

Performing Arts Spring Season 2022



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Japan Society presents **Book Launch & Conversation:** Okada Toshiki & Japanese Theatre

Fri, Jan 19 at 6 pm

Book Launch & Conversation: Okada Toshiki & Japanese Theatre is supported, in part, by Doug and Teresa Peterson and the Ph.D. Program in Theatre and Performance at the Graduate Center, City University of New York. Special thanks to Richard Gough from Performance Research Books (publisher) and the Martin E. Segal Theatre Center.

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PROGRAM

Panel I: Okada Toshiki and Japanese Theatre – Making the Book

SPEAKERS:

Peter Eckersall, Professor, Executive Officer of Theatre and Performance, The Graduate Center, CUNY

Carol Martin, Professor of Drama, New York University

MODERATOR:

Thomas Looser, Chair of East Asian Studies, Associate Professor, New York University

Panel II: Part I — On Presenting and Directing Okada's Work in the U.S.

SPEAKERS:

Kate Loewald, Founding Producer, PlayCo Dan Rothenberg, Co-Artistic Director, Pig Iron Theatre Company Alec Duffy, Artistic Director, Hoi Polloi

MODERATOR: Yoko Shioya, Artistic Director, Japan Society

Part II — Okada and Ogawa Join for a Fireside Chat

SPEAKERS: **Toshiki Okada**, Playwright/Director **Aya Ogawa**, Playwright/Director/Performer/Translator **Kate Loewald**, Founding Producer, PlayCo **Dan Rothenberg**, Co-Artistic Director, Pig Iron Theatre Company **Alec Duffy**, Artistic Director, Hoi Polloi

MODERATOR: Yoko Shioya, Artistic Director, Japan Society

ABOUT OKADA TOSHIKI

Okada Toshiki was born in Yokohama in 1973. He is a playwright/director. He formed the theatre company chelfitsch in 1997. Since then, he has written and directed all of the company's productions, practicing a distinctive methodology for creating plays, and has come to be known for his use of hyper-colloquial Japanese and unique choreography. In 2005, his play Five Days in March won the prestigious 49th Kishida Kunio Drama Award. He participated in Toyota Choreography Award 2005 with Air Conditioner (Cooler, 2005), garnering much attention. His collection of short stories titled The End of the Special Time We Were Allowed was published in February 2007 and awarded the Oe Kenzaburo Prize. He has been on the judging panel for the Kishida Kunio Drama Award since 2012. In 2013, his first book theatology was published by Kawade Shobo Shinsha. From 2016, he directed works in a repertory programme at Münchner Kammerspiele, one of the foremost public theaters in Germany, for four consecutive seasons. THE VACUUM CLEANER has been selected as one of the 'ten remarkable productions' by Theatertreffen 2020, the German theatre festival. In 2020, he won the 27th Yomiuri Theater Awards Selection Committee Special Prize with his Thai artists-collaboration piece Pratthana—A portrait of possession, which is an adaptation of a novel by Thai author Uthis Haemamool. He was awarded the 2021 Yomiuri Prize for Literature for his online pandemic era and noh-inspired drama anthology Unfulfilled Ghost and Monster – ZAHA / TSURUGA.

ABOUT THE PANELISTS & MODERATORS

Peter Eckersall teaches in the Ph.D. program in Theatre and Performance at The Graduate Center, City University of New York and is a Professorial Fellow, University of Melbourne. Recent publications include: *Machine Made Silence* (ed. with Kristof van Baarle, 2020), *The Routledge Companion to Theatre and Politics* (ed. with Helena Grehan, 2019), *New Media Dramaturgy* (co-authored with Helena Grehan and Ed Scheer, 2017), and *Performativity and Event in 1960s Japan* (2013). He was co-founder/dramaturg of Not Yet It's Difficult. Recent dramaturgy includes: *Everything Starts from a Dot* (Sachiyo Takahashi, LaMama), *Phantom Sun/Northern Drift* (Alexis Destoop, Beursschouwburg, Riga Biennial), and *SHEEP #1* (Sachiyo Takahashi, Japan Society).

Carol Martin is a Professor of Drama at New York University. Her books include *Theatre of the Real and Dance Marathons: Performing American Culture of the 1920s and 1930s*. She is the Editor of *Dramaturgy of the Real on the World Stage, A Sourcebook of Feminist Theatre*, and the co-editor with Henry Bial of *Brecht Sourcebook*. She is the Guest Editor of four special issues of TDR, "Reclaiming the Real" (2017), "Performing the City" (2015), "Documentary Theatre" (2006), and "Japanese Theatre: 1960s to the Present" (with Kurihara Nanako).

Thomas Looser (BA in Anthropology, U.C.S.C.; MA and Ph.D. in Anthropology, University of Chicago) is Associate Professor of East Asian Studies at NYU. His areas of research include Cultural Anthropology and Japanese studies; art, architecture and urban form; new media studies and animation; and critical theory. A senior editor for the journal *Mechademia*, an editor for *Digital Asia*, and on the editorial advisory board of ADVA, he is the author of *Visioning Eternity: Aesthetics, Politics, and History in the Early Modern Noh Theater*, and has published articles in a variety of venues including *Boundary 2, Japan Forum, Mechademia, Shingenjitsu, Journal of Pacific Asia*, and *Cultural Anthropology*.

Kate Loewald co-created The Play Company with her late partners, Mike Ockrent and Jack Temchin. Prior to launching PlayCo, from 1990-99 she was Director of Play Development at the Manhattan Theatre Club, and also directed their Writers in Performance series for two seasons. Before MTC, Kate worked for producer Margo Lion, developing and producing shows on and off Broadway including George C. Wolfe's Jelly's Last Jam and Martha Clarke's *The Garden of Earthly Delights*. She was a dramaturg at the O'Neill Playwrights Conference 2000-2003. In addition to her work with PlayCo, she was the Guest Artistic Director for the Signature Theatre Company in the 2004/2005 season. Kate is an adjunct faculty member of the Columbia University School of the Arts, and has also taught at The New School, Fordham College, and NYU.

Dan Rothenberg is a Philadelphia-based director and creator of experimental performance. As co-founder and co-artistic director of Pig Iron Theatre Company, Dan has directed and co-created almost all of Pig Iron's original performance works. Together Quinn Bauriedel and Dito van Reigersberg, he received a Pew Fellowship

in Performance Art (2002) and a USA Artists Knight Fellowship (2010). With Pig Iron, Rothenberg has directed and co-created more than 30 original works, including the OBIE-winning productions Hell Meets Henry Halfway (2005) and Chekhov Lizardbrain (2010). At Pig Iron, Rothenberg engages in collaborations with visionary artists who push the ensemble in new directions. Collaborators have included: director Joseph Chaikin; playwright Toshiki Okada; designers Mimi Lien and Machine Dazzle; songwriter and performance artist Cynthia Hopkins; Daniel Rudholm of Stockholm's Teater Slava; and choreographers Sam Pinkleton and David Brick. Rothenberg's work with Pig Iron has toured to 15 countries on four continents.

Alec Duffy is a playwright and director. In 2005, he founded the theater company Hoi Polloi, with whom he has created many original works, including *Dysphoria, The Less We Talk*, and *All Hands*. In 2010, he shared an OBIE Award for *Three Pianos*, a paean to Schubert's *Winterreise* song cycle, co-written and performed with Dave Malloy and Rick Burkhardt in a production directed by Rachel Chavkin that toured to New York Theatre Workshop and American Repertory Theater after its premiere at Incubator Arts Project. His most recent production with Hoi Polloi was a commission of acclaimed Japanese playwright Toshiki Okada, *Quiet, Comfort*, which premiered at JACK in 2016. His production of the opera *Four Nights of Dream* premiered at Japan Society in 2017 and subsequently toured to Tokyo Bunka Kaikan. Before founding JACK, he held positions in several arts organizations, including Japan Society (as assistant to Artistic Director Yoko Shioya) and Mannes Opera. Duffy is a former NEA/TCG directing fellow and a Drama League Directing Fellow. Duffy has been a member of the Youth, Education & Cultural Affairs committee of his local Community Board since 2015.

Aya Ogawa is a Tokyo-born, Brooklyn-based playwright, director, performer, and translator whose work reflects an international viewpoint and utilizes the stage as a space for exploring cultural identity and the immigrant experience. Cumulatively, all aspects of their artistic practice synthesize their work as an artistic and cultural ambassador, building bridges across cultures to create meaningful exchange amongst artists, theaters, and audiences in both the U.S. and in Asia. Their original plays include *Ludic Proxy* (The Play Company), *Journey to the Ocean* (Foundry Theatre) and *oph3lia* (HERE). Most recently, they directed Haruna Lee's Obie Award-

winning *Suicide Forest* at The Bushwick Starr and its Off-Broadway remount for Ma-Yi Theater and adapted *Ludic Proxy: Fukushima* (Japan Society) for a digital platform. Most recently, they directed Spencer Lott and Maiko Kikuchi's puppet show *9000 Paper Balloons* at HERE for an online presentation. Their translations of over a dozen plays by Toshiki Okada and numerous other contemporary Japanese playwrights into English have been published and produced in the U.S. and the UK. They are a current resident playwright at New Dramatists, a Usual Suspect at NYTW and recipient of the President's Award for Performing Arts from the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council. Upcoming Performances at Japan Society

Shomyo: Buddhist Ritual Chant – Spiral Mandala Ceremony

Feb 24-27



Believed to have originated in India, *shomyo* is a ritual form of Buddhist chant that traveled along the Silk Road to China, eventually reaching Japan in the sixth century. For this one-of-a-kind in-person performance, Brooklyn-based media designer **Tei Blow** will transform Japan Society's stage into an immersive soundscape featuring the ethereal voices of **Shomyo no Kai–Voices of a Thousand Years**, a group of two dozen priests from the esoteric *Shingon* and *Tendai* Buddhist sects. Incorporating the lyrics and graphic score of the Japanese female composer **Yu Kuwabara's** *shomyo* piece **Spiral Mandala Ceremony** and the ancient mandalas that inspired her work, Blow's visuals, in tandem with Shomyo No Kai's vocals, create an ever-shifting environment with dreamlike power.

Tickets: \$15/\$12 members

TICKET ON-SALE DATES: Members: January 20 General Public: January 27

Waves Across Time: Traditional Dance and Music of Okinawa

Mar 18-19



Commemorating the 50th anniversary of Okinawa's return to Japan after the U.S.'s post-WWII occupation, a group of the islands' most exquisite dancers will perform a diverse repertoire of Okinawan traditional performing arts accompanied by live music. As specially selected by the young artistic director of the National Theatre Okinawa **Michihiko Kakazu**, the versatile artists will perform highlights from the traditional repertoire of kumiodori, a noh-inspired theater form developed during the period when the archipelago was an independent kingdom called Ryukyu (15th-19th centuries). The program also features popular folk dances (zo odori) with traditional ensemble music. From the brightly-dyed bingata costumes to the island music's iconic use of pentatonic scales, audiences are invited to relish the history and heritage of Japan's southernmost prefecture.

Tickets: \$42/\$32 members

TICKET ON-SALE DATES: Members: January 20

General Public: January 27

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