



ASSOCIATION FOR ASIAN PERFORMANCE FALL, 2019 NEWSLETTER

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT



Dear AAP Members,

Sending wishes for a happy fall from Indiana -- I hope the semester is treating everyone well. The weather here has been very warm, but finally the trees are changing. It reminds me that even though change is sometimes hard, it can also be very beautiful and exciting. Likewise, I have several exciting changes to announce!

After a number of difficult years working with a management company -- the *ATHE* leadership has decided to return to the model of having an Executive Director. At the Focus Group Representative meeting we were able to meet with the new director, Aimee Zygmanski, and I was impressed by her experience and passion for the position. Nancy Erikson (who was the executive director before she retired) has returned to assist during the transition. This initially may not mean much to most AAP members -- but I believe that there will be great benefits that will make our preconference and participation in *ATHE* that much better.

At the Board of Directors meeting -- the AAP board also decided to recommit to working with *ATHE* and making our participation in the main

conference as valuable and dynamic as the preconference. I believe that is an important part of a shift happening more generally in the field of theatre and performance studies, which is becoming more globally diverse. We should think of *ATHE* as a place to highlight some of our best scholarship and ideas and put them in conversation with the field as a whole. The preconference will remain a valuable incubator with a core specialist audience... but I hope to see greater integration and value in both events in the coming future.

And I am happy to announce the most exciting news -- Carol Fisher Sorgenfrei, has endowed a new award, The Carol Fisher Sorgenfrei Prize for Japanese theatre. This award is designed to promote and encourage the study of Japanese Theatre and Performance. It is targeted for an early career scholar and will honor an outstanding article, chapter, or essay on Japanese theatre and performance that was published during the current calendar year in a journal or book (print or online). The award includes a cash prize! Please go to the AAP website for more information and to submit nominations (self-nominations are accepted).

As always, this issue of our newsletter contains reports on the Association for Asian Performance 19th Annual Conference and AAP-sponsored *ATHE* panels held in Orlando, FL in August 2019. I want to make special mention of the *ATJ* Lecture given by long-time board member and photographer extraordinaire, David Mason. His demonstration of *rasa* theory with

action figures was both entertaining, but also incredibly thoughtful and nuanced.

This newsletter also contains information about the 2020 *ATHE* and *AAP* conferences to be held in Detroit, MI next summer. You will also find a call for papers for the 2020 Emerging Scholars Panel, which I hope you will share widely with friends, colleagues, and students conducting innovative research in our field.

I want to thank the board members who have completed/ or continued to serve. Ellen Gerdes has finished her term as Graduate Student Representative. She has contributed greatly to expanding the role graduate students play in the organization and creating opportunities for mentorship. Arnab Banerji and I were re-elected as Membership Outreach Coordinator and President respectively. It is an honor to work with *AAP* in these leadership roles. I also want to give a special mention to Tarryn Chun who has done many wonderful things as IT Coordinator/*AAP* Online Editor. Be sure to check out the new website: www.asian-performance.org. I am excited to welcome Jashodhara Sen, a PhD student in Theatre and Performance Studies at the University of Colorado, Boulder, and a Community-Based Research Fellow, as the new Graduate Student Representative.

I hope all members of *AAP* consider serving on the board. It has been one of the most rewarding parts of my academic career – and there are many different roles to be filled. This year we will be electing new Vice Presidents for *AAP* and *ATHE* Conference Planning addition to a new Graduate Student Representative. I will be sending out more emails about these opportunities, but please consider running! I am happy to answer any questions.

I also want to thank Carol Fisher Sorgenfrei, Siyuan Liu, and David Jortner for their work on *AAP*'s various publications. Carol works to compile this newsletter two times a year, Siyuan is the editor for *ATJ*, and David is also with *ATJ* as book review editor. I enjoy reading the news and research from all of you that they make available.

Please watch your email for announcements about the upcoming *AAP* elections and 2020 Pre-

Conference CFP. May the semester bring inspiration, the holidays due respite. Happy Fall!

Sincerely,

Jennifer Goodlander

Jennifer Goodlander

President, *Association for Asian Performance*

A SPECIAL INVITATION: AAP RECRUITING GRAD STUDENTS

Calling all Graduate Students!

AAP warmly encourages participation from graduate students. The conference provides a number of dedicated events, such as an informational brown bag lunch with mentors and social gatherings out on the town, that make *AAP* an especially welcoming and enriching experience. If you are interested in learning more, please contact one of our Graduate Student Representatives: **Huihui Huang** (hh20@indiana.edu) and **Jashodhara Sen** (Jashodhara.Sen@colorado.edu).

Also, please join the Facebook of the Graduate Student Sub-Committee of *ATHE* (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/258658720925617/>) and Google Site (<https://sites.google.com/view/athegradstudents>). They will be great places for calls for papers, syllabi exchanges, and other helpful resources for graduate students.

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

Please send news and announcements for the Spring, 2020 *Newsletter* (including up-coming events that will take place between June, 2020-October, 2020) to: csorgenfrei2@aol.com. The deadline is April 15, 2019.

To become a member of *AAP*, fill out and mail the form that is included with the newsletter, or email: **Kevin Wetmore, AAP Secretary/Treasurer** kwetmore@lmu.edu
All the best

Carol Fisher Sorgenfrei

Newsletter Editor





RECAP: NINETEENTH ANNUAL AAP CONFERENCE

August 6-August 7, 2019

Hyatt Regency Grand Cypress
1 Grand Cypress Blvd, Orlando, FL 32836

We had another extraordinary slate of paper presentations at this year's conference, with several organized panels and individual papers that push the boundaries of research on Asian performance in exciting ways. Over the course of two days, we moved from research that considers the balance of tradition and modernity in various traditions of theatre, dance, and puppetry to explorations of political networks and their influence on performance to representations of disability, gender, and ethnic identities. The *ATJ* lecture was presented by David Mason, who spoke on "All The Sanskrit I've Forgotten And All The Hindi I Couldn't Learn: Circling Performance And Religion In India."

This year, we continued our tradition of hosting a workshop in a specific area of Asian performance. On Tuesday afternoon, Dr. I Nyoman Sedana, Professor at the Indonesian Art Institute and Director of Bali Module and PEPADI, Bali, lead us in a short introduction in movement, sound, and philosophy to basic components of Balinese theatre.

Our annual Schmoozefest took place at Darbar Indian Restaurant. Graduate students had even more opportunities for interacting with junior and senior scholars through our mentorship program and Brown Bag Lunch.



--- submitted by Kisten Rudisell, Vice President/AAP Conference Planner

TUESDAY AUGUST 6, 2019 **8:30-10:30 Board Meeting** **10:30 Registration** **10:45 WELCOME!**

Jennifer Goodlander, AAP President

11:00AM-12:30AM SESSION #1

ORGANIZED PANEL: PUPPETS, POLITICS, RELIGION IN POST- TRADITIONAL ASIA

This panel considered the balance of tradition and modernity that is part of post-traditional urban puppetry in Asia.

Organizer and Chair:

Kathy Foley (University of California,
Santa Cruz)

"Puppets, Islam, and Yogyakarta: An Ethnography of Ramadan"

Jennifer Goodlander (Indiana
University)

Using ethnographic methods, Goodlander explored the role of critical thinking and arts practices especially around religious expression and identity—based on field research in Indonesia in May-June 2019 during Ramadan which incorporates many arts and performances that stress Muslim identities within the context of Islamic piety.

"Korean Traditional Puppetry's New Satire in SaniNeomeo's *Bak Cheomji Returns* and Eumma Gaengkaeng's *Kkokdu, Around the World in Eighty Days*"

Kyounghe Kwon (University of North Georgia)

This paper examined how contemporary theatre groups SaniNeomeo and Eumma Gaengkkaeng have updated traditional *kkokdugaksi noreum* for contemporary Korea audiences.

"Shakespeare in Indian Puppetry: *Haidir*, Puppets and Kashmir"

Kathy Foley (University of California, Santa Cruz)

Haidir, Vishal Bradwaj's film rendition of *Hamlet* links the colonial legacy of Geoffrey Kendall's Shakespeare, the Bollywood dynasty's Kapoor family, and the Kapoor-Kendall Privithi Theatre. Contemporary puppet master Dadi Pudumjee, along with his student Anurupa Roy has, plumbed social justice issues, Shakespeare and the ongoing Indian legacy of music/dance in their avant-garde puppet work.

"Triadic Interplay: Transforming Narrative into Balinese *Wayang*"

I Nyoman Sedana (Institut Seni Indonesia-Denpasar)

This paper discussed how the *dalang* (puppeteer) transforms story sources into *wayang*, including creative preparation, performance (including puns, song and social criticism) and after the show, as the sources guide the *dalang* to bridge material and spiritual realms by ritual mantra in the creation of holy water.

12:30-1:45PM

LUNCHBREAK

1:45-3:00PM

SESSION #2

COLLAGE PANEL: HISTORY, POLITICS, AND CHINESE THEATRE

Chair: Iris H. Tuan (National Chiao Tung University)

"From 1945 to 1972: The Role of Politics in *The White-Haired Girl*"

Huihui Huang (Indiana University)

Employing the theories of Joseph Roach and Saidiya V. Hartman, the paper explores the political background of the creation of the play *The White-Haired Girl* and its two productions, the premiere in 1945 and the ballet film in 1972. These different forms reflect different political purposes in different historical periods.

"Disentangling Cultural Exchange in Hong Kong Through *The Memory Palace of Matteo Ricci*"

Whit Emerson (Indiana University)

Performed in a Jesuit chapel, *The Memory Palace of Matteo Ricci-A Digital Media Opera in Seven Acts* was produced by Zuni Icosahedron in 2010. The paper argues that this site-specific work invokes collective historical memory, to consider historical and modern clashing of culture and identities in Hong Kong.

"Convergent Transnationalisms: Leftist Dance Networks in Cold War East Asia"

Emily Wilcox (University of Michigan, Ann Arbor)

Trinidad-born second cousins Dai Ailian and Sylvia Chen, Korean dancer Choe Seung-hui and her long-time Chinese collaborator, Peking opera artist Mei Lanfang, and Japanese ballet dancer Mikiko Matsuyama all fled political dangers to arrive in Beijing during the 1950s. Their paths to Beijing and the forces that brought them there suggest new ways of mapping East Asian cultural trajectories during the Cold War era

3:15-4:30PM

SESSION #3

COLLAGE PANEL: ADAPTING TRADITION IN ASIAN THEATRE

Chair: David Jortner (Baylor University)

"The Conscience Man of *Jatra*: And Interview with Sheikh Madhusudan"

Jashodara Sen (University of Colorado, Boulder)

The paper focuses on Sen's interview with Sheikh Madhusudan, an 87-year old *Jatra* artist who reminisces his relationship with *Jatra*, religion, and his journey as *bibek* (the anthropomorphizing of the "conscience," commonly known as the *bibek*) in *Jatra*, a folk theatre tradition from West Bengal, India—in relation to the dramatic and theatrical theories of postcolonialism and *rasa*.

"Alkap, A Ritualistic Folk Drama: Signature Art of Bengal"

Atasi Nanda Goswami (Centre for Knowledge Ideas & Development Studies, Kolkata)

Alkap is essentially a socio-religious festival celebrated in worship of Shiva at the end of the Bengali Year. It is associated with the Gajon festival around the middle of April. The paper discusses how the form, content, stage craft, and presentation through impromptu dialogue together constitute a virtual space for direct communication with the audience.

"Kathakali Immersion, The Artistic Impact on Today Contemporary Creation in the West"

Sylvie Belleau (Université Laval)
Belleau discussed hybrid kathakali in the West from the 1960s to the present, focusing on Mnouchkine's *Les Atrides*, Nathalie Le Boucher, Annie Rumani and Catherine Schaub's *Le chant du pied*, adaptations of *King Lear* and *Don Quixote*, and her own *Le rêve d'Urmila*. She concluded with a definition of creative cultural hybridization through intensive training in traditional performing arts.

"Breaking Noh: Ishimure Michiko's Shiranui as Activism Against Tradition"

Sara Newsome (University of California, Irvine)
Ishimure's modern noh play *Shiranui* was inspired by the Chisso Corporation's poisoning of the Shiranui Sea, resulting in the acute mercury poisoning now called "Minamata Disease." Ishimure harnesses the traditional religious and didactic nature of Noh to shame humankind for poisoning the sea-- but ultimately it is the act of "breaking" Noh-- that is, not following the traditional structure of Noh-- that is rebellious and activist in and of itself.

**4:30-6:00PM SESSION#4
WORKSHOP - "BALINESE
PERFORMANCE: BALANCING WORLD-
NATURE-CULTURE THROUGH DANCE
TRAINING AND SPIRITUAL
PREPARATION"**

Organizer/Workshop Leader:

I Nyoman Sedana, Ph.D. (Professor at the Indonesian Art Institute and Director of Bali Module and PEPADI Bali)

After an introductory slide presentation, the participants learned the 5-Wi (stages of Balinese dance training). These are WIRAGA (body - posture, movements, and choreography); WIRAMA (rhythm - the gamelan musical accompaniments); WIRASA (feeling -- the emotion according to story and dramatic characterization); WIGUNA (usefulness -- theatrical, sacred, ceremonial or secular); and WIBAWA (conduct, bearing - the knowledge and dedicated values of the dancer who must balance world-nature-culture, according to Seni Mandala Widya [Art as Mandala for Edification]).

7:00 PM SCHMOOZEFEST!!!!

Everyone had a great time -- an evening of merriment and Asian cuisine -- at Darbar Indian Restaurant.

9:00 PM Grad Student Social Hour

WEDNESDAY AUGUST 7
8:00 AM Registration
8:30AM-9:30AM -- SESSION #5
COLLAGE PANEL: GENDER
AND THE BODY IN CHINESE THEATRE
Chair: Emily Wilcox (University of Michigan)

"The Interweave of Representation and Reality: Male Impersonators in Beijing Opera"

Yun-Pu Yang (University of California, Los Angeles)
The actress En Xiaofeng (1887-1949), a Chinese male impersonator, was among the first generation of actresses in Beijing opera. Critics articulated En's performances through the ambivalence of theatrical cross-dressing and biological sex. Analysis of En demonstrates how women's social status transformed from the Qing dynasty to the Republic of China.

"Representing Disability in Xiqu: an Examine to Dwarf Wang Ying"

Yuning Liu (University of British Columbia)
The paper considered the use of *aizibu* 矮子步 (dwarf steps), a movement used by many *chou* 丑 (clown) characters, in *xiqu* 戲曲 (Traditional Chinese theatre). During China's dramatic reform, most of China's *xiqu* troupes switched to *wusheng* 武生 (martial male) instead of *chou* to perform *Wang Ying* 王英 (a hero with excellent military skill as well as dwarf disability). The paper demonstrated how this change was affected by cultural and social attitudes toward the representation of the disabled body.

9:30-11:00 AM Session #6
ORGANIZED PANEL: INTERROGATING
AGENCY AND REPRESENTATION IN
LIMINAL SPACES

Chair: Jashodhara Sen (University of Colorado, Boulder)

"Erasure vs. Appropriation: Teaching Global Theatre at PWIs"

Sarah Johnson (Texas Tech University)
This paper explored the anxiety of teaching theatre from non-western cultures in

predominantly white institutions (PWIs) in the United States. Johnson advocated avoiding erasure of non-western cultures as a priority over avoiding unintentional misrepresentations. The best practices involve radical honesty and a pedagogical disruption of hierarchy.

"Performing *paribartan* – 'Scene Changes' Reflecting Simultaneous Westernization and Indigenization in Contemporary Kolkata"

Sukanya Chakrabarti (San Francisco State University)

Chakrabarti explored the "scene changes" in Kolkata, against the backdrop of a ruling government that initiates changes both towards Westernization (by recreating Kolkata in the semblance of London) and simultaneously indigenization (with state funding of "folk" – particularly Baul – festivals, and state initiatives to support indigenous art).

"Tantidhatri Festival, Networking East and West Through Performing Arts"

Sylvie Belleau (Université Laval)

India's Tantidhatri festival was inspired by a network of events born out of the desire of Odin Teatret artists to create a space for women performers. Tantidhatri evolved into a festival of its own where art practices, politics, gender issues, and spirituality are addressed.

"Hakka Theatre: *Roseki* TV drama"

Iris Tuan (National Chiao Tung University)

Roseki, a TV drama with music, represents the life and literature of Lu Ho-Juo. Performed in multiple languages (Hakka, Japanese, Taiwanese dialect, and modern standard Han language), *Roseki* interprets the story of contemporary Taiwan language, aided by the perspective of feminism.

11:00-12:00 PM AAP MEMBERSHIP MEETING

12:00-1:45 LUNCH BREAK / GRAD STUDENT BROWN BAG LUNCH

1:45-3:15PM SESSION #7 EMERGING SCHOLARS PANEL

Chair: Arnab Banerji (Loyola Marymount University)

"Cultural Anxiety and the Reconstruction of the Tradition of Classical Chinese Theatre in the Early Twentieth Century"

Chao Guo (Sun Yat-sen University, Zhuhai Campus)

The transformation of Mei Lanfang's (1894–1961) performances over the decade from 1919–1930 embodied *xiqu* professionals' pursuit of the legitimacy of *jingju* in light of an earlier critique of *xiqu* as "feudal." This history also shows that the "tradition" of *xiqu* is not *a priori*, but cumulatively constructed partially through *xiqu* professionals' prolonged debate with Westernised intellectuals in twentieth-century Chinese society.

"Rhythmic Tendencies in the Choreographies of Dairakudakan's Muramatsu Takuya"

Sebastian Semur (University of Toronto)

Using key concepts from Henri Lefebvre's theory, such as polyrhythms, eurhythmia, arrhythmia, and dressage, Semur examined four recent works by butoh dancer Takuya Muramatsu. The works frequently feature a soloist (himself) moving through a journey from a high, beautiful or clean world into a lower, uglier, or dirtier one, often culminating in a rhythmically charged moment, with fast-paced music and jarring movements as a large group of dancers work in opposition to Muramatsu. This moment – both cathartic and existentialist in nature – achieves its potency through the rhythmic shaping that has led up to it.

"'An Island of Death': Homo Sacer and Ungrievable Deaths"

Yuh J. Hwang (University of Pittsburgh)

How is the historical experience of the Jeju massacre represented in the form of "ungrievable" deaths in terms of the relationship between the "Reds" and innocent civilian victims in the context of an anti-communist ideology? Using Judith Butler and Giorgio Agamben's theories in the context of Cold War ideology, and Benedict Anderson's view of history and memory, the paper seeks to reveal social and cultural implications of mass death, including displaced, missing, and unknown dead, through the medium of artistic practices in Jeju Peace Park.

3:30-5:00PM ATJ LECTURE

"All The Sanskrit I've Forgotten And All The Hindi I Couldn't Learn: Circling Performance And Religion In India."

David Mason (Rhodes College)

A brief look at how someone might ping around the edges of performance and religion in northern India, followed by an attempt to unpack some basic elements of *rasa*, a theory of performance launched in the early centuries of the common era, quickly appropriated as a literary theory, and, by the seventeenth century,

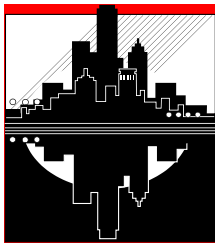
transformed into a theo-philosophical concept of personal identity as a fluid—and, perhaps, not even a real—thing



SCHOOMZE & FOOD

In celebration of our 32th year, our annual Schmoozefest took place at one of Orlando's outstanding Asian restaurants, Darbar Indian

Restaurant, where everyone had a chance to unwind, eat, drink and chat with friends old and new.



RECAP: AAP at ATHE—AUGUST 7-10, 2019

Hyatt Regency Grand Cypress
1 Grand Cypress Blvd, Orlando, FL 32836

Our AAP Conference ended with David Mason's *ATJ* lecture, which was simultaneously the opening event of our offerings at *ATHE*. This timing encourages both AAP and *ATHE* members to attend. This year, we had the great joy of seeing our own Kathy Foley, editor of *ATJ* from 2005-2018, be honored by *ATHE* as the recipient of the coveted Excellence in Editing Award. Congratulations, Kathy, and well deserved!

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 7, 2019
ATJ LECTURE 3:30-5:00PM
"All the Sanskrit I've Forgotten and All the Hindi I Couldn't Learn: Circling Performance and Religion in India"
---David Mason (Rhodes College)
(see above for summary)

3:30-5:00 PM
Sociology of Dictator Movement in Multimedia Theater
This PhD thesis incorporates and analyzes multimedia theater and its connotation with social dictatorship movements.

Session Coordinator: Moein Mohebalian,
Theater educator
Moderator and Presenter: Golnaz Asldini,
Theater director

T HURSDAY AUGUST 8, 2019
ATHE AWARDS CEREMONY
5:45-7:45 PM
EXCELLENCE IN EDITING AWARD
— KATHY FOLEY

Kathy Foley is a Professor of Theatre at the University of California, Santa Cruz and has taught at University of Malaya, University of Hawaii, Yonsei University (Seoul), and Chulalongkorn University (Bangkok) and served as college provost for three of UCSC's residential colleges (Porter, Kresge, and Merrill). She runs the UCSC ArtBridge program, sending students

to teach arts in K-12 classrooms. She is President of UNIMA-USA and serves on the UNIMA-International Research and Publications Commissions working on UNIMA's online *World Encyclopedia of Puppetry Arts*. She was editor of *Asian Theatre Journal* from 2005-2018. Her articles have appeared in *TDR*, *Modern Drama*, *Asian Theatre Journal*, *Puppetry International*, and other journals and books. She was one of the first non-Indonesian invited to perform in the prestigious all Indonesia National Wayang Puppetry Festival and has performed as a dalang of wayang golek sunda (rod puppetry of West Java) at the Smithsonian, Harvard, UCLA, and other venues. She has directed western theatre as well as many Indonesian dance dramas at UCSC. She curated multiple touring exhibitions of puppets and masks of South, Southeast Asia, Korea, Thailand, and Malaysia at sites like Center for Puppetry Arts (Atlanta), the East-West Center (Honolulu), the National Geographic Society (Washington), etc. She is an advisor to the Society of Asian Arts of the Asian Art Museum (SF) and her work has been supported by grants, including Fulbright, Asian Cultural Council, Institute for Sacred Music (Yale), World Wood Foundation, UCSC Committee on Research and Arts Research Institute, and others. She is also a Punch and Judy professor.

Selection Committee:

CHAIR: Mary Elizabeth Anderson, Wayne State University

Shelby Lunderman, University of Washington

John Michael Sefel, The Ohio State University

Jennifer Goff, Centre College

Julia Moriarty, Wayne State University

4:00-5:30 PM

Change of Scene: Noh and the West

Organized Panel:

This panel addresses three different manifestations of Noh's reception in and impact on the West, from the 19th century through the 1970s.

"Lost in Transmission: Noh Theatre and the West, 1868-1921"

David Jortner (Baylor University)
Post-Meiji Western artists, scholars, and politicians created the Noh they wished for, not the Noh that exists. The paper examines the historiography of Western writing on the Noh, from Grant's writings on the theatre through Pound/Fenollosa, positing that the emergence of Noh as a popular alternative theatre in the West came as a sustained intellectual and artistic pursuit by Westerners who saw it as the solution for the theatre.

"An American Noh: Ezra Pound's impact on the Midwest's Little Magazines and Little Theatres"

Steffen Silvis (University of Wisconsin, Madison)

The paper argues that Ezra Pound's Noh translations (and William Butler Yeats's Noh-influenced "Plays for Dancers") had as much impact on the Little Theatre Movement as they did on the Little Magazine Movement in the American Midwest. It analyzes the Little Theatre Movement's promotion of Pound's Noh plays and the propagation of "native" Nohs by Robinson Jeffers and Wallace Stevens that they inspired.

Ulick O'Connor's "Extremely Modern" Form: Noh or No?

Richard Jones (Stephen F. Austin State University)

Richard Jones examines three "Noh" plays by Ulick O'Connor: *The Grand Inquisitor*, adapted from Dostoyevsky; *Submarine Roger Casement* is the shite who visits the dreams of two IRA members aboard a U-boat during World War II; and *Deirdre*, familiar Irish legend. Like Yeats before him, O'Connor had an incomplete and somewhat reductive understanding of the "extremely modern" forms and strategies of Noh. This paper explores O'Connor's work both in its own terms and as "modern Noh."

FRIDAY AUGUST 9, 2019

3:45-5:15 PM

Practice and Change in Asia

Organized Panel:

This panel gathered papers of how theatre artists are responding to changes in the world around them through rethinking their approaches to theatre as an art.

"Gaana Peter Pan: The Canadian Tamil Youth Association's Resistance to Growing Up Thaalam"

Kristen Rudisill (Bowling Green State University)

Kristen D. Rudisill's paper examines how the Ultimate Gaana Competition in Toronto has been using the story of Peter Pan. Her paper looks at the current moment in Canada to think about why this story is connecting so well with the globalized Tamil youth community in Toronto.

"Japan's Post-Colonial Ghost: Kazuo Ohno's Butoh Performance"

Weiye Li (University of Washington)

Weiyu Li looks at the performance of “My Mother” by butoh-artist Kazuo Ohno. By inviting this ghost of Japan’s past on stage, Ohno returns cultural agency to Japan’s by reclaiming and surpassing Western perceptions of the “exotic” East. Li argues that Ohno’s performance acts as an anomalous structure that makes radical use of the East/West binary.

**“The American Dream’ and Malaysia:
International Aspiration in the Play Thicker than
Water”**

Jennifer Goodlander (Indiana University)
Jennifer Goodlander looks at the work of Malaysian duo Terry and TheCuz. Diaspora, identity, and the production of culture emerge as key elements to understand the ever-increasing global theatre circuit and the commodity of the “American Dream.

**SATURDAY AUGUST 10, 2019
8:00-9:30 AM Beyond Fidelity: Scripting,
Re-turning, and Queering Canonized
Theaters against Changing Cultural Scenes**

Organized Panel:

This panel examines the science, art, and act of adapting canonized theatres against the changing stage and cultural scenes in contemporary Taiwan and Shanghai.

**“Changing Scenes in Queer Cultural Flow:
Queering A Streetcar Named Desire in Taiwan’s
Theatre”**

Ivy (I-Chu) Chang (National Chiao Tung University)

Chang focuses on Tainan Theater Troupe’s Belle Reprieve (2015), an adaptation of New York-based Split Britches’ queer version of Tennessee Williams’ *A Street Car Named Desire*. Engaging Judith Butler’s theories of performativity and reiteration, this paper discusses how the performers infiltrate western canons or heterosexual representational apparatuses with Taiwanese lesbian and gay subculture and queer desire to expose the imitative structure of gender/sex formation.

**“Inheritance and Adaptation: The Reconstructed
Performance of *The Story of Jade Hairpin* by
Shanghai Kunju Opera Troupe”**

Ya-Hsuan Lo (National Taiwan University)

Lo’s paper investigates *The Story of Jade Hairpin* which was staged by the Shanghai Kunju Opera Troupe in 1994. Through drawing attention to the comparison of the complete set of a play and the extracts, Lo examines the significance a small-scale complete set may have in the development of contemporary performance of Kunju opera.



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*submitted by Man He, VP/
ATHE Conference Planner*



CONFERENCES AND CALLS FOR PAPERS

A AP Emerging Scholars Adjudicated Panel

The Association for Asian Performance (AAP) invites submissions for its 26th Annual Adjudicated Panel to be held during the Association for Asian Performance annual conference in Detroit, Michigan on July 28-29, 2020, which precedes the Association for Theatre in Higher Education (ATHE) conference. Selected papers will be strongly considered for publication in Asian Theatre Journal – an official publication of AAP. Eligibility is open to all (current and recent graduate students, scholars, teachers, artists) provided they are: 1) early in

their scholarly career OR new to the study of Asian performance; 2) have not published in Asian Theatre Journal; and 3) have not previously received an AAP Emerging Scholars Award. We welcome submissions from past applicants. Papers (8-10 double-spaced pages) may deal with any aspect of Asian performance or drama. Preparation of the manuscript in Asian Theatre Journal style, which can be gleaned from a recent issue, is desirable. Up to three winning authors will be selected and invited to present their papers at the upcoming AAP conference. Paper presentations should be no longer than twenty minutes. A **\$100 cash** prize will be

awarded for each paper selected, to help offset conference fees. ***AAP Conference registration fees are waived for the winners, who also receive one-year free membership to AAP.***

Receipt of award is contingent upon attendance at the AAP conference. All paper submissions will receive written feedback from the selection committee.

SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS

Papers should be accompanied by a separate cover sheet detailing the author's contact information: institutional affiliation and current title (if relevant), address, phone number, and email address (for both academic year and summer holiday). The author's name should not appear in the paper.

Please send submissions electronically to Dr. Arnab Banerji, Assistant Professor of Theatre, Loyola Marymount University (arnab.banerji@lmu.edu).

Deadline for Submissions: January 30, 2020.
Winners will be notified by April 30, 2020

AAP is proud to sponsor this adjudicated panel. Not only is it a chance for students and emergingscholars to get exposure and recognition for their work, it also provides an opportunity to meet and make contacts with others who are interested in similar fields of research.

Please direct any inquiries regarding the Emerging Scholars Award panel to Arnab Banerji at (arnab.banerji@lmu.edu). To find out about the benefits of becoming an AAP member, please check out our website at <http://asian-performance.org> and consider joining us on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/aaponline/>



PRODUCTIONS, FESTIVALS, EXHIBITION

Female Noh Tours North America

In September, the University of Victoria had the honour to host the mother-daughter pair of noh actors, Hisa and Hikaru Uzawa, from Tokyo's Tessenkai, for a workshop and sold-out performance. It is exceedingly rare for two women to make their way in a traditional performing art that has been dominated by men for centuries, but both Hisa and Hikaru are consummate professionals. In fact, Hisa has been designated as a "Living National Treasure" for her contribution to this 650-year-old art form. The Tessenkai is one of preeminent schools of Kanze noh and was the home base for Kanze Hisao, by all accounts the greatest noh actor of postwar Japan. Hisao was also Hisa's teacher. Victoria was the second stop (after Vancouver) on a North American tour that took them to Oberlin, Smith, and Columbia Universities. At UVic, Hisa and Hikaru led students in a workshop in movement and chanting taken from the play *Lady Aoi*, and for their performance, Hisa danced the final act of *Atsumori*, named for

the sixteen-year-old scion of the Heike clan who was slain at the battle of Ichinotani by Kumagai Naozane. In the play, Kumagai, remorseful over taking Atsumori's life, has taken Buddhist orders and as the priest Rensei, returns to the site of the battle where he encounters the spirit of the boy he had killed. Hisa's performance as Atsumori was incandescent, and enthralled the audience, who remained long after for a lively question and answer session.



Hisa Uzawa as Atsumori

This was only the second time Hisa had performed in this role, the first time being the night before, at the University of British

Columbia. My thanks especially go to my colleagues Christina Laffin at UBC and Ann Sherif at Oberlin for coordinating the tour, to my colleagues and students in Theatre at UVic for their expert work in building set pieces and serving as dressers and stage assistants, and to the Centre for Asia-Pacific Initiatives at UVic for sponsoring their visit.

Balinese Shadow-Puppetry University of Hawai'i at Mānoa Spring 2020

The UHM Asian Theatre Program is currently conducting rehearsals in traditional and modern Balinese performing arts for a *Wayang Listrik* shadow-puppetry production for the UHM Kennedy Theatre mainstage directed by Kirstin Pauka and Made Moja. Training and artistic supervision is provided by three Balinese master artists:

I Madé Widana - dancer, choreographer, *gamelan* musician, composer

I Ketuk Wirtawan - dancer, choreographer, and *dalang*

I Madé Moja - designer and painter.

The training period will culminate in a Balinese *Wayang Listrik* performance of the play "*The Last King of Bali*" presented February 6-15, 2020 at the UHM Kennedy Theatre. Extensive outreach performances will extend this program to local schools and the wider Hawaii community.

Wayang Listrik is a modern Balinese theatre genre based on traditional shadow puppetry (*Wayang Kulit*) with accompanying dance and music, all transferred to a large 30 x 15 foot screen.



Wayang kulit performed by Mr. Ketut Wirtawan

The show comes alive with traditional carved leather puppets, shadow-actors, dancers, and *gamelan* music. A new script based on traditional Balinese *babad* was composed by master artist Ketut Wirtwan, who draws upon many years of experience as a traditional Balinese *dalang*.

Please support our School Outreach activities
via our crowd-funding initiative at
givelively.org:

<https://secure.givelively.org/donate/arts-focus-southeast-asia/arts-education-for-all-children-from-bali-to-hawai-i>

Theatre Nohgaku on Tour

Our 2019-20 season is already in full swing, with recent performances of *Emily* in London and of *Gettysburg* in Pennsylvania and New Jersey. Ashley Thorpe and Richard Emmert's *Emily* was well received, as Alice Baldock's [review on the UK Japan Society page](#) attests. You can follow the links to a [WVIA interview here](#) and another interview on the [Being Human podcast](#) to hear Elizabeth Dowd and David Crandall talk about *Gettysburg*.

We're grateful to all our audience members, workshop attendees, and well-wishers for their support of these projects. A central part of our mission is to bring an experience of noh to new audiences and to share in a dialogue about noh and what it can be in the contemporary world. Your part in that dialogue fascinates and inspires us and always leads us on to our next project.

The next among those is Kevin Salfen's *Phoenix Fire*, an intercultural work written in celebration of the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. On the first day of the 1964 Olympics, filmmaker Ichikawa Kon encounters the spirit of Kanō Jigorō (1860-1938), the founder of judo and Representative to the International Olympic Committee in the years leading up to the failed 1940 games. The two discuss the nature of the Olympics - after a half century of devastating conflict, can the first Olympics in Asia show a way forward: humankind, beyond nation and creed, striving to overcome its limits? The world premiere of *Phoenix Fire* will take place in March 2020 in the US and Japan. Watch our Facebook page [and website](#) in the coming months for details! <https://www.theatrenohgaku.org>



PERFORMANCE TRAINING

Noh Training Project Japan Tokyo•Fukuyama•Kyoto Summer 2020

Theatre Nohgaku announces its Noh Training Project Japan 2020 organized together with the Kita School of Noh. This is the 4th summer for Theatre Nohgaku and the Kita School to hold a series of workshops featuring various aspects of classical Japanese noh theatre. This year's series of six workshops will take place over six weeks in June and July 2020 in Tokyo, Fukuyama and Kyoto.

The workshop series features a three-week performance workshop entitled **Power and Resistance** featuring the dance and chant of noh under the direction of Teruhisa Oshima leading a team of Kita School actors along with several Theatre Nohgaku members. Simultaneously there will be a three-week mask making workshop entitled **Revealing the Mask** under the direction of master carver Hideta Kitazawa.

In addition there is an eight-day Noh Costuming workshop entitled **Sculpting Silk** featuring lectures in Kyoto by noh scholar Monica Bethe and costuming lessons with the Kita Oshima family in Fukuyama. There is also an intensive three-day **Kata Boot Camp** with Kita professional Kinue Oshima also in Fukuyama to help those with some experience to solidify the basics of movement and chant. A workshop entitled **Pause between Silence** is a five-day writers' workshop in Tokyo to learn the basics of noh literary and poetic structure and encourage participants to write in their own language using that structure. There is also a final workshop entitled **Noh Time Is a Presence** to encourage those who have participated in the performance workshops to apply techniques to new work.

The workshops are all held in English or in Japanese with English interpretation. Details of the dates, fees, application process and other information can be found on the Theatre Nohgaku website:

<theatrenohgaku.org>

Please download our digital leaflet and share it freely.

To register or for more information please contact ntp.japan.summer@gmail.com

<kita-noh.com> and <theatrenohgaku.org>

Wayang Kulit Workshop in Bali

I Nyoman Sedana will be holding a seminar at ISI Denpasar April 16-17 in conjunction with the World Festival of Puppetry in Gianyar Bali. From April 20-26 there will be a workshop in Bali on Balinese wayang kulit with I Nyoman Sedana and I Made Sidia. It will be, like the world festival an opportunity to meet and see some of the top Balinese artists working in contemporary shadow theatre in Bali. The fee for the week workshop will be \$200, but no one will be turned away, so if you are interested in contemporary and traditional Balinese performance, consider joining. for more information contact kfoley@ucsc.edu.

Çudamani Summer Institute-Bali July 23-August 7, 2020. Study Balinese Music & Dance with Çudamani in Bali.



For twelve years students of all ages from around the world have come to Pengosekan to study intensively with the community of Çudamani artists under the direction of Dewa Putu Berata and Emiko Saraswati Susilo. Their approach to teaching is unique in Bali and supports the beginning

student as well as the seasoned master artists.
For more information and applications:
www.cudamani.org

Corporeal Mime
Thomas Leabhart workshop 3-8
January 2020 Association
Hippocampe, Paris
hippocampe@mime-corporeal-theatre.com or
tleabhart@pomona.edu



PUBLICATIONS and OTHER MEDIA

Vol 2: Theatre's Leiter Side Now in Paperback

Just published in paperback: the second volume of my *Theatre's Leiter Side* series, providing 300 substantial reviews (300!) of the 2013-2014 season. 2013-2014, my second (and last) year as a Drama Desk Awards nominator was my busiest ever as a reviewer. There are so many reviews the book had to be published in two parts: Part I, May-November; Part II, December-April. Reading the book through will bring the entire season to life, as if you were going to the theatre nightly with me, seeing every Broadway and Off-Broadway show. The books are priced as low as possible, so please keep the series in mind when thinking of a gift for a theatre-loving someone this coming holiday season.

Here's the description on Amazon.com.

https://www.amazon.com/s?k=Theatre%27s+leiter+side&i=stripbooks&ref=nb_sb_noss_2

This two-volume book is the second in the Theatre's Leiter Side series anthologizing hundreds of reviews of New York theatre by Samuel L. Leiter originally posted on his Theatre's Leiter Side blog. After a long, prolific career during which he was recognized both as a world-renowned writer on Western theatre and traditional Japanese theatre, especially kabuki, Dr. Leiter began reviewing plays in his early 70s, following his having been named a Drama Desk Awards nominator, a position he held for two years. The present book collects his 300 reviews for the 2013-2014 New York season. This makes it the most extensive treatment of that season—

which featured such hits as *All the Way, Beautiful*—The Carole King Show, *Aladdin*, and *A Gentleman's Guide to Love & Murder*—in any single source. Its coverage is so thorough it is being published in two chronologically organized volumes, the first for reviews from May to November 2013, the second for December 2013 to April 2014, when the awards season ended. Making the book even more significant are the hundreds of program covers it reprints, representing perhaps 90 percent of the Broadway and Off-Broadway shows described.

New Indonesian Plays

Launched on October 15, 2019: *New Indonesian Plays* includes Cobina Gillitt's translation *Bedfellows* by

Hanna Fransisca, an important Indonesian play because the content deals directly with the ongoing ethnic and religious conflicts prompted by the rise of militant Islam in Indonesia (which relates to my current manuscript on theatrical censorship by these Islamic groups).

It's also important because it was written by a woman from a minority Chinese ethnic group

from one of the outer provinces, West Kalimantan on the island of Borneo. It's only recently that regional playwrights (rather than those from Java) are being recognized for their work, and even rarer still for a woman playwright who identifies so strongly with her minority

ethnicity. Cobina's translation was



commissioned for this collection which was put together in tandem with the 2019 London Book Fair's focus on Indonesia. World premiere reading at *First Date: Showcase of Indonesian Plays*, Ovalhouse, London, May, 2019.

A **TJ ONLINE AT JSTOR**
JSTOR will be sending all AAP members a second invitation to sign up to access *ATJ*. This will supply back issues of *ATJ* (more than three years old) that people can access online, but it will require that each AAP member create their own login. This service is free and a part of your AAP membership. *ATJ* is published by University of Hawaii Press. Support the Press.

C **ALL FOR PROMOTIONAL BOOK FLYERS!**
AAP is continuing a new means of promoting publications. In order to make the membership aware of new and upcoming books on Asian performance, to allow members to promote their own works in a cost effective manner, and to possibly offer members a discount on upcoming publications, we will include promotional fliers for upcoming books in the mailed version of the AAP Newsletter.
The AAP Newsletter is mailed twice a year. **Those who have had books released recently or have a book coming out soon may arrange to have the publisher send AAP 140**

fliers for the book and AAP will include the individual fliers in with the newsletter. We ask that you observe the following restrictions:

- Each publication will be publicized once.
- Submissions should be limited to publications since the last newsletter, and can include upcoming works.
- The publisher must provide enough fliers for the membership (140). AAP will not cover the cost of photocopying, but the postage is already covered as part of the newsletter.

We also ask you to suggest that your publisher might consider offering a small discount to those who order using the AAP flyer, to make the offer more worthwhile to our members. A time limit can certainly be set (i.e. "order this book by 1 July 1, 2013 and receive 20% off").

For the inclusion in Spring, 2014 *Newsletter*, please include books published only since the previous newsletter (Fall, 2013).

Interested parties may contact the Secretary/Treasurer at kwetmore@lmu.edu and send or instruct their publisher to send 140 copies of fliers to:

Association for Asian Performance
Kevin Wetmore
Department of Theatre
Loyola Marymount Theatre
1 LMU Drive, MS 8210
Los Angeles CA 90045



MEMBER NEWS, KUDOS, AND ACCOLADES

L **inda Ehrlich**
She has published two articles:
"Turning Away from the Fire: A New Look at the Films of Kore-eda Hirokazu," in *Frameworks: The Journal of Cinema and Media* 60:1 (Spring 2019), 116-140.

Also, a review: "Tanaka Kinuyō: Nation, Stardom, and Female Subjectivity." Ed. Irene González-López, in *Film Quarterly* (Winter 2018): 115-118.

A **rnab Banerji**
He published "The Social Drama of Durga Puja: Performing Bengali Identity in the Diaspora" (*Ecumenica: Performance and Religion*, Fall 2019)
And "From Heart Mountain, Wyoming to the Heart of Little Tokyo: Japanese American Resilience in Los Angeles" (*BOOM California*, February 2019)

He also received an ASTR Research Fellowship to attempt a new English translation of Badal Sircar's *Evam Indrajit* from its Bengali original.

Matthew Isaac Cohen

After 14 years of teaching at Royal Holloway, University of London, Matthew said farewell to England and in August 2019 took up a tenured professional position in the Department of Dramatic Arts at the University of Connecticut. He is teaching courses on global puppetry as part of UConn's renowned Puppet Arts program and developing new courses in Asian theatre, cultural diplomacy, and global arts and culture. He is Affiliated Faculty at UConn's Asian and Asian American Institute. He is continuing his research on the Dr. Walter Angst and Sir Henry Angst Collection of Indonesian Puppets, with the goal of a publication and associated exhibition, as a Council Affiliate of the Yale Council on Southeast Asian Studies at nearby Yale University.

During the summer of 2019, Matthew spent six weeks in Java, Indonesia, collaborating with the puppetry department of the conservatoire Institut Seni Indonesia Yogyakarta on a grant entitled "Enabling *Wayang* to Contribute to Environmental Discourse: Communities, Puppet Theatre and Climate Change in Indonesia." Matthew's own research in this project addresses the ecology of *wayang* ritual drama in Cirebon (West Java).

Researchers associated with this grant from Indonesia, the UK, Poland, and the Netherlands presented papers in a double-panel Matthew organized entitled *Traditional Art, Community and Environmental Discourse: Wayang Puppet Theatre in Global Contexts* at the 10th EuroSEAS conference held at Humboldt-Universität in Berlin, Germany on 10-13 September 2019. A national symposium in Yogyakarta on ecology and traditional Indonesian arts is scheduled to conclude the year-long collaboration in April 2020.

Three of Matthew's recent articles are "Three Eras of Indonesian Arts Diplomacy," *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 175 no. 2-3 (2019): 253-283; "Wayang in Jaman Now: Reflexive Traditionalization and Local, National, and Global Networks of Javanese Shadow Puppet Theatre," *Theatre Research International* 44, no. 1 (2019): 40-57; "Stories as Stock-in-Trade: Notes on a Puppet-Less *Wayang* Performance," *Puppet Notebook* 29 (2019) 13-16.

He also keynoted at the International Conference on Intermedia Arts and Creative Technologies and International Conference on Interdisciplinary Arts and Humanities, held in Yogyakarta on 3-5 July 2019, with a lecture titled "Puppets and the Changing World: Pandam Guritno's American Travels with *Wayang*, 1961-1971."

Cody Poulton

This fall, he served as a member of the critics' jury for the Tokyo Festival World Competition to be held at the Tokyo Metropolitan Theatre in Ikebukuro. Conceived by Yokoyama Yoshiji, this is the first ever competition of the kind to be held in Tokyo. Evoking the competitions held in ancient Greece to determine the greatest tragedies and comedies of their time, the competition will also serve as a prelude to the Olympics next year. The competition features a half dozen plays curated by artists and programmers representing six regions around the world: the Americas, Africa, Europe, Asia, Oceania, and the host country Japan. The curators have specially selected these works to showcase a rising new generation of artists creating world theatre. There is also an artists' jury, featuring leading directors like Thomas Ostermeier (Schaubühne, Berlin) and choreographer Emily Johnson (Catalyst Dance, New York City). Juliette Binoche will chair the juries. The festival runs from October 29 to November 4 and is part of the larger Tokyo Festival program directed by Miyagi Satoshi, featuring, among other works, Ostermeier's *A History of Violence*. Further details can be found on the competition's website here: <https://tokyo-festival.jp/2019/en/world-competition?fbclid=IwAR2lQaAeJOQm10Q9ygKJgQ8bx2fVsFy4gq2mSK9MSgA40DIxtQc4OSdxDiQ>

Alexa Alice Joubin

She edited a special cluster of *Asian Theatre Journal* 36.2 (Fall 2019) on "Tang Xianzu and Shakespeare, Quatercentenary Celebration." Her short article "Performing Commemoration: The Cultural Politics of Locating Tang Xianzu and Shakespeare" appeared in the same issue. In October, she gave a TED-style plenary presentation at the Fulbright Association Annual Conference in Washington, D.C., and over the summer she spoke on creative collaboration at Canada's Stratford Festival Meighen Forum.

One of the articles she published that may be of interest to Asianists is "Ophelia Unbound in Asian Performances" in *Actes des congrès de la Société française Shakespeare* 37 (2019).

Shiao-ling Yu

She has published the following articles: "Tradition and Modernity: Two Modern Adaptations of the Chinese Opera *Hezhu's Match*," *Asian Theatre Journal* vol. 36, no. 2, pp. 416-438 (Fall, 2019). "From Religious Rituals to Popular Theatre: Evolution of the Mulian Legend," forthcoming in *Ecumenica* vol. 12, no. 2 (Fall, 2019). She also presented a paper, "Taiwan's Experimental Theatre and Lai Shengchuan's Play *A Village in Taiwan*," at the International Federation for Theatre Research's annual conference in Shanghai, July 8-12, 2019.

Gillitt, Cobina

She translated "Bedfellows (*Kawan Tidur*)" by Hanna Fransisca in *New Indonesian Plays* ed. Cheryl Robson,

Aurora Metro Books, 2019 (see full announcement above).

Julie A. Iezzi

She collaborated with colleague Lim Beng Choo of the National University of Singapore on a paper titled "Traditional Japanese Theater in the Age of Technological Innovation," presented at the *Japan/Japanese Studies Through a Southeast Asian Lens* Conference, held at the Imin Conference Center of the East West Center from May 22-24, 2019. The paper was subsequently published in the July 2019 Conference Proceedings.

Kathy Foley

She will be doing a dance drama production performed in February involving *Kecak* with I Nyoman Sedana from the Institute Seni Indonesia (ISI)-Denpasar as a guest artist.



EDITOR'S CHOICE

Many thanks to John Gillespie for providing these insightful and timely reviews! -- CFS

THREE RIEVIEWS OF JAPANESE THEATRE IN NY -- BY JOHN GILLESPIE

Antigone

By Sophocles

Translated by Yaginuma Shigetake

Directed by Miyagi Satoshi (b. 1959)

Production of Shizuoka Performing
Arts Center (SPAC), Miyagi Satoshi,
General Artistic Director (since 2007)

Composer: Tanakawa Hiroko

Space Designer: Kiz Junpei

Costume Designer: Takahashi Kayō

Lighting Designer: Osako Koji

Hair and Makeup: Kajita Kyōko

@ Park Avenue Armory in New York City

September 25-October 6, 2019

In Japanese with supertitles

Review title: **No Exit?—Truth or Political Loyalty**

Spectators are greeted by a very wide stage, a rectangular space filled with 18,000 gallons of water, marked with several large stones. As we are taking our seats, sylph-like figures in white gowns are gliding around the perimeter of the dark and shallow pool's perimeter. The mood, quiet and meditative, suddenly turns festive as the key players turn to face us and begin to introduce themselves. This part of the performance lasts only five minutes, carried out in a cute, almost childish, upbeat tone of voice, as if *Antigone* were a more-or-less unknown quantity. Is it an ovation, perhaps, to the Japanese penchant for such odd contrasts, in this case between the opening and the gravity of the play itself, effected almost as an integral, if ill-fitting, part of the performance's presentational style? Then, as the existential challenge of Antigone's situation—follow her passion to bury

her brother Polyneices, an accused criminal, or abide by Creon's dictum not to do so—begins to unfold, the soft, playful mood of the opening yields to a different mood entirely and has us leaning forward so as not to miss what would come next.

That quiet sense of mystery has marked Miyagi's work from the beginning. I first encountered his work about 20 years ago, at a performance of his ethereal *Tenshu Monogatari* (The Castle Tower), by noted author and playwright Izumi Kyōka (1873-1939), which Miyagi first staged in 1996 with Ku Na'uka (meaning something like "towards science" in Russian), the company he founded in 1990, then at New York's Japan Society in 2003. His signature style can be mesmerizing. Similar to Bunraku, Japanese classical puppet plays, he separates actors and narrators, the actors moving and gesturing, the narrators intoning the actors' lines. Moreover, his actors are diligently trained to move in a deliberate, slow, stylized way, enhanced here by moving in the water, in concert with the words emanating from the narrators, who are usually located just to the side of the physical action. Miyagi has termed his approach one of "pathos and logos." He goes on to explain that this division of experience and language is necessary to cut through their melding, an unfortunate outcome of Japan's modernization and Westernization; only in separating them, he feels, can the full impact of the words' (logos) expressiveness be properly expressed by the histrionic body (experience).

This style of performance can certainly be riveting and the spectators for *Antigone* the night I attended were drawn in. Certainly, this one was. It was impossible to resist that impact, when a dozen or so of the actors, moved slowly in a line, in perfect unison, through the water, creating the sense of utter impotence against the inevitably incoming tide; Antigone, at that point, has no exit from her life dilemma.

Three other aspects of the performance deserve mention. One is the use of water. The mood of the play is bolstered now and again by group movement through the water, all the while causing a gentle rippling sound—an appealing aesthetic effect, for sure. Miyagi also intends to recover the Japanese (and ancient Greek) sense that water divides the realms of the living and the dead. His calculation is to blunt the contrast between the two realms as much as might be possible, to make the boundary (especially for a country like Japan that is surrounded by water) ambiguous.

The second is related. Miyagi is on record as saying that Japanese culture, with its multiple divinities, has a closer connection to polytheistic ancient Greece than to Western countries. So he prefers not the either-or—heaven or hell—contrast in Christian eschatology for Creon, Antigone, and Haemon; rather, in the Japanese sense, all three, in dying, would become buddhas.

The third aspect to mention here is the timeliness of this performance. While the 2,500-year-old play certainly carries multiple resonances for Japanese culture, it is clearly timely for the United States (and perhaps many other Western countries), given the polarities of today's world, in which the political or political loyalties would appear to have overwhelmed for many the sense to distinguish truth from fiction, right from wrong. To that end, Antigone's physical movements and narrated utterances, while she is on the platform of a large stone as she learns her ineluctable fate, conveys to onlookers feelings of ineffable human conflict and, indeed, pain. Is there no exit?

While not wanting to be churlish, I have a couple of reservations about this performance. First, it could lose the child-like opening, since it contributed little or nothing to the performance, though perhaps it might be necessary in Japan, where *Antigone* is far less widely known than here. Second, it also struck me, at least at moments, as somewhat too fixed, too cold, too stilted in its stylization to fully stimulate and release the rawness of the ostensibly featured human passions. Yet, this play certainly could be characterized as engaging, transporting even, especially within the grandeur of the performance space at the Park Avenue Armory, but I wondered, just for a moment, whether, as Miyagi has grown older, he hadn't become a bit like an older, even more stylized Robert Wilson?

But, no matter, it is without question a performance, as with all of Miyagi's work, not to be missed.

---Submitted by John K. Gillespie
October 2019

Ashita no Ma-Joe: Rocky Macbeth

Written and directed by Murai Yu.

Performed by Kaimaku Pennant Race, Five

Performances: May 15-18, 2019

@ Japan Society, New York

In Japanese with supertitles

Review Title: **LollaPalooka**

Yu Murai, who can stake a claim to being among Japan's most innovative playwrights and directors today, has his own take on Japan's century-plus tradition of staging/adapting Shakespeare. His first foray into the U.S., the 2009 New York International Fringe Festival, featured his hilarious *Romeo and Toilet*, recognized by *Time Out New York*, citing its "fantastic combination of ingenious movement, surreal story lines and dynamic, startlingly disciplined performers." That description also applies to his most recent Shakespeare adaptation, *Ashita no Ma-Joe: Rocky Macbeth*, the title drawing on the wildly popular manga *Ashita no Joe*, 1968-73, and on *Macbeth's* witches (*majo* is "witch" in Japanese). The manga illustrated the melodramatic tale of a confused youth, an orphan and ex-con, whose life itinerary, difficult at best, brings him to professional boxing, his eye on a championship belt, all conflated with Macbeth's ill-fated rise and fall.

Murai established his company, Kaimaku Pennant Race (KPR) in 2006, its name evoking both a baseball-season opener and a play's curtain. Tokyo-based KPR is known there for adapting Western masterpieces, featuring dialogue brimming with puns and word play, calling up universal aspects of human endeavor and issues in Japanese popular culture—i.e., manga, animé, and video games. His stage action is stylized, disciplined, and marked by humor and sight gags. The stage for *Romeo and Toilet*, for example, was adorned with 10,000 rolls of toilet paper.

Murai launched *Ashita no Ma-Joe: Rocky Macbeth* in Tokyo in 2017 at Tokyo's Honda Gekijō, renown for experimental theatre. Japan Society's performance opened on what resembled a traditional boxing ring with a smaller boxing ring in the middle, its floor mat of rubbery material. Everything was white, including the three actors, dressed in white spandex bodysuits, which facilitated quick changes from one character to another, including, among others, Macbeth, Witches, Lady Macbeth, Banquo, Ghost of Banquo, and Malcolm, and Macduff.

The action opens with Macbeth lamenting his life in cold, remote Scotland, reflecting Joe's life in an obscure Japanese boxing ring. Suddenly, Macbeth encounters the witches ensconced under the ring-within-the-ring mat, punctuating lines with their heads successively popping up against the rubbery mat,

as though enacting a game of whack-a-mole. This provocative opening shook the spectators, effectively foreshadowing Macbeth's projected rise and fall from grace.

Murai's stage action is snappy, the full play lasting barely an hour. With the witches and other characters narrating but also commenting on their own actions, Macbeth's (and Joe's) vicissitudes gain immediacy in seamlessly linked scenes. The smaller ring-within-the ring with the rubbery mat, it becomes apparent, frames each scene as a mini-play-within-the-play. That realization is woven into the action by several techniques, including the witches' rapid wordplay melding, for example, "mat," "mad," "man," even "Macbeth"—words uttered, oddly, in English. The witches' pithy conclusion, "we are the mat," confirms it not only serves as the backbone of the play-within-the-play structure but functions virtually as a central character. It's an ingenious meta-technique that, by the second or third scene, has us fully within its grip.

Murai follows the ill-fated itineraries of the would-be king Macbeth and manga-boxer, would-be champion Joe, juxtaposing them, punctuating the action throughout with humorous wordplay and other devices. For example, Macbeth and Lady Macbeth at one point wonder aloud if they are "punch-drunk" for not seeing what is in front of them. Macbeth even mimes an imaginary fight, using terms like "cross-counter" and "razor uppercut." Then the sound of the morning gong Macbeth hears is conflated with the boxing-match bell announcing a new round, and Duncan's murder by knife is described, in boxing terms, as "a jab" attack. Following the deed, Macbeth and Lady Macbeth discuss breaking bread together, the sound of the Japanese word for bread (*pan*) modulating to "Panquo" then "Banquo"—which ultimately suggests, since both Banquo and Duncan are now dead, that the blood-stained couple is sustained far less by bread than by bloody murder.

The importance of the small ring's mat increases here: opened, video of a carp pond is projected on it. Teeming carp jostle to locate a spot where they might find their own "corner" and sustenance. Two characters (here identified only as A and B) muse about the carp, *koi* in Japanese (homophone for love), comparing them to the young couple in love; the very wordplay becomes another of the play's structural leitmotifs. By the end of their conversation, the two are washing their hands in the pond, which has turned blood red. Image and action together

reflect Macbeth's demise—i.e., Duncan's "loyal" thane now steeped in treachery.

Midway through the play, two characters don hardhats for a tête-à-tête and are pelleted with crushed rocks during their conversation. The two are probably Macbeth and Lady Macbeth (it's not made clear), their lines spilling out fast and furious, like the nonstop falling rocks—mirroring the world crumbling around the sociopathic monarchs. Moreover, the stones cover a good part of the boxing-ring stage, making it noticeably awkward, even painful, for the actors, all barefoot, simply to walk, re-enforcing the inexorably deteriorating universe of the principal characters. Humorous moments also abound with, for example, the appearance of a traveling T-shirt salesman at the banquet where Macbeth alone sees Banquo's ghost. When the salesman, all unctuous sales hype, comments on the T-shirts' artistic design, Macbeth sees it as "looking exactly like the ghost of Banquo!"

The play's ending is ambiguous, as it was for the ending of *Ashita no Joe*; in his title bout against the champion José Mendoza, Joe refuses to throw in the towel and gets beaten to a pulp but so discombobulates Mendoza that the champion ages, his hair becoming white and his face totally wrinkled by fight's end. And, in a telling analogy, Macbeth, too, is so shaken by the continual reappearance of Banquo's ghost—it happens here seven times in succession—that he becomes completely unhinged. Is Joe dead? That controversy continues all these years later. And Macbeth? "I could not find a corner of my own," he says. "I . . . was once called Macbeth. Who . . . am I?" So we are not certain that either Tomorrow's Joe or Rocky Macbeth is dead. You decide.

Meant as entertainment, the play also makes use of popular culture aspects deeply ingrained in the Japanese psyche, calling attention to the sort of striving that impels those like Joe and Macbeth to betray the highest human values. Finally, Macbeth's last words in the play cap a key Murai theme throughout—namely, the ongoing challenge in Japan since at least the mid-nineteenth century to come to terms with their identity both as a nation and as individuals in the modern world. Moreover, while both Joe's and Macbeth's original stories have been told before, Murai has put the two together—Macbeth's channeling Joe's—in a fascinating way to give us, by the very comparison, new insight that a serious

consideration of only one of the tales might well ignore.

Murai's three actors, Takasaki Takuro, G.K. Masayuki, and Kazuma Takeo, are quite adept at the quicksilver action and, apart from some deafening declamation (reminiscent of the early *angura* [underground] theatre in the 60s and 70s), in full keeping with Murai's favored approach to stage action. And Watanabe Kazuki, video designer, provided excellent special effects. Murai Yu has been widely recognized in Japan for his work, receiving multiple awards for his playwriting and directing. But outside Japan, as evidenced by this truly milestone performance, he is a playwright-director to keep an eye on.

----Submitted by John K. Gillespie
October 2019

Sugimoto Bunraku Sonezaki Shinjū: The Love Suicides at Sonezaki

Original text by Chikamatsu Monzaemon (1653-1725)

Artistic Director: Sugimoto Hiroshi (b. 1948)

Composer and Director: Tsurusawa Seiji
(designated a Living National Treasure in 2007)

Choreography: Yamamura Tomogoro III

Video: Tabaimo and Sugimoto Hiroshi

Narrators (Tayu):

Toyotake Rodayu VI, Toyotake
Todayu, Toyotake Rosetayu, Toyotake
Nozomidayu

Shamisen Players:

Tsurusawa Seiji, Tsurusawa Seisuke,
Tsurusawa Tozo, Tsurusawa Seishiro,
Tsurusawa Seiki, Tsurusawa Seiko

Puppeteers:

Yoshida Tamasuke V, Yoshida
Ichisuke, Yoshida Tamaka, Kiritake
Montomi, Kiritake Monhide, Yoshida
Tamase, Kiritake Monyoshi, Yoshida
Tamasho, Yoshida Tamayo, Yoshida
Tamahiko, Yoshida Tamamichi,
Yoshida Tamanobu, Yoshida
Monohisa, Yoshida Tamayuki

Instrumentalists:

Mochizuki Taisaku, Tosha Jisho

@ Jazz at Lincoln Center's Frederick P. Rose
Hall in New York City

Four Performances, October 19-22, 2019

In Japanese with supertitles

Review title: **Darkling Night: Eros/Thanatos**

On the pitch-black stage, a lone shamisen player is suddenly illuminated. He plays a plaintive piece, setting a proper tonal context for the impending event. Then the story begins, enhanced by a striking video animation, unusual in Bunraku, simulating the feel of Edo-period Osaka streets, homes and buildings, especially the latticework style of the wood construction. With the near total darkness of the auditorium, it felt almost as though I were treading those actual streets, even to the extent of being hemmed in by the surroundings and funneled to a predetermined destination.

The plot, famous in Japan for over 300 years—Chikamatsu wrote *The Love Suicides at Sonezaki* in 1703—is relatively simple: store clerk Tokubei, in love with the prostitute he frequents, Ohatsu, longs to purchase her freedom so they can tie the knot. Alas, his uncle wants Tokubei to marry his wife's niece and to help him establish his own business. This disconnect generates the key tension in many Bunraku plays—i.e., between *giri*, one's expected duty or obligation, and *ninjō*, one's passions or feelings. Tokubei's feelings win out; he opts against *giri*, rejects his uncle's proposal and is summarily disowned, his uncle demanding the young man retrieve the dowry he's already paid Tokubei's stepmother. Tokubei struggles to retrieve the considerable sum, then naïvely lends it on a three-day deal to his friend-in-need Kuheiji. When Kuheiji hasn't repaid on time, Tokubei approaches him, but, Kuheiji, in a dastardly turn, denies ever accepting the loan, asserting that Tokubei simply forged the IOU. So what's the beleaguered Tokubei to do? In defying the expectation of sacrificing *ninjō* for *giri*, he now must face his existential dilemma. Seeing no other honorable exit from this rigid social expectation, Tokubei and Ohatsu agree to commit double suicide.

Sugimoto has lived mostly in New York since 1970 but his life and work constitute an ovation to Japanese culture and he has carved out a world-class reputation as a maven of Japanese aesthetics, especially in photography. His influence on the performance, first staged in 2011, is substantial. Foremost, he has assembled second-to-none performers, including one “Living National Treasure,” the lead shamisen player Tsurusawa Seiji, and at least a few others who will likely become so designated. In addition, he abandoned the meter high black boundary behind which the head-to-toe black-clad puppeteers traditionally work, completely

hiding the one manipulating a puppet's feet. Sugimoto insisted that the lead puppeteer, black-clad but traditionally with face and head visible, must, like the others, cover up. It's an effective modification, because the near-total darkness of the stage, maintained throughout but for the puppet-targeted lighting, renders the puppeteers virtually invisible. So the old fiction that one somehow doesn't see them becomes a reality here. In addition, the haunting music is the result of Sugimoto prevailing upon Tsurusawa Seiji to compose a new score for this performance.

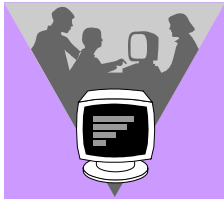
Of course, the final scene, when the lovers fulfill their mutual vow, demonstrates another Bunraku charm unavailable to human actors: they can commit suicide on stage. As Chikamatsu himself notes, with puppets, the killing can be shown, whereas with humans, it can only be simulated. There lies perhaps the heart and soul of Bunraku's aesthetic power, as in Chikamatsu's famous dictum, “Art is something that lies in the slender margin between the real and the unreal.” The proof was there before us in Sugimoto's crystallized vision of this classic play, marked by Tsurusawa's unforgettable music, the utter darkness filling the stage, the narrators' emotion-laden voices, and the masterful puppet manipulation. In the end, it's well nigh impossible not to feel an intense welling of emotion as the double suicide ends two young lives in the relentless darkness.

What are we make of this? Following the initial performance in 1703, love suicides proliferated because so many young couples, Sugimoto avers, “felt thwarted by feudal morality.” This phenomenon persisted for two decades, demonstrating the power of Bunraku performance to move people. The Tokugawa shōgun then decided, in 1723, to ban performances of *The Love Suicides at Sonezaki*; it was not staged again until 1955, over two centuries later. In that interim, the original musical score and notes on how the narrators intoned their lines were lost. Only Chikamatsu's scenario and some diagrams by the original puppet master remained.

Beyond the play's powerful aesthetics and pathos, one other factor might help explain its strong impact. In Japan, matters of Eros, including love suicides, are regarded as the stuff of poetry, not necessarily of religion. In comparison, suicide in the West is deemed a punishable sin by Christianity—the 6th commandment forbids killing—while in Buddhist Japan, young people believed committing double suicide would enable them to

enter Buddhist paradise to finally consummate their love. In short, what was forbidden in earthly life would be allowed in afterlife. East or West, whatever one's view, Sugimoto concludes, "the themes of Eros and Thanatos remain as urgent as ever to people all over the world."

---Submitted by John K. Gillespie
October 2019



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