

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-78244-9 - Performing Shakespeare in Japan
Edited by Minami Ryuta, Ian Carruthers, and John Gillies
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Performing Shakespeare in Japan

Shakespeare has an astonishingly rich and varied performance tradition in Japan, stretching from the westernizing and modernizing ferment of the nineteenth-century Meiji era to the postmodern performance culture of today.

How has the tradition evolved? Where is it going? How is it to be accounted for in theatrical and cultural terms? What does it mean to do Shakespeare in Japan? Such questions are raised in the book's introduction and pursued in fourteen essays on key aspects, moments, and personalities in the performance tradition. These are followed by provocative interviews with four leading directors (Deguchi Norio, Suzuki Tadashi, Ninagawa Yukio, and Noda Hideki) and with one leading performer (Hira Mikijirō).

Unlike the very few existing books on Japanese Shakespeare, this book concentrates on modern and postmodern theatre, roughly from the 1970s, and contains contributions from both Japanese and Western scholars and theatre practitioners.

MINAMI RYUTA is Associate Professor of English at Kobe City University of Foreign Studies. He has co-edited, with Ian Carruthers and John Gillies, a CD-ROM on Deguchi Norio's productions of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* for the Department of Theatre and Drama, La Trobe University. He also compiled a chronology of Shakespearean performances in Japan for *Shakespeare and the Japanese Stage* published by Cambridge University Press in 1999.

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JOHN GILLIES is an Australian Research Council Research Fellow at the School of Arts & Media, La Trobe University, Melbourne. He has published numerous articles and book chapters. He is also the author of *Shakespeare and the Geography of Difference* published by Cambridge University Press in 1994 and editor, with Virginia Mason Vaughan, of *Playing the Globe* (1998).

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PREFACE

TAKAHASHI YASUNARI

The Fifth World Shakespeare Congress (Tokyo 1991), with the general theme of “Shakespeare and Cultural Traditions,” significantly stressed the need for an inter-cultural viewpoint in Shakespeare studies, or, to put it more bluntly, a heightened awareness of Shakespeare’s foreign consumability. One of the after-effects was a seminar on “Japanese Shakespeare Productions: Problems of Stylization and Localization” held at the Sixth World Shakespeare Congress (Los Angeles 1996). As a co-chair (with Ian Carruthers) of the seminar, I vividly remember the enthusiasm with which scholars from Japan and other countries discussed the “sea changes” (be they ravishing or estranging) undergone by the English Renaissance dramatist at the hands of Far Eastern directors after the passage of three to four centuries.

It is a great pleasure to me to know that the seminar has now been re-born into a new life. Extensive re-organizing by the editors, intensive re-thinking by the speakers, and participation of new members have produced what I expect will prove a new step in the history of Shakespeare studies.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Debts incurred in the process of bringing this book to press are many and various. We owe particular debts of gratitude to Professor Takahashi Yasunari for his expertise in setting up the research project in Japan and for his wise mentoring throughout; to Ted Motohashi for so efficiently and cheerfully coordinating an arduous research seminar at the Sixth “International Shakespeare Association” congress at Los Angeles in 1996; and to Matsuoka Kazuko for organizing the interviews with prominent directors and actors. Her deep knowledge of the field, as translator, critic and dramaturge, as well as her unfailing perspicacity and generosity have substantially contributed to the success of this project. Professors Anzai Tetsuo and James Brandon have also given valuable advice, and made invaluable contributions to the interview process. We deeply regret that, for reasons of space, we were not able to include James Brandon’s article “Some Shakespeare(s) in Some Asia(s),” but are pleased that this magisterial survey of the whole field is available in print in the *Asian Studies Journal* (Journal of the Asian Studies Association of Australia) Vol.20, No.3, April 1997, 1–26.

Other scholars and friends have assisted us with help and advice along the way, particularly Dennis Bartholomeusz, co-editor (with Dr. Poonam Trivedi) of a forthcoming volume from a related “Shakespeare in Asia” conference (on “Shakespeare and India”) in New Delhi, 1998. We also thank Professor J. R. Mulryne and Dr. Margaret Shewring who, after participating in our 1996 seminar in Los Angeles, kindly allowed us to see the proofs of their own *Shakespeare on the Japanese Stage* (Cambridge, 1998), co-edited with Professor Sasayama Takashi.

We are also beholden to all those who assisted with the transcription and translation of interviews, in particular: Inazawa Shôko (for transcription of tape-recordings), Hashimoto Kayoko, Yoshida Masako, Suzuki Masae and Chiba Shôko (for help with translation of, respectively: Deguchi and Suzuki, Ninagawa, Noda, and Hira). Hatta Genji and Yanagisawa Kayoko generously translated several articles which we were eventually forced to cut for reasons of economy. Paula von Loewenfeldt earns a particular debt of gratitude for taking on the exacting job of typing, formatting and collating the first draft of our typescript, as does Ann Philpott for indexing. We have a separate attribution sheet for photographers, but would like to thank particularly, Rei Zunde in Australia, and the offices of the directors and actors we interviewed for supplying such superb photographs.

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For her expert guidance and patient practical help at all stages of the preparation of this book, we thank our editor, Sarah Stanton.

Note

Japanese names in this book follow conventional Japanese usage: the surname first, followed by the given name (except in the event that the given name is not Japanese).

A macron (ˆ) over a Japanese vowel indicates that the vowel is long. The macron is not used in the case of familiar names such as “Tokyo,” “Osaka” and “Kyoto.”