



## Fall 2025 Issue

**Editor: Jashodhara Sen**

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## LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear AAP Members,

**G**reetings from Williamstown, in the northwest corner of Massachusetts, where the air has begun to turn crisp and winter is settling in. I hope everyone has found moments worth remembering and sharing—whether joyful or meaningfully challenging. Above all, I hope we are all staying healthy and finding time for care, rest, and renewal.



In this issue of the newsletter, you will find reports on the AAP Conference and AAP-sponsored panels at the ATHE Conference held in July–August 2025, information about the upcoming ATHE 2026 Conference and AAP 2026 Conference, and updates on AAP's leadership transition.

Before turning to these updates, please allow me to briefly reintroduce myself. Since my first AAP conference in Scottsdale, Arizona, in 2014, AAP has gradually become a place I return to year after year—to meet colleagues, make friends, and deepen my understanding of the field. At AAP, I experienced nearly every important “first” of my academic life: my first presentation drawn from my dissertation, my first time organizing a panel, my first book promotion, and my first moments of openly sharing both excitement and fear about my work.

Over the years, I have delivered seven papers at AAP annual conferences. Whether polished or imperfect, each one strengthened my almost stubborn determination to return whenever possible. Taken together, these papers bear witness to a journey marked by humble attempts, meaningful frustrations, and moments of self-doubt—as

I grew from a graduate student trained in modern Chinese literature into a scholar seeking to contribute to the study of modern Chinese theatre, theatre history, and historiography.

Last year, when I learned that I had been elected President of AAP, I felt deeply honored—and admittedly, a bit apprehensive. I wondered whether I could fill the large shoes left by our dear former President, Xing Fan, a mentor and friend to so many of us. And yet, I ultimately accepted the role with genuine excitement. I see the AAP community as another academic home—one where I have been able to imagine myself boldly, revise myself continuously, and remain deeply committed to both scholarship and the creative, collaborative process of theatre-making. I very much look forward to working with you all in the coming years.

Now, back to AAP. This summer, on July 22–23, we held our very first AAP standalone conference at Hunter College, The City University of New York. Approximately forty colleagues—from graduate students to senior scholars—presented papers and participated in roundtable discussions. In addition, AAP had a strong presence at the ATHE Conference (virtual, July 29–August 1, 2025), sponsoring and co-sponsoring ten panels.

At ATHE, Professor Matthew Isaac Cohen delivered the 2025 *Asian Theatre Journal* Lecture, “*Unlikely Archives in the Study of Indonesian Theatre and Performance*.” As the ATHE Conference Committee continued experimenting with conference themes, proposal procedures, and formats, organizing this year’s AAP Conference and AAP-sponsored panels at ATHE presented unique challenges. I am immensely grateful to Hayana Kim (VP/AAP Conference Planning) and Weiyu Li (VP/ATHE Conference Planning) for their diligence, patience, and leadership.

While organizing any conference is demanding and comes with its own set of challenges, the 2025 AAP/ATHE configuration was truly exceptional. In 2025, ATHE moved fully online, allowing us to connect with colleagues across the globe. At the same time, the AAP community was able to gather in person at Hunter West 603, on the southwest corner of 68th Street and Lexington Avenue in New York City. Running two distinct conferences required extensive coordination, much of it invisible, as well as a great deal of creativity to ensure that both gatherings unfolded smoothly. I am deeply grateful to Xing Fan (former AAP President), Hayana Kim (VP, AAP Conference Planning), Weiyu Li (VP, ATHE Conference Planning), and Alex Rogals (Secretary/Treasurer) for their thoughtful leadership, creative problem-solving, and generosity of time and energy, as well as for their careful coordination with Hunter College. Through their dedication, we found ourselves connecting twice—and yet many times over.

It gives me pleasure to announce that the 2024 Carol Fisher Sorgenfrei Prize was awarded to Jyana Browne for her article, “Puppetry Networks of the Island of Naoshima” published in *Theatre Research International*, 49, 2, July 2024. I thank the Sorgenfrei Prize Committee for their work. The Carol Fisher Sorgenfrei Prize for Japanese Theatre is designed to promote and encourage the study of Japanese theatre and performance, given to an early career scholar for an outstanding article, chapter, or essay on Japanese theatre or performance published in English during the current calendrical year in a journal, online journal, or book. Please find the 2025 call for submissions in this newsletter.

On December 12, 2025, ATHE 2026—“*Activating Imagination in/and Community*” (July 22–26, 2026, Baltimore, Maryland)—concluded its first round of the Call for Proposals (for procedures and deadlines, see: [https://www.athe.org/page/conference\\_call](https://www.athe.org/page/conference_call)). Under the leadership of Weiyu Li (VP, ATHE Conference Planning), and with the generous support and dedication of many AAP members, AAP has proposed eight panels, three of which involve potential collaborations with other focus groups, including the Black Theatre Association, Disability Theatre and Performance, and Middle Eastern Theatre. This spirit of collaboration resonates strongly with the conference theme. I would especially like to thank Weiyu for bringing her energy and passion to panel development, outreach to other focus groups, and coordination with panel organizers.

I am also pleased to confirm that we will return to our long-standing practice and hold the AAP 2026 Conference in Baltimore, Maryland, immediately prior to ATHE 2026. More announcements will follow in the coming months—please keep an eye on your email.

I would also like to thank Minu Park and Alex Rogals for running the AAP election for the 2026–2028 term within a short time window, and for their patience and collegial support throughout the process. The election is currently underway and will conclude on December 31, 2025. I sincerely encourage you to vote if you have not yet done so for the following five positions: Vice President, AAP Conference Planning; Vice President, ATHE Conference Planning; Vice President, Access, Equity, and Inclusion; IT Coordinator / AAP Online Editor; Graduate Student Representative. Election results will be shared via email once finalized.

Last but not least, I would like to thank Xing Fan and Siyuan Liu for their remarkable service to AAP in recent years as AAP President and *Asian Theatre Journal* Editor, respectively. For many of us who have worked with them, we carry with us how much we have learned from their leadership and generosity. They helped cultivate an AAP community in which I—and so many of us—have grown together.

I also wish to thank the AAP Board members and all AAP members for your patience and trust as I find my rhythm in serving this community.

I will close by borrowing a phrase Xing often shares: “*Friends and colleagues, take good care.*” May we continue to embrace life—and our work—with courage, patience, and humor.

Best wishes,  
Man He

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## LEADERSHIP TRANSITIONS AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Dear AAP members,

We are delighted to welcome our new AAP officers for the coming year: Man He as AAP President, Rini Tarafder as Membership and Outreach Coordinator, and Jashodhara Sen as Newsletter Editor. We extend our deepest gratitude to our outgoing officers for their dedicated service, especially to Carol Sorgenfrei, whose remarkable 21 years as Newsletter Editor have left an enduring legacy.

With appreciation for all who have served, we warmly welcome our incoming officers and wish them every success in the year ahead.

Please find more about our officer on the [AAP Website](#).



## A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

Dear AAP Members,

My name is Jashodhara Sen, and I am honored to step into the role of AAP Newsletter Editor, having previously served as Graduate Representative and Membership/Outreach Coordinator at AAP. It is a privilege to follow Carol Fisher Sorgenfrei, whose 21 years of dedicated service shaped this Newsletter; thank you, Carol, for your extraordinary leadership and care.

This issue arrives slightly later than planned as we finalize a few structural details. I appreciate your patience and am pleased to share that the Spring 2026 and Fall 2026 newsletters will be released on schedule moving forward.

The AAP Newsletter will now be fully online. A Google Form will be circulated soon for members to submit news, announcements, and events for the Spring 2026 issue (November 2025–May 2026). To become an AAP member, please submit the membership form included with the newsletter or contact Alex Rogals, AAP Secretary/Treasurer, at [alexrogals@yahoo.com](mailto:alexrogals@yahoo.com). I look forward to sharing the exciting work of our community.

## AAP 2025 CONFERENCE — Hunter College, New York

The 25th Annual AAP conference took place on July 22-July 23, 2025, in New York, New York. Thank you, Alex Rogals, for laying the groundwork for the conference. This year's conference was a success and an encouraging moment for AAP members, as it was held independently. Usually, the AAP conference precedes the ATHE (Association for Theatre in Higher Education) conference, but this year we organized the conference independently. For future conferences, please consider becoming a member of AAP and reach out to the AAP Secretary/Treasurer, Alex Rogals at [atalexrogals@yahoo.com](mailto:atalexrogals@yahoo.com) for more information.

In 2026, ATHE will be in Baltimore, Maryland. You can find more information on the ATHE website: [https://www.athe.org/page/conference\\_call](https://www.athe.org/page/conference_call)

As a reminder, all panel and workshop participants must be current AAP members. Please join/renew your membership as soon as possible (<https://www.asian-performance.org/registration>)

## 2025 EMERGING SCHOLARS PANEL WINNERS

Warmest congratulations once again to the winners of our 2025 Adjudicated Emerging Scholars Panel:

Yao Bray

Dahye Lee

Ruijiao Dong



**Thank you, adjudicators, for volunteering your time. Please check the call for the 2026 Emerging Scholars panel at the end of the newsletter.**



## SCHMOOZEFEST

One of the highlights of the AAP conference is sharing space with our colleagues over food. If you're attending in 2026, please plan to join us for this celebration of food and fun.

## LOOKING AHEAD: AAP & ATHE 2026: CONFERENCE THEMES AND STRUCTURE

The ATHE 2026 conference theme is “ACTIVATING IMAGINATION IN/AND COMMUNITY.” The conference is in-person on July 22–26, 2026, in Baltimore, Maryland.

AAP-sponsored sessions were submitted to ATHE.

### **ATHE Proposal Submission Deadline:**

ATHE will have **two rounds of submission**. The **First Round** is for “**fully formed sessions**.”

1. The first round submission portal will open on November 3, 2025.
2. The first round submission deadline: **December 12, 2025 (11:59 p.m. Eastern)**

The **Second Round of Submissions** is NOT the time to propose a new session. This submission process is open to individual participation in **already accepted sessions**.

1. Second round submission open: March 9, 2026.
2. Second round submission deadline: **March 27, 2026 (11:59 p.m. Eastern)**.

If you have any questions, please contact the Conference Planner Weiyu Li (Vice President for AAP/ATHE Conference Planner): [weiyu2128@gmail.com](mailto:weiyu2128@gmail.com).

## CALL FOR PROPOSALS AAP, 2026

Coming soon...

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## SPECIAL FEATURES

### THE CAROL FISHER SORGENFREI PRIZE

The Carol Fisher Sorgenfrei Prize recognizes outstanding scholarship in Japanese theatre and performance and is awarded to an early-career scholar for an exceptional article, chapter, or essay published in English. Early-career scholars are defined as current graduate students or untenured scholars within eight years of earning a terminal degree (MFA or PhD), including independent scholars. The prize includes a \$3,000 award, a commemorative plaque, and a complimentary one-year membership in AAP.



Eligible submissions may address any period, genre, or approach to Japanese theatre or performance, broadly conceived, and must have been published between **January 1, 2025, and December 31, 2025, for the 2025 award year**. Self-nominations are welcome and encouraged. The 2025 awardee will be announced at a later date, and the prize will be formally presented at the AAP Annual Conference in 2026.

The deadline for submission is May 1 each year. Submissions may be made through the AAP website or sent directly to **Jessica Nakamura**, Chair of the Prize Committee, at [jnakamura@ucsb.edu](mailto:jnakamura@ucsb.edu).

The 2024 Carol Fisher Sorgenfrei Prize was awarded to **Jyana Browne** for her article, “*Puppetry Networks of the Island of Naoshima*,” published in *Theatre Research International*, Vol. 49, No. 2 (July 2024). I extend my sincere thanks to the Sorgenfrei Prize Committee for their thoughtful and diligent work.

Photo: Jyana Browne, 2024 award recipient.

## GRADUATE STUDENT CORNER

Calling all Graduate Students! Mentorship Lunch at AAP 2026!

Are you a graduate student looking to connect, learn, and engage with scholars in Asian performance studies? Make the most of your AAP 2026 experience by joining our Mentorship Lunch at the 26th AAP annual conference! This is a fantastic chance to connect with experienced scholars, ask questions about research and career paths, and build meaningful relationships in an informal setting. If you're interested in participating as a mentee, let us know! Contact An-Ru ([anruc@uci.edu](mailto:anruc@uci.edu)) and Zhixuan ([zzhu4@gradcenter.cuny.edu](mailto:zzhu4@gradcenter.cuny.edu)) for more details.



We look forward to seeing you there! Also, please join the AAP Facebook group at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1450088988610782> to stay in touch with other members. This group is an excellent place to post calls for papers, share syllabi, and share other helpful resources for graduate students in our field.

## CONFERENCES, PRIZES, CALLS, and PROFESSIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

### Book Reviewers Needed



Asian Theatre Journal is once again seeking book reviewers, especially those interested in South Asian, Chinese, and/or Middle Eastern/West Asian Theatre and Performance. We also have several books on broad issues in theatre in Asia. Please email the Book Review Editor, David Jortner, at [David\\_Jortner@Baylor.edu](mailto:David_Jortner@Baylor.edu).

## The ANNUAL Traditional Theatre Training program at the Kyoto Art Center

Come join us for another summer of Traditional Theatre Training! The T.T.T. program runs annually at the Kyoto Art Center and facilitates access to lessons in the traditional Japanese performing arts, culminating in a recital at the historical Ōe Noh Theatre. This year, we will be offering Kyōgen (traditional comedy) and Nihon Buyō (classical Japanese dance) with an optional, add-on mini course in Kotsuzumi (shoulder drum). We also facilitate additional workshops and fieldtrips when possible. No prior experience or Japanese language ability is necessary! We are anticipating the 2026 program will take place from July 8th to August 7th, but please keep an eye on the Kyoto Art Center website for confirmation once the T.T.T. 2026 program applications open in the spring. If you have any questions at all, please don't hesitate to reach out our Program Director, Jane Traynor, at any time. Please direct inquiries to both [t.t.t@kac.or.jp](mailto:t.t.t@kac.or.jp) and [jtraynor@hawaii.edu](mailto:jtraynor@hawaii.edu) to ensure that we see your email.



## CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

### Asian Shakespeare Association (ASA)

The ASA holds biennial conferences in Asian locations. The ASA conferences consist of keynote addresses, panel sessions, seminars, workshops, symposiums, performances, screenings, and other special events. The 2026 CFP has yet to be announced.

<https://asianshakespeare.org/>

### The International Federation for Theatre Research (IFTR) Asian Theatre Working Group

The Asian Theatre working group, established in 2008, meets annually at the IFTR conference. The group facilitates discussions of practices, histories and research approaches in various Asian theatre disciplines. It welcomes new members and encourages collaborations with other working groups.

Email: [iftratwg@gmail.com](mailto:iftratwg@gmail.com)

The submission for the working group was on December 8, 2025. The IFTR Asian Theatre Working Group will meet during the World Congress in Melbourne from 6 to 10 July 2026.

If interested, please visit IFTR's website for the upcoming year. <https://iftr.org/>

### Rocky Mountain Modern Language Association

Call for Papers 2026

Asian Drama and Performance Panel

<https://www.rmmla.org/assets/docs/Call-for-Papers/rmmla-callforpapers2026.pdf>

Conference Dates: October 8-10, 2026

Location: Marriott Courtyard in Ogden, Utah

<https://www.rmmla.org/call-for-papers>

## ATDS Panels at the Comparative Drama Conference (2026)

**deadline for submissions:** January 10, 2026

**full name/name of organization:**

Richard Gilbert / Loyola University Chicago

**contact email:**

[rgilbert1@luc.edu](mailto:rgilbert1@luc.edu)

Papers reporting on original investigations and critical analysis of research and developments in the field of drama and theatre are invited for the 48th Comparative Drama Conference, Madison, Wisconsin, July 9-11, 2026

<https://theatre.wisc.edu/comparative-drama-conference-cdc/>

## NEXUS Interdisciplinary Graduate Student Conference 2026

The 2026 NEXUS Interdisciplinary Conference invites current **graduate students** to submit abstracts for this year's conference at The University of Tennessee - Knoxville on **April 17-18, 2026**. **Deadline for submissions:** January 31, 2026, University of Tennessee

**Contact email:**

[nexus.conference.utk@gmail.com](mailto:nexus.conference.utk@gmail.com)

*Practice and Performance:*

These two words carry with them kindred connotations of shallowness. Mere practice suggests preparation without follow-through, while mere performance conjures presentation without substance. But at the same time, bebop architect Thelonious Monk once said, at a recording engineer's demand for more rehearsal upon hearing the group's performance in the studio, that "you rehearse every time you play your instrument." How do we distinguish between preparation and action? In a world increasingly oversaturated with "content" often beholden to corporate interests rather than cultural touchstones, it is necessary to grapple with what it is that we practice and perform and why. Such grappling is the collective intellectual act NEXUS 2026 will facilitate: interdisciplinarity is the best way through this seemingly impenetrable fog of difference.

Paper proposals are invited from a variety of disciplines within the humanities engaged with but not limited to:

- Close reading as performance / practice
- Culture in relation to practice and performance
- The legacy of the "performative turn" in the humanities
- Forms of preparation: rehearsal / practice / prefiguration
- Debates distinguishing theory and practice
- Artistic practice
- Political praxis
- Reflections on pedagogy
- Performance studies roughly thirty years after its establishment
- Performance as a rhetorical act
- Writing and composition studies

Our goal is to create an atmosphere that is welcoming to academics and creatives. We encourage group submissions. In addition to a keynote speaker and a variety of panels, we plan on offering open-mic space and asynchronous video submissions to be displayed to attendees. There is no registration fee.

Please send **abstracts of approximately 200-300 words** as an attached PDF or Word document to [nexus.conference.utk@gmail.com](mailto:nexus.conference.utk@gmail.com) by **January 31, 2026**. Please note if your abstract is for an in-person or asynchronous submission.

## **Performing Islam (Journal)**

ISSN 20431015, ONLINE ISSN 20431023

*Performing Islam* is the first peer-reviewed interdisciplinary journal about Islam and performance and their related aesthetics. The journal covers dance, ritual, theatre, performing arts, visual arts and cultures, and popular entertainment in Islam-influenced societies and their diasporas.

2026 CFP is “Performing Islamophobia.”

Please check the class: <https://www.intellectbooks.com/performing-islam#call-for-papers>

Email: [performingislam@yahoo.com](mailto:performingislam@yahoo.com)

## **EMERGING SCHOLARS ADJUDICATED PANEL 2026**

### **AAP EMERGING SCHOLARS ADJUDICATED PANEL 2026**

The Association for Asian Performance (AAP) invites submissions for its 30th Annual Adjudicated Emerging Scholars Panel to be held during the Association for Asian Performance’s annual in-person conference in 2026. Selected papers will be strongly considered for publication in the 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 the 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 a one-year free membership to AAP. The receipt of the award is contingent upon attendance at the AAP conference. All paper submissions will receive written feedback from the selection committee. Please keep in mind that if you are traveling outside the country and anticipate any visa complications this summer, we plan to keep the AAP preconference in person.

### **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. Rini Tarafder at [tarafder.rini@gmail.com](mailto:tarafder.rini@gmail.com).

Deadline for Submissions: February 28, 2026. Winners will be notified by April 30, 2026.

AAP is proud to sponsor this adjudicated panel. Not only is it a chance for students and emerging scholars to get exposure and recognition for their work, but 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 Rini Tarafder at [tarafder.rini@gmail.com](mailto:tarafder.rini@gmail.com). 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/>

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## Call for Promotional Book Publication Information

AAP is continuing a new approach to 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 information. If you want the information (not the actual flyers) to be included in the online version of the newsletter, contact newsletter editor Jashodhara Sen, [jsen@ufl.edu](mailto:jsen@ufl.edu).



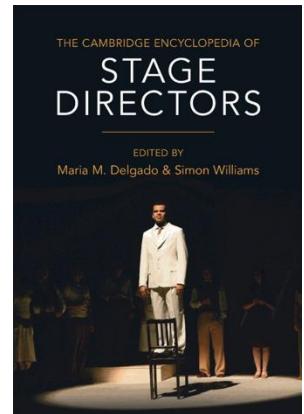
## MEMBER NEWS, KUDOS, AND ACCOLADES

**CONGRATULATIONS!**

**Alexa Alice Joubin** published on Taiwanese playwright Stan Lai and Taiwanese actor Wu Hsing-kuo in *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Stage Director*, ed. Maria M. Delgado and Simon Williams (Cambridge University Press, 2025). Additionally, she gave a talk on AI and Theatre from a Trans Perspective at London's Guildhall School of Music and Drama during the TVCE Symposium on Queer Acts of Hope.

A video recording is available at <https://youtu.be/DvoVYe92ZQE>.

Joubin's work on AI and the humanities was recently featured <https://trustworthyai.gwu.edu/gw-tai-professor-alex-alice-joubin-explores-role-ai-humanities>. She gave a TED-style talk at the 2025 George Washington University Leadership Forum.



**Matthew Isaac Cohen** is a 2025 Guggenheim Fellowship in Theatre and Performance Studies. An article on his Guggenheim project was published at <https://today.uconn.edu/2025/05/guggenheim-fellow-from-uconn-preserving-wayang-puppetry-for-posterity>. He was also awarded an NEH Fellowship but this was sadly “terminated” by DOGE prior to commencement of the grant. On July 29, 2025, Matthew was honored to have delivered a talk titled “Unlikely Archives in the Study of Indonesian Theatre and Performance” as the Annual Asian Theatre Journal Lecture at the Association for Theatre in Higher Education Conference 2025. Matthew was the puppeteer in a two-channel video, *Hide and Seek*, directed by Ben Hagari. This was a response to rare Javanese wayang kulit (shadow puppets) in the Dr. Walter Angst and Sir Henry Angest Collection of Indonesian Puppets at Yale University Art Gallery. The video was at the center of Hagari's solo exhibition *Hide and Shade* at the Nahum Gutman Museum of Art in Israel.



He also was commissioned by Beth El Temple to create a Rosh Hashanah-themed wayang golek play entitled The Prince Who Forgot, performed at the synagogue and the University of Hartford. Over the last year, he has lectured at Diponegoro University (virtually), the Stony Creek Museum (virtually), Kunst-Universität Graz (virtually), New York City's Indonesian consulate (virtually), the Gutman Museum (virtually), Barnard College, and Yale University. His review of Sumaram's book The In-Between in Javanese Performing Arts: History and Myth, Interculturalism and Interreligiosity appeared in Asian Theatre Journal, and he published a short article on the MukaMukaMu Collection of Indonesian Puppets and Masks at the Asia Culture Center in South Korea for Puppetry International.

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In October 2025 **Claudia Orenstein**'s new book, co-edited with Dassia Posner and Alissa Mello, *Making Meaning in Puppetry: Materials, Practice, Perception*, came out from Routledge, Claudia's fifth co-edited book of articles on puppetry (<https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/edit/10.4324/9781003378815/making-meaning-puppetry-alissa-mello-claudia-orenstein-dassia-posner>).

The book includes her own essay, "Lost in Object Translation: Reading Meaning in Traditional Japanese Puppetry," and Kathy Foley's Materializing the Immaterial: Puppets and Masks of Indonesia, Thailand, and Myanmar (Burma). Claudia also gave the presentation "The Japanese Puppet Legacy of Hakomawashi Puppeteers" at Annals of Object Performance: A Conference Celebrating the Contributions of Dr. John Bell at the Ballard Institute and Museum of Puppetry at the University of Connecticut, Storrs. She continues to serve as Editor of the online, open access, scholarly journal, *Puppetry International Research*, which often includes articles, reports, and reviews of puppetry in Asia. You can check out the journal here: <https://pirjournal.commons.gc.cuny.edu>

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**Jennifer Goodlander**, Associate Professor, Indiana University, directed "Dracula: A Comedy of Terrors" at the Brown County Playhouse in Nashville, IN, and it featured puppets! She is also excited to be teaching Asian Performance this semester, where we do a mix of performance workshops, history, and discussing plays.

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In 2025, **Menghang Wu** participated in the curation of the Society of Ethnomusicology Sound Studies Section program, an interdisciplinary venue that showcases cutting-edge work in sound studies. This year's theme brought together scholars and artists whose research engages with Global South performance, environmental humanities, science and technology studies, and other emerging frameworks in sonic inquiry. The curation explores how sonic practices—across analog and digital, human and nonhuman, remembered and simulated—generate counter histories, challenge systems of knowledge, and unsettle normative modes of listening, sensing, and remembering--how sound perform as a site of entanglement—across body, memory, media, and environment—and that challenge us to hear differently, archivally, and politically.

More information about this project can be found through the Sounding Board 2025 portfolio: <https://semsoundstudies.wixsite.com/semsoundstudies/portfolio-collections/my-portfolio/sounding-board-2025>.

Wu is also honored to have received support from the China National Arts Fund for my research on Tibetan dance. With this support, I am developing a long-term initiative on ethnicity minority dance map, a project that documents, visualizes, and analyzes diverse ethnic dance practices across China through GIS and other digital humanities tools (such as Tibetan-Yi corridor). Combining ethnographic fieldwork, digital mapping technologies, and choreographic experimentation, the project seeks to illuminate the relationships between movement circulation and regional cultural histories. Together, these are my 2025 research that creating pathways for understanding Asia within a transnational framework. And FYI, I warmly welcome opportunities for collaboration and dialogue with scholars, artists, and practitioners working in sound studies, dance ethnography, AI, robotics, STS, digital humanities, intercultural performance, and related areas.

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**Jan Creutzenberg** presented on “Voice, Silence, and Politics of Place in Contemporary [Korean] Sound Art” (conference “Tempting Tunes: Interfaces of Sound and Narrative in Korean Culture”, University of Copenhagen), “Adaptations of the Yeoseong Gukgeuk Webtoon Jeongnyeoni” (Korean Screen Culture Conference, University of Leiden), and “Kafka’s Ape in Korea: Staging Otherness, Remaking an Icon” (AAP, Hunter College) this summer. He is (still) preparing an article on “Korean adaptations of Kafka’s ‘A Report for an Academy’ from the 1970s until Today” for publication. Jan published a (German-language) book chapter on Korean noraebang culture (in: Mikrotopoi: Zur Poetik kleiner Räume, eds. Christian Kirchmeier & Jasper Schagerl, Königshausen & Neumann, 2025) and contributed to The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Stage Directors (eds. Maria M. Delgado & Simon Williams, Cambridge UP). Jan’s students at Ewha Womans University (ensemble “Auf die Bretter”) produced an interactive adaptation of Friedrich Dürrenmatt’s “Die Panne” (in German, with Korean subtitles) and are currently preparing the Korean premiere of Falk Richter’s “Electronic City”.

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**Jashodhara Sen**’s monograph *Intersectionality in ‘Folk’ Performance Through Identity and Expression* is scheduled to be published in January 2026. This book is a Part of the book series: Performance Studies & Cultural Discourse in South Asia (PSCDSA, volume 4), Springer Nature. This book offers a critical lens on understanding *jatra* as a historical-cultural performance and reveals its impact on class and gender politics across India. It sheds light on how class and gender identities intertwined with “folk” forms and street performances have influenced contemporary *jatra*’s hybrid identity formation. It is an intriguing book for scholars in Theatre and Performance Studies, Cultural Studies, South Asian Studies, Gender and Queer Studies, and Postcolonial Studies. Also, it offers valuable insights for scholars in modern Indian languages and those exploring “folk” performances in contemporary India. More information:

<https://link.springer.com/book/9789819522736>

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**Linda Ehrlich** (Independent Scholar, CWRU Emeritus):

An essay published in THE CINEMA OF KINOSHITA KEISUKE: FILMS OF JOY AND SORROW, ed. David Desser and Earl Jackson (Edinburgh Studies in East Asian Film), pp. 98-112.

Taught two (online) classes for Smithsonian Associates; An Introduction to Traditional Japanese Theatre (October 2025) and Japanese Culture through the Lens of Ghibli Studio (April 2026)

Delivered a talk and film introduction in a special symposium about the film PERFECT DAYS, at Western Washington University, Bellingham, WA.

For more information, please visit.

<https://braidednarrative.com/upcoming-events/>

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## Reviews

### *Le Tambour de Soie (The Silk Drum)*

By John K. Gillespie

This performance, staged October 24 & 25, 2025, the second installment of Japan Society's YUKIO MISHIMA CENTENNIAL SERIES: EMERGENCES, was adapted from Mishima's modern nō play, *Aya no Tsuzumi* (The Damask Drum), its plot taken from the traditional nō play of the same title. His so-called modern nō versions, while sticking to the key events of the traditional plays, are indeed modern in their sensibilities, often striking spectators as similar in some ways to the absurdist theatre—i.e., playwrights like Samuel Beckett and Eugène Ionesco.

The French title was chosen by the two Japanese creators of this adaptation, actor-director-writer Yoshi Oida and actor-dancer-choreographer Kaori Ito. With composer-performer Makoto Yabuki, all three have spent decades living and working in France, where they've been abundantly recognized for outstanding work. Ito and Paul Lazar, a founding member of NYC's Big Dance Theater, were the featured actor-dancers.

Ito plays the role of the beautiful Consort, of whom Lazar, the Custodian, catches just a fleeting glimpse, falling hopelessly in love. The traditional conceit is that he, a low-born laborer, by exchanging even a split-second glance with the high-born Consort, has become her equal—though that would be considered at odds with accepted social norms. He then receives a blithe message from the Consort that she would appear to him, provided she hears him beat a hand drum hanging from a nearby tree. Overjoyed, the Custodian takes the drum and whacks it again and again, but, made of silk, it emits no sound. In deep emotional despair at his inability to make the drum sound, he flings himself into the garden pond and drowns. Learning of this tragic development, the Consort is tormented by the sound of a drum emerging from the pond. Whereupon the Custodian, as in the second part of many nō plays, returns as a (demonic) ghost haunting the Consort, insisting as karmic payback that she make the drum sound. When she inevitably fails at this effort, the ghost, wracked in eternal bitterness, vanishes into the pond.

The performance was truly top-of-the-line, all three performers superb. Ito and Lazar were both so effective, that afterwards, I heard some spectators say that she was the best and others insisting that he was the best. Both were spot on and so, too, Yabuki with his music and, strategically punctuated sound effects, played with a variety of instruments and percussion gadgets.

I have a couple of quibbles. The first is that, though this was essentially a dance performance, in the middle of it words were uttered—too many, I felt. It was, after all, dance, so the words felt extraneous, the basic plot amply clear, both visually and aurally. The second concerns the music at the ending. In both the nō play and Mishima's modern version, the action moves ineluctably toward sadness and despair, the Custodian dying, forever unfulfilled, and, realizing her betrayal and insensitivity toward him, the Consort ends up hounded by eternal remorse. However, in the performance I saw, the final few minutes struck me as strangely upbeat by comparison with the prevailing dourness, the music briefly devolving to what sounded like some jaunty pop. That was confusing and I'm still wondering about it.

Whether that music was attempting to convey some new sensibility—an attempt at leavening the dourness, perhaps?—Ito speaks one final, quite appropriate line, saying, "I could have heard it, if only he had beat the drum one more time." That was consistent with both the original nō play and with Mishima's modern version; another drumbeat, without question, would have changed nothing. That utterance clearly marks the play's vision of existential despair and the sterility of aesthetic experience. The performance thereby thrusts Mishima's strong conviction that the aesthetic spirit, here overlaying the Custodian's passion, into the realm of real-life human expression and finds it wanting.

It has, therefore, common ground with the similar aesthetic pessimism in the performance of *Kinkakuji* in September 2025.

*The Seven Bridges*

by

**John K. Gillespie**

Thanks to the charmingly named Japanese dance company CHAiroiPLIN, the performance of *The Seven Bridges* (Hashi zukushi) was, in a word, superb. It was the third installment in Japan Society's YUKIO MISHIMA CENTENNIAL SERIES: EMERGENCES. The Mishima short story (published 1956), from which the plot was adapted, is distinctive for being in a lighter vein than most of Mishima's other works of fiction and drama. Japan Society Artistic Director Yoko Shioya calls the story "coquettish." Transforming this folksy traditional tale happened to be exactly what the co-founder of CHAiroiPLIN, Suzuki Takuro, with co-founder Shimizu Yuri, an accomplished musician and dancer (who plays the Moon here), had already been doing with their "Dancing Novel" series, featuring performances based on noteworthy 20th century works of fiction—by, for example, Abe Kōbō, Akutagawa Ryūnosuke, and Miyazawa Kenji.

Mishima's story appears initially rather simple: three women and one attendant set out to indulge in a superstition: cross the seven bridges over the Tsukiji River in Tokyo under a full moon and without speaking to anyone or turning back so as to realize their respective, deeply felt wishes. Gradually, however, various themes emerge: ritual, money, sexual desire, and the often uncomfortable blending of traditional Japanese culture with the realities of modern life. Plus there are each woman's specific wishes, the stress and suspense they (and we) feel on whether they will succeed in keeping silent or not turning back. This seemingly superficial task, then, takes on deeper dimensions.

Mishima himself later adapted the obvious visual aspects of his tale as a dance drama. It is revealing to note that Suzuki, who choreographed the performance, mentions in the Japan Society play guide that Mishima may have been creating a "parody" of Chikamatsu Monzaemon's famous *jōruri* (puppet theatre) masterpiece, *The Love Suicides at Amijima* (Shinju Ten no Amijima, 1721), in which the two lovers cross several bridges on the way to terminating their lives.

The four characters here are a veteran geisha Koyumi (Amano Rise), whose wish is for more money; a young geisha Kanako (Kobayashi Lala), who wants a patron and also better movie roles; Masako (Mimori Momo), daughter of a successful restaurant owner, who wishes to have a baby with her heartthrob movie star; and Mina (Jodie), Masako's maidservant, who says she has a wish but we don't know what it is. One needs to see this remarkable performance for better insight into the four and to ascertain the reasons why they might become distracted. The set was nicely built with a train track around the stage perimeter and a train running across the same bridges the women aim to cross, enhancing the spectators' experience of apprehending the difficulties and challenges each woman encounters. Will they all or even one of them, we wonder, actually succeed?

Mishima plants seeds to help us grasp what's happening, by terming the women's quest to cross "tasteless, dull and even hideous" bridges, and seeing the surrounding areas as "gloomy buildings," a clock as "proclaiming an absurdly incorrect hour," and the Tsukiji Bridge as "bleak-looking" and "utterly without charm," thereby raising what, for him, was the downright vulgarity of a modernizing Japan. That sense pervades the effort of the four woman, foreshadowing the futility of their wishes. In addition, the notion of death emerges, for example, when Masako muses that "she would rather be dead, if she couldn't be with" her envisioned actor-lover; Kanako's face "had turned deathly pale" at one point; one bridge gave off "a ghostly color;" the face of a former geisha acquaintance of Koyumi carried a "deadly pallor;" and when Masako ran

from a policemen, so as not to talk to him and thereby disqualify herself from the quest, he regarded her as intending “to throw herself into the river.”

Kanako is the first to drop away; unable to withstand intense stomach pain, she turns back. Eventually, Koyumi, then Masako feel compelled by circumstance to utter some words, leaving Mina as the only one to “successfully” complete the quest, but we never learn the nature of her desired wish. When queried she gives only an ambiguous facial expression.

What are we to make of this lighthearted, chuckle-worthy performance? The lasting impression I will take away is the incredibly talented dancers and their amazing flexibility. That impression was implanted at the very beginning by Suzuki, setting the context as the train conductor and is then joined by the whole company; there is no falloff, whether the dancers perform as a group or individually. In addition, I felt that the ambiguity of the end could be leading us to conclude that there might be no real end to the quest, that it would only continue to be replicated. No wish was granted, or maybe only one but we don’t know. Or maybe we’ll never know. Part of the ambiguity could well be Mishima’s hinted suggestion that such ambiguity is, without question, repetitive in real life. Add to that the built-in contradiction that, while the quest to cross the seven bridges is an individual one, the four women start out as a group. Can they succeed as a group or is it only as individuals? The hard fact is that they fail as a group and only one of them might be successful as an individual. Is she? Perhaps she doesn’t want to succeed when the other three have fallen short. Did she really make a wish or would she need to undertake the quest again with a wish that she shares with the others?

Beyond the dominant impression of this group’s histrionic excellence, which Suzuki partly attributes to the influence of Pina Bausch, the ambiguity struck me as having Sisyphean overtones. Indeed, in the story, Mishima suggests as much, briefly explicating the contradiction this way: “Each woman’s prayer was her own problem . . . Masako could not be expected to shoulder anyone else’s burden. It would not be helping someone to carry a heavy load up a mountain.” And yet, something analogous is precisely what they may well have done. It’s hard not to regard this mythic quest, therefore, as having some common ground with Sisyphus’ myth. While the tone here is quite light, almost playful, it nevertheless joins with the first two installments in Japan Society’s Mishima series in its aesthetic pessimism; whatever the artistry of the attempted trek under the full moon, it was not enough to overcome the failure of at least three of the women to realize their respective wishes. Certainly, the group that started out failed as a group, and so too the individuals. Art alone, Mishima expresses again, however beautiful, as in this new-told tale, remains insufficient to meet the inevitable challenges of real life.

Three brief points to add. The first is that Suzuki, in a talkback following the performance, stated that his company had created a family-and kid-friendly performance of *The Seven Bridges* that was only half an hour, replete with humor, while the JS performance was a full hour, targeting adults. Second, Mishima never pinpointed the source of the *The Seven Bridges* myth; after his story came out, however, the practice of undertaking the trek enjoyed a boom and is still done, if in dwindled numbers. Finally, the picturesque bridges from long ago have been destroyed and those that have been rebuilt probably fall into the category of “hondescript modern,” no place for selfies.

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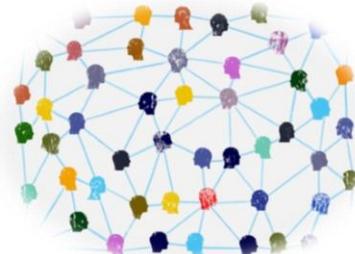
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