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978-0-521-12951-0 - Shakespeare and the Japanese Stage

Edited by Takashi Sasayama, J. R. Mulryne and Margaret Shewring

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Shakespeare and the Japanese Stage

Shakespeare has been performed in Japan since shortly before the re-opening of the country to the West in the Meiji period (1868–1912). This book breaks new ground by studying the interaction of Japanese and Western conceptions of Shakespeare, and the assimilation of Shakespeare into a richly traditional theatre practice.

The book is a collaboration between leading Shakespeare scholars from Japan and the West. The first part deals with key twentieth-century moments in the assimilation of Shakespeare, including the work of world-famous Japanese directors such as Ninagawa, Suzuki and Noda; the second part considers parallels and differences between Japanese and Western theatre over a longer timespan, focusing on the relationship of Shakespeare to traditional Japanese Noh, Kabuki, Bunraku and Kyogen.

Additional features include black and white and full-colour illustrations of Shakespearean and traditional Japanese productions, a comprehensive chronology of Shakespeare performances in Japan from 1866 to 1994 and the English text of Yasunari Takahashi's celebrated Kyogen adaptation of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*.

Takashi Sasayama is Professor in the Department of English at Kwansai Gakuin University, Kobe, Japan. He is one of Japan's leading Shakespearean scholars and an expert on Japanese theatre. He has written studies in Japanese and English on Elizabethan, Jacobean and Caroline drama.

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Preface

The experience of editing this book has been made a great deal more pleasant by the genial co-operation of all our contributors, both Japanese and Western.

We have incurred many debts. Principal among them is the debt we owe to the Saison Foundation, Tokyo, for its generous grant-in-aid for research towards, and publication of, this book. Kwansei Gakuin University, Kobe, and the University of Warwick generously made it possible for two of the editors to undertake a research trip to Japan. Professor Yasunari Takahashi not only helped in securing the support of the Foundation but has been repeatedly active on our behalf in making contacts, suggesting directions our work might take and generally stimulating the progress of the enterprise. Mr Akihiko Senda, theatre critic of the *Asahi* newspaper, Tokyo, put at our disposal his vast knowledge of theatre performance, and was instrumental in securing valuable photographs. Ms Kazuko Matsuoka helped us again and again by sharing her extraordinary knowledge of Shakespeare performance in Japan, and by discussing with us the insights garnered from her experience as one of the theatre's most expert and sensitive translators. Many other friends and scholars assisted us with advice, commentary and practical help. These included Sue Henny, formerly of the Japan Foundation, Charmaine Witherall, formerly of the Centre for the Study of the Renaissance, University of Warwick, Carole McFadden and Jenny White of the British Council, and staff of the Cultural Section of the Japanese Embassy in London. Ian Carruthers, Ted Motohashi, Ryuta Minami and John Gillies of the Japanese Shakespeare seminar at the Shakespeare World Congress in Los Angeles commented helpfully on our work, and generously allowed us access to valuable interview material. We are very grateful for untiring practical help and guidance from Sarah Stanton, Teresa Sheppard and Karl Howe of Cambridge University Press.

We have had opportunities to discuss Japanese Shakespeare with theatre practitioners in Britain and Japan. We should like to thank especially Sir Ian McKellen, Sir Richard Eyre, Mr Declan Donnellan, Mr Adrian Noble, Mr Simon Russell Beale, Mr Roger Chapman and, in

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Japan, Master Mansaku Nomura, Living National Treasure, the distinguished Kyogen actor. We are grateful to Professor Takahashi, Ms Matsuoka and the General Manager and Staff of the Panasonic Globe Theatre, Tokyo, for opportunities to see Shakespeare performances.

We owe a debt of gratitude to past and present students of the Centre for the Study of the Renaissance, the Department of English and the School of Theatre Studies at the University of Warwick for their perceptive comments on Japanese Shakespeare in the theatre and on video. We owe a particular debt to Ryuta Minami and Tomoko Ohtani, who not only helped us in many practical and scholarly ways in England, but also acted as generous and genial hosts in Japan. Mr Minami, as a doctoral student of the Centre for the Study of the Renaissance, was tireless in translating for us, providing us with videotapes, and putting at our disposal his detailed knowledge of Shakespeare performance in Japan. Nobuko Kawashima of the School of Theatre Studies at Warwick has also been very helpful in translating Japanese texts.

We are grateful to the staffs of a number of libraries. We should particularly like to thank the librarians of the Birmingham Shakespeare Library, the Nuffield Library of Shakespeare's Birthplace Trust, Stratford-upon-Avon, and the Library of the Oriental Institute, University of Oxford. We are indebted to the National Bunraku Theatre, Osaka, the *Asahi* newspaper, Tokyo, and the Japan Foundation for assistance in obtaining photographs. We have received expert typing and other secretarial assistance from Mrs Pauline Wilson, Ms Kate Brennan and Mrs Alison Cressey of the University of Warwick.

The increasing significance of Japanese Shakespeare on the world stage is evidenced not only by extensive international touring by professional companies but by the notice given to Japanese theatre performances and Japanese directors by reviewers and scholars in Europe, America and Australia. Dennis Kennedy's *Looking at Shakespeare* and his edited collection *Foreign Shakespeare* devote considerable attention to Japan. Plans are in hand to publish a volume on Tadashi Suzuki in the Cambridge University Press series *Directors in Perspective*. Several sessions of the World Shakespeare Congress in Tokyo in 1991 dealt with Japanese Shakespeare, and the subsequent World Congress in Los Angeles in 1996 included a highly successful seminar wholly devoted to this topic, plus a Forum on Intercultural Shakespeare with a particular emphasis on Japan and China. These are no more perhaps than straws in the wind, but our hope is that alongside the present book they signify a recognition that Japanese Shakespeare has an illuminating contribution to make not only to the wider aspects of Shakespeare study but to the study and practice of world theatre generally.

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Note on text

The macron sometimes used in Japanese printed texts to indicate a long vowel (ō, ū etc.) has been omitted throughout this book, with the exception of the Chronological Table. With the same exception, we have used the Western word order in citing personal names, that is given name followed by family name.

T. S., J. R. M., M. S.