of the human world. It presents an unsettling depiction of the lives of liberal-minded people about to descend into chaos due to the intrusion of a natural phenomenon (a typhoon) and the law (an eviction order from a landlord), with references to the January 2021 attack on the US Capitol by conservative and far-right Americans.

Okada: If it's acted out with a high finished quality, I feel like the concept will waver. Reading through the script printed out like this, each line is long, even though I tried to make them short when I was writing it.

I don't know how to achieve the "notes" that Takahashi was talking about, playing something as if it were scribbles. So, for now, let's just read it all together.

The following are excerpts of exchanges between Okada and the actors after reading the play several times.

KAWASAKI Mariko: I said the line as if I were in the rain, or rather, inside a house while raindrops were falling.

Okada: I thought that was good. Imagining how to close when you start talking is difficult, at least for me, because you start without a full picture.

Yazawa: Mumbling awkwardly, it's not quite right either. I think that's the thing about Takahashi practicing so hard.

Okada: While it's possible in theory to present the play totally analyzed and torn apart, I don't feel like that leads to the acting becoming more interesting.

SHIIBASHI Ayana: Without imagining anything... In terms of emotion, it's a bit uncomfortable, but...something like uttering lines differently, not imagining a space. Although, I'm not sure.

Okada: I don't think "emotion" should be disregarded, but just like the growth of a tumor, emphasizing emotion is a question of degree. For example, if you were suddenly asked to give a wedding speech, you could do it, even if it was a bit awkward, because of your feelings of happiness for the couple. On that level, emotions are key. But could you call falling rain a question of degree on the scale of emotion?

...Uttering lines, aiming them at a target, is parabolic. In acting, there may be an "understanding" that assumes you're approaching a landing, the end of the line. This is something you can only do when you have a bird's-eye view of all of the lines. It's possible that pretending you don't know despite having a bird's-eye view allows you to make the parabola invisible to yourself.

Based on these kinds of exchanges, in his next performance, Omura Wataru tried uttering his lines or performing as if his motivation abruptly gave out. Taking this as experimentation without defining the endpoint of the performance, one might refer to the phrase "jumping the gun," which emerged later during ASAKURA Chieko and Yazawa Makoto's practice, as the verbalization of experimenting without defining a starting point.

Okada: The subject of "jumping the gun" that was raised here concerns itself with "length"—so long that you don't know when it'll end. This could possibly mean not knowing the direction of what you're talking about. It's like getting on a train with no idea of where it'll arrive or when.

Obviously, you need to correctly understand the script you're reading right now. But I want you to intentionally leave it loose—just whether the shape is round or square, for example. Something made to order or specially arranged is too boring.

Afterwards, experimentation connected to the concepts of "incompletion," "parabolas," and "jumping the gun" continued almost until the ending time. Lastly, video was recorded to be sent to Fujikura as a reference for composing.

July 14, 2021: Workshop Day 3

On the third day, Okada arrived at the studio after visiting a hospital to have his neck checked out. Although the examination did not reveal any serious problems, he made for a sorry sight in his immobilizing neck cast.

Fujikura's adaption of his existing compositions for the video recorded at the end of the previous day had arrived without delay, so everyone gave it a listen. According to dramaturge YOKOBORI Masahiko, he had the impression that Fujikura's works included a relatively large number of very dense and continuous ones but that this time he had chosen more porous compositions with breaks or pauses. Following this, opinions were exchanged about the music.

Okada: It's interesting that when the piano is used, it feels like the piano's talking or acting like a translator. The piano's great. But conversely, it also makes me want to create interesting relationships with the other instruments as well.

It seems like you could express scene changes through differences in the melody and instruments. For example, if two characters are having a dialogue and another character enters, you could think of that as the scene changing. You could also assign melodies and instruments to each character. I think it would be interesting to explore the relationship between the composition and scene in different ways.

Never Given is a dialogic play for six characters reminiscent of a university professor, an assistant, and students. The idea of defining and rearranging their relationships through the instruments and melody would continue to be discussed and implemented in various ways in later workshops once Fujikura had become involved in earnest. I will go into detail regarding the contents of those workshops in the latter half of my report. (As of the third-day workshop, my impression was that the music was still only realized as a hint or guide for experimenting with the performances.)

Just like the previous day, on this day there was continuing discussion of the extemporaneity and incompleteness of performance, such as the peculiar way in which novelist TAWADA Yoko, who writes in German as well as Japanese, ends her writing (if there is an order for two hundred pages of manuscript paper, spontaneously ending as the two-hundredth page arrives). Different views on "parabolas" were also presented.

Creation workshop

Okada: Although not making language parabolic suffices as a concept, a determination to never make it parabolic isn't really usable. More normally, it's just "talking without knowing the ending," or rather, it's simpler to think of it as always jumping the gun in life, like Ms. Asakura said.

While Okada's interest in this kind of "uncertainty" in a broad sense is connected to his experimentation with techniques and styles of performance, it may also be very much tied to the plot of *Never Given*, which depicts premonitions of happenings "outside" a certain community and the "internal" disquiet they produce. Okada made statements to this effect during the day's workshop.

Okada: I want this to be an event happening inside a certain building. Whenever there's an inside, there's also something outside. You can translate this into a controllable humanistic space and what lies outside it.

What's important when acting is creating something "outside" on the level of imagination. By doing this, you establish the issue of there being both an inside and an outside. It's not an issue of whether or not the set has physical walls, but rather of the method of imagining. In this case, "rain" is a very easily understandable subject. People hang bedding outside because they want it to dry soft and fluffy, but it's completely possible that it'll become soaking wet instead. That's what I want to present through every possible means.

The simulated family problems that we're currently doing are enough to create drama, but that's not what I want to do. What's outside is bigger. This is the early stage to establish that there's something outside, and it's bigger. And later, it won't even matter. The creation of this contrast is what I'm envisioning.

1 "Takahashi Yuji Plays Bach and Talks about Contemporary Music" https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3YBG1WbufTY (Last accessed: March 2, 2022)

chelfitsch & Dai Fujikura with Klangforum Wien (Austria)

"Work-In-Progress for Music Theatre Production"
Third Report: Rehearsals, Part II

Author: SHIMANUKI Taisuke

July 21–23, 2021

I joined the workshop for the first time in three days. Starting on this day, rehearsals took place at Yamabuki Factory in Tokyo. OKADA Toshiki seemed to be in excellent condition with his neck cast removed.

First, a video was shared in which FUJIKURA Dai had added fragments of some of his original compositions over the run-through footage filmed at Steep Slope Studio. Fujikura had also edited the video so that two musicians (a flutist and guitarist) appeared to be playing alongside the actors' performances. The setup was such that there was space for the actors on the left side of the stage and for the musicians on the right side as viewed by the audience. Okada, who had been continually thinking about the antagonism between the music and performances throughout the workshops, supported the idea for use in the actual performance.

In an email that he sent to Okada based on the content of past workshops, Fujikura said that performing together with the musicians (or audio) would strongly influence the actors. More specifically, the addition of music would alter the performance. For example, the performers might change the speed of their reading according to that of the music. Okada responded that while the possibility of this collaboration promised to serve as a powerful weapon for the work, he wanted to emphasize the "comprehensibility" of the lines of the play, that is, the words of the actors. I had heard similar statements during the production process for *Pratthana – A Portrait of Possession* (premiered in 2018). The acoustic design of this work was handled by ARAKI Masamitsu, an artist who makes acoustic-sculpture-like installations. He was very careful in finding ways to balance the sound from the acoustic equipment so that it would not interfere with the actors' speech.

Okada: If the listeners give up on understanding, the lines will become mere sound. It goes without saying that we can't let that happen. Through the rehearsals, I think the actors will gradually be able to grasp the logic of what they're saying. As long as there's some kind of core or structure to it, the audience will be able to grasp it as well. Otherwise, I imagine that it'll slip away like an octopus. "Incompletion" is crucial as well, but first, let's create a core.

In the later July workshops, the relationships established between the performances and music became a prominent element. Rehearsals continued, interposed with discussions with Fujikura in London remotely linked to the studio.

Okada: By watching Fujikura's video, I learned that playing music means moving your body. However, I don't think that it's a good idea for me to direct the musicians' movements. I feel like I can accentuate something by showing the actors and musicians moving respectively.

Fujikura: The two musicians in the video are orchestral players. Their bodies move because they're trying to match each other's playing without a conductor. The number of musicians I envision for *Music Theatre Production*, five, is the very limit of viability without a conductor, but what I wanted to show with the video I created is the appeal of chamber music. It's an example of an ensemble as acting.

After rehearsing several times with just the actors, rehearsals began with couches and stools lined up in a stage-like setup. Okada divided the actors into two groups of three members each and tried some very simple direction such as getting on and off stage, speaking while standing, and speaking while sitting. Watching and listening from his home studio in London, Fujikura appeared to experiment with applying various compositions to the real-time video.

The following is an exchange during the performance by SHIIBASHI Ayana, KAWASAKI Mariko, and AOYAGI Izumi's group.

Shiibashi: I acted as if I were listening to the music, but that made it difficult to concentrate on the script. The music is "present." I wonder what it means to be intertwined with that.

Okada: Instead of trying to approach the music, I imagine that the music will become intertwined all on its own if you grasp the core of the script, which is already beside you. It's important for this image of intertwining to end up being visible to the audience.

Fujikura: It'll probably stand out even more when there's actually a space for the musicians, won't it?

Okada: As long as the actors move in a good way, the musicians will naturally notice it. In this case, won't the actors and musicians look like they're dancing? I think that would be very funny. It would be great.

The relationship between music, movement, and words is a theme also explored in *Super Premium Soft Double Vanilla Rich*. The work uses all 48 preludes and fugues of Bach's *The Well-Tempered Clavier, Book 1*, which strongly take on the characteristics of "shackles" constantly tethering the play and the actors' performances to a certain frame. The work's dramaturgy lies in the superimposition of this with the sophisticatedly managed setting of a convenience store and, by extension, the state of Japanese society. However, Okada said that he was pursuing a more organic relationship with music in the current work. The receptive sensibility of "the music becoming intertwined all on its own" certainly seemed to differ from the passivity of *Super Premium*.

Fujikura: If you think of each musical composition as an "island," you can lie in wait for the sound by creating stopping points in between, which we call "pauses." This makes the music more elastic as well. It's one of the properties of live music.

Repeated attempts were made to assign six different compositions to each of the six actors, start the music in the middle of a line or ahead of speech, and so on. Thus, the workshop moved into the next day.

Okada: Yesterday, I formulated the hypothesis that as long as the performances are good, the sound will become intertwined with them. Today, I want to try "listening to the music" more intently or "taking a more passive role." The music is always audible—always reaches your ears. You can listen even when you're not taking a break, so you don't need to take a break to listen, but I want to try "taking a break to listen."

What Okada may have meant by this was to convert non-speaking time into "listening time" or "rests." Naturally, the actors were to continue various movements at these times as well. However, the momentary rests accentuated the central theme of the work, "inside" and "outside," and more specifically the existence of the "house" that the characters want to protect from external enemies and that they feel is being invaded. Okada emphasized that he wanted to share the "presence" of this fictional space with the audience and entrench it in their imaginations. Following this, ASAKURA Chieko, OMURA Wataru, and YAZAWA Makoto performed as a group.

Yazawa: I thought that it would be really hard to act out "sharing with the audience" like you said, but it felt like there was something maintained by the music even without me doing anything on my part.

Okada: I think it's fine to feel a sense of reassurance from the music. It's like Spider-Man coming to save you even if you fall off a building.

Fujikura: The chattering-like clarinet composition fits Yazawa's part so well that I thought, "This is it!" The composition feels like a component of the lines.

Okada: One might say that they're just pauses, but I feel like they really create a sense of singing. At the same time, it's not just to do with the sound. I think that it's connected to performing the work as something incomplete by giving the impression of fluctuations in the actors' awareness. At one point, I had a plan to fabricate musicality by making the actors string out their vowels, but now I've realized that it's completely unnecessary.

It seemed important to note that the sharing of images with the audience through pauses is not a means of emphasizing the transmissive intent to make the audience listen to something in particular. The intervals that were extended in order to entrench the fiction highlighted by the play that "this is our house" as something "present" would not provide answers to the audience, but rather reveal a space for questioning.

Okada: Unless we open it up to the audience like this, I think that the music, that is, the playing will become mere background music.

Only two days remained of the first series of workshops, and this was the final day that I was able to observe. However, the experimentation would continue. Fujikura commented on the play *Never Given*, which was updated and grew in length daily.

Fujikura: As the work will be over one hour long by the time it premieres in Vienna in 2023, it's probably better if there are fixed rules for Okada, the actors and musicians, and me. In terms of the orchestration, I think that a clarinet and string quartet will be most effective.

However, because of the length, I'm agonized by wanting to construct the music. Normally, I wouldn't take the classical approach of sandwiching the music between the same themes at the beginning and end, but as this is musical theater, it might be a chance to do just that.

There was also mention of the presence or absence of music in a manner linked to the discussion of "pauses" in the previous day's performances. Assuming the strength of the structure of the music and the concept supporting it, "looping" could be used to broadly establish three categories: "lines over the music," "no music," and "musically static." Fujikura suggested that by shuffling these, a natural structure could be created while accentuating a pulse-like tempo. Based on his suggestions, parts without music were added to the performance. Some roles were also swapped between male and female actors.

Fujikura: It might not be necessary to aggressively attach meaning to the "absence" of music. Also, a major discovery for me personally is the fact that male and female performers give a very different feel to the performance. My music tends to be in the upper register, so it's prone to clashing with female voices. That's what I tried to avoid in my compositions, but there were some parts that I felt were questionable. As a future policy, it would be good if we could settle which lines are spoken by male or female actors.

Okada: Let's do that. In the production that we rehearsed last month (*Yuzuru*), there were also problems with the ranges of the actors or singers, making some parts difficult to hear.

Fujikura: In opera, that's a constant issue. Japanese pop has a strong tendency to actively pit the instrumentals and backing vocals against the main female vocals, generating conflict. But what I want to achieve is coexistence between the two—a state in which this coexistence occurs spontaneously.

While updating the central axis of the acting was a point of contention in the earlier July workshops, the later ones developed the performances overall by exploring their relationship to the music. Through these workshops, it seemed as if Okada's very concept for *Music Theatre Production* was greatly expanded. The play, which started as the story of a core "family," had previously given the feeling that the six characters would survive until the end. However, amid the antagonism between the music and performances, the family (or community resembling one) exited early, and its presence ceased to be a problem. In other words, as Okada predicted, human matters were no longer the central theme.

Non-anthropocentricism is a hot topic in many areas of contemporary art, science, and philosophy, but insofar as it is grasped by the European standards of the modern era and later, it remains a matter of humans (and deities or faith). Similarly, insofar as it deals with the abstraction and embodiment of diverse human behavior, it is difficult for theater to become fully divorced from human existence. However, rather than uncritically

foregrounding his reliable method of "imagination" and "conception of imagery," Okada attempted to envision a new form of musical theater based on unrefined (in a positive sense) collaboration between the music and actors in this workshop, filling it with creative potential and anticipation. The next would be in November.

Resumption of workshops after the premier of *Yuzuru*

About three months had passed since the previous workshop. The originally scheduled work-in-progress performance in Vienna, Austria, was quickly abandoned and switched to a second series of workshops and work-in-progress performance at Tower Hall Funabori in Edogawa, Tokyo. In the meantime, Okada had experienced directing his first operatic work, *Yuzuru* (premiered in 2021). The workshops were resumed only two days after the premiere.

Okada: Back in July, I said that I wanted to create something that wasn't opera without knowing much about opera. But after directing *Yuzuru*, the meaning and texture of "not opera" have changed greatly for me. In a way, it's like I've just gotten back from the land of opera and am suffering from jetlag, but I think that's definitely a good place to start.

When I asked the actors who had watched the Tokyo performance two days prior about their impressions, one by one they shared realizations connected to the relationship between the performances and music as explored in the July workshops. "I was surprised that the singing sounded more like lines than I'd imagined. It was also interesting how the singers interacted with the music onstage" (Yazawa). "I practice *rokyoku* (recitation of stories accompanied by shamisen playing), so I really want to be able to achieve narrating the verses instead of singing them. The opera did that" (Shiibashi).

Okada: Singing and music tend to be thought of as abstract, but *Yuzuru* reminded me that opera has concrete storylines and roles. The emotions of the actors or singers are expressed through the singing and music, so you could think of them as lines.

The way I see it, opera is a format suited to starting from "what to imagine" like we did in the past workshops, because the music carries the "emotional" aspect of the work. The actors' movements and acting are in yet another layer.

Looking back on the production of *Yuzuru*, Okada said that while there were certainly moments when he was tempted to have the actors or singers themselves express the emotions represented by the music, doing so would have led the music and actors to clash, missing his original aims.

Writing this report after the fact, I hypothesize that concretely building up the comprehensive nature of the act of drama and then clearly dividing those elements into layers so that they run side by side may be the foundation of Okada's creative work. For example, while working on *Pratthana – A Portrait of Possession* with its original author, Thai novelist Uthis HAEMAMOOL, and scenographer TSUKAHARA Yuya of contact Gonzo, I heard Okada himself make statements to the effect that his directing in that play was fairly conservative. However, I feel like this was due to the scale of production of *Pratthana* being the largest that he had ever worked on. With the main line that moves the narrative along being the scope of the original author and the decorative and formative aspects that constitute the muscle and fat of the work being that of the scenographer, Okada's task of embodying the drama as the playwright and director naturally converged, or shrank, into a limited domain. Although it is, of course, the role of the director to synthesize these divided elements along the timeline of the performance, they are synthesized in a realer sense by each audience member. (This is where the issues of imagination and conception of imagery mentioned by Okada enter the foreground.) It goes without saying that this broadly collaborative aspect is the reason why not only Okada, but all physical artists emphasize the presence of the audience. Theater is "something created collectively."

Nonetheless, what Okada idealizes may not be uniaxial collaboration in which the boundary between the self and the other becomes ambiguously fused, evoking a living organism or blood ties, but rather a state of (a) synchronous collaboration with the individual outlines or sharp distinctions of the director as director, the actors as actors, and the musicians as musicians kept solid and yet running side by side in the same direction. His previously mentioned statement that "the actors' movements and acting are in yet another layer," as well as the dialogues that took place at the workshops previously described in this report, appear to be potential evidence of that. In Okada's case, his awareness of the collective/cooperative in theater prescribes not only the state of organization but also his own creative grammar.

Returning to the topic of *Yuzuru*, Okada spoke as follows about opera and the various forms of staging derived from it.

Okada: In addition to the concert format, opera can apparently also be performed as just singers singing, without a set or costumes. It's said that many opera fans prefer that. But I feel like that's totally wrong. In opera, there's music that can't be heard unless it's staged narratively with the singers present as actors.

As Fujikura's music is really strong, I want to make that strength audible. I hope that I can make the actors and audience aware of it so that it comes through even more by watching the performance. That's the goal for the next four days of workshops—how the music will change when the layer of imagination is created.

My first report introduced OUKI Tamiko and Okada's recognition of "chelfitsch as a laboratory." For me, the word "laboratory" conjures up the image of "a vessel for things that are less than the finished work." It also suggests room for a large number of unspecified people from various backgrounds to become involved. This is truly how the creation of *Music Theatre Production* can be put into perspective.

Does this mean that once the results of the experiment are given explicit form, the name "chelfitsch" has completed its role? In some ways, that may be the case. After experimentation through chelfitsch, Okada uses his personal name, "Okada Toshiki," because it is backed by his directorial success and its reproducibility—in other words, his directing abilities (although I believe that this is usually an external decision by the other parties who commission Okada rather than his own choice). At the other end of the spectrum, projects that maintain an experimental nature, such as *Eraser Mountain* and *EIZO-Theater*, proactively use the name "chelfitsch."

However, in the case of a work such as *Pratthana* where the three names "Uthis Haemamool," "Okada Toshiki," and "Tsukahara Yuya" are placed side by side, I feel like Okada's individual role as director becomes conceptually isolated from the others (it is because it is sufficiently isolated that effective collaboration with others is possible), and his self-aware-

ness of grasping the overall work as a “playwright” is already abandoned by the time of the performance, when the work is widely shared with audiences. It is somewhere within the production process transitioning from “chelfitsch” to “Okada Toshiki” that the moment arrives in which the identity of “playwright Okada Toshiki” is outlined. It may be the identity named by the phenomenon that occurs in the moments of encounters and collisions between different values and layers as seen in *Music Theatre Production* and *Yuzuru*, as well as in the aftermath when those layers are progressively divided to run side by side in the quest for imaginary synthesis.

Photo: KATO Kazuya

chelfitsch & Dai Fujikura with Klangforum Wien (Austria)

"Work-In-Progress for Music Theatre Production" Fourth Report: Performance and Reflection

Author: SHIMANUKI Taisuke

Toward the work-in-progress performance

With the location moved to the Small Hall of Tower Hall Funabori, where the work-in-progress performance would be held, November began with several days of "story sessions."

"Story sessions" are a standard warm-up in OKADA Toshiki's creative process. Sitting in a circle, the actors listen to an episode related by the previous member and reenact it themselves. Then, they add their own story. This is repeated by the next member and then the next. (The topic of the story can be anything, such as something that happened on the way to the rehearsal room, or the actor's recent hobbies.) Resembling an "acting telephone game," the method is one that Okada often uses in theatrical workshops for students and children as well. Although I have never participated directly, and it is only my impression as a bystander, I feel like the method's advantage lies in molding one's own imagination physically and psychologically to assimilate another person's experiences through this playful process. The irregular, hearsay-style reporting (and attempts at such) that materializes in this manner, reminiscent of a medium channeling a spirit, quite naturally brings out what can be described as a very "chelfitsch-style" performance.

Becoming another person is a basic element of acting. However, rather than trying to erase the self, I suspect that the multiplexing, fluctuations, and friction in identity produced by tracing or overwriting another's imagination as if it were one's own while maintaining oneself have something in common with the "layers" to which Okada frequently alluded within this creative process, as well as the "running side by side" that I mentioned in the previous report.

Photo: KATO Kazuya

Partly because it was the first time the cast had come together in about three months, the main point on the first day was to restore the sense attained in the previous workshops while further expanding it. Owing somewhat to the fact that the performance in front of an audience was only four days away (November 5), everyone seemed to share a more practical feeling of tension. This kind of immediate tension is stimulating as well as desirable, but as an observer, I also felt like the openness of the laboratory in July and the more relaxed pace with no hurry to complete the work had receded, which was a pity. The fact that it was just after the performance of *Yuzuru*, Okada's first chance to work on an opera, may have also had some effect.

On the other hand, one thing to be welcomed was the fresh addition of elements to improve the precision of the laboratory—namely, the participation of the engineering team composed mainly of sound staff from the Born Creative Festival organized by FUJIKURA Dai at the Tokyo Metropolitan Theatre. Although the remote system built by Nagie had been utilized to full effect in the July workshops, it was now further enhanced. Multiple microphones and cameras were installed inside the theater along with oversized wireless communication equipment resembling military communication devices. Thus, higher-definition audiovisual information could be transmitted to Fujikura in London.

To quote Fujikura in an interview during the workshops, "the functions of a studio were transferred directly to the theater." This enabled his work operating production equipment at hand to be delivered to Tokyo in real time, as well as footage of the practice in Tokyo to be transmitted to Fujikura in London without any delays. Establishing this environment, which required dedicated staff and technical gear for communication, set a fairly high bar in terms of both the budget and technology, one that would be utterly unaffordable for an individual or single-company production. However, as a positive example of a new creative environment produced by the COVID-19 pandemic, it deserves mention that if leading public theaters in Japan and overseas used similar systems for cooperation, it seems that they could definitely establish specialized remote creative environments usable even after the pandemic.

Photo: KATO Kazuya

So, how did practice with Okada and the actors change? It may have been because he was more conscious of giving shape to the work than in the July workshops, but my impression was that more of the analogies that Okada used with the actors were specific things explicitly eliciting images of weight and gravitation—an anchor that "refuses to budge," or a great several-hundred-year-old tree spreading its roots to secure its position. The actors, too, used expressions such as "building a brick house for the three little pigs" (AOYAGI Izumi). In an interview that I conducted following the July workshops, I had told Okada I was "surprised that creation with such capable actors begins from a ground zero that is so unrefined, in a positive sense." Okada had responded, "It's largely because they're so capable. And when creating something, starting by grappling in the mud of the foundation leads to better results in the end." Weighty ex-

changes continued, evoking the process of mud becoming sand and then brick and gaining materiality.

After a fitting session for the performance (although all of the "costumes" were the actors' own clothes) and a break, practice resumed with Fujikura's participation.

Okada: In this phase, I'd like to experiment with how far to mold imagination into the performances. To put it simply, instead of Fujikura's music being tied to the characters' emotions, I think that it'd be interesting if it was connected to the characters' imaginations…if the music could look like it was depicting that. This is an area where I'm influenced by having staged an opera.

Hearing Okada recount the experience he gained from *Yuzuru*, Fujikura retorted slyly, "Welcome to the world of opera!" It seemed as if Fujikura had already predicted that the experience of working on an opera would change Okada's views on "musical theater."

Something rather unique about the work-in-progress performance on the final day was that the actors' performances, based on the approximately 10-minute play that Okada had newly written for the production, were to be staged with two different versions of accompaniments: one with footage of the five members of Klangforum Wien (string quartet and clarinet) playing filmed in advance in Vienna, and another with the Japanese string quartet Ensemble NOMAD (HANADA Wakako and KAWAGUCHI Shizuka on the violin, KAI Fumiko on the viola, and HOSOI Yui on the cello) and YOSHIDA Makoto on the clarinet playing live. The former, with the progression of the music determined in advance, and the latter, with the actors and musicians interacting, would naturally result in performances with different qualities. However, there were also commonalities.

Okada commented as follows regarding the performance of KAWASAKI Mariko, who had the first lines in the play.

Okada: I thought that it was good that she didn't start speaking as soon as the music started. Although the play begins with a call from a real estate agent, imagining the voice on the phone, which is unpleasant to her, acts as a switch. If she thinks about the music this way, she might be able to impart a subliminal meaning for the audience.

Then, her performance naturally became bigger by working with the music, and I think that's a good thing. It's like hitting back hard when you're hit first. I feel like imagination and the kind of performance that spreads from it will make it easier for her to create certain physical movements and states from the core of the image she has now.

The method of acting in which the actor outputs a physical and psychological reaction to a certain phenomenon that occurs is the same for both recording and live music. But this is commonplace. What makes Okada's directing unique is that it encourages recombination of the circuits of the input phenomena and the output via the actor's imagination.

Okada: If an actor bursts into tears in response to the music, the music will become tied to crying. In other words, it's too broad.

But no matter how concrete the things we imagine are, they don't exist. Still, imagination and the music are tied firmly together. Even if only a little, you push the image of the voice as if it were something that actually exists. And yet, no matter how much you push it, it remains nonexistent and invisible. That's why Kawasaki's character is comfortable despite the external enemy.

Spinning off from this discussion, Fujikura pointed out the following regarding the changes he expected to see in the live-music version.

Fujikura: When the musicians actually join, they'll probably be influenced by the actors' speaking tempo and phrases. This made me wonder whether it'll be difficult for the musicians to ignore the actors' performances because they understand Japanese. But as Austrian musicians who don't understand Japanese won't understand the meanings of the words, I feel like something interesting could happen.

Suggestions for collaboration gleaned from music production

Going slightly off topic, I would like to quote another fascinating comment by Fujikura.

Fujikura: When there's a conductor, the ensemble or orchestra plays according to the conductor's notions, so without a conductor, it inevitably becomes more democratic. Each of the five members plays while sensing the others. It's a very interesting situation. Even if the performance in 2023 has more than five players, I think it can still be written so as not to require a conductor.

As my interests skew toward contemporary theater (or rather, the formalistic and postmodern trend in Japanese theater, of which the emergence of Okada Toshiki and chelfitsch is a historical node), I have focused on describing the theatrical aspects, especially for the July workshops. However, what surprised me while observing the November workshops was the meticulousness of the arrangements for the creation of the music, which did not assume extemporaneity.

Considering the schedule and workshop program, the music used was constructed by cutting and pasting fragments of several of Fujikura's past compositions. However, this definitely did not mean that the work was easy. As the performance would include live playing by an ensemble, the entire score written for the production needed to be given to each musician in advance. If the work required composing from scratch, like a new opera, this would take an exponentially greater amount of time. The full orchestra would not be able to practice until just before the performance, and plans would need to be made while constantly anticipating the feasibility of the orchestration and tones. The composer's role would become almost as rigid as that of structural design in architecture.

On the other hand, as long as there is a completed score, a professional musician has the skills to reproduce the music perfectly with just a bit of practice. If anything, this is the domain of Western music, which was backed by a firm system for artistic expression premised on reproduction before the birth of replicated art.

Instead, whether contemporary art, theater, or music, artistic expression in the modern era, which relies greatly on the primacy of the agent of expression, has affirmed the accidents and happenings contained in "extemporaneity"—the singularity or uniqueness that cannot occur without a particular person, time, and place—as something welcome. Okada Toshi-

ki and chelfitsch, who have constructed their own styles and forms with a high degree of precision, are no exception. Often employing the production method of a work in progress, they are, needless to say, extremely modernistic artists. Given that fact, the offer from Wiener Festwochen to "create a new work related to music of a genre originating in the West" begins to seem like an immensely difficult task.

That is why Fujikura's comment I cited earlier is so significant. The reason he put a string quartet at the core of the creation is that this configuration makes it possible to look for musicians anywhere, and it is the smallest unit that can guarantee musical range through the playing method of each instrument. Clarinetist Yoshida Makoto and the members of Ensemble NOMAD also have past experience with Fujikura's creation, making them musicians with full knowledge of the intentions and tendencies of a composer. This creates a flexible framework with a strategy to avoid the risk of creation collapsing, while also remaining responsive to the improvisational creation required of contemporary theater.

Although interdisciplinary cooperation/collaboration is common at artistic events these days, my impression is that the point of these projects is usually a creative explosion born from singular encounters among artists inhabiting different disciplines.

Of course, multiyear medium-term frameworks occasionally appear as well, but even these are very much like anomalous training camps or retreats temporarily provided for the ongoing activities of individual artists. It seems unlikely that the experiences and techniques acquired there will be worked up to a level resembling a "system." One might call it the "chronic ailment" of arts and culture in a globalized economy where quarterly closing of accounts is the norm, but the framework of this project, one of interdisciplinary co-creation, real exchanges between contemporary art and classical art and accumulated outcomes, and international joint production, which does not rely excessively on the fashions of the day, the fickle desires of consuming audiences, or the moods of artists and planners, needs to be requestioned.

In this sense as well, the *Music Theatre Production* project, which has set the not-so-distant year 2023 as its finish line, seems to be of great significance. Although I have only touched on them slightly in this report, it contains more than a few promising seeds and hints, such as the verification of specialized remote engineering. Something like a hackathon or open hub focused on fine-art or performing-art productions might also be possible.

Photo: KATO Kazuya

Summary (or an abrupt ending that does not fully serve as one)

I am nearing the prescribed word count, and although there are countless scenes and comments that it would be a shame not to include, I must hasten to finish this text. Thus, I would like to conclude by presenting my emailed interview with Hanada Wakako, who played in the work-in-progress performance as a member of Ensemble Nomad. The following are some of her post-performance impressions that I have compiled.

—— How were the sessions with Okada Toshiki and the actors?

Hanada: Even though I've provided recorded music for theater and dance works before, I've never played onstage as part of one. Not only that, but instead of a finished work, we joined during the production process, so the other members and I all began with confusion and puzzlement. I feel like it ended while we were still exploring the meaning of our presence onstage and the demands of the live playing, but it was an extremely exciting experience.

The "intersection of the world that the actors imagine in order to speak their lines with the world that the musicians imagine in order to play the music" that Okada talked about on the first day of practice was especially fascinating—the fact that these imagined worlds, which cannot be expressed (or are not visible) externally, cross each other through the acting and playing.

—— Playing usually follows a score, but this performance included experiments with improvisation, where you adjusted the transitions of the compositions according to the actors' performances. How did you feel about dealing with this at the same time as the music?

Hanada: In conventional operas and musical works with recitation, the measure of the music is predetermined, and the relationship between the music and words consists of timing the words to it. However, with this work I had the chance to experience a new kind of relationship, one in which the music is timed to the lines spoken by the actors. As the actors' lines are something living, I realized that this kind of relationship with the music is possible, and I anticipated that it might even create a more equal relationship between the music and the lines. (Perhaps this is what is required of "musical theater" that is neither a musical nor a theatrical work?)

A major feature of this work is that it strives to create an integrated relationship, with the music equal to the acting rather than just background music. Still, when it came to moving to the next composition without playing the previous one all the way through, as a musician, not being able to play the composer's work all the way to the end felt like a waste. In the beginning, I was caught up in thinking that music is "complete" when the last note is played, so it felt strange to move on to the next composition while the previous one was unfinished. However, through my interactions with Fujikura, I was relieved to learn that it didn't necessarily matter to him as composer whether each composition was "played all the way to the end."

As for the technical side of things, due to the nature of the relationship with the music, I really struggled with having to listen for the flow of the actors' lines while playing. In particular, as it was ensemble piece without a conductor, when I focused on making music as part of the ensemble, I would sometimes unconsciously stop hearing the lines and miss their timing, but when I tried to listen to the lines, there were moments when I would become a bit detached from my playing. On the first day, I thought, "I wish I had two brains!"

—— How did you feel about the concept of the music assuming the role of an “outsider” or “other”?

Hanada: There were two combinations, one with live music and one with video footage. When I saw the rehearsal with the video, I felt like it gave a stronger impression of an “outsideness/otherness” (in the sense that there was no response to changes in the actors). On the other hand, when we performed live, whether consciously or subconsciously, we couldn’t help reacting to the delivery and movements of the actors. In that sense, I feel like we produced a sense of “outsideness/otherness” completely different from that of the video. If the onstage configuration were switched from the current one, with the actors and musicians all in a nearly straight line, to one with us arranged in a V shape facing each other slightly or with some members in front or behind, it might change how we, the musicians, perceive the actors’ movements and energy.

These responses provide many realizations and implications, but to summarize them roughly, just like the changes in the actors in response to the music that I described earlier, it seems that the actors’ performances also had a strong influence on the musicians. Due in part to the fact that there was limited time for creation, that influence tended to be a strain on the information processing necessary for playing. However, there is surely much to be gained from repeated practice and concept sharing. Meanwhile, the embodiment of “outsideness” or “otherness” sought by the work, as pointed out by Hanada, holds the potential for various trials.

For example, it might be possible to explore larger structures such as introducing the musical systems and rules of “reproduction from a score” that I mentioned in the previous section as another element of otherness to theater. Okada’s work in recent years includes attempts to “hack” the systems and histories of classical performing arts like Noh drama, opera, and ballet on a contextual level. The abstract concept of “musical theater” sought through this project can allow for diverse forms of experimentation not limited to practical performances. As I look forward to the finished form of *Music Theatre Production* in 2023, I hope that the various discoveries and results obtained along the way will grow and take hold with a reach that extends beyond artistic creation.

PROJECT

SPAC Autumn–Spring 2021–2022 #2: “The Cherry Orchard”

SPAC-Shizuoka Performing Arts Center and T2G-Théâtre de Gennevilliers-Centre Dramatique National (France)

Performance flyer

This production of *The Cherry Orchard* was a collaboration between SPAC-Shizuoka Performing Arts Center and T2G-Théâtre de Gennevilliers-Centre Dramatique National. Working on the play by Anton CHEKHOV with Japanese and French actors, director Daniel JEANNETEAU embodied the depths of the human psyche in delicate art and lighting to create an onstage world that stirs the memories of audience members.
It was the fourth play directed by Jeanneteau in Japan following his previous collaborations with SPAC, consisting of *Blasted* (premiered in 2009), *The Glass Menagerie* (premiered in 2011), and *The Blind* (premiered in 2015).
Both French and Japanese were spoken onstage in a complete reimagining of Chekhov’s world of drama. The premiere was in November 2021 at Shizuoka Arts Theatre.


Daniel Jeanneteau ©Olivier Roller

Outline of Performances

Regular performances
Schedule: 2:00 p.m. on Nov. 13 (Sat.), Nov. 14 (Sun.), Nov. 20 (Sat.), Nov. 21 (Sun.), Nov. 23 (Tues. public holiday), Nov. 28 (Sun.), and Dec. 12 (Sun.), 2021

Performances for junior and senior high school students
Schedule: 1:30 p.m. on Nov. 12 (Fri.); 2:30 p.m. on Nov. 16 (Tues.); 1:30 p.m. on Nov. 17 (Wed.), Nov. 22 (Mon.), Dec. 6 (Mon.), and Dec. 8 (Wed.); 2:00 p.m. on Dec. 13 (Mon.); 1:30 p.m. on Dec. 14 (Tues.); and 10:00 a.m. and 2:30 p.m. on Dec. 15 (Wed.), 2021
Duration: 2 hr. 20 min.
Venue: Shizuoka Arts Theatre

Credits

Direction and Scenography: Daniel JEANNETEAU
Artistic Collaboration, Dramaturgy, and Video: Mammar BENRANOU
Text: Anton CHEKHOV
Translation: André MARKOWICZ, Françoise MORVAN (French), and ADACHI Noriko (Japanese)
Cast: SUZUKI Haruyo, FUSE Asuka, Solène ARBEL, ABE Kazunori, Quentin BOUISSOU, Aurélien ESTAGER, KONAGAYA Katsuhiko, Nathalie KOUSNET-ZOFF, KATO Yukio, YAMAMOTO Miyuki, Axel BOGOUSSLAVSKY, DAIDOMUMON Yuya, and OUCHI Yoneji
Lighting Design: Juliette BESANÇON / Sound Design: Isabelle SUREL / Music: TANAKAWA Hiroko
Costume Design: KOMAI Yumiko
Stage Manager: OGAWA Tetsuro / Stage: ICHIKAWA Kazumi and TSUCHIYA Katsunori / Lighting Operator: HANAWA Yuuki
Lighting: KOBAYAKAWA Hiroya and MIZUNO Hikaru / Sound: HARADA Shinobu and TAKESHIMA Chisato / Artwork: FUKASAWA Eri and SATO Yosuke
Chairs: HIKOSAKA Reiko / Video Technician: TAKEZAWA Akira/ Video Operator: MORITA Honoka / Wardrobe: YAMAMOTO Kana
Technical Director: MURAMATSU Atsushi / Interpretation: ISHIKAWA Hiromi, YOKOYAMA Yoshiji, YAMADA Hiromi, and HARA Mariko
Production: KEIMI Aoi, YONEYAMA Junichi, SAKANAKA Toshiki, and OISHI Takako / Subtitle Operation: OISHI Takako and NAGAI Kenji (December 12 only)
Flyer Design: ABE Taichi (TAICHI ABE DESIGN INC.) / Promotional Photography: HASHIMOTO Hirotaka

Organized by The Japan Foundation and SPAC-Shizuoka Performing Arts Center
Produced by SPAC-Shizuoka Performing Arts Center and T2G-Théâtre de Gennevilliers-Centre Dramatique National
Coproduced by Théâtre des 13 vents CDN Montpellier

Performance photography ©K. Miura

SPAC-Shizuoka Performing Arts Center and T2G-Théâtre de Gennevilliers-Centre Dramatique National (France)

"The Cherry Orchard" First Report: Launch of Project

Author: HORIKIRI Katsuhiro

T2G Théâtre de Gennevilliers: A Hub of Theatrical Exchange between Japan and France

SPAC-Shizuoka Performing Arts Center has invited director Daniel JEANNETEAU, a central figure in French public theater circles who has been serving as the director of T2G Théâtre de Gennevilliers in the Parisian suburbs since January 2017, to work on an international coproduction of *The Cherry Orchard* by Anton CHEKHOV. While this is the fourth time Jeanneteau has taken up residence at SPAC, following *Blasted* (2009), *The Glass Menagerie* (2011), and *The Blind* (2015), it is the first time that actors and staff from both Japan and France will participate, generating huge anticipation for the resultant work.

Needless to say, this is a continual exchange between public theaters in Japan and France on an unparalleled scale. However, I should perhaps emphasize at the outset that it cannot all necessarily be reduced to the activities of SPAC. T2G has become a hub of theatrical exchange between Japan and France in recent years thanks to the personal relationship of trust between its previous director Pascal RAMBERT (in office from 2007 to 2017) and Japanese playwright HIRATA Oriza (Reference: FUJII Shintaro, "Pascal Rambert and T2G Théâtre de Gennevilliers: Driving Forces behind Theatrical Exchange between Japan and France").

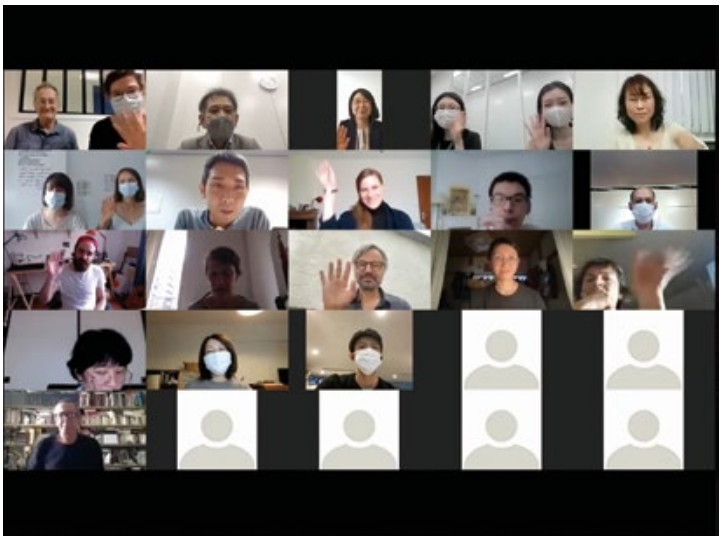
T2G Théâtre de Gennevilliers is currently one of the venues hosting artists from Japan as part of Festival d'Automne à Paris (a performing arts festival held every year from around September to December at theaters in Paris and its suburbs). In 2021, two works are scheduled to be performed: *Fortress of Smiles* by Niwa Gekidan Penino and *Eraser Mountain* by chelfitsch and KANEUJI Teppei. Fujii ends his previously cited report by stating, "The new director of T2G who took over from Rambert is Daniel Jeanneteau, a leading expert on Japan in French theatrical circles, who has forged deep connections with Japan. This must be more than just a coincidence and raises hopes that the heritage of cultural exchanges built by Rambert will be passed on to the next generation in a different format." In this sense, the *Cherry Orchard* project could be called the second chapter of international exchange between T2G and Japan. The fact that it was a coproduction with SPAC, which had already established a trusting relationship with Jeanneteau, might even be called inevitable.

Challenges for an International Coproduction amid the COVID-19 Pandemic

Ahead of the performances from November to December 2021, SPAC, which would host the French actors, divided rehearsal into two phases (first: August 6 to 31; second: October 11 to November 11). However, the future of the project was clouded by uncertainty amid fears that COVID-19 infections would rise due to the Tokyo Olympics (July 23 to August 8) and Paralympics (August 24 to September 5) being held despite insufficient progress in vaccinations.

As of July 2021, visas were not actually being issued for travel from France to Japan, and it would not ordinarily have been possible for the actors to enter the country. However, they were able to receive visas on July 19 thanks to an exemption for "exceptional circumstances." They departed Paris (Charles de Gaulle Airport) on July 21 and arrived at Haneda Airport the next day, traveling from there straight to the SPAC dormitory in Shizuoka. Rehearsal started after they had finished their 14-day period of isolation. Although the number of infections, which had been on the rise since early July, peaked on August 26 (at about 25,000 new infections), the fact that the creative environment of SPAC was isolated from urban areas ended up being the most positive factor in terms of carrying out international exchange amid a health crisis. Most importantly of all, at this time of emergency posing a risk of cultural atrophy, the flexible response and cooperation for artistic creation from both Japan and France contributed to major achievements on the production side.

The first phase of rehearsal started with a read-through of the script. In order to make effective use of the actors' government-mandated isolation periods, this was begun in late July using a videoconferencing tool (Zoom), but it was far from ideal. The actors did not all have the same script on the first day, there was frequent noise such as the sound of shuffling papers and email notifications, and network connection and microphone issues occurred repeatedly. Under these challenging conditions, director Jeanneteau first and foremost emphasized carefully sharing the characteristics and ambience he had envisioned for each act of *The Cherry Orchard* with not only the actors but also the partial participation of music and wardrobe staff. The importance of interpreting to such an international project was also affirmed again and again.



Zoom orientation prior to travel to Japan

Progress of Rehearsal (Phase I)

What was interesting in the read-through was that Jeanneteau frequently encouraged both the Japanese and French actors to "read slowly and carefully rather than at natural speed." In other words, at this stage, he was trying to minimize the incorporation of characterization or interpretation in the acting in order to pursue the various possibilities of the script. Although Jeanneteau can communicate with basic greetings, he cannot perfectly understand Japanese. However, he gave the actors fairly precise instructions by comparing their lines (acting) with the bilingual Japanese and French script. The relationships of trust he had already built with them played a large role.

In the latter half of the first phase of rehearsal (starting in mid-August), rehearsal began in the theater on a stage with minimal props. The actors varied their speed of delivery, inflection, and pauses as well as bodily

movements. (At this point, they still wore masks.) In addition to directing the actors, what became important at this stage was the musical work for Act III (music is a critical element in this act, which is set in a drawing room where music played by a Jewish band can be heard). In this production, the lighting design was assigned to the French side and the costume design to the Japanese side (lighting: Juliette BESANÇON; costumes: KOMAI Yumiko), while the sound design was assigned to the French side and the music to the Japanese side (sound: Isabelle SUREL; music: TANAKAWA Hiroko). Thus, the image of the work was gradually shared among the actors and staff. Despite concerns and difficulties related to travel restrictions caused by the pandemic, it can be concluded that the first phase of rehearsal went along without any major disturbances.

The Significance of Staging *The Cherry Orchard*

It was SPAC (General Artistic Director MIYAGI Satoshi) that had selected Chekhov as the playwright for this coproduction. However, I was shocked to learn that Jeanneteau had never before in his 30-year career staged a work by Chekhov (either as a director or a scenographer). Chekhov's works are, of course, frequently performed in France; for example, it was *The Cherry Orchard* (directed by Tiago RODRIGUES) that opened the 2021 Festival d'Avignon in the courtyard of the Papal Palace. Nonetheless, it was for this very reason that a work by Chekhov would require a brand-new style of staging and reading from a French director, setting a high bar.

Of course, this may hold true in Japan to a certain extent as well. Just looking at recent productions of *The Cherry Orchard*, it was staged by New National Theatre, Tokyo, during the 2015–2016 season (directed by UYAMA Hitoshi) and by director GONOHE Marie of the Bungakuza theater company at Kawasaki Art Center and other venues in 2020. In terms of commercial theater, it was staged by PARCO Theater in 2012 (directed by MITANI Koki), and a production was planned by SIS Company in 2020 (directed by Keralino SANDOROVICH). The Dainanagekijo, which has staged all of Chekhov's four major plays, also staged *The Cherry Orchard* in October 2021, during SPAC's preparatory period (composition, directing, art, and translation: NARUMI Kohei). Narumi is close friends with SPAC's General Artistic Director Miyagi Satoshi, and MISHIMA Keita joined the cast from SPAC. That being said, in Japan, where scenography and reading of the play constitute a relatively lower proportion of directing, the work may not be considered to set such a "high bar."

In this context, although the production was based on the most recently published translation of *The Cherry Orchard* by ADACHI Noriko (Mirai-sha Publishers, 2020), Jeanneteau proposed using the translation by André MARKOWICZ, which reconstructs the first version of Chekhov's manuscript. This was because most of the translations currently in circulation are based on the revised version requested of Chekhov by director Konstantin STANISLAVSKI. In particular, there is supposedly an interesting exchange between Firs and Charlotta at the end of Act II. (In the popular version, the act ends with the dialogue between Anya and Trofimov.) This act had to be newly translated in order to correct the differences from the Adachi translation.

As a sidenote, Markowicz (born in Czechoslovakia) is a poet as well as a translator who has collaborated with Jeanneteau on stage productions before. In 1990, he began publishing the complete works of Fyodor DOSTOEVSKY. In the performing arts field, he has translated works by Maxim GORKY, Nikolai GOGOL, and William SHAKESPEARE. Together with his partner Françoise MORVAN, he has also published the complete works of Chekhov through Actes Sud, which has published numerous plays, finishing in 2014 with *Platonov*. Since 2006, he has engaged in sessions he calls "open improvised translations."

How the lines of the play envisioned by the director as a poetic text are to be developed through teamwork by both the Japanese and French actors will surely become clear during the second phase of rehearsal.

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Photo: Hirotaka Hashimoto

Dialogue with Director Daniel Jeanneteau

—— Over the course of your career, have you ever staged a work by Chekhov before?

Jeanneteau: In my thirty-year career, I've never staged a work by Chekhov before, either as a director or a scenographer. This is my first time.

—— That means this will be a big challenge for you, doesn't it?

Jeanneteau: I've actually wanted to stage Chekhov for a long time. He's a great playwright. But his works are staged all the time and everywhere in France, so I'd need to discover something new in them. Instead, I've always staged more contemporary works, but then I received the proposal from Japan. In France, I'd probably never have staged Chekhov. It was Japan that brought me closer to him when Miyagi Satoshi invited me to stage Chekhov at SPAC, which I think is sort of interesting. After agonizing about all kinds of things, I eventually decided to stage *The Cherry Orchard*.

—— Previously in Japan, you've staged works by Sarah KANE, Tennessee WILLIAMS, and Maurice MAETERLINCK, focusing on the "contemporary" rather than the "classical." Given this, why did you choose *The Cherry Orchard*?

Jeanneteau: I was torn between *Uncle Vanya* and *The Cherry Orchard*, but I thought that *The Cherry Orchard* might be a more wide-open work with a larger capacity. It's also more complex. No major happenings occur in the work. It's just a chain of trivial events. There's a lightness to it, like chatting or gossip. It's not dramatic like *Uncle Vanya* or *Ivanov*, and that's what I like about it. In other words, even though it's a work without a single serious element, it has an aspect of showing the state of the world. It's a profoundly tragic work, and more broadly speaking, it's a work that depicts people in an era of extremely dramatic social change.

—— Chekhov died only a few months after the play opened in 1904. The Russian Revolution beginning with the "Bloody Sunday" incident occurred in the next year, 1905, leading to the February Revolution of 1917. It was a turbulent era, wasn't it?

Jeanneteau: *The Cherry Orchard* has been interpreted in various ways, but for me, I think it really resembles the current times.

—— What, specifically, do you mean by "the current times"?

Jeanneteau: I mean the times in which we're living now. The era of *The Cherry Orchard* is the turn of the 20th century, so to speak, just before major events like the Russian Revolution and World War I. I think people in those days more or less sensed that something was brewing. I think they realized that the ways of doings things in the previous century would no longer be viable. As industrialization progressed, and the speed of production increased, new forms of business developed. At the same time, a huge gap emerged. I think Chekhov must have realized this—that things could no longer continue on the same path. Although, as he died shortly thereafter, he never saw the revolution or the war.

—— So, you sense this sort of "discontinuity" in the times?

Jeanneteau: Yes, but it's all intuitive. It might seem superficial, but I feel like we're now at the end of an era, and how we live will change tremendously. I feel like even the theme of (viral) mutation itself is relevant to this play by Chekhov. That's what makes it interesting to me. *The Cherry Orchard* doesn't depict any frenzied scenes. No single character is right; instead, they're all correct in their own ways. But no one can go back to the old days. I feel like the essence of this situation is very similar to the one we're currently in.

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—— In other words, although it may seem at first glance like a work composed of silly little conversations, your view is that it's more in line with the times than Chekhov's other three major plays.

Jeanneteau: I think global crises like the pandemic and climate change have dramatically changed my reading of *The Cherry Orchard*. Of course, my readings in previous projects have also been influenced by the current state of the world. For example, I staged *The Glass Menagerie* in Shizuoka in 2011, which is when the big earthquake and resultant Fukushima nuclear accident occurred. Sharing a lot of time with the Japanese actors, whose sensibilities were shaken by the catastrophe, led to various discoveries. Curiously enough, the fact is that whenever I do work with Japan, I can't help but think about how it aligns with the times. Due to the current health crisis, there was a period of isolation, and we have to wear masks even during rehearsal. However, instead of mere external obstacles to the project, it's almost like these restrictions are driving it from within.

SPAC-Shizuoka Performing Arts Center and T2G-Théâtre de Gennevilliers-Centre Dramatique National (France)

"The Cherry Orchard" Second Report: Rehearsals

Author: HORIKIRI Katsuhiro

Why Stage a Multilingual Adaptation of Chekhov Now?

In *Drive My Car* (directed by HAMAGUCHI Ryusuke), the most-talked-about Japanese film of 2021, the protagonist, theater director Kafuku (NISHIJIMA Hidetoshi), is commissioned by a theater festival in the Setouchi Region to create a multilingual stage production. What's more, the play is *Uncle Vanya*, by the same Anton CHEKHOV who wrote *The Cherry Orchard* covered in this report. Is this sheer coincidence?

Chekhov's four major plays (*The Seagull*, *Uncle Vanya*, *Three Sisters*, and *The Cherry Orchard*) are categorized as "classical" plays in that they have been staged repeatedly all over the world. However, this is not in the same sense as the works of William SHAKESPEARE. First of all, the original works are written in Russian, a language difficult for most non-Russians to understand. Nonetheless, in terms of theatrical history, rather than something separate from European literary history, they are positioned at the starting point of contemporary drama (together with the works of playwrights such as Henrik IBSEN). This is because over the course of the nineteenth century, Russia, which had previously lagged far behind Western Europe, raced from romanticism to modernism within just a single century (from Alexander PUSHKIN to Fyodor DOSTOEVSKY and Leo TOLSTOY).

As Daniel JEANNETEAU himself emphasized in my first report, the era in which Chekhov lived was a turning point in history. From the vantage point of future generations, it was the eve of revolution and thus an almost dystopian time in which the past had become a complete relic, and yet the future was impossible to predict. This is why Jeanneteau sees the current state of the world in Chekhov. He asserts that while the future appeared bright when he was a child, that is no longer the case for children nowadays. "Nowadays, children are taught that the earth is tiny, full of people, and thoroughly polluted; that changes in the climate can no longer be predicted; and that the gap between the rich and poor has become larger than ever before... I suspect that many people feel like we've entered an era beyond what we can imagine, an era in which it's no longer possible to envision the future" (excerpt from interview with Daniel Jeanneteau in *Stage Natalie*). Needless to say, his statement carries traces of the following lines by the character of Trofimov in *The Cherry Orchard*: "The human race progresses, perfecting its powers." "The land is great and beautiful" (Act II). Children nowadays must despair of even the lofty ideals espoused by Trofimov.

This kind of transnational inquiry may serve as another model within the framework of an international coproduction, as well as one for a program for junior and senior high school students.

Language, Translation, and Communication

The 1880s, when Chekhov became active as a writer, are considered a "Great Interregnum" in the Russian literary world, when the so-called masters retired from the front lines. As if to epitomize this, Chekhov's works lack a core protagonist. If anything, the focal point in his stories is "omnipresent" (URA Masaharu, "Commentary" in *Uncle Vanya* / *Three Sisters*, Kobunsha New Translations of Classics Library, p. 315). This "loss" or "omnipresence" of a focal point may be considered a rationale for staging Chekhov's works multilingually rather than monolingually. In particular, *The Cherry Orchard*, which depicts the fall of the aristocracy, is an intimate drama set within a single room/family, and yet the characters are like ghosts tossed about in a turbulent world.

FUSE Asuka, who plays the role of Anya, explains that in the first phase of rehearsal (August 6 to 31), it was difficult for her to predict the rhythm and breaks in her counterparts' lines, and she was forced to concentrate on listening. However, in the second phase (October 11 to November 11), she came to understand their lines. Little by little, they became able to catch each other's words and move "freely." That being said, from the audience's point of view, the establishment of "natural" communication between the French-speaking actors and Japanese-speaking actors must surely appear strange, even while remaining aware that it is "art." In other words, the closer the actors get to "natural" communication, the more "unnatural" it appears to the audience.

One interesting aspect of the casting is the fact that Solène ARBEL, who plays Varya (the twenty-four-year-old adopted daughter of landowner Madame Ranevskaya), the counterpart to Anya (Ranevskaya's seventeen-year-old daughter, who has returned home after five years living in France), has played the same characters as Fuse in *The Blind* and *The Glass Menagerie*. According to Fuse, during the course of rehearsal, the two gradually became like real "sisters"—or rather, "artistic sisters." In addition, the role of the "eternal" student Peter (Trofimov) in this production is played by Aurélien ESTAGER, a translator who has worked on Japanese manga. He completed an undergraduate program at the French National Institute for Oriental Languages and Civilizations in 2001 and won the Konishi Foundation's third annual Konishi Prize for the Translation of Japanese Manga into French in 2020 (for his translation of EGUCHI Hisashi's *Stop!! Hibari-kun!*). Among the cast, he is the only actor with a command of both Japanese and French, and thus, in his role as the pedantic young man, Jeanneteau has experimented with directing him to switch languages partway through his lengthy lines speaking of an ideal "future." As mentioned earlier, Peter's lines play a meta role in defining *The Cherry Orchard* as a drama of humanity. In this sense, the casting of Aurélien is also something that could only be tried in an international coproduction.

The Difficulty of Staging a Bilingual Drama

Multiple translations of Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard* have been published in various countries. As I mentioned in my first report, this production is based on a Japanese translation by ADACHI Noriko (Mirai-sha Publishers, 2020) and a French translation by André MARKOWICZ and Françoise MORVAN (Actes Sud, 2002). The French translation is the eighth to be produced. A new translation emphasizing the rhythm and cadence of the Russian language was used in a 1992 staging as part of Festival d'Automne à Paris (directed by Stéphane BRAUNSCHWEIG). The theater hosting the performance was T2G Théâtre de Gennevilliers, where Jeanneteau currently serves as director.

Meanwhile, the Adachi version was a new translation for *The Cherry Orchard: A Comedy in Four Acts* directed by GONOHE Marie of the Bungakuza theater company in 2020. The Japanese predilection for Chekhov is evidenced by the sheer number of translations, as listed below.

◆SENUMA Kayo (*The Cherry Orchard* / *Uncle Vanya*, Shinchosha Publishing, 1913)

◆ITO Rokuro (1915 Japanese premiere at the Imperial Theatre)
◆YONEKAWA Masao (*Compendium of Modern Plays, Vol. 14*, Compendium of Modern Plays Publication Society, 1923; Shincho Bunko, 1952; Kadokawa Bunko, 1953; revised edition in 1968)
◆KUSUYAMA Masao (*The Complete Works of Chekhov, Vol. 3*, Shinchosha Publishing, 1920)
◆NAKAMURA Hakuyo (*Three Sisters* / *The Cherry Orchard*, Shunyodo Publishing, 1932; *The Collected Writings of Chekhov*, Sangaku Shobo, 1943–1944)
◆HANAI Shuzaburo (*The Cherry Orchard* / *The Seagull*, Bunshinsha, 1935)
◆YUASA Yoshiko (*The Cherry Orchard*, Iwanami Bunko, 1950)
◆JINZAI Kiyoshi (*The Cherry Orchard* / *Three Sisters*, Kawade Shinsho, 1955; Shincho Bunko, 1967)
◆SASAKI Akira (*The Cherry Orchard* / *Three Sisters*, Obunsha Bunko, 1966)
◆MAKIHARA Jun (*A Complete Collection of World Literature, Duet Edition, Vol. 43*, Shueisha, 1969)
◆KAWABATA Kaori (*A Complete Collection of World Literature, Vol. 61*, Kodansha, 1975)
◆MATSUSHITA Yutaka (*The Complete Works of Chekhov, Vol. 12*, Chikuma Shobo, 1987; Chikuma Bunko, 1993)
◆ONO Michiko (*The Cherry Orchard*, Iwanami Bunko, 1998)
◆ODASHIMA Yushi (*The Cherry Orchard*, Hakusui U Books, 1998)
◆HORIE Shinji & Nina ANARINA (*The Cherry Orchard*, Gunzosha Publishing, 2011)
◆URA Masaharu (*The Cherry Orchard* / *The Proposal* / *The Bear*, Kobunsha New Translations of Classics Library, 2012)

No matter which translations are used, the French and Japanese versions will not necessarily share the same principles in every sense. It was therefore the best decision to use the Adachi translation for the Japanese, as it allowed for close and direct communication with the translator. When the need arose to make changes to the Japanese translation on the spot, alternatives were actually explored by contacting Adachi. In this regard, although it is necessary for a Chekhov play, where subtle nuances of the lines have major implications, one may imagine the extremely detailed work required on the spot.

As one example, Anya has the following lines in Act II.

> Anya: Peter, what have you done to me? Why don't I love the cherry orchard as I used to? I loved the cherry orchard so tenderly. I thought there was no better place in the world than our cherry orchard.

In the Adachi translation, the play's titular "cherry orchard" occurs three times within the short speech. This seems to be the result of avoiding pronouns ("it") and alternate expressions ("our orchard"). In the French version, the phrase "cherry orchard" (*la Cerisaie*) only occurs once. Consequently, the Japanese lines, which already have more syllables than the French ones, sound even lengthier to French speakers.

Apparently Fuse, who plays Anya, originally intended to resolve this issue by speaking her lines rapidly. However, in the scene Anya is asking Peter, who has greatly influenced her, to explain what is going on in the world. Despite the existential angst she feels, she also (vaguely) identifies with Peter's "futurism," and thus it is not such a serious speech. (Although in literal terms, she seems to be seriously accusing Peter, that is not actually the case.) As such, the Japanese lines, in which the phrase "cherry orchard" is repeated three times, are at odds with the acting up to that point. In the rehearsal on October 25, Anya playfully sprawls on the floor out of joy at being alone with Peter. The immediately ensuing lines were changed as follows.

> Anya: Peter, what have you done to me? Why don't I love the cherry orchard as I used to? I loved the cherry orchard it so tenderly. I thought there was no better place in the world than our cherry orchard.

Such changes to the script may seem unnecessary for a multilingual play. However, in this production of *The Cherry Orchard*, the actors must understand the feeling and rhythm of the foreign language spoken by their counterparts, not on the level of grammar and syntax, but in terms of the images stirred up by the speech as a whole. Thus, it is a task that cannot be ignored by either the director or the actors. It also mirrors the task of the audience members, who must listen to (and thus understand) about half of the lines in a foreign language. Although the performances will be subtitled, this is merely an auxiliary function. Instead of the surface meanings of the words in the lines, what is more important is the tone, rhythm, and cadence of the actors' words, as well as their expressions and gestures.

This task is also connected to the work Jeanneteau did in the plays he previously directed in Japan, especially *Blasted* and *The Blind*. Vsevolod MEYERHOLD once praised Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard* by stating that in pursuing realism, it achieved symbolism. Jeanneteau's lyrical direction belongs precisely to that very lineage of symbolism. This aspect is slightly removed from the frequently emphasized comedic (vaudeville-like) qualities and absurdity of Chekhov's plays. The characters in *The Cherry Orchard*, who flounder about almost blindly, are certainly foolish, but if we assume them to be portraits of ourselves, then they are also objects of angst (fear). In order to produce *The Cherry Orchard* as "a play about humanity's angst," straightforward characterization becomes, if anything, a foreign element. This principle of the direction gradually became clear in the second phase of rehearsal in the theater, as work on the music, set, and lighting progressed.

The Difficulty of Holding Rehearsals During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Shizuoka Prefecture instituted priority measures against the spread of COVID-19 from August 8 to 19 (originally until August 31, but measures were enhanced due to increasing infections) and state of emergency measures from August 20 to September 30 (originally until September 12 but then extended). The number of daily new cases continued to rise and reached a record high of 675 on August 19, leading to the declaration of a state of emergency for the prefecture on August 20. Hamamatsu Medical Center was pushed to the limit, with the occupancy rate of beds for COVID-19 patients exceeding 80% in late August. Thanks to exhaustive measures against infections, which continued to be implemented during the second phase of rehearsal for *The Cherry Orchard*, no infections emerged among the actors or staff.

With conditions changing moment by moment, SPAC established rather strict guidelines to prevent infections. As the "strictness" of these guidelines diverged in many ways from the standards in France, time was set aside to explain them carefully to the French actors and staff. It apparently took an especially long time for them to accept the actors wearing masks onstage during the performances (as this kind of performance does not even exist in France). Even in Japan, theaters in Tokyo that have actors

wear masks onstage are in the minority. However, in light of the fact that *The Cherry Orchard* was also to be performed for junior and senior high school students, SPAC decided to have the actors wear masks onstage so as not to deprive the students of a "once-in-a-lifetime" encounter with a theatrical work.

Because of this policy, opportunities for the actors to eat together during the course of rehearsal were also avoided. According to the previously cited Fuse, being able to communicate freely outside of rehearsal in previous projects led to understanding the other actors' ways of thinking and vibes. She felt that this was often fed back into the performances onstage and said that it was "too bad" that it wasn't possible this time. Although it is up to the discretion of the director who leads the actors, it might have been beneficial to consider allowing both the Japanese and French actors to share the same spaces and times (if not mealtimes) outside of "rehearsal" in a narrow sense. As long as measures against infections are rigorous, providing safe opportunities for recreation and looking after the mental health of the actors and staff within that framework may also be an important factor amid a pandemic. After all, taking Trofimov's lines to heart, "The human race progresses, perfecting its powers."

SPAC-Shizuoka Performing Arts Center and T2G-Théâtre de Gennevilliers-Centre Dramatique National (France)

"The Cherry Orchard" Third Report: Performance

Author: HORIKIRI Katsuhiro

Media Coverage of *The Cherry Orchard* (Advance Coverage, Interviews, and Talks)

The international coproduction of *The Cherry Orchard* by SPAC and T2G Théâtre de Gennevilliers premiered as a performance for junior and senior high school students on Friday, November 12, and as a regular performance on Saturday, November 13. The former consisted of a total of 10 performances finishing on Wednesday, December 15, and the latter of a total of seven performances finishing on Sunday, December 12, for a grand total of 17 performances at Shizuoka Arts Theatre. A performance was also held at Ryuyo Naginoki Hall in Iwata City on Friday, December 3. The duration of the performances was two hours and twenty minutes, without any intermission.

As I mentioned in my second report, rehearsal for this production proceeded smoothly according to rigorous guidelines against infections. As a result, not a single infection emerged before the performances. Enhanced publicity began to be actively promoted in November, when rehearsal was almost finished, and the performances were close at hand. Although the SPAC blog usually consists of real-time reports under ordinary circumstances, the first post on November 4 started by looking back on the first day of rehearsal.

◆SPAC Blog

November 4, 2021
The Cherry Orchard Blog #1: "Long time no see!" and "Nice to meet you!" online on the first day of rehearsal

November 12, 2021
The Cherry Orchard Blog #2: Cast Interview with SUZUKI Haruyo & Quentin BOUISSOU

November 19, 2021
The Cherry Orchard Blog #3: Opening & Artist Talk Report

December 11, 2021
The Cherry Orchard Blog #4: Artist Talk 11/20 Report

SPAC uses various social media (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube) for publicity, but I should emphasize that the abovementioned blog on its website serves not only as "reading material" but also as an "archival" function. In particular, the publication of the content of interviews and talks online provides a record of works from the perspectives of both cast members and audiences. This sort of online initiative cannot currently be found at any of the core public theaters in Japan. Under current conditions, with reviews and criticism rarely printed in newspapers or magazines, it deserves to be recognized as a model for presenting and publicizing the results of theatrical work.

SPAC itself also shared a "collection" of Tweets related to the performances ("SPAC Autumn-Spring 2021–2022 #2: Collection of Tweets Related to *The Cherry Orchard*," November 23). In addition, a program hosted by one of SPAC's affiliated actors aired an open talk session with the cast members as guests ("ISHII Moemi Will Take Center Stage!, Vol. 86: Special talk session with the cast of *The Cherry Orchard* currently playing to rave reviews" aired on November 22).

In external media, the theatrical information website *Stage Natalie* published interviews with director Daniel JEANNETEAU along with cast members Suzuki Haruyo and Aurélien ESTAGER as advance coverage ("Daniel Jeanneteau's hopes for *The Cherry Orchard* by SPAC: Suzuki Haruyo and Aurélien Estager discuss 'understanding beyond differences,'" October 29). The same website also ran an article to mark the play's opening ("Jeanneteau pleased by opening of SPAC's *The Cherry Orchard*: 'The realization of this international coproduction is a victory,'" November 14). The *Shizuoka Shimbun* newspaper ran an article about the performances

Performance photography ©K. Miura

featuring an interview with Estager ("Faint understanding across the language barrier: Estager from SPAC's *The Cherry Orchard*," November 24).

In retrospect, these articles describe the appeal of the play as if the COVID-19 pandemic had never happened. However, the circumstances of Le Théâtre du Soleil's *L'ÎLE D'OR KANEMU-JIMA* (October 19–28 at Tokyo Metropolitan Theatre; November 6–7 at ROHM Theatre Kyoto), which was scheduled to come on tour to Japan from France at roughly the same time, make it understandable why preparations for this international coproduction were carried out with such careful planning. Although it cannot necessarily be compared to *KOTATSU* written and directed by Pascal RAMBERT (September 9–12 at Ebara Riverside Theatre), which was forced to be performed with almost no audience due to the cancellation of Toyooka Theater Festival 2021, the fact that the project concluded successfully and without disruption despite the challenging circumstances was thanks to the efforts of the SPAC production team.

What Kind of Production Was Jeanneteau's *The Cherry Orchard*?

What kind of production was *The Cherry Orchard* by Daniel Jeanneteau, who has mostly directed contemporary plays? First of all, the set was a simple one consisting mainly of lighting and images, rather than a realistic one seeking to "recreate" the mansion with actual nineteenth century-style furnishings. The props were also kept to a minimum. Although this might have been influenced by Jeanneteau's aesthetics as a scenographer, it may also in some ways reflect his image of Japan (for example, his image of Noh drama).

On a textual level, this onstage world transports the audience back to a specific time and place, namely, Russia at the turn of the twentieth century. However, on a spatial level, it evokes extremely abstract human depictions. As a contrasting example, in KURIYAMA Tamiya's 2002 production of *The Cherry Orchard* (New National Theatre, Tokyo), the director chose to shift the setting to Japan and realistically recreate the costumes and the house in order to restore the various characters to fixed "personalities" and showcase the dramatic conflict between them. In this case, the actors' performances will inevitably resemble the acting in a television drama (depicting states of mind through facial expressions and movements). In other words, the production becomes the naturalistic Chekhov of Konstantin STANISLAVSKI, rather than the symbolic Chekhov of Vsevolod MEYERHOLD.

Although it is a very rough generalization, Meyerhold and Stanislavski are frequently depicted as diametrical opposites within Russian theater in the early twentieth century. Stanislavski demanded that actors "reexperience" their roles onstage based on naturalism and realism. By contrast, rather than embodying "natural" psychology through character analysis, Meyerhold attempted to portray the human condition on a different level through new modalities and physicality (which would eventually lead to him being purged by Stalin in 1940). As the theories of the Japanese *shingeki* theater movement were based on SENDA Koreya's interpretation of Stanislavski, the aforementioned Kuriyama's directing is positioned as an extension thereof. Jeanneteau is the type of director who emphasizes "script reading" and focuses on spatialization of the play's subtext. However, his spatialization, or the aesthetics of his directing, is symbolic and different in nature from that of realism.

One recent example of simple staging breaking away from realism is the production of *The Cherry Orchard* directed by Tiago RODRIGUES, which was performed in the courtyard of the Papal Palace at the 2021 Festival d'Avignon. The stage was only set with a large number of chairs. Although the young Portuguese director, who is eyed as the next artistic director of the festival, cast the great actress Isabelle HUPPERT in the role of Ranevskaya, the production was far from a success. Still, his transformation of the play into musical theater by bringing the musicians of a rock band onstage in Act I was laudable. In highlighting the anachronism of the story and the isolation of the characters, Rodrigues did not take such a vastly different approach from Jeanneteau.

However, Jeanneteau suffuses his play with more of a sense of "awkwardness," a feeling of "being out of place," or more crudely, "unease" regarding an unpredictable future. Unlike Rodrigues, who created the music and staging based on brainstorming with the actors rather than the script itself, Jeanneteau honors the poetic resonance and imagery of the lines written by the playwright. Returning to the plot of *The Cherry Orchard*, at the end of their troubles, the characters venture out into a new environment and era. However, they still cling to nostalgia for the bygone era (yearning for the cherry orchard). When all is said and done, they have already lost their reality. This is represented by the musical scene in Act III. The xylophone music composed by TANAKAWA Hiroko functions as a metaphor for the finely wavering emotions of the characters. It is here that the somewhat ghostly aspect of *The Cherry Orchard* emerges.

Act III has a special resonance within Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard*. The initial stage directions indicate, "An anteroom. A Jewish band, the one mentioned in Act II, is heard playing. Evening. In the ballroom, a circle dance is being danced." Faced with the loss of her family's mansion and "cherry orchard," Ranevskaya's adopted daughter Varya inconspicuously wipes away tears. The party in this act is the flip side of the play's "unease." In the end, Ranevskaya weeps and seventeen-year-old Anya consoles her as the music plays. Incidentally, this scene was completely cut in the Rodrigues version.

Belgian theater collective STAN's production of The Cherry Orchard, which premiered in 2015, is unusual for its indication of potential in the manner of storytelling, with only five actors swapping roles. In Act III, the play shows the partygoers gathered at the mansion as being in an almost cult-like trance by having the actors dance feverishly to fast-paced electronic music. (As a sidenote, this collective has also had a decisive influence on the theatrical career of the aforementioned Tiago Rodrigues.) The power of music is extraordinary. This is the very reason why Plato banished art from his ideal state and why MISHIMA Yukio had a distaste for the intoxicating nature of music. When the "trance" is broken, the "music" is no longer audible to Ranevskaya.

However, in Jeanneteau's *The Cherry Orchard*, the music is not external to the characters. It is treated on the same level, so to speak, sympathizing with their (un)conscious anxiety. A key feature of Jeanneteau's direction is that he does not cynically suggest that people are automatons controlled by music, but instead creates a "temporally disjointed" space in which they speak of their own philosophies, ideals, and lives on the level of reason, or rather, madness. In our society (even within families), we must all to varying degrees get along with people whose values or ways of thinking differ from our own. In this sense, *The Cherry Orchard* is like a multi-protagonist play in which the characters are "antiheroes" who accept compromise as part of a "losing battle." No one is right, and conversely, no one is entirely wrong. It is a microcosm of our labyrinthine modern society, which gives to rise to laughter and humor that have a completely different aspect from the surface-level comicality of lines and gestures.

Normally, staging a nearly two-and-a-half-hour scripted play would require physically and mentally drawing the audience's attention to the stage by varying the tempo of the music and images. In this sense, Jean-

neteau does not "grovel" to the audience. Even when the performance is directed at junior and senior high school students, instead of presenting an "easily understandable" story, he seeks to convey the atmosphere, worldview, and spatiality of the work to the audience through the resonance of the lines, with minimal stage setting and music. Like the images of "clouds" projected onto the back of the stage in Act I, the actors onstage form a single mass and yet continue to move subtly. By focusing on the movements of actors other than the speaker, the circumstances of the family and their acquaintances, who resemble "clouds" before a storm, are steadily changed over the course of mindless "chatter."

More than anything, the fact that Jeanneteau has produced a bilingual adaptation of a Chekhov play (which he has never staged before) with his actors is the work's greatest feature. Any other device would therefore almost be a distraction. As I touched on in my second report, the actors from the two countries do not perfectly understand each other's languages, but at the same time, there is not a complete lack of understanding. Creating an integrated and intimate drama under these conditions requires very elaborate, careful, and disciplined work. By adapting the play with the awareness that the world is currently undergoing a historic transformation, Jeanneteau attempts to derive hints for how to face our own fears from Chekhov's lines, and as such, his production will surely remain deeply etched within the history of *The Cherry Orchard* in Japan.

Partnership Initiatives with Educational Institutions

About 2,000 junior and senior high school students from Shizuoka Prefecture were able to attend these valuable performances. As the number of junior and senior high school students in the prefecture is reported to be about 100,000 for each, this works out to 1% of the total. SPAC aims to deliver performances to about 35,000 junior and senior high school students (100 performances) annually, not limited to just this play. If that target is achieved, it means that junior and senior high school students in Shizuoka Prefecture will be able to watch a SPAC performance at least once during their six years of schooling. SPAC has created a system to reduce the burden on participating schools by subsidizing the cost of chartering buses from the schools to the theater, in addition to making the performances free for the students and their chaperones. SPAC also conducts guest performances and visiting school workshops, and furthermore, Shimizu Minami Senior High School has just become the first public high school in Shizuoka Prefecture to sign an agreement with SPAC aimed at offering specialized theatrical training ("Shimizu Minami Senior High School becomes first public school in Shizuoka Prefecture to offer specialized theatrical training under agreement with SPAC," *The Shizuoka Shimbun*, November 5, 2021).

Free pamphlets are also distributed at the performances for junior and senior high school students (available for sale at regular performances). These have been produced by students in the graphic design course of the Shizuoka Professional Training College of Design since 2014, with the quality improving every year. They are beneficial not only to the high school students, but also to regular audience members unfamiliar with Chekhov's plays or theater. The pamphlets can be viewed on the portal site "Shizuoka ebooks."

Shizuoka Prefecture has established a system to promote regional development through culture based on its "Basic Ordinance for Cultural Promotion" formulated in 2006. Since the appointment of MIYAGI Satoshi as its second General Artistic Director in 2007, SPAC has also been focusing on outreach under the principle that "theater is a window on the world." In 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic broke out, SPAC hastily transformed its "World Theatre Festival Shizuoka" usually held every year in spring and summer into "World Theatre Festival on the Cloud" via online performances and streaming. With a plan to "bring art into people's homes," shows were delivered to facilities such as nursing homes with social distancing ensured, and telephone theater was also performed.

Surrounded by such diverse public projects, the 2,000 students who were able to attend this international coproduction realized despite a pandemic are lucky indeed. Of course, they are only "seeds," and it may take a long time for them to sprout. However, the theater is a place where such seeds are planted, watered, given light, and sometimes fed with fertilizer. The concept of "culture" in both of its senses is being realized on a daily basis at SPAC's unique theater, with involvement from the community and local residents. Not only the creation (invitation) of a high-quality production, but also the inclusion of 2,000 junior and senior high school students as audience members ought to be remembered as a miraculous outcome of these performances.

A performance for junior and senior high school students

Pamphlet distributed to junior and senior high school students

SPAC-Shizuoka Performing Arts Center and T2G-Théâtre de Gennevilliers-Centre Dramatique National (France)

"The Cherry Orchard" Fourth Report: Reflection

Author: HORIKIRI Katsuhiro

As my third report focused on advance media coverage, interviews, and talks, in my final report I would like to present some stage reviews interspersed with my own brief comments. Media in which public reviews of the play may be published are currently limited to the stage-review columns of newspapers, theatrical magazines (*Theatreux*, *Higeki Kigeki*, etc.), or review websites. In terms of reviews and criticism, the performing arts are surrounded by a far from abundant environment. However, the following two stage reviews have been published as of January 2022.

- ○KITANO Masahiro's review in *Shimbun Akahata* (published December 1, 2021)
- ○TAKAHASHI Hiroyuki's review in the February edition of *Theatreux* (published January 13, 2022)

As Kitano has also covered past SPAC productions in his column, he writes as follows with the stylized acting of director MIYAGI Satoshi (or even of SPAC's first General Artistic Director SUZUKI Tadashi) in mind. "SPAC is a theater company that prizes stylistic beauty, but the acting this time seems to be almost realistic for them. Still, as it is a bilingual (subtitled) production with actors invited from France, rather than immediately reacting to or empathizing with the words of the characters, the premise of distance enables a unique viewing experience in which the audience savors the meanings and nuances of those words." As I mentioned in my third report, when we consider the special circumstances of the "realist" reception of the works of Anton CHEKHOV within the *shingeki* theater movement in Japan, it may naturally follow that the play is critiqued as a "unique viewing experience" domestically. Ideally, I would have liked the reviewer to go further and share how that "uniqueness" may influence interpretations and experiences in the theatrical world, but unfortunately, he was constrained by space limitations.

Takahashi, on the other hand, writes as follows, focusing on the onstage visuals and "symbolism" as a keyword. "[The multi-protagonist play] is like a mirage filled with symbols. For example, there is a scene where the carpet on the floor, which initially appeared to be covered with a thick layer of sand, is cleaned all at once and swept into the corners so that the floor of the stage is visible. This alone seems to symbolize that the cherry orchard has been sold off, the old generation is in decline, and everything has been lost." As I mentioned in my third report, the visual-arts approach of Daniel JEANNETEAU is derived from the poetic aspects of language, and the fact that this leads Takahashi to conclude that "the reading of Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard* stands out in the careful directing" could be considered a certain degree of praise. Regarding the bilingual staging, he writes, "Strangely, it did not bother me at all." As described by this report, that was the result of careful work carried out according to meticulous planning at a difficult time.

Some excellent writing can also be found on personal blogs and social media posts. I would like to present some excerpts here with the author's permission.

- ○ODA Toru's review posted on his personal Facebook page (updated December 10, 2021) and personal blog *Uratadona*

Among the reviews written so far, Oda's is the richest in analysis and also comes closest to the subtext of the work and direction. Although the previously mentioned Kitano review is interesting for its detailed examination of the acting methodology of each character and actor, I would like to cite the following passage regarding the intertwining of the themes of the work and the bilingual staging.

> The whole play is dominated by a vague sense of unease. Something like sound effects that build suspense in a horror movie accompanies the monologues of Ranevskaya (SUZUKI Haruyo)... With the directions for "pauses" written throughout Chekhov's script presented literally, the gaps in the characters' words and conversations take on an absurd degree of horror and ominousness. Certainly, the actors talking past each other is to a certain extent due to the obvious reason that they are engaging in dialogues in two different languages, Japanese and French. However, the thorough miscommunication onstage cannot be blamed entirely on linguistic issues. The frustration of words that convey no meaning, or rather, the inability of the words to reach their target in the first place is topicalized. This is the degree to which the peculiar bilingual format is incorporated into the method of direction. As the play moves along, we begin to accept the different languages as obvious.

While pointing out that Jeanneteau's idea of structurally building the bilingual staging into his directing functions well with the lines and "pauses" of the play, Oda's review also clearly identifies the directorial theme of "unease." The review is particularly brilliant for its juxtaposition of Chekhov and Samuel BECKETT, focusing on the directing in the final part of Act II. We could call this an example of a "fortunate encounter" between a director and critic.

> The climax of Jeanneteau's directing is probably... the scene with the "passerby" (OUCHI Yoneji), who appears only in Act II. His arrival is a mysterious one. With the scrims removed, blinding light pours in from both sides of the stage. A beggar wearing a brown hooded sweatshirt and pants, blue down jacket, and ocher baseball cap walks extremely, almost terrifyingly slowly from stage right to stage left. All eyes are on him, and everyone turns toward him. The intruder has the power to make everyone's attention converge upon him. Who is he, really? In Chekhov's script, he declares himself "a hungry fellow Russian," but to Jeanneteau, he is a divine stranger who is not supposed to appear, and perhaps even an absolute other. When Varya "screams, frightened" at the sight of him, her intense startlement and backing away may represent our bewilderment and discomfort at being unable to understand the discovery of the strange neighbors who are always and already present in modern society, which we mistakenly thought to be homogenous and stable.

In an ordinary reading of the play, the "passerby" appears in order to demonstrate Ranevskaya's "cluelessness" in giving away her gold without fully grasping her own debt. However, Oda indicates the appearance of this bit character to be the arrival of a "divine stranger." He is like Godot, who never arrives, or like the "intruder" in the play by Maurice MAETERLINCK. Make no mistake, *The Cherry Orchard* is not a story of hopelessness. Although it depicts a hopeless situation, each character sets out on a new path, and in doing so, their "bewilderment and discomfort" is the very mirror image of our panic amid a pandemic.

Entry and Exit Procedures amid the Global Pandemic

Thus, *The Cherry Orchard* finished its run in Shizuoka, and the France staff members sequentially returned to their home country. The play is scheduled to be performed in France next season (2022–2023), but for now, in my report, I would like to summarize production under the "extraordinary circumstances" of the past six months. Ahead of the performances in November and December 2021, the French actors and staff first arrived in Japan in late July. Their six-month entry/exit schedule was as follows.

▼Rehearsal, Phase I: Jeanneteau, Mammar BENRANOU, and the five actors
Wednesday, July 21: Departure from Charles de Gaulle Airport, Paris
Thursday, July 22: Arrival at Haneda Airport and entry into Japan; travel to Shizuoka via chartered bus → Isolation until Thursday, August 5 (14 days)
*Only Aurélien ESTAGER entered Japan on Thursday, July 29 and was in isolation in Shizuoka until Thursday, August 12.
Wednesday, September 1: Two of the actors (Nathalie KOUSNETZOFF and Estager) return to France
Wednesday, September 8: Jeanneteau returns to France (due to a family matter)

▼Rehearsal, Phase II: Jeanneteau, two of the actors, Isabelle SUREL (sound), and Juliette BESANÇON (lighting)
Saturday, September 25: Departure from Charles de Gaulle Airport, Paris
Sunday, September 26: Arrival at Haneda Airport and entry into Japan; travel to Shizuoka via chartered bus → Isolation until Sunday, October 10 (14 days)

▼Return to France
Surel & Besançon: Left Japan on Tuesday, November 16
Jeanneteau: Left Japan on Wednesday, November 24
Benranou and the five actors: PCR test at clinic in Tokyo on Thursday, December 16; left Japan on Friday, December 17

Amid the special circumstances of a global pandemic, cooperation with government policy (border control measures) was necessary with regard to (1) entry, (2) isolation, and (3) exit. The first obstacle was (1) entry. As I briefly mentioned in my first report, the performances were extremely significant in terms of creating a model for inviting artists to Japan from overseas despite entry restrictions.

Conversely, SPAC took responsibility for (2) isolation. As of the summer of 2021, entrants and returnees from overseas (those who had tested negative upon entry/return) were restricted from using public transportation when heading to their homes, accommodation facilities, or other quarantine locations. Accordingly, a bus to Shizuoka was chartered. The fact that SPAC's headquarters are located about four hours from Haneda Airport by bus and the accommodation facilities were so far from the Tokyo area appears to have been a factor in greatly reducing the stress of staging an "international coproduction" amid a pandemic. The situation might have been different had infections emerged, but fortunately, none of the visitors tested positive or were identified as a close contact.

Finally, with regard to (3) exit, trouble occurred due to changes in the domestic situation. First of all, because there was a reduction in the number of flights and there were no daily direct flights between Paris and Tokyo, the travelers had to deal with cancellations of their tickets (or changes




Performance photography ©K. Miura

to flights) even after booking depending on the number of reservations. Second, as of December 2021, all travelers were required to take a PCR test before boarding (regardless of vaccination status), but there was no hospital or clinic in Shizuoka that could issue proof of a negative test on schedule. Accordingly, it was also necessary to make bookings with testing clinics and make travel and accommodation arrangements on a tight schedule, just before departure and during the performance period. It may be difficult, as this is a case-by-case issue, but with regard to flexibility for schedule changes, the possibility of institutional design to reduce confusion on the ground might be something to examine in the future.

Role of The Japan Foundation and Future Prospects: Relationship with SPAC

The past activities of The Japan Foundation focused on disseminating Japanese culture overseas and not on "inviting" foreign culture to Japan. However, this has changed since the outbreak of the global COVID-19 pandemic. The foundation's project to support international co-productions is one such endeavor.

Since the time of its first General Artistic Director, Suzuki Tadashi (1997–2007), SPAC has possessed a creative theatrical environment unlike any other in Japan (Shizuoka Arts Theater, Performing Arts Park, and SPAC theater company) and established a history as a venue for inviting and presenting theatrical works from around the world. In particular, its international theater festival (now "World Theatre Festival Shizuoka") launched following the success of "The 2nd Theatre Olympics" (1999) has become one of the pillars of its activities. SPAC has especially close ties to France, with major achievements including the invitation of Olivier PY (first visit to Japan in 2008), who served as director of the Festival d'Avignon until this year, as well as the production of *Interior* directed by Claude RÉGY (premiered in 2013).

Miyagi directed *Grimm's Fairy Tales* (*The Real Fiancée* and *The Girl, the Devil and the Mill*) written by Py in 2012. In 2014, while Py was the director of the Festival d'Avignon (held every year in July), Miyagi staged *Mahabharata – Nalacharitam* in the Boulbon Quarry, where Peter BROOK had previously staged that same work. Later, in 2017, Miyagi staged *Antigone* in the festival's main venue, the courtyard of the Papal Palace. These performances became important "incidents" in Japanese theatrical history in the 2010s. However, it goes without saying that those "incidents" were based on the accumulation of various events. Although there were major differences between the two, the prototype for the SPAC version was the Ku Na'uka Theatre Company's version of *Antigone*. It premiered at the Ancient Stadium of Delphi, Greece, in July 2004, 2,500 (!) years since the birth of its author Sophocles, one of the three great Greek tragedians. The value of a single work can paradoxically only be discussed from medium- and long-term perspectives measured in terms of five or ten years.

Varying degrees of "incidents" undoubtedly occurred within the process of this production of *The Cherry Orchard* as well. My report was only able to track a few of those many "incidents." That is why when I wrote the four reports, I envisioned the role of myself, a single critic, as a "Process Observer" to be reporting on the path of a single work to its performance onstage (not only that, but amid the unusual circumstances of entry restrictions and measures against infections) from as many different angles and viewpoints as possible, while also placing it within a historical context.

Performance photography ©K. Miura

Because of the designated length, I was unable to avoid bias. However, that is due to my own lack of ability, for which I hope you will forgive me.

Although it may be redundant, I would like to add at the very end of my report that "dissemination" by The Japan Foundation is expected by theaters to play an enormous role. In particular, the "STAGE BEYOND BORDERS" online distribution of performances launched around the same time (a free distribution project launched in February 2021) has the reach to deliver performance footage to various viewers beyond the "built-in audience" of each theater and company through platforms such as YouTube, where its channel has 21,100 subscribers (as of January 2022). The SPAC productions currently being distributed are the previously mentioned (1) *Grimm's Fairy Tale – The Girl, the Devil and the Mill*, (2) *Grimm's Fairy Tale – The Real Fiancée*, and (3) *Antigone*. The view counts are about 48,000 for (1) (released February 2021), about 35,000 for (2) (released May 2021), and about 64,000 for (3) (released October 2021). The distributed videos may also be used for lecture presentations and lessons. Most of all, the fact that they are accessible from anywhere in the world as an archive makes them of great benefit to the public.

Needless to say, The Japan Foundation's international creations must provide a high degree of public contribution. However, this is achieved not only through their position within history as described in this report, but also through their comprehensive approach to the contemporary receiving environment. Accordingly, it may be advisable for The Japan Foundation, which leads Japan's cultural sector, to develop medium- and long-term receiving platforms for the performing arts while exchanging opinions with theater and company producers. Furthermore, from the perspective of audiences, the method of attending performances is ceasing to be limited to just "sitting in the theater across from the stage." Despite the circumstances of the pandemic, it is important for the parties concerned in each cultural sector (national, prefectural, and municipal) and on the ground (theaters, companies, artists, producers, and critics) to widely share the fact that the time has come to explore and examine new ways of "disseminating" Japanese creativity in the performing arts.

Note

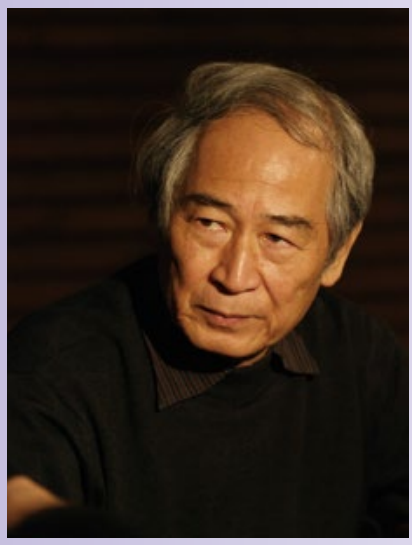
In the process of writing this report, I received significant assistance from everyone at SPAC. In particular, I would like to express my gratitude once again to NARUSHIMA Yoko on the production side, as well as actors FUSE Asuka and Suzuki Haruyo and director Daniel Jeanneteau, for their cooperation regarding the interviews. I would also like to thank KEIMI Aoi and YONEYAMA Junichi on the production side for fact checking and providing photographs and video footage.

PROJECT

“Electra”

SCOT (Suzuki Company of Toga) and Restu I. Kusumaningrum (Indonesia)

Electra was an international collaboration between members of SCOT (Suzuki Company of Toga) in Japan, led by SUZUKI Tadashi, and Indonesian actors. SCOT previously produced the play *Dionysus* (co-produced by the Japan Foundation Asia Center), which was directed by Suzuki and performed by Japanese, Indonesian, and Chinese actors from 2015 to 2019. It was performed in Japan and Indonesia to high acclaim.For *Electra*, a project to build on the success of *Dionysus*, Suzuki auditioned and selected Indonesian actors undergoing training in the Suzuki Method of Actor Training under the supervision of Indonesian producer Restu I. Kusumaningrum. With the accompaniment of percussion music performed by TAKADA Midori, this production shed a unique light on the assets of Asian theater and presented the world with a new version of the Greek tragedy. *Electra* was first performed at Toga Grand Theatre (Toga Dai-Sanbo) in November 2021.



SUZUKI Tadashi

Restu I. Kusumaningrum

Outline of Performances

Date and times: November 27, 2021 (Sat) 1:00 p.m. / 6:15 p.m.
Duration: 75 minutes
Venue: Toga Grand Theatre (Toga Dai-Sanbo)

Credits

Director: SUZUKI Tadashi
Original work by: Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Sophocles
Music composed and performed by: TAKADA Midori
Cast:
Clytemnestra: SAITO Maki
Electra: Andhini Puteri Lestari
Chrysothemis: Agatha Irena Praditya
Orestes: Jamaluddin Latif
Men in wheelchairs: Dian Nova Saputra, Wahyu Kurnia, Erik Nofriwandi, Ahmad Ridwan Fadjri, Washadi
Nurses: KIYAMA Haruka, KITO Risa, SHIN Marie, YOSHINO Karen, SUGIMOTO Sachi, FUSO Miyuna
Doctor: Bambang Prihadi
Set Design: SUZUKI Tadashi
Lighting: NIWA Makoto
Sound: KOBAYASHI Junya
Costumes: MITSUDA Toshimi
Assistant Directors: TAKEMORI Yoichi, SATO-JOHNSON Aki, Bambang Prihadi, Anak Agung Iswara
Administrator: Wiwit Roswita
Producers: Restu I. Kusumaningrum, SHIGEMASA Yoshie

Organized by The Japan Foundation and SCOT
Co-produced by Purnati Indonesia

Performance photos ©SCOT (Suzuki Company of Toga)

SCOT (Suzuki Company of Toga) and Restu I. Kusumaningrum (Indonesia)

"Electra" First Report: Launch of Project

Author: UCHINO Tadashi

Initially there were fears that this project would be difficult to implement due to the worldwide spread of COVID-19. The project was originally scheduled to be presented during the SCOT Summer Season in the summer of 2021, but due to universally known situation, it became no longer possible to schedule. However, thanks to the professional and calm response of SCOT in Japan and their Indonesian collaborators, producer Restu Kusumaningrum and Purnati[1] staff, and their deep understanding of the artistic and art historical importance of this project, which is more than just an international exchange, preparations are now well underway for the performance scheduled for November 27 at Toga Grand Theatre (Toga Dai-Sanbo) in Toga Art Park, Toga Village, Nanto City, Toyama Prefecture. The first meeting with both sides was held remotely via Zoom on October 22. At that time, the Indonesian actors had already arrived in Japan and were already in Toga Village, SCOT's home base, where the production is to be staged, and in self-isolation.

The following is mainly a summary of a presentation given by the Indonesian side (by Restu) at the meeting, translated from English into Japanese (the Japanese translation was done by the author), interspersed with comments noting my impressions at this point.

1st Meeting (Using Zoom)
October 22, 2021, 2:00 p.m.–3:00 p.m.
Participants: SHIGEMASA Yoshie (SCOT production), Restu Kusumaningrum (producer, Singapore[2]), Wiwit Roswita (Purnati manager, Jakarta), Anak Agung Iswara (interpreter, Bali), Uchino Tadashi (observer)

The project has encountered various difficulties due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but the Indonesian actors have finally been able to come to Japan, the schedule for the performance on November 27 has been set, and the first meeting to explain the project to the author was held via Zoom, connecting Japan, Indonesia, and Singapore.

First, Shigemasa of SCOT gave an overview of the project and described the purpose for the day, followed by a more than 30-minute presentation on the project by the producer, Restu. The following is a summary of that presentation.

The following 12 people are participating in this project from the Indonesian side:
Jamaluddin Latif (Actor, Yogyakarta)
Dian Nova Saputra (Actor, Trenggalek)
Washadi (Actor, Jakarta/Brebes)
Erik Nofriwandi (Actor, Padang Panjang)
Wahyu Kurnia (Actor, Lombok)
Ahmad Ridwan Fadjri (Actor, Padang Panjang)
Andhini Puteri Lestari (Actress, Jakarta)
Bambang Prihadi (Training Director/Actor, Jakarta)
Agatha Irena Praditya (Actress, Yogyakarta)
Anak Agung Iswara (Interpreter, Bali)
Wiwit Roswita (Administrator, Jakarta)
Restu I. Kusumaningrum (Producer, Singapore)

1. Intensive training at Purnati, April 10–24, 2021
Conducted in Jakarta with 15 invited actors/performers
Purpose: To enrich the vocabulary of physical expression and to identify potential actors for *Electra*
Program Content:
- Lecture on philosophy through Javanese dance by an expert on Javanese culture invited from the University of Indonesia
- Saman, an Acehnese dance for the organic connection of the senses
- Martial arts of West Sumatra
- The soft movements of the Pakarena dance of South Sulawesi
- Basics of Balinese dance for women and men
- Introduction to the Suzuki Training Method
- Voice training through text reading in each person's native language
- Viewing of videos of SCOT, Indonesian, and international performing arts
- Exchange with invited professional actors, directors, and writers

2. *Electra* audition, April 22, 2021
15 actors participated and the following six were selected:
1. Washadi (performed in *Dionysus*[3]) 2. Erik Nofriwandi 3. Wahyu Kurnia 4. Ahmad Ridwan Fadjri 5. Andhini Puteri Lestari 6. Agatha Irena Praditya
The following three actors who were in the Indonesian version of *Dionysus* were also invited:
7. Jamaluddin Latif 8. Dian Nova Saputra 9. Bambang Prihadi
These are the nine people who were offered roles in *Electra*.

3. Training program for the selected actors
a. May–June
Regular Zoom meetings with Restu
Viewing SCOT performance recordings
Suzuki Training Method training every Wednesday and Saturday at Pro Art Space
(Participants: Washadi, Andhini, Sarah, and via Zoom, Agatha, Erik, Ridwan, and Wahyu)
b. July: Training
Suzuki Training Method training at Pro Art Space from Monday to Saturday every week
7:00 a.m.–8:00 a.m. Morning session / 4:00 p.m.–5:00 p.m. Afternoon session
(Participants: Washadi, Andhini, Erik, Ridwan)
Meditation and text readings at the studio (in Indonesian, at Jampang Farming Studio)
c. July: Actors
Erik and Ridwan (Padang Panjang, West Sumatra) flew to Jakarta on June 30
(Tuesday–Thursday) Administrative work at the Purnati office of Pro Art Space
(Friday–Monday) Outdoor activities for physical strengthening [agriculture, gardening, fishing, and renovation of Jampang Farming Studio (painting, cooking, building an outdoor theater)
d. August
Agatha (Yogyakarta) took the train to Jakarta
Wahyu (Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara) flew to Bali
Suzuki Training Method training (instructed by Restu, Bali Purnati), then flew to Jakarta on August 1
All except Jamaluddin and Dian Nova gathered on August 2

Training Schedule for *Electra*

- August 2–25: Suzuki Training Method training at Pro Art Space

Monday–Saturday, 7:00 a.m.–8:00 a.m. Morning session / 4:00 p.m.–5:00 p.m. Afternoon session
Wednesday and Thursday: Training by Bambang
Viewing of *Electra* video
<Intensive training in the Suzuki Training Method>

- August 26–September 5
  Quarantine/isolation at Jampang Farming Studio, 1.5 hours away from Jakarta
  Participating actors: *Electra* team (Erik, Wahyu, Ridwan, Andhini, Agatha), five *Dionysus* participants (Aditia, Anwari, Dexara, Sarah, Washadi), plus five new actors invited from Java and Sumatra
  Led by Bambang, assisted by Washadi
  Introduction of the Suzuki Training Method for new actors, training for the participants of *Electra* and *Dionysus*
- September 1–October 10
  Jamaluddin and Dian Nova fly to Jakarta
  Quarantine: At Jampang Farming Studio (outside Jakarta)
  Preparation for the Toga Program began on September 13
- September 13–October 3
  Suzuki Training Method training at Jampang Farming Studio
  Readings of the script of *Electra* in Indonesian and four local languages
  Wheelchair training
  Sunday–Friday
  10:00 a.m.–12:00 a.m. Morning session
  2:00 p.m.–4:00 p.m. Afternoon session
  6:30 p.m.–8:30 p.m. Evening session
  Led by Bambang, assisted by Dian Nova and Washadi

Preparation for Departure
October 5–11
Oct. 5: Move to Pro Art Space (Jakarta)
Oct. 6–8: Conventional training
Oct. 9: PCR test at Japanese medical institution
Oct. 11: Departure for Japan

Health Considerations

- COVID-19
  Two vaccinations completed
  PCR and antigen testing conducted prior to training participation
  Weekly antigen testing with Purnati staff
  Infection prevention measures: Wearing masks, hand washing, social distance
- Quarantine
  Quarantine (disinfection) system: Various facilities in Purnati
  From August 2
  Pro Art Space, Jampang Farming Studio, Bali Purnati Art Center

Restrictive measures taken in August for COVID-19 forced all actors to move to Jampang Farming Studio, an hour and a half from Jakarta

The Casting Decision Process for *Electra*

1. Auditions were held and recorded in Jakarta on April 22.
2. Videos of the auditions with Restu's comments were sent to SCOT for review.
3. The results were communicated to Restu, and after discussion, the actors were selected.
4. The final casting was decided by Suzuki after the rehearsals in Toga had begun (this part was based on information provided by Shigemasa).

Impressions after Listening to the Presentation

Although the author has not yet been able to visit the site due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it was understood through the first meeting discussed in this report that the project is overcoming various difficulties and progressing extremely well.

I think I met the producer Restu for the first time in Toga Village in the early spring of 2015. No one would dispute the fact that Suzuki Tadashi is a world-class director, but Restu was not a producer who simply appreciates Suzuki's works highly. I remember that she came to Japan to ask Suzuki to stage an international co-production with Indonesia in order to somehow contribute to the modernization and revitalization of the performing arts in Indonesia, where Restu is from. Of course, there are many such requests, and it would be impossible to fulfill all of them, but Suzuki accepted Restu's request, and a relationship was slowly built over time. The result was performances of *Dionysus*, one of Suzuki's best-known works. As already noted, it was performed during the SCOT Summer Season from August to September 2018.

In this production, the roles of Cadmus and the chorus were played by Indonesian actors. After its premiere at Toga Grand Theatre in Toga Art Park, the play was also performed in a special open-air theater in the Prambanan Temple Compounds in Indonesia. During the 9th Theatre Olympics the following year, the play was performed again at Maezawa Garden in Kurobe City, Toyama Prefecture, and at the open-air theater in Toga Art Park.

Dionysus, one of Suzuki's representative works, has not only been staged in more than 20 countries, but has also become known for being performed by a wide variety of actors. In the version that was performed this time, the Indonesian actors who played the chorus spoke in their own dialects, which was a major feature of the production. The actors, who already had high physical abilities, further enhanced their potential as actors through training in the Suzuki Training Method. Their ability to successfully present the image of a group of people from different cultures with different sounds/languages, who grouped together in a religious fervor to incite the masses, was most impressive.

It is anticipated from the casting that Indonesian actors will be even more important in this production of *Electra*. In my next report, I hope to attend rehearsals in Toga Village one week before the performance and interview the actors, if possible.

1 Purnati is an arts production organization headed by Restu and has facilities in Bali and Jakarta, including residency rehearsal studios and theaters. It covers not only theater but also dance, music, fine arts, and a wide range of other art forms (according to information provided by Shigemasa).
2 Restu, the producer, is based in Indonesia, but also travels back and forth to Singapore. She stayed in Indonesia (Bali or Jakarta) for most of the audition and rehearsal period of *Electra* to organize and manage this project and to train the actors.Because the actors went to Singapore just before coming to Japan, the October 22 Zoom meeting was attended from Singapore (this part of the information was provided by Shigemasa). The other participants live in Indonesia, but not necessarily in well-known cities such as Jakarta or Yogyakarta.
3 This is the second collaboration between Indonesian actors and SCOT. The first was the three-year-long production of *Dionysus*, which welcomed actors from Indonesia and was performed at Toga Art Park (Toga Grand Theatre) from August to September 2018, and again at the end of September in the Prambanan Temple Compounds in Indonesia. As will be explained later, this was a long three-year collaboration, and the trust built at that time with the Indonesian side is thought to have made the current project during the COVID-19 pandemic possible.

SCOT (Suzuki Company of Toga) and Restu I. Kusumaningrum (Indonesia)

"Electra" Second Report: Rehearsal

Author: UCHINO Tadashi

As noted in the first report, initially there were fears that this project would be difficult to implement due to the global spread of COVID-19. Although it was no longer possible to conduct the project according to the prior performance schedule, the group decided to accelerate its preparations for the performance scheduled for November 27, 2021, at Toga Grand Theatre (Toga Dai-Sanbo) in Toga Art Park, Toga Village, Nanto City, Toyama Prefecture. The first meeting with both sides, discussed in the first report, was held remotely via Zoom on October 22. At that time, the Indonesian actors had already arrived in Japan (October 11) and were in Toga Village, SCOT's home base, where the performance is scheduled to take place, and were self-isolating.

As the international co-production *Electra* will be rehearsed and performed at Toga Art Park, which has excellent facilities, some facilities were available for the members from Indonesia to self-isolate. Therefore, the 11 members who came to Japan spent the self-isolation period (14 days) in the Toga Village facility without any particular problems, and rehearsals for *Electra* began on October 26.

The author stayed in Toga Village from the afternoon of November 18, nine days before the performance, to the morning of the following day, November 19. After arriving, I observed a full rehearsal of *Electra* on the afternoon of the 18th, and then had the opportunity to interview three of the actors. In the evening, I also saw a rehearsal of *Shinpan: Tsugaru Kaikyo Fuyugeshiki* (Isolated Landscape in Winter – New Version), which is scheduled to be performed together with *Electra*. In the morning of the following day, the 19th, I was able to observe the Indonesian actors' training in the Suzuki Training Method, followed by a part of their independent rehearsal of *Electra*.

Those interviewed on the afternoon of November 18 were Bambang Prihadi, who is the assistant director of *Electra* and plays the role of the doctor; Andhini Puteri Lestari, who plays Electra; and Jamaluddin Latif, who plays Orestes. The interview was conducted in Indonesian. The interpreter was Anak Agung Iswara, and Wiwit Roswita from production and SHIGEMASA Yoshie of SCOT were also present. The following is a summary of the interview.

Bambang is an artist with his own theater company in Indonesia. In 2015, he came to Toga for the first time under a Japan Foundation program and stayed at SCOT for 40 days to experience the Suzuki Training Method. He had read about the method in books, but when he actually experienced it, he says that he understood that it is even more wonderful than what he had gained by reading. Since then, he has continued his relationship with SUZUKI Tadashi. The method itself has been taught in Indonesia since 2002 by artists from the Indonesian theater company Theater Garasi who studied the method in Toga and brought it back to Indonesia, but it is since 2015 that the method has finally been taught there in earnest. The producer of *Electra*, Restu, understood the essence of the method and created a system to teach it in Indonesia, using the spaces of Purnati, which she presides over, and other locations. Bambang also began to use the method in his own theater company, Ciputat (Jakarta).

According to Bambang, in Indonesia, each theater company has its own method of training actors, and nothing systematic has ever been taught except at universities. He believes that the Suzuki Training Method has spread in Indonesia not only because it is systematic, but also because anyone who actually tries it understands immediately that it is good for actors. The way of concentration and the way of using the body in the method can be understood naturally and effortlessly by Indonesian actors, and anyone can understand that this is a method necessary to become a good actor.

Andhini had the opportunity to perform in a Robert Wilson production in 2018, for which she received training in the Suzuki Training Method from Bambang as well as Indonesian actors who appeared in *Dionysus*. She became interested in the method at that time and tried to participate in the summer school scheduled to be held in Toga in the summer of 2020, but unfortunately it was canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. When 2021 came around, she heard that there was an audition for *Electra*, so she joined it and was hired. Andhini has been participating in a theater company called Teater Koma since 2005, which does not necessarily emphasize the physicality of the actors, focusing instead on spoken drama. After experiencing the Suzuki Training Method, she came to realize that she could not speak her lines properly without training her bodily senses. Therefore, she intends to continue the training as much as possible.

Jamaluddin, who played the main role of Cadmus in *Dionysus*, says that he first encountered the Suzuki Training Method in Australia way back in 1994. At that time, the instructor did not call it the Suzuki Training Method; it was just something that the Australians were doing. But Jamaluddin was interested, and when he researched it, he found that it was the Suzuki Training Method. He was a member of Theatre Garasi, one of Indonesia's leading theater companies, from 1997 to 2011, where he also had the opportunity to experience the Suzuki Training Method. What he understood there was that the method is designed to help actors acquire the necessary physicality. If actors do not have control of their bodies, they will not be able to convey anything to the audience when they are on stage. Jamaluddin believes that by developing a sense of body through the method, it is possible to acquire such a body.

According to Jamaluddin, the reason the Suzuki Training Method has spread in Indonesia is that, like Bambang said, it is an easy-to-understand method that shows actors how to acquire what their bodies need. He said that he felt that his performance in *Electra* was, in a sense, an opportunity to experience the "real" Suzuki Training Method, and that he considers it to be a very valuable opportunity.

Afterward, the author, understanding the importance of the Suzuki Training Method for the Indonesian actors, asked how they feel it comes out in actual productions.

According to Bambang, what he learned in training is directly applied on stage, as shown by his ability to respond physically to Suzuki's direction, for example. In other words, training and the stage are linked. Furthermore, Bambang also said that his performance in *Electra* has made him understand that the combination of Suzuki's direction and the Suzuki Training Method is the probably the most appropriate way to convey to people the various tragic situations of the contemporary world.

Andhini, in response to the same question, said that since she is playing the role of Electra, she has experienced that the elements of the Suzuki Training Method, from body movement to breathing and concentration, play an extremely important role. In Indonesian contemporary theater, acting that relies on emotion tends to take precedence, but in theater based on the Suzuki Training Method, it is important to convey emotion without losing the form of the body, and she believes that she is gradually becoming able to do this.

For Jamaluddin, the Suzuki Training Method was initially a tough experience that put a lot of strain on his body, but as he continued the training, he found that when he actually went on stage, his body was stronger and his sense of balance was sharpened, so that even in situations where he does not speak, he says that he is able to maintain his body's strength. The body is acting.

Finally, I asked what the most difficult part of the project is, given that it is an international collaboration during the COVID-19 pandemic. According to Bambang, Indonesia was in a critical situation where the spread of the virus resulted in lockdowns, and for nearly two years, people had been unable to work in groups like they had before. He believes that it is important for people to meet in person, and in theater as well, new ideas are created when people come together and talk, but he has experienced that this is extremely unlikely to happen online. He said that he is grateful that this project gave him the same opportunity as two years ago to physically interact with people and create something.

Andhini responded that she was even moved by the fact that she is able to give normal performances in front of an audience. The only difficulty was that she could not train during the initial 14-day quarantine period. As she had been training in Indonesia before coming to Japan, training itself became difficult after the quarantine period, but with the support of those around her, she managed to get in shape to perform on stage.

Jamaluddin told me that he thinks it is very important, in the midst of the crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic, that a new version of *Electra* is being created through this international co-production. He said that the presence of an audience is, above all, a treasure in this situation. Although the 14 days of quarantine were also difficult for Jamaluddin, he also had some interesting experiences during the quarantine period, such as drawing the sketches shown in the attached document, and communicating with the staff through the drawings.

The above is the content of the interview. The Suzuki Training Method is spreading worldwide, and the most interesting fact was that the Indonesian actors felt that it was the best method for them. After this, I witnessed the actors' performances from rehearsals to the live show, and everyone was amazed that they had reached this level of performance in such a short period of time. The fact that the actors trained for the performance before coming to Japan, went through the quarantine period, and had a series of extremely stressful rehearsals in Suzuki's watchful presence, may have been a major factor in their performances reaching a high level. However, it also seems to be related to the fact that the Suzuki Training Method is, in the first place, an extremely compatible training method for the Indonesian actors' methodology and aesthetics of theater and for their physicality.

This and other aspects of the performance of *Electra* itself will be discussed in detail in the next report.

From Jamaluddin's notes during his self-isolation period (photos by the author)

SCOT (Suzuki Company of Toga) and Restu I. Kusumaningrum (Indonesia)

"Electra" Third Report: Performance

Author: UCHINO Tadashi

The author stayed in Toga Village on the performance days, November 27–28, 2021, about a week after the visit described in the second report. During that period, the author attended four performances: *Electra*, a Japan-Indonesia co-production (from 1:00 p.m. and 6:15 p.m. on November 27 at Toga Grand Theatre (Toga Dai-Sanbo)), which was the subject of this observer work and *Shinpan: Tsugaru Kaikyo Fuyugeshiki* (*Reissue: Winter View of the Tsugaru Straits*; from 3:30 p.m. on November 27 and 1:00 p.m. on November 28 at New Toga Sanbo). In addition, I attended a talk given by SUZUKI Tadashi at 10:00 a.m. on the 28th.

I would like to briefly discuss here *Electra*, the subject of this collaborative production. The text of this work is based on texts by Sophocles (ca. 496–406 BC), a Greek tragedian, and Hugo VON HOFMANNSTHAL (1874–1929), an Austrian playwright active from the late 19th to early 20th century.

The script composed by Suzuki consists of seven scenes. The characters are Clytemnestra, Electra, Chrysothemis, Orestes, men in wheelchairs, nurses, and a doctor. After the famed Trojan War, the Greek commander Agamemnon returns to Mycenae, Greece, only to be murdered by his queen Clytemnestra, largely because of her affair with her lover, Aegisthus, during the ten years of the Trojan War. Agamemnon and Clytemnestra have daughters Electra and Chrysothemis and a son Orestes. Orestes, fearing for his life after his father's death, flees, and Clytemnestra treats her daughter Electra coldly. Eventually, however, Orestes returns and kills his mother and her lover to avenge his father's murder.

This tale of Orestes' revenge is one of the most famous in Greek mythology, and was a subject treated not only by Sophocles but also by Aeschylus and Euripides, who, along with Sophocles, are considered the three greatest Greek tragic poets. Meanwhile, against the backdrop of the renewed attention to ancient Greece in the modern Western world, Hofmannsthal, the author of the text used in the present work, adapted a play based on Sophocles' text and staged it in 1903. The composer Richard Strauss composed an opera from the text, using it as a libretto. The opera version was premiered in 1909.

Regarding this Hofmannsthal version of the text, Suzuki writes:

> The special quality of this play, based on a Greek tragedy, is in its depiction of the emotions of each woman of the Atreus family, Clytemnestra, the wife who murdered her husband Agamemnon, and her two daughters, Electra and Chrysothemis, in a way that is convincing even to modern audiences. Although a bit wordy, the story is brilliant in the way it makes us wonder if this is where the germ of insanity begins. It is a rather good fit for my idea of stage production, which is that the world is a hospital, and all people are sick. The main reason for this impression is that the three women are placed in a closed "family" and the differences in their feelings are clearly depicted. Their feelings are not expressed in conversation, but rather almost invariably in intense monologues. And all of them are concerned with the survival and return of Orestes, the absent son and brother. This is partly why I chose the subtitle *Waiting for Orestes*, but at any rate, the present and future of these women's existence is defined by the nature of their relationship with the absent Orestes. One is frightened her son will kill her, one wishes that her brother will kill their mother, and one dreams that this situation will be transformed by her brother's death. ("Director's Notes: Circumstances of Delusion—Waiting for Orestes," https://www.scot-suzukicompany.com/works/05/)

It can be seen from this that Suzuki believes that Hofmannsthal imagined the inner self of modern humans, and regards the fact that this comes out "almost invariably in intense monologues" as the main characteristic of the work. Moreover, because it takes the form of monologues, Suzuki says that it "is a rather good fit" with his idea that "the world is a hospital, and all people are sick."

> When humans are in an impossible situation—in this case, the situation of the three trapped women, to which are added several men (chorus) who are in isolation as sick people—what kind of mental state and behavior do people develop when they feel that they lack the power to change their situation? The most essential aspect of this production was the pursuit of the clearest way to present that on the stage. (Ibid.)

As a result, "as usual, we had wheelchairs and nurses making a grand appearance," Suzuki continues, and aside from whether this is "as usual" or not, we can understand that this "wheelchairs and nurses making a grand appearance" is a major feature of Suzuki's direction. In addition, there is an extremely important directorial touch in this work, which Suzuki himself explains below. This is the live percussion performance, and the presence of the percussionist on stage at all times.

> The performance also features a unique technique for stage effect: the addition of live percussion music, with the rather intense sound of the percussion instruments, and the percussionist's presence on stage from the opening of the show to the end. The actors move violently with the sound of the percussion instruments; however, the sound is not an accompaniment to their movements, but rather a cry from their inner selves that bursts out and fills the space. Therefore, it is fair to say that the body of the musician, who guides the movements of all the characters, is also one of the main actors in this performance. Perhaps there has never been a stage production in the history of the world's theatrical arts where a musician has been so present as a leading actor. (Ibid.)

As you can see, the percussion performance is not merely an accompaniment to the actors' movements, but is intended to be "a cry from their inner selves that bursts out and fills the space." This is generally presumed to be difficult to achieve, but the participation of TAKADA Midori, one of Japan's leading percussionists, in the show since its premiere has enabled Suzuki's directorial intention to be successfully realized. And this time, of course, Takada is participating again.

Electra, composed and directed by Suzuki as described above, was first performed at Toga Open Air Theatre in 1995. Although it has not necessarily been performed as frequently as his other major productions, in 2007, for example, Suzuki directed *Electra* at Taganka Theatre in Moscow, Russia, where Yuri LYUBIMOV (1917–2014) was the artistic director, and it later became a part of the theater's repertoire, giving it a glorious history.

In this version of *Electra*, an international co-production with Indonesia, the cast was as follows:
Clytemnestra: SAITO Maki
Electra: Andhini Puteri Lestari*
Chrysothemis: Agatha Irena Praditya*
Orestes: Jamaluddin Latif*
Men in Wheelchairs: Dian Nova Saputra*, Wahyu Kurnia*, Erik Nofriwandi*, Ahmad Ridwan Fadjri*, Washadi*
Nurses: KIYAMA Haruka, KITO Risa, SHIN Marie, YOSHINO Karen, SUGIMOTO Sachi, FUSO Miyuna
Doctor: Bambang Prihadi*
(Honorifics omitted)

Of these, the actors marked with an asterisk are from Indonesia.

The opening scene with the men in wheelchairs is a scene that is not described in detail in the performance script I have at hand (it says only that "five men in wheelchairs appear"). This was first of all a showcase for the male actors from Indonesia. For a while they continue to make grotesque and sometimes comical movements that rely on their outstanding physicality, almost dance-like, as they march across the stage in their wheelchairs, stamping their feet like an army, letting out incomprehensible roars in unison, and breaking ranks. Then Electra appears on stage, pushed in a wheelchair by a doctor, echoing the percussion performance by Takada Midori onstage as the performance proceeds.

Most of the performance is spoken in Indonesian and the dialects of the Indonesian actors' hometowns, with Japanese subtitles displayed. Only Saito Maki, who plays Clytemnestra, speaks in Japanese.

It should be noted here that the wheelchair-bound men, who continue playing a role from the beginning of the play, can be said to be the chorus of Greek tragedy, and in Suzuki's staging, they sometimes also speak Electra's inner voice. For example, in the stage directions for scene 3, it is clearly stated that, "The men begin speaking Electra's inner voice." Thus, it is the men in wheelchairs, as the inner voice of Electra, who play the role of telling Clytemnestra that she herself is destined to be killed by Orestes (scene 5).

The principle of each speaking in his own dialect when speaking alone and in Indonesian when speaking in unison is maintained. Although I cannot tell the difference in detail, after listening to the play several times, I could begin to feel the distinctive tonal quality that each of their languages has.

With that being said, Electra does not have as much dialogue as Clytemnestra, who has rather long monologues in scenes 2 and 5, but she is physically present on stage from beginning to end, responding to every bit of Takada's percussion playing with gesticulations and showing





that she is the real main character of the play. Andhini Puteri Lestari, who played the role of Electra, exhibited the acting skill to handle this difficult directorial challenge with aplomb. The same could also be said of the Indonesian male actors who played the wheelchair-bound men with a sense of composed control throughout as well as individuality despite their well-organized discipline.

As we have seen, the international co-production of *Electra* (directed by Suzuki Tadashi), which overcame various obstacles in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, achieved results far beyond the author's expectations. The Indonesian actors grew even more significantly than during the full rehearsals I wrote about in my second report, and it is safe to assume that this was due to the fact that they were able to continue to live in the favorable environment of Toga Art Park, where they could concentrate solely on their creative work.

As noted above, two performances were held, drawing a total of 301 spectators. The fact that such a large number of visitors came to Toga Village at the turn of the season is due in large part to Suzuki's achievements over many years, and the author is confident that this international co-production must have made a striking impression on the audience.

Please see the photos provided by SCOT of the Indonesian actors training in the Suzuki Training Method and performing on stage.

SCOT (Suzuki Company of Toga) and Restu I. Kusumaningrum (Indonesia)

"Electra" Fourth Report: Reflection

Author: UCHINO Tadashi

Up to the third report, I mostly completed my reports as an observer. In this final report, I would like to analyze the historical significance of this international co-production, taking into account academic views.

International coproduction is a relatively neutral term, but the word "international" nevertheless implies the assumption of a nation-state, meaning that different nations work together to produce a work of art. In the case of *Electra*, this means Japan and Indonesia.

On the other hand, academically, the term *interculturalism* refers to a trend in performing arts that has emerged as a new phenomenon since people's interaction with each other has increased globally. It is important to note that the term "culture" is used rather than "nation," and also that "inter," meaning between or among, is used here. The Japanese translation has not been settled, and while some researchers call it *ibunka-sesshoku-shugi* (literally, different culture contact-ism), I have consistently used the term *kanbunka-shugi* (interculturalism).

The fact that different cultures come into contact and are influenced by each other due to various factors is the very history of humankind. As such, it is possible to say that this is not a phenomenon unique to the age of globalization. However, considering the characteristics of the limited category of the history of contemporary theater, I believe that it is possible to segment/discuss the various practices that have come into the limelight with the keywords "inter" and "culture," so I have adopted this translation and will use it uniformly in this report.

Interculturalism first came to attention in the 1980s. More than 40 years have passed since then, and it is safe to say that a common understanding of what interculturalism means in the context of theater has emerged among practitioners and researchers alike. With some reservations that this shared understanding may be limited to the English-speaking world, with which I am deeply involved, I would like to point out that the publication in 2020 of *The Methuen Drama Handbook of Interculturalism and Performance*, co-edited by Daphne P. LEI and Charlotte McIVOR, demonstrates the growing understanding and expansion of interculturalism in theater.[1]

The final chapter of the book is an annotated bibliography by McIvor with Justine NAKASE, in which the historical view of interculturalism on which the book relies, and which is generally shared by the academic community, is presented, along with explanations of key terms and key references. According to the description, the *winds* of intercultural theater began to blow at the end of the 19th century, forming Wave One ("emergence and backlash") from the 1970s to the end of the 1990s. Then, Wave Two ("consolidation") lasted from the early 2000s to 2010. And the present (2011 onward) is the era of Wave Three ("other" interculturalism(s)).

The *winds* were blown by the giants of theater history with whom we are familiar, such as Bertolt BRECHT, Gordon CRAIG, Vsevolod MEYERHOLD, Antonin ARTAUD, and Jerzy GROTOWSKI, who are considered to have been influenced mainly by the Asian theatrical tradition despite being in Europe. They are referred to here as the "modernist genealogies of experimentation," and key texts are introduced. They are all must-reads for theater researchers, such as Artaud's *The Theatre and Its Double* (1938).

Wave One, which is considered the "emergence and backlash," is where many familiar names from my generation and others appear, and authors such as Peter BROOK, Richard SCHECHNER, and Erika FISCHER-LICHTE are mentioned. The word "backlash" is used because, just at this time, postcolonial criticism was a major force in critical theory in the English-speaking world, and the structure of artists from the former colonial powers exploiting the culture of their former colonies was, *in and of itself*, severely criticized. Perhaps the most famous controversy is the criticism by Indian critic and director Rustom BHARUCHA of the British, white, Brook's production of *The Mahabharata* (1985).

The subsequent Wave Two of consolidation was a period when intercultural works had great influence within the festival culture circuit, mainly in continental Europe, against the backdrop of an era of globalization. Partly because of this, intercultural theater practices had become so commonplace that even scholars had begun to point out the need to separate the categories within them. In this book, categories such as *transcultural*, *intracultural*, and *extracultural* are introduced. Moreover, articles that say things such as the following have also come to be written.[2]

> While [noting] that intercultural theatre as a whole has tended to be dominated and over-determined by Western practitioners and theorists, [it is argued] that intercultural theatre is better positioned to "explore and critique alternative forms of citizenship and identity across and beyond national boundaries, although the subjectivities they produce are not wholly free of state mediation." (p. 237).

In other words, as intercultural theater productions matured with the period of consolidation, the discourse surrounding them also shifted toward more subtle analysis and evaluation that could not be reduced to simple dualism.

As for the current Wave Three, as it is one of the "other" interculturalism(s), it is noted that the attention of researchers is increasingly focused on a very diffuse and diverse range of intercultural theater practices, especially small practices in non-mainstream and non-Western-centered places. Of course, since we are talking about discourse in the English-speaking world:

> Wave Three is characterized by… the study of intercultural performance with an emphasis on minority-led and/or Asian and/or non-Western artists, projects, events, and experiences, and an even more pronounced focus on intercultural processes including but not limited to actor-training and rehearsal processes… Wave Three might be seen as centered on practices that repurpose, replace, redirect, or ignore these [traces of Wave One and Wave Two] entirely. (pp. 239–240)

Within this stream of the "other," coeditor Lei argues, for example, that a genre of "hegemonic intercultural theatre" (HIT) has come into existence. First, here is the definition of HIT as a keyword in this book:

> Daphne P. Lei's succinct term which describes elite practices of intercultural theatremaking that are unbalanced in their power dynamics between collaborators, typically lead by auteur directors, spectacular in scale, and driven by the West or Western sources of influence and funding. (p. 240)

Brook's *The Mahabharata* is a typical example, but it is worth noting that in the 2010s, Lei ventured to call it hegemonic. This is noteworthy be-

cause Lei deliberately calls it HIT, as she wants to say that there are limits to critical evaluation of such dualistic power structures.

For example, Lei considers Robert Wilson's (1941–) international collaborations in Taiwan, considered to be part of Wave One, to be typical HIT. There were two collaborations between Wilson and local artists in Taiwan. The first, *Orlando* (2009), was an intercultural performance that could not withstand the postcolonial criticism. However, *1433—The Grand Voyage* (2010), which was produced in response to the first collaboration, is said to have been able to present tremendous complexity that was a complete change from the previous production. Although the details are beyond the scope of this report, Lei attributes this success more than anything to the positive lessons learned by the participants from their experience with *Orlando*.[3] To summarize briefly, opportunities that ought to have been positive—the "Interruption, Intervention" mentioned in the title of the essay—were brought to Taiwanese theatrical culture through two collaborations with the "other" in the form of Wilson. The cultural flow, which had been in a natural state, was artificially interrupted, so to speak, by the introduction of aesthetics and ideas (in this case, Wilson's views on theater) from the "other," which normally should not have entered the flow, and an unexpected chemical reaction occurred. She also says that even researchers who are critical of HIT should recognize this significance of HIT. From a larger perspective, Lei believes that the stance of criticism that criticized institutions from the outside and pressed for their dismantlement, which was the mainstream in the 20th century, has become invalid via the postmodern, and that it is only from within institutions that institutions can be changed, a stance that is becoming the mainstream in the 21st century.

If we bring in this theoretical or genre framework of intercultural theater, how does the Japan–Indonesia co-production of *Electra* (co-produced by SCOT and Purnati Indonesia) look?

In Lei's paper mentioned above, SUZUKI Tadashi's name actually appears as one of the practitioners of HIT for some reason. Although I cannot find a very assertive reason other than the fact that Japan belongs to the first world economically, it may have something to do with the fact that Suzuki's appearance in the period classification already mentioned falls in the time of Wave One. In other words, is it because he has continued to be active since the "backlash era," when being a "great director" itself was simplified to such analyses as "unbalanced power dynamics"?

In any case, I am not going to personally quibble with this assessment made in 2011. Rather, in looking at the chronology given in the book edited by the same Lei almost a decade later, I believe that it is important to note that from the very beginning of his activities, Suzuki's work so far has realized a performative practice of subjectivity within the problematic sphere of *identity politics*, which as I have already cited as a characteristic of the consolidation of Wave Two, "explore[s] and critique[s] alternative forms of citizenship and identity across and beyond national boundaries, although the subjectivities they produce are not wholly free of state mediation."

This applies not only to the works with actors from the former Waseda Little Theater and SCOT, but also to all of the various international co-productions that Suzuki has created so far. The performances and presence on the stage of the Indonesian actors who participated in this production of *Electra*, as I have written about in previous reports, were certainly a heterogeneous or intercultural physicality "explor[ing] and critique[ing] alternative forms of citizenship and identity across and beyond national boundaries."

It is important to emphasize that such "physicality" is not acquired overnight, but is made possible first of all by the persistence and soundness of the organizations (in this case, SCOT and Purnati Indonesia) on which the international co-production is based. It is thought that the success of the co-production comes down to the fact that it took five years. Of course, it is not always better to spend a long time doing things. Even though the collaborations between Wilson and Taiwan only took place on two occasions, they are said to have brought about significant changes ("interruption, intervention") in the Taiwanese theater scene. What about the case of *Electra* this time?

The key to this is the existence of the Suzuki Training Method as a shared asset. By sharing this training method with Indonesian actors as an introspective system to consciously cultivate not only their skills and physical abilities as actors, but also their entire being for speaking dialogue, *Electra* was able to achieve the same level of theatrical per-

Training in Indonesia ©Purnati Indonesia, 2021

Performance photos ©SCOT (Suzuki Company of Toga)

formance as Suzuki's many previous international co-productions. In other words, not only did the actors give physical and concrete shape to "alternative forms of citizenship and identity across and beyond national boundaries" before the eyes of the audience, but through their bodies and the words they uttered, they allowed the audience to become aware of, or rather to comprehend, an ancient Greek story that should be a great reference for considering the crises of our own time.

1 It should be noted here that the term "theater" in this report refers to performing arts that are not limited to theater in the narrow sense of the term, as well as to all so-called performative works in general that do not necessarily take place on a stage.

2 The quotation in parentheses is from the following paper.
Lo, Jacqueline and Helen Gilbert. "Toward a Topography of Cross-Cultural Theatre Praxis." Drama Review 46, no. 3 (Fall 2002): 31–53.

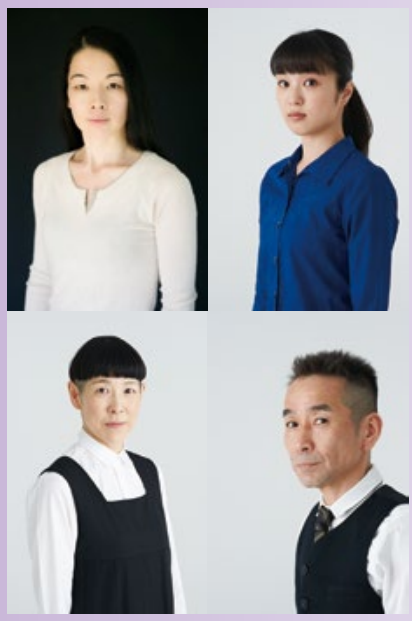
3 Daphne P. Lei, "Interruption, Intervention, Interculturalism: Robert Wilson's HIT Productions in Taiwan," Theatre Journal, Volume 63, Number 4, December 2011, 571–586.

PROJECT

“TOGE”

Company Derashinera with LEE Ren Xin (Malaysia) and LIU Juichu (Taiwan)

TOGE is a new dance creation by Company Derashinera, which has collaborated extensively with performers across Asia. Directed by ONODERA Shuji, Company Derashinera members KAJIHARA Akiko, LEE Ren Xin (Malaysia), LIU Juichu (Taiwan), and other international artists explore shared adaptability in different locations and examine how we can put our differences aside and live together. With the very survival of person-to-person exchanges at stake amid the COVID-19 pandemic, the work attempts to avert ruptures, to support opportunities for coming into contact with different value systems, and to connect to the future by sharing with society at large. After a series of workshops with a focus on body language, the piece premiered at the Atrium in Kanagawa Arts Theatre (KAAT) in December 2021.



Top left: KAJIHARA Akiko ©Amandine Crochet
Bottom left: FUJITA Momoko,
Top right: SAKIYAMA Rina,
Bottom right: ONODERA Shuji (Company Derashinera)
©Suzuki Jouji

Left: LEE Ren Xin ©Bernie Ng
右 Right: LIU Juichu ©Yi Hsin Lo

Outline of Performances

Free Performance of *TOGE Atrium*
Dates: December 9 (Thu), 10 (Fri), 11 (Sat), 2021
5:00 p.m. on each day
Duration: 30 min.
Venue: KAAT Kanagawa Arts Theatre, Atrium

Theatrical Performance of *TOGE*
Dates and times: December 17 (Fri) 5:00 p.m., 18 (Sat) 1:00 p.m. / 5:00 p.m., 19 (Sun) 1:00 p.m., 2021
Duration: 70 min.
Venue: KAAT Kanagawa Arts Theatre, Middle Studio

Credits

Direction and Cast: ONODERA Shuji
Cast: KAJIHARA Akiko, LEE Ren Xin, SAKIYAMA Rina, LIU Juichu, FUJITA Momoko
Lighting: YAMAMORI Eiji
Sound Coordinator: IKEDA Nobu, YAMAMOTO Shuhei
Music: ONO Kishiro, OMURA Tomoya, TANNO Musashi
Scenic Design: HARADA Ai, ISHIGURO Takeshi
Costume Design: VuDuc DoanHung
Stage Manager: IWAYA Chinatsu

Organized by The Japan Foundation, Company Derashinera
Co-organizer: YPAM Executive Committee
Produced by Company Derashinera
Production cooperation: NISHIO Sachiko (arts knot), SONODA Shoko (arts knot)

Performance photos: ©Suzuki Jouji

Company Derashinera with LEE Ren Xin (Malaysia) and LIU Juichu (Taiwan)

"TOGE" First Report: Launch of Project

Author: TAKAHASHI Ayako

1. Rehearsal Studio, Beginning

In preparation for the performances in December 2021, Derashinera gradually started rehearsals at the end of July with the Japan-based members who could get together: ONODERA Shuji, FUJITA Momoko, and SAKIYAMA Rina. I observed one of these, a rehearsal held in the multi-purpose hall at Academy Otowa on July 26.

At the beginning of the rehearsal, a meeting with the scenic design staff was held to prepare for the atrium performance. They brought in a cube-frame object that has been used several times in past Derashinera performances, and discussed how it looks and how it could be used. Especially as this is a joint production with an international cast, they seemed to be conscious about using "simple tools that could be found in any country." One of the artists commented, "It would be nice if we could touch on something cultural."

Consider using art used in the past

Then, after trying "movements like a drunk holding a light" with the lights dimmed, Onodera, Fujita, and Sakiyama next tried movements using "paper." The paper was dropped, and Onodera and Sakiyama tried several patterns to see how they could connect while Fujita took video. They explored expression by changing the meaning of the paper and the power relationships of the people involved in various ways, such as imagining the paper as a letter, "with powerful words written on it like an election speech." They crumpled the paper up, and Onodera and Sakiyama took on the roles of "one who wants to unfold" and "one who wants to close" the paper, with Fujita then replacing Onodera and giving it a go with Sakiyama. Factors such as the way the paper is unfolded and closed, and the timing and speed all make a difference in the way things appear. In the process of searching for the right image, Czech filmmaker Jan ŠVANKMAJER was mentioned as a reference.

Trying out using a spotlight with the lights dimmed

Movement of competing for a piece of paper (photo by the author)

They plan to share these rehearsal videos with the performers overseas as a resource.

2. Interview with ONODERA Shuji, Director of Derashinera, on the Launch of the Project

Why Asia?

——What are your thoughts on creation with performers from other Asian countries?

Onodera: When I was active in the group Mizuto Abura (Water and Oil), I was more Europe-oriented and did not pay close attention to Asia. However, during my stay in Vietnam and Thailand as a Japan Cultural Envoy, I felt an energy that is not present in Japan today. In cities where many people live the same as in Tokyo, the stores and lifestyles are comparable, but at the base, the energy of the people who live in the city is completely different. It may simply be that people's voices are a bit louder, but that sensation was the start. From there, I had opportunities to collaborate with many people in Asia and became more interested in the differences between Japan and other countries through the people I met there.

—— What are those differences?

Onodera: For example, NUNG Van Minh was a performer in KAAT with Onodera Shuji's *Without Signal!* (February 2017) created through a workshop in Hanoi. Van Minh is a member of an ethnic minority, living with his family near the border with China. He is very pure and honest, including his passion for dance. I have the impression that he knows how to live properly as a human being, rather than just looking for interesting activities based on his self-interest. I thought there must have been many young people like this in Japan in the past. I have the opportunity to meet with

young people in Japan, but I do not see many of his type in Japan today. I think this may be due to differences in the environment, such as the amount of information and technology. After his performance in Derashinera's *Knife* (December 2020), he could not return to Vietnam because his country had restricted travel from abroad due to the pandemic, including by its own citizens. So, he stayed in Japan for six months and we had him participate in Derashinera's *The Emperor's New Clothes* (March 2021). We had planned to have him join this performance as well, but as the Vietnamese government's policy had not changed, we decided against it because we felt that it would be problematic for him, considering his age and his career, if we invited him back to Japan and he could not return home for six months again.

Also, after my experience as a Japan Cultural Envoy, I had a project to gather young people from Taiwan and audition them to create a piece, which later met with a hitch, but I did a work-in-progress performance in Japan. At that time, I felt that the way female performers [in Taiwan] stand on stage is a little different from in Japan. I feel that there is a certain way that is considered good for female performers to express themselves on stage in Japan. Don't get me wrong, but I have the impression that Japanese women want to be "cute." That is great too, but with one standard for what is beautiful/not beautiful, everyone tends to look similar.

In both Taiwan and Vietnam, on the other hand, I was impressed with the strength that these female performers showed. I was fascinated by a Taiwanese work-in-progress performer, LIU Juichu, who was just so cool no matter what she did in the audition. She will be performing again this time, following her appearance in *Knife*. Then there is NGUYEN Thi Can from Vietnam, who is not participating this time, but appeared in *Without Signal!* She, too, was wonderful. When I look at other Asian countries, my honest impression is that there are quite a few female performers whom I would like to have perform and appear on stage with me. Of course, this is not to say that such performers do not exist in Japan, but rather that they tend to not make their presence felt at the right time or end up being forgotten. That is why I want to show how *cool* female performers are. Even when I was in Mizuto Abura, I enjoyed being told, "So there's this way of looking, too." This is work that can be done among Japanese performers, but again, as I continue to have opportunities to do it with people from other countries, especially in Asia, I want to bet on the possibility of showing a new value system when done with performers from other Asian countries.

Wanting to Present an Image of Strong Womanhood

—— Especially with your style, I imagine that an individual's gender expression would have a big impact, as you use everyday gestures, such as receiving and not giving things or pretending to give things to others in your productions …

Onodera: That's right. The acting aspect of how a person moves, which goes beyond the matter of dance technique, is important. So, the kind of life someone usually leads and how that person lives his/her life have an effect. I think it is interesting if I could pull out what is already inside a person. When I suggest something that I think is interesting, it might be new for the person, and even if they do their best despite a sense of discomfort, it may not work. However, when I talk with Liu Juichu and Fujita Momoko, a lot of times they sympathize with me and say, "That's only natural," or "I know what you mean." KAJIHARA Akiko, who is coming from France, is another dancer I love, and I hope she will show her strength to Japanese people. Also, although we have not worked together yet, Lee Ren Xin from Malaysia will also participate this time, and I have high expectations for her. I think she is in the dance or performance category, but she also creates her own works, so I feel that she will present a new image of womanhood. I am looking forward to seeing how I will react to that.

—— That would change your way of making productions a lot, wouldn't it?

Onodera: I think so. When I was working in Mizuto Abura, Fujita was the only female performer, and I asked her to take on characters who do not flirt or even laugh, aiming to erase the boundary between male and female. However, stories are inevitably told in "male/female" terms. In a society where men are always considered to be dominant, how to show this is one approach [to addressing this issue]. However, as there is an all female cast this time, I want to create a work that shows the strength and interest of each of them.

—— What are your thoughts on the state of men?

Onodera: As a man myself, I cannot be objective in some respects, but I feel that men may be given preferential treatment in Japan. When I go to Europe, for example, the attitude of men toward women is totally different. I think men are strong in Europe as well, but I feel that they have overcome this dispute. I feel that [society] goes awry to the extent that Japanese men are not aware of their privileged position, but if what is happening in Japan today is a transitional period, it may be inevitable. Come to think of it, when I did a workshop in Thailand, it was a pleasant experience for me to be able to create just by being there, regardless of whether someone was male or female, because they were so open about the categories of gender.

Anyway, I feel that Japan has more to learn from other Asian countries, but as values never change in a stroke, I think there might be something to show after 10 years or so of continual work, rather than imagining a one-shot deal. As for myself, I think that I will keep making efforts little by little without bending.

Projects Spanning Ten or Twenty Years

—— You just mentioned the words "after 10 years," and this performance is the first in The Global Theatre Project, which I understand is a 10- or 20-year project.

Onodera: This is related to my problem awareness. For example, when dancers who have been active abroad come back to Japan, there are almost no companies to receive them. KANAMORI Jo's Noism Company Niigata is open to people from abroad, yet in many cases, I feel that the dancers who return to Japan have to start from scratch. But I think that if Japanese companies were more global, there would be more openness and we would be able to see different things.

Until now, I had been more conscious of doing what I wanted to do and expecting someone to pick up the work, rather than engaging with society. It didn't make sense to me to go out of my way and say, "for the good of society," so I thought I would just do my own thing and do it well. But at some point, however, I began to think that I needed to reflect on various things and have words to express them in order to connect with society a little more. Now, I feel that my method of connecting with society is to find and present a kind of universality using mime, a potential and means of expression that does not involve words. Considering my age, I

feel that I will not be doing this for that long, so I must proceed little by little, as life is unexpectedly short.

Group Narrative, Both Abstractly and Figuratively

—— What is your specific conception for this work at this point?

Onodera: I am thinking of George ORWELL's novel *Animal Farm* as a motif. The conception itself is interesting, and I feel it is close to the world we live in today, where a group or society is led around by the nose, and after going in the direction they thought was best, they realize that they ended up in a different place and are eventually swindled. However, as I am likely to be the only man in this project, it will be difficult to achieve a balance in terms of expressing the story. I am thinking of taking a different approach by adding some more elements such as different texts, paintings, and so on.

—— By "paintings, and so on," do you mean as objects? Or as stories?

Onodera: I don't mean to use the works as they are, but perhaps the concept or the idea behind them. Also, I feel that deserts, towers, and other things that are both abstract and figurative in some way create a world. I think it would be better to take in something different from the outside and approach it with the feeling that I am likely as not to break it, rather than to study it thoroughly as a basis, so as to not come off as preachy. We are going to make cut-outs of moments such as quarrels or when people say, "Let's try to do our best together," but what kind of structure can we use to show this? Considering the quarantine period for the performers from overseas, we don't have much time for rehearsals, and there is also the language problem, so I am thinking of using a system where, for example, I give people a theme and ask them to create a solo, and then we discuss it.

I feel that *Animal Farm* has continuity with my previous work *Knife*. *Knife* was inspired by MAUPASSANT's *Boule de Suif*, in which a group of people are on a journey. I thought of it as the journey of life. In a sense, that's what I want to do this time, so I was thinking of using the same artwork once more.

—— I think if you were to use completely different visuals, it would change the appearance and make it easier for both the performers and the viewers to see it as something new, but that's not the point, is it?

Onodera: No. It is wishful thinking, so I am not sure how it will turn out, but I *am* exploring new possibilities for expression, such as using paper. I do not want to make everything new all the time. I want to make new works, but I also want to be conscious of things like recycling and sustainability. The world is headed in that direction, and the performing arts are also feeling the economic impact of COVID-19. I don't want to gainsay shows that charge 10,000 yen to show something gorgeous and beautiful, but amid various restrictions, I would like to consider putting on a rich performance in a simple, minimalist way, as a place to showcase expression itself. I am very grateful to The Japan Foundation for giving me a push at a time when the common reaction is to question the need to invite foreigners [to Japan] during the pandemic. In the midst of all this, I feel that I, too, am being questioned about what it means to create a stage performance.

3. Impressions

An international co-production during the pandemic means that changes had to be made, such as canceling the performance of Nung Van Minh, and there are many uncertainties about when the performers would be able to attend rehearsals, depending on the COVID-19 situation and government policy. I can see that Onodera and other creators are struggling with this situation.

On the other hand, for Onodera, who has been active on stage for more than a quarter of a century, his encounter with other Asian countries has given him a new perspective and, coupled with his age, has brought him to a crossroads in terms of expression, in a positive sense.

As many rich expressions have come out of various constraints, it will be interesting to see how this creation will turn out and what those involved will gain from it.

Company Derashinera with LEE Ren Xin (Malaysia) and LIU Juichu (Taiwan)

"TOGE" Second Report: Rehearsal

Author: TAKAHASHI Ayako

1. Determining the Title and Concept of the Work

The plot was finalized in October, based on a concept that had been in the works for some time. In *Animal Farm*, the motif for the project, the animals who have driven out the controlling humans try to establish a free and equal self-government, but an imbalance gradually develops, and they are exposed to attacks from the dominant animals and the outside world. The project abstracts the "rulers" and depicts people who are unaware of their situation. The central characters are played by five women, with ONODERA Shuji in a supportive role. The name of the project is *TOGE*.

2. Start of Rehearsals at KAAT

In mid-November, in the run-up to the December live shows, rehearsals began at the Kanagawa Arts Theatre (KAAT), the venue for the production. Prior to this, although there was some exchange of text and video via e-mail, there was no particular practice via Zoom or other means, especially with the overseas group, as the emphasis was on face-to-face creation in the rehearsal studio.

In early October, a tentative text (script) for the project was finalized, translated into English, and shared with the performers.
On October 21, the director and performers held a face-to-face Zoom meeting to discuss their impressions of the text and the original work.
On November 16, rehearsals began in KAAT's 8th floor studio. This was the first day of rehearsals for Onodera Shuji, FUJITA Momoko, and SAKIYAMA Rina, who were already in Japan. LEE Ren Xin, LIU Juichu, and KAJIHARA Akiko, who were in quarantine, spent time working on their own solos and other ideas, and communicated with everyone via Zoom.
On November 18, Lee joined the rehearsals.
On November 19, Kajihara joined the rehearsals.
On November 23, Liu joined the rehearsals.

I visited the rehearsal studio on November 24, when everyone was present. The scene at the beginning of the story, where the "kept" characters conduct mutual surveillance on each other, is expressed using a long piece of rubber. Various shapes are created, just like in a game of cat's cradle. Everyone holds the rubber, and when they go inside, it looks like a boat. It seemed difficult for the five people to handle a single piece of rubber, because if the timing was not right, the rubber would loosen or it would look like a different action. Onodera's instructions were extremely detailed, such as, "Don't start running suddenly, but lean a little."

Using a long rubber band to represent unstable and swaying people (photo by the author)

For example, in a scene where Lee almost falls off the boat and Fujita appears to have saved her, Fujita falls off. When Lee then made a gesture as if to follow, Kajihara, who was standing next to her, reacted the same way, but Onodera pointed out that this made the movement too one-dimensional. So, Kajihara and Liu decided to make a movement of pulling Sakiyama, who was stumbling backward.

In this way, as the same scene is repeated over and over again while carefully crafting the details, the movements and nuances become richer and smoother. On the other hand, Onodera also says, "I want to show the individuality and presence of each character rather than a detailed story."

Next, the rehearsal moved to a scene in which Kajihara agitates everyone, and her address brings about a change in the tamed people. Onodera's cautioning to "go for discussion, not dance" was interesting.

Here, Kajihara and Liu put their weight on a slanted platform, whose durability was checked with the stage manager, IWAYA Chinatsu.

Checking the durability with stage director Iwaya (photo by the author)

Onodera says that he was inspired by artist Mark MANDERS, whose world of sculptures and other objects existing in mysterious equilibrium with simple chairs, tables, and platforms seems to fit the world of Derashinera.

Conversation in the rehearsal studio was a mix of Japanese and English, with Lee and Liu sometimes complementing these with Chinese. There was no confusion, and the atmosphere was friendly.

Although the rehearsal this day was for the theater performance at KAAT, experiments with a giant plastic bag to be used in the atrium space were conducted on another day. Preparations for this are also in progress.

A giant plastic bag for the atrium shows. The cast will perform inside and outside of this bag.

3. Interview with the Performers

—— What are your expectations for this project?

Lee: This is not the first time I have collaborated with Japanese people, but it is the first time I have created a work together in Japan in this way. I was interested in how we would work with the director and as group to create a piece. When the rehearsals started, it was so detailed! I am now very curious to see what we can create together, including myself, with mostly Japanese people.

Liu: I participated in Derashinera's *Knife* in Japan last year. This time it is a new work, different from that one, but there are similarities, such as the table. I am curious to see what will happen.

Sakiyama: I was really looking forward to working with Liu and Lee, as they are female dancers close to my age. Last year in *Knife*, Liu pulled out an unexpected variety of useful tricks for handling things impromptu, and Kajihara's free spirit was refreshing, stimulating my stiff head and making me think, "It's okay to be free!" That was fun. This time, Lee will join us and likely show us a new bag of tricks, and I am determined to reveal what I've got up my sleeve as well. If not, I will be left behind, and as there are many people here who do crazy stuff (laughs), I feel that we will be able to generate some great energy.

Kajihara: With *Knife*, it was exciting to have a mix of people from different cultures, and as it was a creation made in a short period, there was a sense of excitement. This time, we are using some of the same props again but in different ways, with some of the same members but also some new ones……So while there has been a bit of switching around over time, I was looking forward to beginning another journey and going to an unknown world. This is my fourth creation with Onodera, and his work is always very detailed and precise, which feels very stimulating deep down. As I always work freely, I find it difficult and interesting to fit things into a proper form. In addition, I am also inspired by the activities of Derashinera, who are constantly searching for a different way of seeing things while maintaining their own style of expression, which is somewhere between theater and dance. I feel very blessed to be able to challenge myself and work with these young dancers.

Fujita: It may not be the case that I have created with so many people in Japan, but when I create with people from overseas, I can question what I think is normal and see that it may not be so. There are many things that I can learn from Lee and Liu, who come from overseas, and from Kajihara, who works outside Japan, that I cannot notice being in a small company, so I am looking forward to seeing how this will become part of the work.

—— Ms. Lee, Ms. Liu, and Mr. Kajihara, what did you do during your quarantine period at the hotel?

Lee: Onodera had given me an assignment to see what I could do with wrapping film, so I went through a lot of trial and error with that in my hotel room. I memorized ideas and e-mailed them to Onodera and the group. I am still working on it in the rehearsal studio. I am going to use it in a solo scene.

Liu: During the quarantine period, I spent the first two days reading and rereading the plot. I had a hard time translating it into Chinese. After that, I juggled, did exercises in bed, and improvised moves. The last four days I watched the videos they sent me and memorized and thought about my solo moves. My solo was supposed to be in the character of an office worker, and she was supposed move in a way between an animal and a human. I was given a video of what it might look like, and asked to think about how I wanted it to look.

Kajihara: I was rereading *Animal Farm*, which is the motif of the piece. I knew that my schedule would allow me to participate in the rehearsals right after they started, so I was trying to conserve my strength by doing yoga, Pilates, and other workouts, and sometimes improvisation (laughs).

—— I think that a lot of things are different from the norm due to COVID-19. How is that affecting you?

Fujita: We were miraculously able to perform *Knife* despite the high probability of cancellation due to COVID-19 (the November shows were canceled due to a performer testing positive, and were held in early December). I feel fortunate that we were able to get together this time, as it feels miraculous again.

Sakiyama: I have become quite accustomed to rehearsing under COVID-19 [restrictions], but in terms of creating a piece with performers from overseas with no time to spare due to their quarantine period, I think that last year's experience has helped in preparing, with things written in English so they are ready to be explained right away. We are more prepared this time than last time. For example, we have devised a way to communicate more clearly by naming things, such as "prologue," and speaking in English.

Kajihara: I really get the impression that things are very well prepared. I am relieved that they have made the preparations so carefully. It must have been difficult for you two (foreigners) to prepare so many documents, wasn't it?

Lee: Yes, it was. But that's okay (laughs). I don't feel any problems in terms of COVID-19 measures either. I am just thankful to be here because the infection situation has been quite bad in Malaysia for the past few months, and there have been no events at all.

Liu: COVID-19 has made it difficult for me to go abroad for the past two years, so I am happy and grateful for the rare experience I am having by participating in this project. As Taiwan is quite safe, with few infected people, my parents were worried about the situation in Japan. But I decided that I would go, unless Japan banned entry, in which case I would have no choice. After all, working with Derashinera is so much fun. Every minute and every second are a great experience for me as a performer, and I am very happy. I feel that this is something I cannot experience in Taiwan.

—— What is your impression of Onodera's direction?

Lee: Onodera's direction is very thoughtful about how the audience sees the performance. It is also impressive that he asks Momoko and others to look and try to capture things objectively. For me, it is interesting to learn how carefully he thinks about how the audience sees the piece, and it is fun to try different things here, to have Onodera explain the effects of the movements, and to try to change the way the audience sees the work.

Liu: Onodera just has a free imagination. He is full of possibilities. In rehearsing with him, I can try many different things for what I can do.

Dance, movement, action, acting, mime……all are included and all are put together. This also frees up my own imagination.

Kajihara: He is energetic. I am attracted by his passion, and we become passionate together. But sometimes he goes too fast, so I call him "TGV" [the French high-speed train] (laughs). What Onodera emphasizes is movement, situations, and people. What people are, how interesting people are…these [ideas] are interspersed throughout the process, and it is interesting and difficult to explore them through trial and error. But he has a clear vision, so I trust him and follow him. The collaborators who usually work with Onodera are just what you would expect, and for his part Onodera is supported by all of them. I feel that this is a group work. I am very happy to be able to join in as a guest from time to time. I live in France and work with people from France and other European countries, and their way of doing things really varies from person to person. So, it is fun to start with a blank canvas and experience, "Oh, this time it is this kind of color, this kind of painting."

Sakiyama: I always work with Onodera. He has several patterns [of direction], such as when he gives us a big theme, or when he has a clear idea of what he wants to show, or when he says, "Give me this kind of atmosphere." I enjoy the feeling of making the finished piece through a process of being asked, "How should we do it?" and then everyone saying, "Let's do it this way."

Fujita: I feel like I've gone around in a circle and now I'm back to mime. As I started to reflect more on mime as I got older, I found that continuous dancing or movement or speaking of lines isn't necessary; it is possible to make one's presence felt in the pauses, the blank spaces of inactivity presented. So, it is a great opportunity for me to collaborate with people who can do that, who can make it "work" when I say, "Hey, I'm going to present you with this space."

—— What do you enjoy most in the rehearsal studio right now?

Sakiyama: I feel it's an amazing thing to be able to communicate through movement despite the language barrier. I can just say something like, "Let's do it like *whoosh*!" and when we give it try, to my surprise, the mood got across and people caught my drift. And when they add a bit of color to that, I think it is a very special thing.

Liu: Everything is interesting. Lots of languages are flying about, but sometimes, even without language, you can tell what is going on, what the problem is, by the atmosphere and by looking at each other.

Lee: I guess the fact that everyone is trying to find something better. For my part, I sometimes wish that I knew more of your language so we could share images more clearly.

Kajihara: When I first went to France, I couldn't speak French at all, and I sometimes created things as the only Japanese with French flying all about. So, I understand Lee's feeling of "if I could understand the language," but there is also the strength of being connected through non-verbal communication such as dance and mime. Sometimes it is more important to use the sixth sense to understand than words, and I think that is what makes international projects like this so interesting.

Fujita: Indeed, every year I sincerely wish I could speak English better, but there are moments when I can understand who people really are when I stand facing them in the rehearsal studio or on stage. I feel very happy at those moments when we understand each other in the absence of words.

4. Comment from Onodera Shuji

Onodera: After the rehearsals began, I became convinced that this casting was the right choice. Lee and Liu catch [what we're trying to do] and give output. I'm not going to agree with all the communication in the rehearsal studio now, and I don't think that I need not study language so that I can explain more details, but I feel that we can use the fact that something is missing as a possibility for new expression. This is because I am now aiming for mime that I think is beautiful for what it lacks, rather than mime that is perfect in form. I am focusing on the fact that just standing still can be attractive, or that various imagery is created from people meeting and forming relationships, and I feel that what is strong in such situations is a body that does not explain itself.

In fact, there is a big difference between what you can do when you understand everything and what you can pick up and produce by feel. For me, this is a chance to think about creation once more. When dealing with people who understand Japanese, I tend to ramble on and on, but in this project that is difficult. So, I try to say very simple words. The cast moves in response to that and then I say "fast," "slow," or "a different sense of speed," and each person decides for herself based on her own sense. Then, I say "no" or "yes" to it. Whereas normally I would have things pretty set in my mind, this time I am doing things the other way around and asking for help because I am lacking in some areas, and I am getting more and more excited thanks to everyone's input. So, it is a matter of whether or not I can correctly select from among what the ladies have felt and brought out. On top of that, there are days when an interpreter comes in, and while it's not like revealing a secret or something, I think it can be interesting to later be like, "Oh, this is what that person was saying." I regret that I am stressing everyone out, but I also enjoy the unexpected discoveries that come out of it.

5. Impressions

I had imagined that the creative process would make extensive use of tools such as Zoom, but I got the sense that the creative process had progressed at a rapid pace after the performers met in person. Although the time until the live shows is limited, the performers are all experienced, so after making their own preparations, they are able to give their best in the rehearsal studio.

Company Derashinera with LEE Ren Xin (Malaysia) and LIU Juichu (Taiwan)

"TOGE" Third Report: Performance

Author: TAKAHASHI Ayako

Derashinera's project was composed of two parts: ***TOGE Atrium*** (free of charge) at the Kanagawa Arts Theatre (KAAT) and ***TOGE* theater performances** in the KAAT Middle Studio. After about two weeks of rehearsals in a KAAT atelier (rehearsal studio), the performances were held in December on the following schedule.

5th: 1:00 p.m.–9:00 p.m. Full-size rehearsal with actual props in the atrium
6th: 10:00 a.m.–6:00 p.m. Rehearsal
7th: 10:00 a.m.–6:00 p.m. Rehearsal
8th: Rehearsal, followed by
1:00 p.m.–6:00 p.m. Preparation in the atelier
From 8:00 p.m. Atrium performance dress rehearsal
9th: 10:00 a.m.–3:30 p.m. Preparation in the atelier
17:00 ***TOGE Atrium***
10th: 10:00 a.m.–3:30 p.m. Preparation in the atelier
5:00 p.m. ***TOGE Atrium***
11th: 10:00 a.m.–3:30 p.m. Preparation in the atelier
5:00 p.m. ***TOGE Atrium***
14th: No rehearsal, stage setting begins
15th: 1:00 p.m.–6:00 p.m. Stage rehearsal
16th: 1:00 p.m.–6:00 p.m. Stage rehearsal
17th: After dress rehearsal
5:00 p.m. ***TOGE* theater performance**
18th: 11:30 a.m.–12:00 a.m. Notes (criticism)
1:00 p.m. & 5:00 p.m. ***TOGE* theater performance**
19th: 1:00 p.m. ***TOGE* theater performance**

1. *TOGE Atrium* Performances

December 9, the first day of the atrium performances. Despite the fact that it was a 30-minute performance on a weekday evening, an audience of about 30 attended. As in the theater performance, a long rubber band is stretched out to establish a space. The difference is that the platform used is wrapped in plastic and a huge plastic bag is prepared under it.

When the show opened, KAJIHARA Akiko, LEE Ren Xin, SAKIYAMA Rina, LIU Juichu, and FUJITA Momoko appeared on stage. The five move inside the taut rubber band. Amid the sounds of livestock and chirping birds, an apple is brought in, and as one person tries to pick it up, the other members interrupt her for a while. Eventually, Fujita succeeds in picking it up, and the apple is passed to the other members one by one……

The fixed rubber band is released by ONODERA Shuji, and the women move to handle it like a communal boat, a movement also used in the theater performances. Eventually, the huge plastic bag is blown up from under the platform, and the women divide into those who walk on the bag that moves like a wave, those who go inside the bag, and those who dance outside it. Before long, Liu films Sakiyama dancing, which is shown on a monitor in real time. Liu and Sakiyama enter the plastic bag that has expanded to cover the entire acting area. The audience sees their silhouettes reflected on the bag and the video on the monitor. Inside the bag, lights are used to create a fantastic atmosphere.

But with an impact sound, the fantastic time is over; the performers pack up the plastic bag, return it under the platform, and leave.

This atrium performance, while using elements of the theater performance, was not a mere presentation, but rather a 30-minute piece that allowed the audience to let their imaginations run free. And yet, when I saw the theater performance afterward, it had been manipulated so as to add a different interpretation and image from what had been seen in the atrium.

View of the atrium before the show (photos by the author)

2. Notes (Criticism) after First *TOGE* Theater Performance

The first theater performance was held on the 17th, and before the two performances on the 18th, Onodera gave his notes (criticism) of the first day.

He mainly went over a few scenes, named for convenience as "Flesh," "The Fly," "Dream Scene," and so on. They reconfirmed the stage cues for the "Flesh" scene, where Lee, who has fallen down and is lying on the ground, is surrounded by Fujita, Sakiyama, Liu, and Kajihara and, before one knows it, turns into a lump of flesh. In this production, the performers and staff often move together in real time by means of cues. After the opening day of the show, they reviewed and redetermined when the staff would give cues based on which performer moved at what timing, whether the cues would be visible to the other performers, or whether it would be more logical to give cues based on another performer.

In "The Fly," Liu chases away a fly, and various patterns were tried for how the sound would reverberate at that time.

The "Dream Scene" is one in which the performers hide behind some furniture, and while the furniture moves alone, Lee sits in a chair and then slowly slides down from and gets back up on a table. On the first day, music was played from the beginning, but it was changed to a silent start. By doing so, the sense of mystery slowly increases. However, the loss of sound necessitated new cueing, so the arrangements for this were also decided.

Onodera giving his notes, and performers on stage (photo by the author)

Checking the location of papers to be blown away (photo by the author)

After Onodera's notes, stage manager IWAYA Chinatsu communicated to the performers about a scene in which the performers hang up pieces of paper and they get blown away: "I want the final positions of the paper to be here." This is because the positions of the paper determine how much they will be blown away.

Thus, even after the opening day, adjustments and changes continued until the last minute.

3. *TOGE* Theater Performances

December 18, the second day of the *TOGE* theater performance (2nd performance). As mentioned in the second report, while this work is based on George ORWELL's novel *Animal Farm*, its unique take is that it portrays *people who are unaware of their place in the world*.

As the show opens, five women face us among surveillance cameras and speakers visible on stage. Their presence is somewhat provocative, and each of them exudes a certain strength. However, the women are unaware that they are *under surveillance*. They are also monitoring each other, and if something is wrong, they warn each other with a "Shhhh!" When they move in formation, the others pull back those who are out of line. This is a scene that pops up in contemporary society as well.

Eventually, Lee collapses, and as the other four stare at her, she becomes a lump of flesh. One is surprised, one shoos away a fly that appears, and another laments. Soon, however, the people forget the tragedy and return to their daily lives as if nothing had happened.

Liu appears, wearing red high heels and carrying papers, walking unsteadily. She somehow manages to walk upright, but the wobble in her step remains. Fujita and Sakiyama fight over a piece of paper. They carry it with their bodies, crumple it up, and spread it out. Further, an apple, which was also used in the atrium performance, appears, and again people scramble over it. In a scene in which everyone stretches out a large rubber band and gets inside it, the scene unfolds with people disturbing each other in the community and restraining each other with warning coughs and other means.

These days are changed by the powerful agitation and death of a hero played by Kajihara. The life of the group shifts to a communal life in which everyone cooperates with each other. There is a peaceful scene in which Lee waters the greenery growing on a box apparatus with a watering can. One day, when all five are sitting together, a bird comes. Its chirping makes the five of them feel happy to hear what is going on outside. Gaining courage, they fight the outside world and gain a victory. From this point on, it was a repetition of gaining momentum and being cast down. The scene in which Lee, whose body was tied to a chair with plastic wrap, succeeded in escaping from the plastic wrap seemed to symbolize the sense of anxiety and accomplishment of living together communally while fighting the outside world.

Eventually, the five begin to build a tower with ropes and chairs. However, the tower is far from solid and shows the precariousness of their communal life. At the end, the tower collapses, and the five women go outside. The dance they perform together seems somewhat like a prayer. The women did not look down, but rather had turned their eyes to the distant sky.

Perhaps due to the original setting of animals, as well as the innate aura of the performers, the five cast members always seem pure and earnest, even when they quarrel with each other. Owing to the way they try their best to resist and rise up while being at the mercy of an invisible enemy, the last scene, too, seems to be more of a rebirth and affirmation than the original story, in which the animals are defeated and the community collapses miserably.

4. Interview with Iwaya Chinatsu, Stage Manager

*Interviewed after the afternoon performance on the 18th.

—— You have been involved in several of Derashinera's performances in the past, haven't you?

Iwaya: I have been involved in roles such as assistant stage manager, and this is my second [of Derashinera's] production[s] as a stage manager, following *Knife*. Last time, the COVID-19 situation was serious, and everyone was nervous. On top of that, in addition to the overseas members, there was Mr. DAKEI, who is deaf, so there was a great mix of languages. But this time, both Lee and Liu can speak English. Of course, it is difficult to judge how much was conveyed properly, but both of them seemed able to grasp Onodera's English, as well as much of his Japanese, and continued the creation. I feel that the whole thing has been very natural. I myself studied abroad in the U.S. for a year when I was in high school, so I enjoy international productions like this.

—— You are also a stage manager for theater productions. What is unique about Onodera's stage production?

Iwaya: In theater, there is a script, from which artists pick up visual hints and give them shape. But in dance, especially for Onodera's productions, even if there is an original story, there is no detailed script, and the pieces of the story are created according to Onodera's image. It takes time to create that art, but rehearsals go on in the meantime. This makes it difficult for the artists, as temporary props might become actual pieces in the production as they are. As the parts of a dance are created precisely while moving the equipment in a theatrical manner, it is difficult as the stage manager to consider what to do about consistency with the actual artwork while using temporary props: what can we build on, what should we keep, and what should we change?

—— What is your main job during the show, and where do you do it?

Iwaya: I am backstage, either stage left or stage right. When the lights go down, I work with the performers to do scene changes such as moving equipment around, and when the "tower" is set up, I am at the end of the rope, raising and lowering it. In a normal dance performance, the stage manager's job is to decide the flow on the spot, and the rest of the time, he or she only has to support everyone and cheer them on. In the case of Derashinera, we always do things together, it seems.

—— As stage manager, how would you rate the overall flow on opening night yesterday?

Iwaya: We have to get a perfect score on opening night, but everyone gets tired to one degree or another, and the more we use equipment, the more it breaks down, so the challenge is how to keep that perfect score and put on the show for the audience without accidents or injuries. To this end, I place emphasis on keeping various matters in a routine so that irregularities do not occur. Onodera always has a wealth of ideas, so time management is also an important part of my job, as I have to figure out how to fit them in within the time frame.

5. Impressions

Two "TOGE" performances by Derashinera, made possible by complex

staff and cast work.

At the atrium performances, I heard comments such as the following: “At this distance, you can even see the difference in the texture of the costumes” (Twitter); “Even though it lasted only 30 minutes, it was pleasant to see the image expand from point to line, from surface to space” (Twitter); “The movements were interesting, and even though the space was near the entrance, which tends to distract the audience’s concentration, it felt absorbing” (interview by the author).

As it is an abstracted world inspired by *Animal Farm*, in which animals revolt against the farmer, some audience members, especially at the theater performance, felt a strong sense of fear and tragedy from the sequences that reminded them of a controlled society and war, whereas others felt more humor and strength. One commenter said, “The five of them in an enclosed space are like us in the COVID-19 pandemic” (Twitter).

Perhaps the diversity of impressions could be said to symbolize the diversity of the work itself.

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Company Derashinera with LEE Ren Xin (Malaysia) and LIU Juichu (Taiwan)

"TOGE" Fourth Report: Reflection

Author: TAKAHASHI Ayako

In December, Derashinera finished two shows at the Kanagawa Arts Theatre (KAAT), **"TOGE Atrium"** and the **"TOGE" theater performances**. This time, I report on an interview with the artist HARADA Ai, conducted immediately after a main show performance, and sum up interviews with performer FUJITA Momoko, and the director, ONODERA Shuji, at the end of January, about a month after the shows ended.

1. Interview with Artist Harada Ai

—— You also worked on the art for Derashinera's last production, "Knife." Onodera had the idea of imitating the previous work, but what did you actually follow, or did you create new artwork?

Harada: As for the larger items, boxes are used in common. Last time, a box was used as a table with legs on it or as a wall, but this time, it is used directly on the floor to create a step, making it look different even though the same thing is used. The slanted table was used again, but this time, it is used as the main feature, whereas last time it was used something like a sub-stage, a separate space from the other tables, or more specifically, a place for the characters' enemies, without moving it much. Also, last time, we greened the back of a table based on the idea of "what if, when the table is turned over on the black floor, out spreads a natural area such as green grass and water like a box garden?" This time, when we experimented with it for the atrium performance, we carried it on its side, and this act itself was incorporated into the movement of the performance in the theater. The major new element is the speaker, which is a symbol of control over the characters. Also new this time is the rope, which is woven with the image of erecting a tower.

—— As an artist, what do you think of Onodera's style, moving art and other objects in various ways?

Harada: We worked together for the first time on "Knife," and I feel that there is more work than usual in moving things around in the rehearsal studio. I would throw out an idea to Onodera's image, and then we would massage it into shape. From that, Onodera would get a new image, and I would be asked what we need to make and process to realize it. It was also necessary to proceed with production while experimenting with the visual aspect during rehearsals so that the desired movements could be realized in a realistic manner. The stage manager, IWAYA Chinatsu, for example, asked me to make it possible to insert a rod. So, I gradually transformed the apparatus, incorporating various events that took place in the rehearsal studio. Also, both the ropes I prepared and those that were in the theater were used, and the chairs were also from the theater.

—— What effect did the live show have on you?

Harada: This production in particular is not a world that can be created only with art, so I made things with a focus on how Onodera could use it, or rather, leaving room for him to use it. In that sense, I think it turned out to be a very good piece.

2. Interview with Performer Fujita Momoko

—— As a performer, what did you gain from this project?

Fujita: This is close to the first time that a Derashinera production is practically all females. Strictly speaking, the same was true of "Red Shoes" (September 2014), in which I performed with KATAGIRI Hairi and Sophie BRECH from the UK, but this time the composition was unprecedented in that it was only Asian women. What I felt while spending time with LEE Ren Xin and LIU Juichu was strength. They were so fearless in going about all sorts of stuff that I realized that I may be hesitant about some things. It may be simply a matter of my own qualities, not their race, but while rehearsing with them I was made aware of ways of thinking and strength that I usually don't notice when working with Japanese people. In particular, even though I had never met Lee before, I felt it was wonderful how easily she became one of the troupes. I was also impressed by their timing. When Onodera asked them to do something or other as a pantomime—something like sitting down and looking back—they did it in their own timing right from the beginning. With Japanese people, I feel that they usually only get enough time after they can do so. Lee creates her own works and performs solo, so I guess she is used to this, and that could make a difference.

—— As a performer, what did you discover in terms of expression?

Fujita: People who are interested in mime and silent theater are hard to find in Japan. The genre itself is not well established. It's dance, it's theater, and it's something that is neither, so it may be alien to people in their 20s who are still young, for example, who want to express themselves. However, when I have people I have met by chance at workshops and so on perform silent theater, they are very interested in it, so I think it is a world with a lot of potential. The best part of it is that, rather than learning techniques and rules, you can hypothesize what might be conveyed by a certain action, and create a new method each time, so to speak. That is why, by interacting with people from other cultures, you can become aware of the principles of your own culture and come up with ways that might get ideas across to people from other cultures. For example, when you are trying to persuade someone, instead of just touching them on the shoulder, you search for a completely different way to persuade them, such as by standing a little further away. The two [foreign] women this time had the ability to gather our meaning, so even if we suggested a gesture, it was not completely unintelligible to them, and they would also make suggestions. And it was not so much that I didn't understand their suggestions due to cultural differences, but rather that although I wouldn't have come up with them myself, I understood them when I thought about it.

—— By meeting people with different lifestyles and different circuitry, you have more options and a wider range of things you can do.

Fujita: That's right. However, we didn't have much time this time, so it was more like we [Derashinera] created the framework and flow ahead and then together we managed to get it to the deadline, rather than a creation that came about through real discussion. If there is another opportunity like this, I would like to take creation a step further.

3. Interview with Director Onodera Shuji

From Complex to Simple

—— How do you feel now that the performances are done?

Onodera: I am relieved. Under the COVID-19 pandemic, with all the pressures of whether or not we could do it, the state of everyone's health, and the limited time for rehearsals, I am thankful that we were able to put on the shows to the end without any serious injuries. The performances were very fruitful and gave me inspiration for the future.

—— What were some of the most striking responses and impressions of the shows?

Onodera: Surprisingly, we received many reactions that the shows were "different from usual." Many people said this in a good way. This may have had something to do with the fact that my work is often relatively male-driven, but this time it was almost exclusively female, and also because my approach to abstract expression has changed from the past.

—— Indeed, it seems to me that more had been left up to the audience than in the past regarding interpreting what is being done on stage.

Onodera: That's right. At the same time, we certainly swung the complexity of what we were doing in a slightly simpler direction this time. This is because, rather than do a complicated story, we were a group that could take simple things and explore how each of us would express them. Usually, I tend to try to strengthen the story by adding detailed explanations or complicating it by adding different elements. That is why the pictures change more than the story, or I make other things happen behind the main events that are taking place, but this time I wanted to throw that out once and see how much the audience could imagine from a single picture. I think what is needed for that is an expressive body. I have a feeling that if this is pursued, in the end it will be very effective for physical expression, which cannot be explained in detail with words, and that new expression may come out of it. It is a little bit difficult to do, so I felt like explaining things and doing things all jumbled up, and I would ask myself every day, "Is this understandable?"

—— Yet, because of the members this time, you were able to use abstraction without fear of not being understood?

Onodera: There is that, too. What I also liked about Lee and Liu is that their movements based on folk dancing come out so easily. I feel that such bodies are the source of culture, and I thought I need to learn more about it. The fact that the performers this time were only women also brought out their individual differences, and I was able to feel satisfied myself as a creator, or perhaps that was the reason I was able to be so bold.

—— In my third report, I mentioned that the ending had a slightly different atmosphere from the work that was the motif. Was that also connected to your desire from the beginning to present the strength of women?

Onodera: I think that the motif of *Animal Farm* is to show how the world works after all, but this time I wanted to extend it and show a bit of "what to do next." This may be my own wish as a man, but when there were five women standing there, I wanted to show that they are not going to give up and create a sense that they are not defeated yet.

Assumptions and the Unexpected

—— How well did you meet your expectations this time around, and how much did you change?

Onodera: I made a rough roadmap with Fujita in advance, but even if the rehearsals proceeded as planned at first, we would continue to search whether that map was really right. Then something completely different would turn out to be fascinating, and we would want to explore it a little more, but due to time constraints we had to move on to the next step of settling on a final shape. This was a process repeated again and again. So, it could be said that our assumptions were not adequate, but on the other hand, it could also be said that we were able to do some good unexpected things. In any case, I keenly felt the need to improve the strength of the original idea in order to enjoy how much derivation is possible. For example, some people commented on the scene where the tower is made of rope, saying that the rope twisting around the chair seemed like confining authority, and others thought that the use of rope evoked sadomasochism—that is, sexual perversion. I think the interesting thing about mime is that there are so many different ways of looking at something, and there are so many different impressions, and it is up to the creator to understand and explore these different ways of looking.

—— At first, there was talk of online rehearsals, but in the end, you decided to wait until the cast could get together.

Onodera: I did deliver props I planned to use for this piece to Lee in quarantine, and wrote her an email asking her, "Can you explore this kind of thing I'd like to try?" So, I gave out something like homework, but we didn't do overall rehearsals online. This time, we had set aside a month for rehearsals, but those coming from overseas spent half of that time in quarantine. If the people in Japan are in a large rehearsal studio and tell those in a hotel room, "This is what we are doing," there is still detachment. As we were thinking about the various options, we decided to try something new for Derashinera—that is, to create a text (script) in advance. Fujita always makes a rough draft text, but usually it is not yet ready when everyone gathers at the rehearsal studio. We will have a number of themes, and we start by meeting and rehearsing to create short pieces. The completed short pieces are then arranged, and just before the shows, a text is completed. This time, however, we made the text in advance and shared it with the performers. It was like script reading in theater. In theater, there are script readings, and people also spend a great deal of time with the play to learn the lines. In our case, this means getting the movements into our bodies, and I feel that it was effective to provide a text for the performers to read when they were separated from that by the quarantine. Because, usually, the performers, including myself, are so absorbed in rehearsals that even if I give them a text, they often don't read it (laughs). This time, however, Liu said she read the text every day at her hotel, and she was able to talk about the story with Derashinera member SAKIYAMA Rina, so Fujita's aim was on target.

—— I think a script writer is very important in ballet and dance, but Fujita won't be credited?

Onodera: She adamantly refused, saying that her text was only a kind of

guide for the rehearsals, but if she is going to make texts properly like this, we might as well put her name out there. In fact, when we tried using a script, it was very effective, so I would like to continue trying this regardless of COVID-19. Separating the script from direction will probably change my awareness and the ease of doing things, so I would like to think positively about this.

—— This is a little related to that, but you did not mention in advance that *Animal Farm* was the motif of your work this time.

Onodera: I was hesitant to do that. After all, we weren't making a faithful reproduction of *Animal Farm*, but rather a spin-off from a different angle, and my main focus was on something different from the scathing criticism of political power that *Animal Farm* has. Because of this, I was afraid that mentioning *Animal Farm* would lead to reactions such as, "It's not like *Animal Farm*," or "It's my fault for not having read *Animal Farm*, so I didn't understand it."

—— However, it was included in the brochure on the day of the event.

Onodera: I wanted to convey the fact that this book is the motif for the show in the sense that we all read it and started out from there. If we had been able to publish a sizable text, such as a post on our website, I would have included this information in advance, but there may be many people who come to the show with only the title of the book. My recent works at Derashinera, whether "Knife" based on MAUPASSANT's *Boule de Suif* or the current work, overlap a lot with the current times, which is why they tend to be preachy, depending on the approach taken. I feel like I am in the process of learning to balance within myself between the parts of the theme that I can take a pragmatic approach to and those that I can get to the core of. There are many original works in theater, but if I can show that so many things can be done with physical expression that does not use words, I think there will be a next step for me to take. So, I want to think carefully about this.

—— It seems that you have made discoveries that will lead you ahead in many ways, including Asia, women-only creations, and how to relate to the underlying works and texts.

Onodera: It is difficult to take a step like this on our own, so I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the Kanagawa Arts Theatre (KAAT), which first approached me about international exchange in 2017 and gave me the opportunity to co-produce with Vietnamese creators, and to the Japan Foundation for this project. Even in these hard times, they went out of their way to invite performers from overseas and allowed me to continue opportunities for exchange and development. I have a feeling that by building on these opportunities, instead of making them a one-time event, we will be able to create something new. Lee and Liu have told me that they would like to come back again, and I would love to continue working with them.

4. Impressions

Since this project was an international co-production during the COVID-19 pandemic, I initially imagined that the creation would be done using online tools. However, it seems that Derashinera got by with more primitive and essential means and, as a result, reaped a great deal of rewards unbound by the times. As an observer, I felt enlightened, if I may say so hyperbolically, as I was able to catch a glimpse of how international exchange not only became an experience for the artists, but also affected their creative methods and ways of thinking in concrete ways. I am looking forward to their future development.

PROJECT

“Sky Bridge”

S.C.ALLIANCE Inc., with Shen Kyomei RIBEIRO, Gabriel LEVY, and Ari COLARES (Brazil)

Fusing the cultures of Japan and Brazil, the “Sky Bridge Project” is a new full-dome movie production for where primitive life breathes and the voices of people, animals, and spirits reverberation among beautiful landscape and flowing, surging water. The myths and tales that have been passed down the generations form symphonic poems, that integrate the sounds and murmurs, prayers and songs of living creatures rooted in the cultures of Japan and Brazil despite a distance of 17,600 km. Symphonic poems chance on each other as they pass through the high-dimensional space-time where the spirit world merges with the ground-air-space.
Sound designer OTAKE Mayumi, visual arts director HASHIMOTO Daisuke, and musicians KOBAYASHI Yohei, Shen Kyomei RIBEIRO, Gabriel LEVY, and Ari COLARES have collaborated to create an unprecedented new “sky.” *Sky Bridge* was released in December 2021.

Outline of Performances

Date and time: 10:30 a.m., Thursday, December 23, 2021
Duration: 45 min.
Venue: Saitama City Space Theater

Credits

Sound Designer / Executive Producer: OTAKE Mayumi
Director / Art Director: HASHIMOTO Daisuke
Music & Saxophone: KOBAYASHI Yohei
Flute & Shakuhachi: Shen Kyomei RIBEIRO
Accordion: Gabriel LEVY
Percussion: Ari COLARES

Organized by The Japan Foundation, S.C.ALLIANCE Inc., Saitama City Space Theater
Production Cooperation: LIL, FAIR WIND music, Sinos na Floresta, GOTO INC.
Patronage: Embassy of Brazil


OTAKE Mayumi

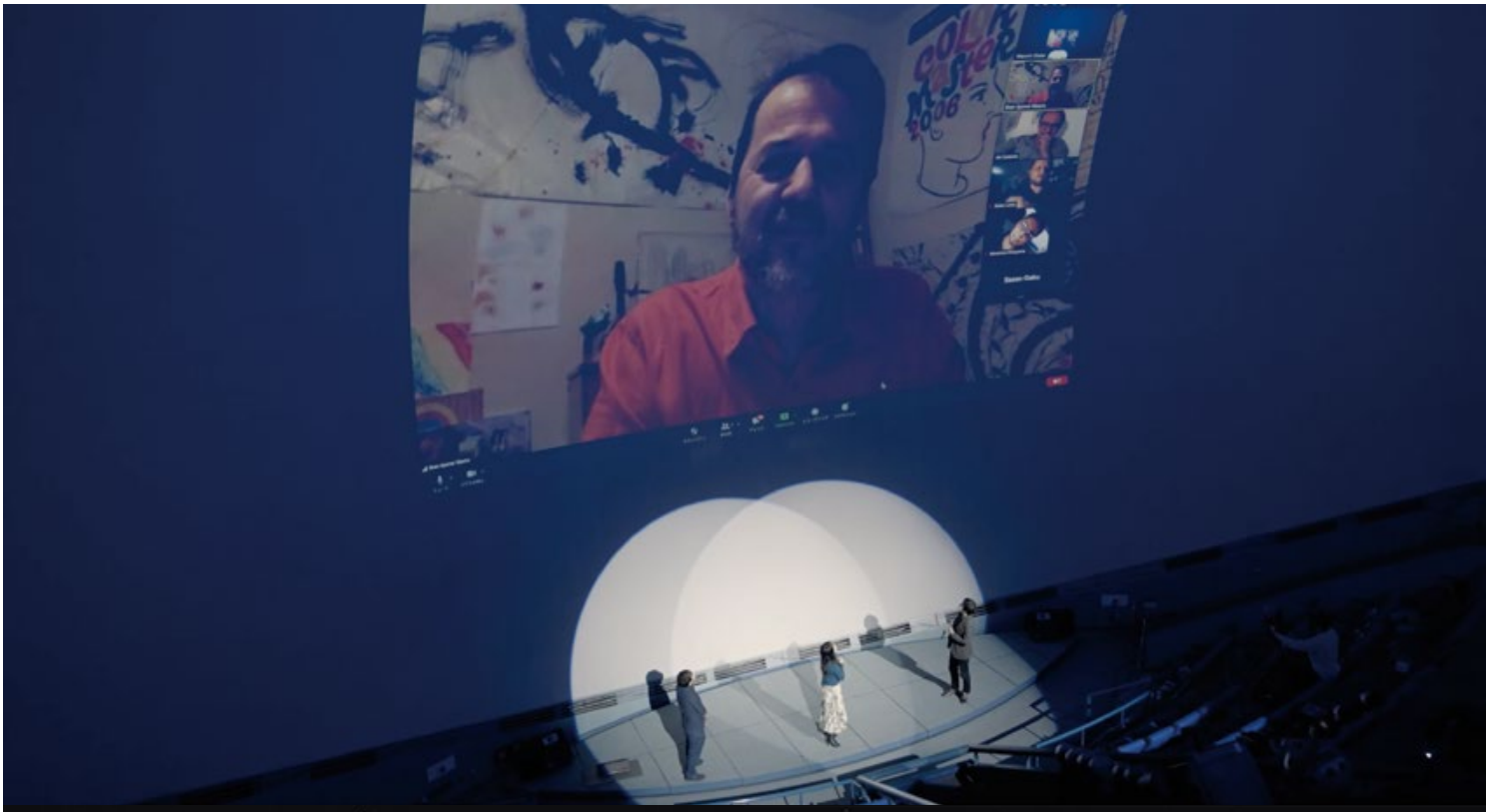

HASHIMOTO Daisuke


KOBAYASHI Yohei

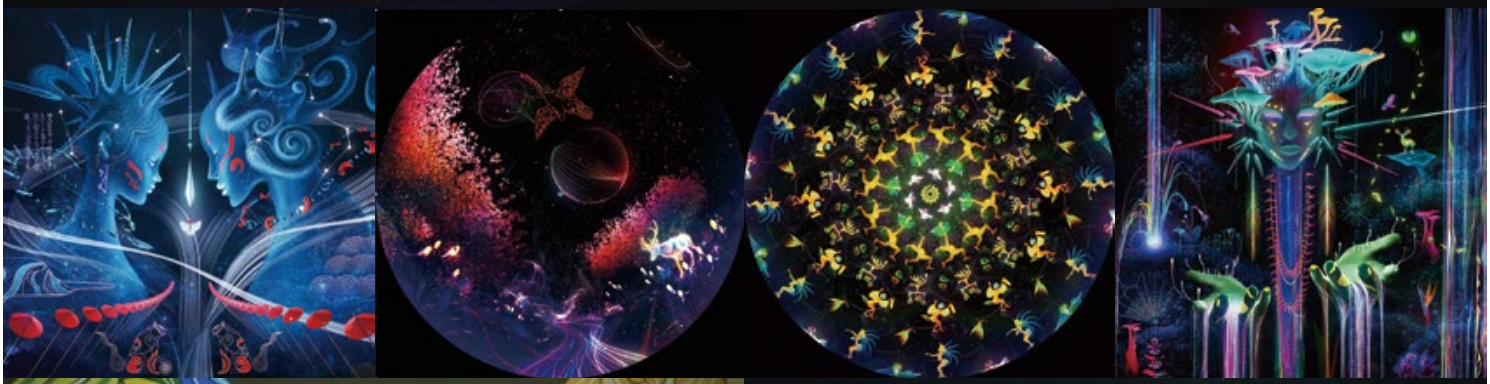

Shen Kyomei RIBEIRO


Gabriel LEVY


Ari COLARES




Sky Bridge
– Ponte do céu –



S.C.ALLIANCE Inc., with Shen Kyomei RIBEIRO, Gabriel LEVY, and Ari COLARES (Brazil)

"Sky Bridge" First Report: Launch of Project

Author: MINAMIDE Kazuyo

Project Overview

The purpose of this project is the production and screening of *Sky Bridge*, a collaborative planetarium movie created by Japanese and Brazilian artists, with planning provided by S.C.ALLIANCE Inc. As every society in the world suffered from the COVID-19 pandemic, this project was developed around the theme of a starry sky based on a desire for people to look up at the sky and hope. In line with the starry sky theme, Brazil, a country whose national flag features a star-filled sky, was chosen as the counterpart nation for this collaborative international project. Of course, S.C.Alliance's existing network served as the foundation for project selection.

The collaborative creation process was planned around four basic stages. In stage one, artists from Brazil and Japan discussed the work's themes and composition several times via online conferencing, developing an overall image for the project. In stage two, the two countries' artists added adjustments to the overall composition with a focus on bare-bones image storyboards and music created by the Japanese artists. Online communication tools were fully leveraged in stages one and two. In stage three, the project's principal stage, artists from Brazil were supposed to be invited to Japan between July and September to lodge together and conduct recording sessions at Yamanakako. Finally, in the fourth stage, images and music recorded in stage three were combined with the aim of completing the work within 2021. In fact, however, during the period from July to September, the COVID-19 situation failed to improve, and the Brazilian artists were not able to come to Japan. As a result, it was decided that the collaborative work of stage three would also be conducted online. The creation process has been recorded at all times, and the project plan includes releasing a making-of move online.

In this first report, I will report on the process involved from stage one to stage two (from project launch at the end of March up to September). As I took on the role of observer starting in September, this report is based on minutes and records of online meetings (held on March 26, March 29, and April 21) provided by S.C.Alliance to The Japan Foundation, as well as information obtained through online interviews conducted on September 24.

Project Members

Before entering into a detailed report, the following reviews the roles of the participating members (underline indicates meeting attendee).

- OTAKE Mayumi (S.C.Alliance): Sound designer and executive producer
- HASHIMOTO Daisuke (LIL): Movie director and art director
- IZUTSU Ryota (LIL): CG and movie production
- KOBAYASHI Yohei (FAIR WIND music): Music production and saxophone performance
- YASUDA Yuji (FAIR WIND music): Music production
- SATO Jun (FAIR WIND music): Office staff
- OSHIO Misato (S.C.Alliance): Production schedule
- TAKE Airi (S.C.Alliance): Operations management
- Shen Kyomei RIBEIRO (Sinos na Floresta): Brazilian team Producer, flute and shakuhachi performance
- Gabriel LEVY (Sinos na Floresta): Brazilian team music production and accordion performance
- Fabiana COZZA: Brazilian team vocalist
- SUZUMORI Shizuka: Brazilian team artist manager

Support Group

- Sinos na Floresta: Music production
- LIL Co. Ltd.: Video technology
- FAIR WIND music: Music production
- GOTO INC.: Dome theater technology support

The outline for the video and music was created in particular by Hashimoto and Kobayashi, respectively. Orchestration and additional arrangements were added along the way through repeated discussion between all of the members.

Stage One: Planning the Overall Composition

The first web meeting was held on March 26. After the Japanese and Brazilian participants met each other, there was a review of the general project outline and schedule. Thereafter, Hashimoto Daisuke presented two drafts (A and B) for the project's theme (overall image). The length of the piece was expected to be 10 minutes.

Some images from Hashimoto's draft A

Some images from Hashimoto's draft B

The concept for draft A was the origins of humankind. The draft was inspired by *Sekai wo sasaeru ippon no ki* ("One Tree Supporting the World"; original work: *Lendas e mitos dos índios brasileiros* by Walde-Mar de Andrade e Silva), a picture book that conveys the myths and legends of the indigenous people of Brazil (Indios). The indigenous people of Brazil believe that animals, people, and spirits coexist. This is similar to the ancient beliefs of Japan, and this draft reinterprets indigenous Brazilian beliefs through a Japanese lens of imagery and sound. The draft's overall image is magnificent. The draft frequently uses abstract imagery. As the story develops, it also uses imagery that connects with our modern society.

The concept for draft B was the "spirit(s) of the stars." In the story for draft B, spirits born and raised in Japan and spirits born and raised in Brazil meet in a starry sky. They resonate with each other and combine their strength to create something unique. The spirits in the story are anthropomorphic.

After considering these two drafts, draft A was chosen during the second web meeting on March 29.

During the discussion process, it was decided that, while both drafts were interesting and draft B was very unique, because of movement restrictions, draft A seemed likely to be easier to create via remote collaboration. In addition, some members felt that the images Hashimoto shared were a "dive into the unknown" and "were emotionally moving but did not make people think (not intellectual)." Combining "not thinking" with concrete (indigenous) Brazilian motifs risked evoking stereotypical images in the mind of the audience. It was hoped that this problem could be avoided by using more abstract images and the concept of "the origins of humankind," which was also connected to Japan.

Stage Two: Creating (and Arranging) the Content

Some of the storyboards created by Hashimoto

Hashimoto Daisuke created draft content based on the overall composition chosen in stage one. He then shared this during the third web meeting on April 21. His draft content was a story. "A world of traveling spirits from Japan and Brazil (Spiritua)" appears throughout the story. The story follows the Japanese four-part structure called "*kishotenketsu*" (introduction/*ki*, development/*sho*, twist/*ten*, and conclusion/*ketsu*). (The summaries provided for each part other than those of "kishotenketsu" are based on notes I took from meeting minutes.)

Introduction/*ki*: Japan and Brazil

- A world map appears on the dome, then disappears, leaving only Brazil and Japan. Traditional music from Brazil and that from Japan play and intermix (the plan is to have a fun and fantasy-inspired introduction).

Development/*sho*: Two spirits

- Two spirits appear. As they dance, they intermingle.
- The imagery becomes more abstract and "mysterious patterns" appear.

Development/*sho*: In a space-time of ancient memories and myths

- A plant emerges. Light shines from the plant and *Mawutzinin*[1] appears. The plant grows, and spirits appear on the ground.
- Bubbles turn into a jungle and the jungle turns into a jaguar. *Mawutzinin*'s hands cup the jaguar.
- Water spills from *Mawutzinin*'s hands and becomes Iguazu Falls.
- The water level rises and the entire dome becomes an ocean. There are fish in the ocean. Indigenous Brazilians appear and begin fishing.
- A fish is hit by the indigenous Brazilians' arrows. It sinks and becomes a mermaid. This represents a fusion of Brazilian and Japanese legends.
- The mermaid splits the water's surface in two.
- From this split, a starry sky appears.
- In the starry sky, two spirits emerge.
- The starry sky gathers around the two spirits.

Twist/*ten*: A cultural exchange party

- The starry sky becomes two capes for the spirits.
- The spirits change shape. They split up and increase in number.
- Colorful spirits cover the entire dome.
- The spirits begin to condense.
- The spirits jump and the capes stretch into cylinders. They become entangled and turn into a globe.

Conclusion/*ketsu*: Japan and Brazil floating in the same ocean

- The globe bursts and the sun emerges.
- (Modern-day) Japan and Brazil, sharing the same sun and ocean, appear on either side of the dome.
- The Japanese and Brazilian production staff credits are shown on either side, and the work ends.

All of the project members evaluated Hashimoto's draft content highly. In order to develop the project further based on this draft, they discussed several key points.

First, Ribeiro (Brazilian team producer and musician) reviewed the content. Because there was already a movie with the title *SPIRITUA*, they could not use that title. In addition, he felt that overall, the content was more Brazilian than Japanese. One specific issue was that the jaguar in the content was a different species from the Brazilian Jaguar, and that in Brazil, jaguars have a more friendly image. Similarly, in Brazil, people have a more friendly image of water gods. The final scene used symbols of modern Brazil and Japan (the Christ the Redeemer statue and Tokyo Skytree). However, based on the overall flow of the work, it was suggested that natural symbols (such as Iguazu Falls and Nachi Falls) might be better. In response, Hashimoto said that he wanted to use symbols that the audience would know were from Brazil and Japan at a glance. It was decided to reconsider possible natural symbols.

Otake discussed the work's starry sky theme—how much to use it in the work, and how to make the audience aware of it. She wanted to make use of the starry sky theme more because of the planetarium space the work would be shown in. There was an idea to contrast the northern and southern hemispheres by using the Southern Cross, which can be seen from Brazil, and the Big Dipper, which can be seen from Japan. By changing the point of view, it would also be possible to see both the Southern Cross and the Big Dipper at the same time, such as near the equator. Otake wondered if it would be possible to use this contrast.

The video to be shown in the planetarium (dome theater) was also discussed. 3D imagery using a lot of CG would look beautiful. However, it would be expensive. Also, CG is already common, and it would actually be difficult to create something novel and new with it. Instead of realistic imagery, the members agreed that it might be easier to create newness and abstractness by combining 3D and 2D. There was also a proposal from Ribeiro to use only music for the introduction and no imagery or video.

Further, the members discussed how easily understandable the work should be, and whether to consider the educational nature of Japanese planetariums (who should this work be made for?). Eventually, the members agreed that they wouldn't worry about the audience or distribution and instead try to create the work they wanted to make. That being said, because the work would be highly abstract, they would need to provide an overview of its content in advance. One proposal was to have a music-only introduction with a narrated overview of the work in multiple languages (Japanese, Portuguese, and English). A brochure would also be made to provide textual information.

View of the Project in Progress (September 24)

Unfortunately, there are no records of the time period from May to August, so this report cannot include information on the discussions and finalization of the storyboards after editing, the creation of the visual content, and the creation of the rough music drafts and their arrangement. However, I was able to observe a mid-production meeting on September 24. This was the first time I met the project's members. During the meeting, the members mainly discussed the meaning of the work, and remote collaboration during the COVID-19 pandemic.

First, regarding the meaning of the work, it would be based on a message of a "deep resonance" between Japan and Brazil, two countries "on opposite sides of the world." In order to represent this, they would use the "the origin of humankind" and "the sky." By making the work very abstract, they could provide viewers with the space to feel what they would freely. The project members also wanted to avoid pushing specific values onto viewers.

Looking at the societies of Japan and Brazil would make it easy to imag-

ine their strong diplomatic relations in modern history, as well as their histories and racial commonalities. However, this work would purposefully not look at their societies. Instead, it would focus on the spiritual world. In part, this decision was made because the Brazilian artists felt that there was potential to combine the two countries' cultures, particularly through music. This was a concept that no one else had really looked at before.

Engaging in remote collaboration during the COVID-19 pandemic was not difficult. In fact, it felt like it was creating new possibilities. Before COVID-19, the project's members were going to try to collaborate face to face during very short periods of time. Under COVID-19, however, connecting online became the new normal, and this actually made it possible to collaborate more closely than before. As they communicated with each other, the artists from the two countries worked hard to make the quality of the project consistent. In addition, if the members had worked together face to face, only some members would have been able to travel. Connecting online made it possible for more members to be directly involved in the production. With regard to the music, working online made it possible to connect together the spaces the musicians normally used. Because of this, they did not have to carry their instruments anywhere and were able to use the best spaces in each country. According to Brazilian artist Ribeiro, in Brazil, there is little educational support for the arts. Because of this, it is important for local artists to participate in artistic opportunities like this online. Accordingly, the Brazilian artists were very eager to collaborate online.

The movement restrictions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic have greatly changed the style of international collaboration/cooperation. Under the "new normal" of connecting online, people can connect to each other anytime, anywhere. At the same time, however, it has made it important to be aware of how much we are able to imagine sensations that can only be experienced in the offline world and the everyday we do not share online. This project will depict the spiritual world. I hope it will be a work that will make it possible for audiences to understand that we are all fundamentally connected, and that this will give people courage during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Japanese original text by Prof. Minamide,
English translation from the original text by the Japan Foundation

1 The "first person" according to the myths of the Brazilian Kamayurá tribe. Introduced in the picture book *Lendas e mitos dos índios brasileiros*. According to the Kamayurá's myths, *Mawutzinin*'s daughter and a jaguar give birth to twins who become the sun and the moon.

S.C.ALLIANCE Inc., with Shen Kyomei RIBEIRO, Gabriel LEVY, and Ari COLARES (Brazil)

"Sky Bridge" Second Report: Video Creation

Author: MINAMIDE Kazuyo

Goals of the Second Report

Sky Bridge is a planetarium theater work. A collaboration between Japanese and Brazilian artists, it was planned by S.C.ALLIANCE Inc. In my first report, I provided an overview of the entire project. I also reported on the development process up to the end of September 2021 based on interviews with participants. Content creation was mainly based on outlines for the video, primarily created by HASHIMOTO Daisuke; and for the music, primarily created by KOBAYASHI Yohei. OTAKE Mayumi from S.C.Alliance and Shen Kyomei RIBEIRO from the Brazilian team served as Executive Producers. The overall creation process has been a collaborative effort instead of specific people only working on specific parts of the project.

In this second report, I will report mainly on the video production process. On November 16, I conducted an online interview with the following members of the project's video production team.

- Hashimoto Daisuke: Movie director and art director
- IZUTSU Ryota: CG and movie production
- KUBOTA Ayana: CG and image production
- HASHIMOTO Shinsaku: Animation production
- Camila GONDO: Brazilian team artist (closing scene key frame production)

(Otake Mayumi: Sound designer and executive producer)

Video Production Process

As I reported in my first report, in the first stage of production, Hashimoto Daisuke proposed two concept drafts. Of these, the project members chose to use his concept of "a world in which Japanese and Brazilian spirits travel (and meet)" as the overall image for the work. I also reported on the process of Director Hashimoto creating a story and draft storyboards[1] based on this. After these events, the production process moved forward as follows.

1. Video storyboards were made based on Hashimoto's storyboards. The video storyboards comprised the same number of still images as regular storyboards. These still images were arranged in a timeline and determined the overall length of the work. These were shared with the music team (Kobayashi Yohei and others). Based on the video storyboards, the music team began creating music for the work.
2. Compositions/blueprints (previsualizations) showing the placement of characters in the space for each scene were created. These were then previewed at a planetarium. This also made it possible to check for any differences in position or speed compared with how they looked on a computer.

   This work continued up to the end of July. Based on the previsualizations, CG artists on the video team began creating the scenes and characters under the direction of Director Hashimoto.

The video team consists of 13 members in total. In addition to Director Hashimoto Daisuke and Producer Izutsu Ryota, who is in charge of production work chain of command, many artists were involved in CG production. This includes people in charge of character CG creation and animation, people to create character models, people to create character movements, and a director to provide CG production technology support. In addition, there were very important staff members who coordinated the overall schedule and plan together with Izutsu. During this process, I interviewed Kubota Ayana, in charge of character CG production, and Hashimoto Shinsaku, in charge of animation.

The Experiences of the Artists in Charge of Scene and Character Production

1. Kubota Ayana

Kubota was in charge of CG production for characters appearing in the video. She was particularly involved in doing detailed work for Scene 1 (the birth of the world), Scene 2 (the birth of the Japanese spirit), and Scene 3 (the birth of the Brazilian spirit). She moved the characters according to the arrangements in the previsualizations, and created the animals and the galactic particle effects and simulations. She also coordinated the overall color pallet and materials. Her work was extensive. The scenes Kubota was directly involved in consisted of around 8,000 frames. While working, she coordinated with Director Hashimoto.

She said that she had heavily struggled with the work's long single take. In order to render the entire section of the project of which she was in charge (about 10,000 frames), each session of rendering took a huge amount of time (more than three days). This made it impossible to quickly make small changes and have Director Hashimoto check them. Kubota says she learned how to solve this problem with the help of Izutsu Ryota.

Kubota has four years of experience as a 3D artist and had worked with Director Hashimoto before. However, this was her first planetarium project, and she had many new experiences working on the project. As described earlier, she had difficulties with the project's long single take. However, through teamwork and Director Hashimoto's detailed and helpful direction, she learned a lot. She says despite the difficulties, she felt very fulfilled.

2. Hashimoto Shinsaku

Next, I talked with Hashimoto Shinsaku, who was in charge of animation production. Hashimoto has 15 years of experience. He is also trusted as an animator by Director Hashimoto Daisuke and Producer Izutsu Ryota. Hashimoto Shinsaku is renowned for his animation skills, which "breathe life into the characters." For this project, he was involved in animating the Japanese and Brazilian spirits, the work's main characters. Director Hashimoto Daisuke directed the spirits' design and movements. Because the project would be shown at planetariums, the movements needed to be 3D. However, Hashimoto Shinsaku says that Director Hashimoto Daisuke's directing was clear, which made his work easier. For Hashimoto Shinsaku, as well, what was difficult was the project's long single take.

Taking on the Challenge of Full-Dome Movie Production

This project would be Director Hashimoto Daisuke's debut full-dome movie production. He says that during the production process, he realized that it was very different from making a regular flat-screen video. For him, it was very enjoyable to create a work that would fill up the entire dome screen. However, things such as the camera work and how to guide the audience's focus were fundamentally different from those of a regular flat-screen video. Moreover, what was very different and even more difficult for Hashimoto was that the work was all a single take with no cuts.

This long single take was also part of the reason why rendering took a long time, a problem that all of the artists complained about.

From the planning stage, Director Hashimoto wanted to take on a new challenge with this full-dome movie project unlike anything anyone had done before. Accordingly, without any precedents, he had to build up an image for the project even while working on developing it. Director Hashimoto's role was very important in sharing this with the other members as the project took shape.

Taking on the Challenge of Online Work

Because of travel restrictions due to COVID-19, all of the work to date has been conducted online. Between the merits and demerits of online work, overall there have been more of the former than the latter. The biggest merit has been the ability for members to immediately connect to each other and check on each other's progress (online) on-site, right where they are. Before COVID-19, the plan had been for them to meet in person to check things and to work while looking at a monitor together. However, because of COVID-19, the members could not meet face to face and had to use online meeting systems such as Zoom. Because of this, the members actually checked on each other's work more frequently than they would have if meeting in person. This resulted in the members collaborating more closely than they otherwise would have. When a problem occurred, Kubota Ayana, in charge of CG production, was able to immediately contact Director Hashimoto. Sharing the same screen view, they were able to check and talk about the problem in detail. Izutsu Ryota said that doing things online significantly improved production efficiency and productivity.

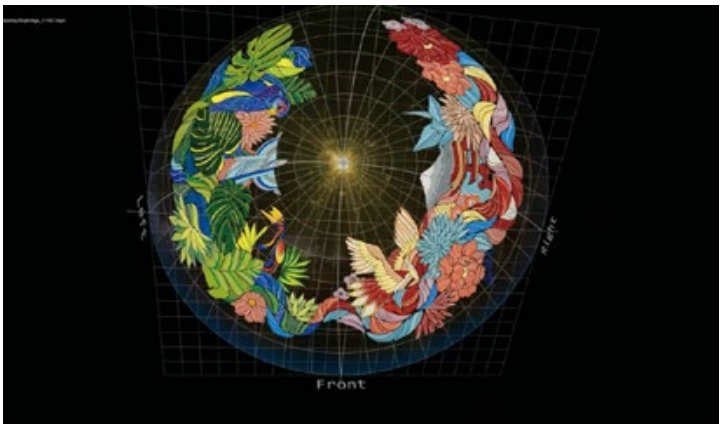
That being said, right now, work is continuing to be done online. When the members are again able to meet in-person, they may realize that there are some things that weren't feasible online. Director Hashimoto told me, "There are many merits to working online, but the amount of information you get by actually meeting face to face is completely different." This information includes nonverbal communication such as each member's mood, attitude, and atmosphere. With regard to things like this, it is true that doing things online can be lacking.

The Fusion of Japan and Brazil in the Production of the Closing Scene

The video's closing scene consists of symbols of Japan and Brazil. Japanese-Brazilian artist Camila Gondo worked on this scene. I asked Director Hashimoto about how Gondo was put in charge of this scene. He told me that the purpose of this project was to be a collaboration between Japanese and Brazilian artists. This was being achieved in the music production. However, the video was mainly being created by Japanese artists. All of the Brazilian elements had come from Japanese artists looking at picture books, etc., and with the input of Music Producer Shen Kyomei Ribeiro. Director Hashimoto wanted to add Brazilian sensibilities to the video, too. He asked for help from SASAO Gaku from the Japan Foundation's Brazilian office. Sasao introduced Hashimoto to several candidate artists. One of the artists was Gondo. Her work was extremely interesting to Director Hashimoto, and he decided to ask her to do the key frames for the closing scene. Hashimoto says he felt a love of Japanese culture in Gondo's works, and Japanese influences in her style and use of color. He decided that she would be perfect for creating the fusion of Japan and Brazil in the closing scene.

I interviewed Gondo and asked her about her use of Japanese symbolism in her works.

Gondo is a third-generation Japanese descendent; her grandparents were Japanese migrants. From the age of 1, she lived in Japan for five years, and went to a Japanese preschool. The first language she acquired was Japanese, and even now, she can mostly understand spoken Japanese. She has a strong identity as someone of Japanese descent. She told me that when she returned to Brazil from Japan, it was hard for her to adapt. When she studied abroad in Portugal, she identified more as a Japanese (Japanese descendent) than as a Brazilian. In order to express her double background and identity, Gondo chose to learn art, and her roots are reflected in her art. For this reason, participating in this collaborative Japanese–Brazilian project is very meaningful for Gondo.



The closing scene focuses on the Christ the Redeemer statue as a symbol of Brazil and Mt. Fuji as a symbol of Japan. This was partly Director Hashimoto's idea, but Gondo also agreed with it and thought about their positions. In the scene, origami cranes are shown next to Mt. Fuji. Origami cranes are also used as a symbol of Japan in Brazil, and in Japan to express the spirit of Japan. In response to the cranes, Brazilian birds (parrots) are shown on the Brazilian side. Mt. Fuji, the cranes, the Christ the Redeemer statue, and the parrots are surrounded by flowers. The flowers on the Japanese side are chrysanthemums and cherry blossoms. Tropical flowers are shown on the Brazilian side. The Japanese side uses red colors, while the Brazilian side uses green colors. The contrasts create a balance.

Brazil and Japan are located on opposite sides of the Earth, and Gondo wanted her design to depict the two countries reverberating with each other. In addition, the sun in the center of the design shines on both countries. Brazil is home to the largest population of Japanese people (Japanese descendants) outside of Japan. There are also many Japa-

nese-Brazilians living in Japan. Gondo's design hints at the fact that Japanese-Brazilians are a bridge between the two societies.

Gondo's designs are different from the rest of the video. Director Hashimoto told me that by using them for the closing scene, it adds diversity to the work. Hashimoto's goal was to create something new and novel, and he felt Gondo's work was a good match for the highlight of the video.

View of the Video Production Process

As of November 16, the video was 60% to 70% finished. The completed work is scheduled to be released by December 23. Before then, the plan is to complete the video, coordinate it with the music, and add sound effects.

The hardest part of making the video is the technical aspects, particularly how to handle the gigabytes of data. I have learned about the evolution of digital technologies, and the demands and challenges of the parallel evolution of digital technology environments. COVID-19 has brought about restrictions on our mobility. We now conduct almost all of our communications and collaborative work online, but we are still figuring out how to continue doing the things we did before COVID-19. We are still looking for a "new normal." The core of this project is international exchange as well as cooperation and collaboration in and outside Japan. *Sky Bridge* is taking on the challenge of finding out how much of this can be achieved online. Director Hashimoto feels that working online has increased productivity and resulted in closer cooperation, but that there's also something "lacking." This sentiment highlights the difficulties of this challenge.

Japanese original text by Prof. Minamide,
English translation from the original text by the Japan Foundation

1 The basic story told in Hashimoto's storyboards (as reported in my first report) was as follows:
Introduction/*ki*: Japan and Brazil appear.
Development/*sho*: Two spirits (Japan and Brazil) are born. Japan and Brazil combine in the world of myths and legends.
Twist/*ten*: The spirits have a cultural exchange party.
Conclusion/*ketsu*: The sun and Japan and Brazil, floating in the ocean.

S.C.ALLIANCE Inc., with Shen Kyomei RIBEIRO, Gabriel LEVY, and Ari COLARES (Brazil)

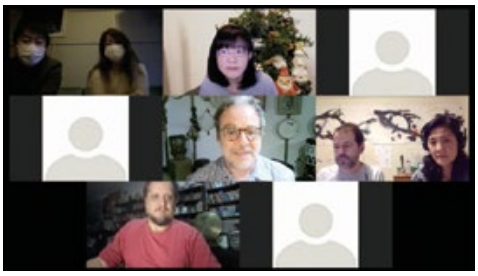
"Sky Bridge" Third Report: Music Creation

Author: MINAMIDE Kazuyo

Goals of the Third Report

Production work by Japanese and Brazilian artists on *Sky Bridge*, a full-dome movie production project by S.C.ALLIANCE Inc., is close to being completed. According to the project proposal at the time of application, artists from Brazil would be invited to Japan to lodge together and conduct recording sessions. However, COVID-19 restricted their travels. Accordingly, the artists have been fully utilizing online systems. Their tireless efforts are resulting in high-quality work. In addition, the merits of online collaboration are leading the artists to new possibilities.

In my second report, I focused on the video team's production process. In this third report, I will report on the production activities of the music production team. I interviewed the Japanese and Brazilian artists online on December 6. I also observed online a recording studio session conducted in Tokyo on October 31. The Brazilian artists also participated online during the recording, and I was able to see how their collaborative production was proceeding.



December 6 interview participants
- OTAKE Mayumi: Sound designer and executive producer
- KOBAYASHI Yohei: Japanese team music production and saxophone performance
- Shen Kyomei RIBEIRO: Brazilian team music producer, flute and Shakuhachi performance
- Ari COLARES: Brazilian team music production and percussion performance
- Gabriel LEVY: Brazilian team music production and accordion performance
- SUZUMORI Shizuka: Brazilian team artist manager

(SASAO Gaku: The Japan Foundation, São Paulo)

Here I would like to give a brief introduction of some of the artists on the Brazilian music production team.

Ari Colares: In addition to being a performing musician, Colares teaches music at various schools in Brazil. He has taught at universities and other institutions, and has also held music workshops for poor children as part of a government assistance program. He is participating in *Sky Bridge* because he knows Brazilian team music producer Shen Kyomei Ribeiro. He has never been to Japan but has a good image of the country. He has also previously incorporated *taiko* drums and other Japanese percussion instruments into his performances.

Gabriel Levy: Levy comes from a family of musicians famous in São Paulo. Composer Alexandre LEVY was his granduncle. His mother is a pianist, and from a young age, he was taught the piano with a focus on classical music. As he learned more and more about music, his interests expanded to include indigenous Brazilian cultures, and he has explored a variety of musical fusions. Regarding Japanese music, he was influenced by KITAHARA Tamie, who traveled to Brazil and spread Japanese music, and is learning the shamisen. He has traveled to Japan three times.

Music Production Process

As I explained in my second report, the video production team headed by Director HASHIMOTO Daisuke created video storyboards with which the music team created an overall image for the music in accordance with the video timing. In accordance with the original concept, KOBAYASHI Yohei and Ribeiro further developed the project's image and worked to create a concrete story.

The length of the work will be around 10 minutes, and its composition will be as follows.

Introduction/*ki*: Japan and Brazil appear.
Development/*sho*: Two spirits (Japan and Brazil) are born. Japan and Brazil combine in the world of myths and legends.
Twist/*ten*: The spirits have a cultural exchange party.
Conclusion/*ketsu*: Japan and Brazil appear illuminated by the sun and floating in the ocean.

Of the above, only for the starting introduction/*ki* section (around 1–1.5 minutes) are the Brazilian and Japanese teams each in charge of specific, different parts. The rest of the work is all created collaboratively. Ribeiro was the leader for the Brazilian part, and Kobayashi was the leader for the Japanese part. They both attended recordings of each other's musical performances online and exchanged opinions as production moved forward. In addition, both teams worked together to adjust any discrepancies between the two countries' musical parts when they were joined together for the video.

Originally, Kobayashi created the overall flow for the collaborative parts from the development/*sho* section onward. However, it was felt that the result was overly produced. As a result, after discussion and trial music production, it was decided to start over and re-do everything collaboratively. According to Kobayashi, they repeatedly created, discussed, and revised their work.

The mixing of the recorded sound (audio) was conducted in Japan. However, Brazilian team artist Ribeiro also took part in the process online, and the mixing was conducted in discussion with him.

The video and music were created in parallel at the same time. When the music was completed, the project members worked to combine it with the video. During this process, both the video and the music were revised and adjusted to match each other. Another task during this process was adding sound effects as necessary. For this project, it was decided to use fewer sound effects than normal, and to use them only where they would be most effective.

Music Recording

The music was recorded in Japan over two days and in Brazil over two days. For the performances, Kobayashi prepared sheet music to serve as

a basis for performances. However, the music had to be performed while watching the video. As the artists played, they would check if it matched the video and adjust their performance. It was almost like improvising the music on the spot. The Japanese recording sessions were conducted in a studio in Tokyo. In Brazil, they were conducted in Colares' home/studio. Both teams attended the other's recording sessions online. Although they couldn't perform at the same time, they participated by picturing the overall mix. I attended the recording in Japan online and also conducted interviews about each country's recording sessions, including what I observed online in Japan.

1. The Japanese Team's Recording Sessions

The Japanese recording sessions were conducted in a studio in Tokyo on October 31 and November 3. The instruments used were a string quartet (two violins, a viola, and a cello), a trombone, a trumpet, and a *shinobue* bamboo flute. There was also a vocalist. During recordings, the musicians performed while watching video shown on a screen in the recording room (Photo 1). Staff in the control room also listened to the musicians perform while checking the video on a screen (Photo 2). Both rooms were also connected to Zoom (a separate audio feed ensured that there would be no sound lag), and Ribeiro from the Brazilian team observed online. When a performance was finished, it was replayed in the control room to check it. The members discussed various points to adjust and recorded another performance. This process was repeated over and over again (Photo 3) in order to create the music for each scene.

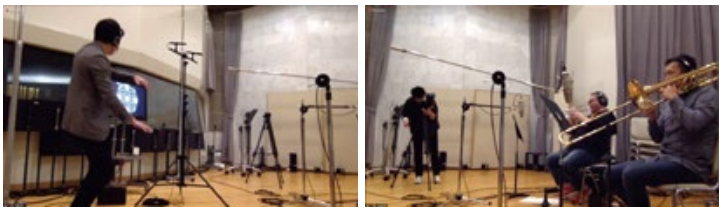


Photo 1: Performing in the recording studio.

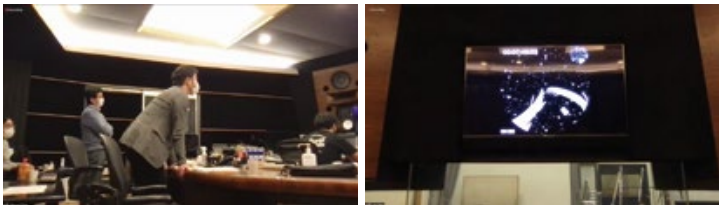


Photo 2: Monitoring everything in the control room.

Photo 3: Kobayashi repeatedly performed the music, checked how things matched, and adjusted the music, over and over again.

2. The Brazilian Team's Recording Sessions

I was unable to observe the Brazilian team's recording sessions, so the following report is based on their interviews.

The recordings were conducted over two days in São Paulo, Brazil, in Ari Colares' home/studio. Colares is a percussion musician and has many different kinds of percussion instruments in his home. Accordingly, the Brazilian team recordings made maximum use of this environment. This would not have been possible under the original plan, which was to bring only a small selection of instruments to Japan for recordings. There was sheet music to be used as a base and an image of what instruments were to be used. However, Colares brought out a huge variety of percussion instruments that were used as deemed necessary for each part.

In Brazil, the music was recorded using three kinds of drums (Japanese, Brazilian, and Thunder Drum), a shaker, piano, accordion, flute, Japanese *shakuhachi* flute, saxophone, and a car spring, among others. The Thunder Drum, in particular, was not part of the original plan, but I was told that it plays a very important role in creating the work's atmosphere. The Brazilian team also created their music while listening to playbacks and discussing them. There were four Brazilian musicians in the studio and Kobayashi also participated online.

Both Kobayashi, the music producer for the Japanese team, and Ribeiro, the music producer for the Brazilian team, emphasized more than anything that they got great satisfaction and enjoyment from being able to engage in collaborative work that was improvisational. They told me that the work was an extremely creative time filled with experimental approaches. The Japanese *taiko* and *shakuhachi* were also used for the Brazilian recordings, but their usage and performances were unique. I was told that in a completely natural way, these Japanese instruments ended up being used to represent Brazil. Kobayashi told me that it opened up new possibilities for musical activities for him.

At the beginning of the work, in the scene where the Japanese and Brazilian spirits meet, there is session music comprising Ribeiro on the *shakuhachi* and Kobayashi on the saxophone. They told me this fusion emphasizes the fun of cultural exchange and also expresses the fun they had recording the session.Normally in collaborative projects, the artists, who have each established themselves in the world, often end up clashing over the things they want to do. According to Kobayashi, however, there was none of that in this project. The musicians found each other's music and performances to be novel and fresh, and they were able to flexibly cooperate without being restricted by fixed ideas. He told me that this was the best part about working on this project for him. Both Kobayashi and Ribeiro told me that this was only possible because they respected each other and that they both came to really like each other. You could say that the most meaningful part of the production process was the artists' ability to embody and experience the purpose of international exchange (collaboration).

Taking on the Challenge of Online Work

In the project's original plan, the recording work while lodging together in Japan was to be one of the main activities. However, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, it was canceled. This was very disappointing to the musicians of both countries. It also forced them to take on a huge challenge: how to engage in international exchange under these conditions. Conversely, however, the pandemic resulted in online meeting systems quickly becoming common and used in all kinds of fields. Cultural activities were no exception.

As I have already stated, in this project, particularly the music production moved forward with constant online contact between Japan and Brazil. The biggest merit of doing the recording work online was that the musicians from both countries were able to try out all of the instruments that they owned. Because of this, Kobayashi emphasized that they were able to engage in approaches they had never tried before, and this resulted in a depth to the music that he never would have imagined. Right from the start, the members of this project intended to create a new kind of full-dome movie unlike anything seen before. The unique music the project's musicians created was a perfect match for this intent and also

helped the members feel that they were achieving this goal. There are still restrictions that limit face-to-face creation activities, and it is impossible not to wonder what other discoveries the musicians might have made if they had met in person. However, it is clear that they discovered the possibilities presented by going in a different direction.

The Unique and Shared Challenges of a Full-Dome Movie

The project's representative and Executive Producer Otake Mayumi has twenty years of experience working as a professional sound designer for entertainment spaces. She has also been involved in planetarium works from early on in her professional career. For Kobayashi Yohei, one of the project's Music Producers and musicians, this is the third planetarium project he has been involved in. Both told me that the sound aspect of planetarium projects is characterized by the difficulty of configuring the audio, including dealing with echoes, in a domed space. The problem is in accurately recreating music, created under the best conditions in a studio, in a domed space.

I asked about how the work will be shared after its completion. The completed work is scheduled to be shown soon in Japan (at Saitama City Space Theater) on December 23. The problem is then showing it in Brazil. There are no planetariums in São Paulo that can show digital videos like this project. The ones that can in larger Brazilian cities such as Rio de Janeiro are small in scale. As the video production team had told me regarding the video production process, the video hardware environment (video conversion, transmission, and projection) lags behind production software technology.

Ribeiro told me that the music alone was good enough to hold a suite concert, and he wanted to invite Kobayashi to Brazil to stage such a concert. He said that the music they created had become "our work."

View of the Music Production Process

Before COVID-19, many performing musicians likely felt that sharing a space and directly experiencing the music while performing it was one of the best things about music. For this project, one of the main activities was to be the recording work done together in person while also lodging together. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, however, this was not possible. In spite of this, the musicians connected to each other online, listened to each other's performances, and imagined performing together as they created the project's music. Technology was used to combine their individually recorded performances and turn them into a concert. I am very much looking forward to seeing how the music of this new kind of ensemble has been synchronized with the video and how it will be shown in a full dome. At the same time, a work like this, created by combining individual pieces, cannot be played on people's home computers and smartphones. This project can only be shown in a planetarium space where large numbers of people gather together. This fact has made me keenly aware that "gathering together" cannot be completely eliminated from cultural activities.

Japanese original text by Prof. Minamide,
English translation from the original text by the Japan Foundation

S.C.ALLIANCE Inc., with Shen Kyomei RIBEIRO, Gabriel LEVY, and Ari COLARES (Brazil)

"Sky Bridge" Fourth Report: Performance and Reflection

Author: MINAMIDE Kazuyo

Goals of the Fourth and Final Report

On December 23, 2021, the completed *Sky Bridge* full-dome movie production by S.C.ALLIANCE Inc. was shown at Saitama City Space Theater, bringing the project to a close. Fortunately, at this time the COVID-19 pandemic was not in a severe state. With restrictions on the number of attendees, the work was able to be shown to the public audience.

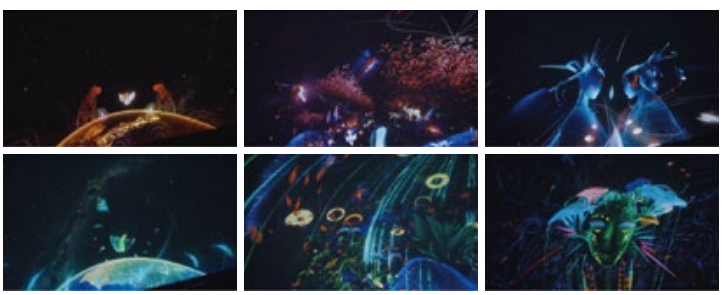
In this final report, I will report on the showing of the completed work. I will also look back on the project as a whole based on an interview with OTAKE Mayumi and OSHIO Misato conducted on January 12, 2022. Lastly, I would like to end this report with a short discussion of my opinions as a process observer of this international collaborative project. Due to the pandemic, excluding attending the showing of the completed work, my work as an observer had to be done entirely online. The creators themselves also did the majority of the work while utilizing the Internet. I would also like to provide an overview of the possibilities and limitations of international collaboration (cooperation) conducted remotely.

The Showing of the Completed *Sky Bridge*

The completed work consists of the 12-minute long actual video as well as a 2-minute-long making-of video. I have already discussed the overall composition of the work in my first report. However, I would like to convey the atmosphere of the work using screenshots taken from a recording of the work's showing made by S.C.Alliance. Of course, it is impossible to fully convey a full-dome movie using flat images. It is also impossible to recreate a moving video using still images. Accordingly, please understand that these images only show the general flow of the work.

Introduction/*ki*: Japan and Brazil appear

Development/*sho*: Japanese and Brazilian spirits are born + the world of myths



Twist/*ten*: The two spirits meet.

The cultural exchange party

Conclusion/*ketsu*: Japan and Brazil floating in the same ocean

From the making-of video

The work consists only of music and video. No words, including any kind of narration, are used in the actual work. Only at the end of the making-of video is the following message stated in Portuguese and Japanese:

> People from all over the world are connected by the "Sky Bridge".
> We celebrate the diversity of cultures and ways of life, and we hope that together we can create a better future for our planet by uniting with one another.

People who watch this work may freely enjoy the combination of music and video, and interpret their own message from the images and title. My own personal interpretation was that Japan and Brazil, which are located on opposite sides of the Earth, form a variety of contrasts in many different areas and, particularly in this video, their symmetry was striking. For example, even the use of color created contrast, with Japan primarily depicted with red tones and Brazil primarily depicted with green tones. (These colors are also connected to the colors used on each country's national flag.) The work's music also highlighted the contrasting composition of the video images. Changes in the music's tone expressed the story's structural changes: the "introduction/*ki*" in which both countries appear; the "development/*sho*" in which we move from Japan to Brazil; and the banquet during the "twist/*ten*" when music from the two countries combines and fuses. For 12 uninterrupted minutes, the work plays in the awe-inspiring space of a planetarium, its imagery drawing viewers in. When the work is finished, it feels like it only lasted a moment. This sen-

sation is also mixed with a feeling of tension—so great one wasn't even able to blink—evaporating.

When the work was finished showing, members of the production team held a talk about the project's creation. These included Executive Producer Otake Mayumi, Movie Director HASHIMOTO Daisuke, and Music Producer and musician KOBAYASHI Yohei. In addition, members of the Brazilian team participated online via screen: Music Producer Shen Kyomei RIBEIRO, and musicians Ari COLARES and Gabriel LEVY. First, Otake provided an overview of the project. Then the production process and how the members collaborated online were explained. After that, the Japanese and Brazilian production staff discussed what they enjoyed and found fulfilling. I have already discussed the production process in this series of reports, so I apologize for repeating myself, but what the members from both countries emphasized was that they discovered new possibilities by collaborating remotely. Originally, it was planned that Brazilian members would come to Japan to engage in collaborative work. This ended up being impossible. However, working online had become normalized, and using the Internet actually doubled the amount of time that the members collaborated. The musicians from both countries were able to listen in real time to each other's performances, improvise, and combine their performances to create the work's music. The process of adjusting and synchronizing the work's video and music was also conducted collaboratively between the Japanese and Brazilian teams. The members said that the experience was very fresh and novel. They said that although they never actually met in person, the Japanese and Brazilian collaborators were also able to build friendships by working together online.

During the informal talk with staff from the Japan Foundation after the showing, the possibility of showing the work in Brazil was discussed. There are no planetarium projectors in Brazil that can show a video like this work, and the planetariums existing in Brazil are small in scale. Because of this, sharing the work as VR content instead of showing it at a planetarium is being considered.

Looking Back on the Production

In an interview around three weeks after the project presentation showing, I asked Otake and Oshio about how they felt about working on the project and the project's challenges.

First, we talked about international exchange and international collaboration. Otake compared working on this project with her other production experiences, but the very first thing she said was that this project resulted in the raising of a good team. In any collaboration between people from different countries, there will be differences in communication. Not only language barriers, but also differences in the way people negotiate and assert themselves. Such projects start with the participants watching to see how the other group responds, and with confusion. In this project, Brazilian team Music Producer Ribeiro had studied in Japan and was also good at Japanese. Even so, when the project started and they first began working with each other, there was some tension on the Japanese side. Particularly with regard to working together online, there was anxiety about people's thoughts and expectations beyond what the screen could convey. However, after one or two months of repeated and frequent planning meetings, the project members had established a communication rhythm, and things went smoothly after that. As the project members worried about how each other's countries were doing under the pandemic, their desire to do the best work possible given the limitations may have also been a positive.

One of the things that made this project difficult was the nature of making a full-dome movie. It is normal for the plan for a video to change as it is being made. When making a documentary, faithfully following the course of events will result in the scope of the video expanding. Even dramatic films become better works when the creation process continues throughout the script writing, filming, and editing stages. When making a video, it is almost impossible for the project budget to stay the same as originally planned. Especially for this project, changes occurred frequently during the production process because, from the start of the planning stage, the focus was on experimenting and trying to create a new kind of planetarium work that had never been seen before, without regard for the commercial value. The project's budgetary framework also had to be changed because of things such as the need to add more people to work on CG production as the video team's work became more and more complicated. Because of COVID-19, the Brazilian creators were forced to give up on coming to Japan. This freed up some of the budget to cover other things, but some parts of the work were only able to be completed (through considerable effort) thanks to the members' love for the project. Such situations required the Japan Foundation to be flexible toward changing the planned budget. In addition, there was no requirement for an audience for the performance showing in December. However, just before this time, the Japan Foundation requested that a general audience be allowed to watch the work. The project's members told me that they understood why the Japan Foundation wanted to see the best results possible as the situation changed again and again under COVID-19. However, the project's end goal, as it were, of whether it would be shown to a general audience was a very important matter, and switching to allowing a general audience at the last minute made things difficult for the project team. S.C.Alliance later informed The Japan Foundation of this issue, and it was recognized that there had been a difference in interpretation.

Despite these difficulties, the members said that overall, they felt significance in having been given the chance to take on the challenge of a new kind of creative activity. They also said that, in part thanks to a great team, international collaboration was very enjoyable. They were forced to do everything online due to COVID-19, but this also helped them to find new possibilities. As a chance to focus on their own artistic sensibilities and try something new without worrying about costs, Otake thought that this project (organized by the Japan Foundation) was a particularly meaningful opportunity for young creators.

When I asked about how this work will be used in the future, I was told that they wanted to submit it to a planetarium movie festival and find other opportunities to show it overseas. They were also thinking about finding chances to show it at international expositions such as Expo 2025, scheduled to be held in Osaka. This project was a collaborative Japanese–Brazilian work. The members believe that it practically expresses the people of Japan and Brazil as well as cultural exchange, and that it should be proactively shown in spaces for international exchange.

Overall View as an Observer

Lastly, I would like to discuss my views on three points with regard to this project from my position as a process observer: full-dome movies, international collaborative works, and remote work.

First, a full dome movie is an unusual kind of project for the Japan Foundation. As I have said repeatedly in my reports, particularly in Japan, planetariums are limited to educational purposes, and they usually adjoin museums and similar facilities run by the local municipal government. I felt that there was a lot of meaning in this work and its goal of being an artistic full-dome movie that would freely move the emotions of both audiences and the creators. I have heard that overseas, filmmakers are entering the planetarium movie world. Japan has many planetariums, and I think that new possibilities for artistic activities in their domed spaces should be demonstrated.

Next, regarding international collaborations, it is true that with this project, leadership tended to come from the Japan side. In part, this is likely because the only supporting organization was the Japan Foundation (no assistance was received from overseas foundations, etc.). However, I also think that this may have been due to a general lack of symmetry in mutual understanding between the societies of Japan and Brazil. In this project, the knowledge and experience that Brazilian members such as Music Producer Ribeiro had regarding Japan were greater than those of the Japanese members regarding Brazil. Because of this, I believe it was easier for the Brazilian members to adapt to Japanese culture. For the Japanese creators, the Brazilian members were the first Brazilian people they had worked with, and this project became an opportunity for them to learn about Brazil. Not just in this project but in all international exchange, there is always asymmetry in the relationships between countries. With regard to Brazil and Japan, Japanese-Brazilians have had an important position, and they have contributed greatly to conveying the culture of Japan to Brazil over the generations. A Japanese-Brazilian artist (Camila GONDO) participated in this project as well. Her depictions of the sights of Brazil and Japan are part of her identity. Today, a not insignificant number of Japanese-Brazilians are living in Japan. By conveying the culture of Brazil to Japan, they have increased Brazil's presence in Japan and promoted international exchange and understanding. There is a need to create environments for this, and I think that this work could provide an opportunity for people in Japan to feel how close Japan and Brazil are.

I have already discussed remote work in my reports previously. For this project, everything had to be done online, but this restriction was turned into a positive, namely engagement in a collaborative process in a way that would not have happened before the pandemic. If this project had happened before the pandemic, its international exchange and collaborative work would have had to have been squeezed into a short period of time when the Brazilian members came to Japan. Because the Brazilian members were not able to come to Japan, however, all of the members were able to work together closely, repeatedly, and over a long period of time. It is impossible to compare and say which way would have been better, but it is true that the project's members developed a new style of collaborative creation. Even after COVID-19 subsides, it is likely that Internet-based remote work will not disappear. I am confident that when that time comes, it will result in the creation of a method that effectively combines both face-to-face and remote work in a balanced way.

Japanese original text by Prof. Minamide,
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