A Survey of Shakespearean Performances in Japan from 2001-2010

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1. An Overview of Shakespearean Performance in Japan

We are going to survey the performances on Shakespeare in this century. The Shakespeare Institute of Komazawa University has been compiling data on Shakespeare in Japan. We would like to exhibit how widely Shakespeare has been appreciated by people in and around Tokyo on the evidence of the performance records for the ten years from 2001 to 2010, based mainly upon the data of Nihon Sheikusupia Soran (A General Survey of Shakespeare in Japan), composed by Takashi Sasaki, a member of The Komazawa University Shakespeare Institute.

*(Table 1)*

The annual number of performances in the 1980s came to around 20-30 but increased to about 60-70 in the 1990s. The peak year of the 1990s was 1991, when the Fifth World Shakespeare Congress was held in Tokyo; in the autumn the Japan Festival of Great Britain was held in Great Britain. A total of 93 plays was performed that year. As the graph above shows, the lower rate of the early 2000s peaked again in 2002. In the recent years more than 100 Shakespearean productions have been staged. The figures include all performances, varying...
from small amateur groups to large professional companies, from authentic British productions to traditional Japanese productions. Most of the plays staged in Japan are performed in Japanese, sometimes highly adapted. Once Shakespeare’s plays are translated into Japanese they are no longer strictly Shakespearean, since the structural differences between English and Japanese detract from his beautiful rhyme, accent, rhythm and imagery. In the place of Shakespearean poetics, however, there emerges a new world of original Japanese sound and imagery. We have a long tradition of original dramatic forms as well as literary devices which provide people with rich imaginative experience. *(Table 2)*

The graph will serve to reveal how often the most popular plays have been performed over the last ten years. Such tragedies as *Hamlet, Romeo and Juliet* and *Macbeth* remain constantly popular, followed by the well-known comedy, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. *Hamlet* was the most popular play of the 1980s and 1990s. In the 2000s, however, *Romeo and Juliet* ranked first (114 times), followed by *Hamlet* (113 times), *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (102 times), *Macbeth* (78 times), *King Lear* (43 times). The tragedies are invariably the most popular.

The next graph shows how the chronology of the top five plays staged from 2001-2010.

*(Table 3)*

As we see, the tragedies constantly attract people to the theatre. The following graph exhibits the chronology of the production of plays of the other genres.
The tragedies occupied the stage 434 times, while comedies took the second place: 301 times. The histories (including the Roman histories) are not very popular in Japan because the audience is not familiar with Medieval English history, in which most of Shakespeare’s historical plays are set. Romances (including the dark comedies) also have difficulty attracting an audience. Nevertheless, the graph shows that the Japanese audience does favor a variety of plays of different genre.

These figures include all plays, from small amateur groups to large professional companies. If we exclude performances by small amateur groups, the figures render a different impression.

We should consider how the commercial theatrical companies have created new versions of Shakespeare’s plays.

The graph reveals that professional companies do not make so many plays, and the commercial trend diverges from the impression made by the survey of total production. Commercial production prefers comedies to histories. The most frequent production is a comedy, "A Midsummer Night’s Dream," followed by two tragedies, "Hamlet" and "Macbeth." We should take note that "Romeo and Juliet," the most popular play in the total graph, does not even appear in the commercial graph, implying that "Romeo and Juliet" is exceedingly popular in amateur production. All of the comedies given above guarantee commercial production a necessary profit more reliably than "Romeo and Juliet."
The best measure of the popularity of a play is the opening period of performance; some plays enjoy long-run performance, while others have performance periods of only a few days. The following graph exhibits the number of days in which a commercial company has performed a play.

*(Table 6)*

The most popular play is *Hamlet*, to which “Shiki Theatre Company” greatly contributed by their long-run *Hamlet*, directed by Keita Asari. The next is *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, which of the comedy-genre has always been a success. *The Twelfth Night* follows, of which the well-known director Yukio Ninagawa’s *Twelfth Night* was highly acclaimed. From this viewpoint, *Romeo and Juliet* reasserts its popularity.

Although these figures do not render definite conclusions, they do indicate the general trend of Shakespearean performances in Japan.

### 2. The Annual Popularity of Particular Shakespearean Performances

Next let us proceed to trace the most representative productions of the year on the basis of reviews by critics published mainly in the *Asahi Newspaper*, in *Walks in the Forest of Arden: Essays on Shakespearean Performances*, a website that includes many elaborate reviews on Shakespearean productions by Noboru Takaki, both given here in our translation, and *the Japan Times online*, reviews by Nobuko Tanaka in English. All the following 38 productions dealt with are selected from those performed in Tokyo and its suburb, Saitama, with one exception: *Macbeth* performed by Tatsuya Nakadai in a local town in 2009.
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2001

The main Shakespearean productions of 2001 that should be mentioned are the following four performances:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>&lt;Title&gt;</th>
<th>&lt;Theatre Company&gt;</th>
<th>&lt;Director&gt;</th>
<th>&lt;Actor&gt;</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Winter’s Tale</td>
<td>Miki-no-kai &amp; Lyric</td>
<td>Mikijiro Hira</td>
<td>Mikijiro Hira</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Merry Wives of Windsor</td>
<td>Saitama Arts Theatre</td>
<td>Shoji Kokami</td>
<td>Toru Emori</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hamlet</td>
<td>Saitama Arts Theatre</td>
<td>Yukio Ninagawa</td>
<td>M. Ichimura</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Throne of Blood</td>
<td>Shochiku</td>
<td>Masafumi Saito</td>
<td>K. Nakamura</td>
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(Macbeth)

Mikijiro Hira, who played Leontes in The Winter’s Tale *(Figure 1)*, is probably the most revered Shakespearean actor in Japan. After performing some roles in Ninagawa’s Shakespearean stages, he played Macbeth and Prospero in the productions of the French director Robert Lepage in the Tokyo Globe. One of his best performances was Prospero in Ninagawa’s The Tempest, at the Saitama Arts Theatre in 2000. His magnificent but fluent voice expressing the old nobleman’s conflict and hope, drew acclaim. In The Winter’s Tale, supporting veteran actors highlighted Hira's ability not only as an actor but also as a director. He focused only on the text’s words, without the use of big sets or drastic changes, but rendered the simple tragic-comedy very moving. The play was performed again by Hira in 2005.

The Saitama Arts Theatre, under Yukio
Ninagawa as art director, keeps presenting Shakespeare plays, but in this year Ninagawa became sick and was taken to hospital for treatment before preparing *The Merry Wives of Windsor* in May. Instead of Ninagawa, Shoji Kokami, who had been a playwright and director for his own theatre company, the Third Stage, directed the ninth play of the Shakespeare series. He succeeded in presenting Toru Emori as a foolish and funny Falstaff.

Ninagawa came back to the Saitama Arts Theatre for *Hamlet* in September. This was his fourth *Hamlet*, having previously presented Mikijiro Hira, Toru Watanabe, and Hiroyuki Sanada in the leading role. The play was performed at a smaller theatre of the Art Theatre, which gave the audience a much stronger feeling of intimacy with the actors than the larger theatre could have. In the space of the smaller theatre, 10 light bulbs were strung up from above, which shone sometimes brightly and other times faintly according to the scenes and the characters’ feelings. Masachika Ichimura projected Hamlet’s suffering and conflict persuasively. Ichimura had been a star actor of the Shiki (Four Seasons) Theatre Company, the largest theatre company in Japan, and after leaving it, he appeared in several musical plays and dramas. He performed Richard III in 1999 and 2004 under Ninagawa’s direction at the Saitama Arts Theatre, and Shylock on the stage of the British director Gregory Doran in 2007.

Just prior to this performance, the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center occurred on the 11th of September. Reflecting the violence of the real world, Ninagawa changed the last scene, in which he has Fortinbras order his soldiers to shoot all the other characters including Horatio. In 2001, the Shiki Theatre Company presented another *Hamlet*. The company is known widely for such musicals as *Cats*, *The Phantom of the Opera*, and *Lion King*. Unfortunately the new *Hamlet* presented nothing dazzling on stage, although the dialogue was spoken clearly and correctly. The production seemed to have been a simple importation from England, whereas recently in Japan there have been many innovative and exciting productions of Shakespeare’s plays. A good example of this is the following.

Masafumi Saito wrote and directed the theatre version of *The Throne of Blood*, based on Akira Kurosawa’s film version of *Macbeth*, which was set in the warring state period of
Japan about 400 years ago. This adapted stage version presents some scenes and characters quite differently from the film version. For instance, Macbeth and Lady Macbeth in this play, given the same Japanese names in the film as Washizu, are depicted as a couple who love each other in perfect union. They cannot help but kill their master because he tyrannically tries to send Washizu to the dangerous battle-front. They murder their master, not from great ambition, but from self-protection. The most divergent point in the plot is that Washizu’s wife does not go mad and die. On the contrary, the couple escapes from the castle as their enemy approaches them from the forest. A lot of arrows do not pierce Washizu’s body, as depicted in Kurasawa’s film. But the final scene shows him dying from just one arrow shot in his soldier, and the play ends focusing on the sorrowful face of his wife. Kabuki Actor Kichiemon Nakamura played Washizu, and his wife was played by Rei Asami, the star who formerly performed male roles in the Takarazuka Musical Company.

FROM REVIEWS:

**The Winter’s Tale** (directed by Mikijiro Hira for Miki-no-kai & Lyric) at Kinokuniya Southern Theatre, 9 September 2001

“Hira played Leontes’ outrageous jealousy and fury so irritatingly, and showed his repentance later so pitifully, that we were deeply moved by Leontes’ lamentable address to Hermione’s statue in the last scene. Bibari Maeda appears as the live statue with sublime and divine beauty. Leontes’ words of repentance passionately expressed to this statue made my tears fall fast.” (Noboru Takaki, *Walks in the Forest of Arden: Essays on Shakespearean Performances*)

**The Merry Wives of Windsor** (directed by Shoji Kokami for Saitama Arts Theatre) at Saitama Arts Theatre, 25 May 2001

“In the centre of this vigorous stage is Toru Emori (Falstaff). With his deep menacing voice he shows how foolish the wretched character is, rolling his eyes and saying things ad-lib. This play includes a lot of sexual and dirty words, but thanks to his charm without his purpose, the expressions didn’t seem dirty.” (Osamu Imamura, *Asahi Newspaper*)
I recommend the following two productions as exemplary for the year 2002;

<table>
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<th>Actor</th>
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<tr>
<td><em>A Midsummer Night’s Dream</em></td>
<td>Point Tokyo</td>
<td>Yukio Ninagawa</td>
<td>Kayoko Shiraishi</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>The Kyogen of Errors</em></td>
<td>Setagaya Public Theatre</td>
<td>Mansai Nomura</td>
<td>Mansai Nomura</td>
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The director Ninagawa had staged *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* in 1994 at Benisan Pit Tokyo in Tokyo. The basic oriental approach to the play at Theatre Cocoon in 2001 was the same as the 1994 version. What we saw when we entered the theatre is not the green forest for fairies, but a mysterious Zen stone garden. The whole ground was covered in white sand, and sand was falling down upon the stage from above. By means of this confusion of the play's setting, Ninagawa achieved a fusion of East and West.

The first performance of *The Kyogen of Errors* *(Figure 2)* was presented in 2001. The theatre company toured the U.K. and got a good reputation. The director Mansai Nomura, who has been the art director of the Setagaya Public Theatre, and a traditional Kyogen actor, produced the Kyogen version of Shakespeare, written by Yasunari Takahashi, who had been a president of the Shakespeare Society of Japan. Being intended as a global presentation, the 2001 performance was presented with English subtitles. At the opening of the performance many actors are repeatedly exclaiming in
Kyogen intonation "Yayakoshi-ya" ("It’s so complicated.") The performance is in fact complicated because two pairs of identical twins repeatedly enter and exit the scene. At the same time the alternating black and white curtains on both sides of the stage project a strong distinction. Thanks to this device, the audience can judge which character it is according to the color of the curtain from which he appears.

FROM REVIEWS:

_A Midsummer Night’s Dream_ (directed by Yukio Ninagawa for Point Tokyo) at Saitama Arts Theatre, 28 August 2002

“In this stone-garden world, Puck — acted by Lin Yungbian — does not fly through the air but jumps athletically from rock to rock, spinning around and often disappearing under the stage, then reappearing from below. Lin was schooled in Chinese traditional theater, kyogeki, which is famous for its acrobatic movement. Puck’s lines are narrated by the Japanese actor Yoji Matsuda, a role division that works well as it allows Lin to perform stunts while Matsuda speaks clearly from the side of the stage.” (Nobuko Tanaka, _The Japan Times_)

_The Kyogen of Errors_ (directed by Mansai Nomura for Setagaya Public Theatre) at Setagaya Public Theatre, 14 August 2002

“This Kyogen version is of much higher quality than Horazamurai, the Kyogen version of _The Merry Wives of Windsor_, written by Yasunari Takahashi and performed by Mansaku Nomura. Success owes a lot to how the characters skillfully put on and take off their Kyogen masks. This enabled two of the actors to switch into other parts (Mansai Nomura for two servants and Yukio Ishida for two lords). This performance presents our contemporary anxiety about identity.” (Yoshio Osasa, _Asahi Newspaper_)

2003

I would like to present six Shakespearean productions from 2003:
The most praiseworthy production of 2003 was Ninagawa’s *Pericles*, which won the Grand Prix of the third Asahi Stage Art Awards. In order to present this folktales-like play for the modern audience, Director Ninagawa set people injured in war as the play's framework of the play. Answering an interview, he explains: “Everybody wants to dream even in the unhappy times or miserable reality.” (20 Jan., *Asahi Newspaper*) It’s a challenging task to perform a rather minor Shakespearean play, but the director successfully made the audience imagine the adventurous story of the reunion of a family, using Japanese old music and a traditional way of telling tales.

In 2003 major theatre companies gave three productions of *Richard III*. It was coincidence, but no one would have doubted that these productions had been inspired by the terrorism of 2001 and subsequent wars and conflicts. Ninagawa presented *Richard III* both in 1999 and 2003 with Masachika Ichimura in the leading role, who very dramatically projected an evil drama. Bungakuza, a theatre company, invited British director Leon Rubin to produce *Richard III* *(Figure 3)*, using Toru Emori, the...
company’s veteran actor, to perform Richard. Rubin made great use of a screen in the back stage, showing TV news and sometimes an announcer’s panic in a TV studio. Emori splendidly performed this witty and ambitious villain. In the fast-paced lively production of Theatrical Group EN, Akio Kaneda performed another interpretation of Richard, delivering an enthralling speech in the foreground of rock music.

Two noble princes also deserve mention. After the 2001 version with Masachika Ichimura, Yukio Ninagawa’s produced a fifth version of *Hamlet* with the 21 year-old Tatsuya Fujiwara as a young energetic Hamlet and 16 year-old Ann Suzuki as a sweet Ophelia. The first half of the performance was presented at a fence on the stage under a repressive atmosphere; the latter half was performed on empty stage at Theatre Cocoon. The Setagaya Public Theatre also presented *Hamlet* with an all-male cast. The most notable character in this production was not the prince but Ophelia performed by Shinobu Nakamura, a Kabuki actor who always plays the role of women on Kabuki stage. If there had been no information, the audience would have thought Ophelia was played by an actress. He played the prince’s lover beautifully, using a high-toned silky voice and skillfully employing Kabuki expressions.

FROM REVIEWS:

*Pericles* (directed by Yukio Ninagawa for Saitama Arts Theatre) at Saitama Arts Theatre, 1 March 2003

“Within the play, Gower the poet speaks the prologue, but a blind Japanese priest (Masachika Ichimura) and his wife (Kayoko Shiraishi) narrate it in this excellent production. These two veteran actors appear between the scenes to explain the story. ... Uchino presents a strong and sturdy Pericles. This play includes some mythological elements that resemble Oriental folktales or Greek myths. Ninagawa emphasizes these mystical elements by using techniques of traditional Japanese art.” (Minoru Tanokura, *Asahi Newspaper*)

*Richard III* (directed by Yukio Ninagawa for Saitama Arts Theatre) at Saitama Arts Theatre, 20 December 2003
“The terrorist attack of September 11th and the Iraq War took place between the first performance of this production in 1999 and the present time. I felt the influence of these violent events in this production. Ninagawa is always faithful to the original text, even though he imaginatively creates the larger world. He never strays far from the text, trying to convey a message from the play. What he wanted to say can appear in its ending. After killing Richard, Richmond attempts to assert the union of the white and red roses, but his voice gradually becomes inaudible as chaotic music slowly increases. On the stage, a brown horse appears, runs about, and falls down. A lot of weapons and things fall violently from above, more violently than in the opening scene.” (Noboru Takaki, *Walks in the Forest of Arden: Essays on Shakespearean Performances*)

**Richard III** (directed by Reon Lubin for Bungaku-za) at Setagaya Public Theatre, 5 November 2003

“Emori’s Richard attracts the audience into an evil world. He acts the man who is determined to be a villain because he is ugly and isolated within his family. The play presents his ambition to reach the throne, his murder of his brother, and other subjects. Emori brilliantly expresses various aspects of Richard, who is daring but sometimes delicate, violent but very witty. ... In a threatening voice he speaks soliloquies, but to the contrary reveals a humorous funny side of the character when he carries out his plot.” (Koji Fujitani, *Asahi Newspaper*)

**Richard III** (directed by Takuya Hiramitsu for Theatrical Group EN) at Kinokuniya Hall, 12 July 2003

“Richard, in the opening scene, takes a microphone on the floor among dancing men and women during the party on the stage. He starts to make a speech which cannot be called a soliloquy. As if he were praising King Edward, he begins, ‘Now is the winter of our discontent made glorious summer by this sun of York.’ From this opening Richard gives us an impression of cheerfulness. This Richard is not very crippled. He drags himself by wearing elevator shoes of different depths, but his back is not hunched, nor is his hand mangled. Instead, only his black costume with yellow-brown indented frills reveals the
abnormality of his body. Richard's costume makes the impression of a clown. ... After Richard dies, the Duchess of York approaches the dead body silently, falls on her knees, and strokes Richard’s head softly. After this scene, the stage’s lights black out and the curtain falls.” (Noboru Takaki, *Walks in the Forest of Arden: Essays on Shakespearean Performances*)

**Hamlet** (directed by Yukio Ninagawa for Theatre Cocoon) at Theatre Cocoon, 29 November 2003

“Ninagawa made *Hamlet* refreshing by using young actors. Especially Tatsuya Fujiwara, who is 21 years old, is outstanding in the leading role. ... The stage is set temporally with the audience located on each side. The same director used this sort of stage setting in *Greeks* three years ago. The stage is set with barbed wire; search lights are even trained on the audience. These settings and effects, creating the atmosphere of a prisoners’ camp, symbolize Claudius' repressive surveillance system. The first half of the play is performed within the fence, but after the fence is removed, the actors perform on a simple empty stage in the latter half. Ninagawa used to build large scale sets, but here he has become a director of ‘empty stage’.” (Akihiko Senda, *Asahi Newspaper*)

**Hamlet** (directed by Jonathan Kent for Setagaya Public Theatre) at Setagaya Public Theatre, 28 Jun 2003

“Jonathan Kent directs the play emphasizing the visual elements on the stage. Especially notable is a setting of a very large box as the rooms of the castle designed by Paul Brown. What is painted outside this very tall three floored box is western pictures, but as the play progresses, the box starts to present pictures from within, which have a rather Japanese or Asian atmosphere. Mansai’s Hamlet is noble and intellectual. In this sense, he is a good player as the prince of Denmark, but at the same time his acting becomes more like that of Kyogen, Japanese traditional comedy. His speech is sometimes formal and unreal, making it difficult for the audience to feel Hamlet’s conflict and suffering.” (Akihiko Senda, *Asahi Newspaper*)
I would like to highlight five productions of the year 2004:

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<th>Actor</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>As You Like It</em></td>
<td>Saitama Arts Theatre</td>
<td>Yukio Ninagawa</td>
<td>Hiroki Narimiya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Titus Andronicus</em></td>
<td>Saitama Arts Theatre</td>
<td>Yukio Ninagawa</td>
<td>Kotaro Yoshida</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Romeo and Juliet</em></td>
<td>The Globe Tokyo</td>
<td>Shoji Kokami</td>
<td>N.Higashiyama</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Hamlet</em></td>
<td>Shakespeare Company for Children</td>
<td>Seisuke Yamasaki</td>
<td>Jun Uemoto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The Tragedy of King Lear</em></td>
<td>Setagaya Public Theatre</td>
<td>Noboru Sato</td>
<td>Renji Ishibashi</td>
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Ninagawa’s *As You Like It* *(Figure 4)* was his third Shakespearean comedy after *Twelfth Night*, in 1998, and *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, in 2000, in the Shakespeare series at the Saitama Arts Theatre. He successfully created an impressive stage-world with an all-male cast of adult actors. He has moreover accomplished some brought out commercially successful productions, often using popular young actors as main characters in his Shakespeare series. In the 2004 production, Hiroki Narimiya played a charming Rosalind and Shun Oguri a refreshing Orlando. Aside from the main cast, Keita Oishi admirably performed the shepherd Sylvius’ foolish but pitiful approach to the woman he loves. Ever since his 2004 production of the Shakespearean comedies, Ninagawa has almost every time directed the play with an all-male cast.
Ninagawa also directed a minor tragedy in 2004. *Titus Andronicus* is a very violent tragedy, but Ninagawa achieved greater impact on the audience by restraining the play’s cruel elements. He did it by using many red threads for blood, contrasting with the white settings and costumes on a white stage. Kotaro Yoshida, who has been the indispensable actor for Ninagawa’s productions, performed Titus. His vigorous voice and thrustful acting never weary the audience. This production went to England in the following year, and was performed again in 2006 at the Saitama Arts Theatre.

The Globe Tokyo, built in 1988 as a circular theatre with a roof and modern facilities had presented a lot of Shakespeare’s plays. But it got into the red, was sold in 2002 to Johnny’s office, which produces a lot of boy stars for TV programs and songs. Since then, Shakespeare’s plays have been performed there only rarely, but in 2004, as a memorial program for the renovation of the theatre, *Romeo and Juliet* was performed at the Globe, using Noriyuki Higashiyama, a popular star of Johnny’s office, as Romeo.

The Shakespeare Company for Children performed *Hamlet* in 2004. This company has kept presenting Shakespeare’s plays every year. Although the name of the company is “Shakespeare Company for Children”, actually their productions are not only for children. Adults also enjoy their performances. “Understandable and entertaining Shakespeare for everyone” suitably expresses the style of performance of this company. Seisuke Yamasaki, director and actor of the company, always appears on the stage, talking with a puppet of Shakespeare. The puppet of course brings the children closer to the stage, but it also functions as a commentator on a few scenes to make plays understandable for the audience. Hamlet was played by Jun Uemoto. He is the only actor who has played both Hamlet and Ophelia, except for Somegoro Ichikawa, who played the two characters at the same time in a kabuki version in 1991. Uemoto had usually played the woman’s role in a theatre company, Hanagumi-Shibai. In 2000 and 2002, he played Ophelia in the production directed by Yoshihiro Kurita. In that production, Hamlet was played by Mira Anju, who had been the star actress of the Takarazuka Musical Company. In 2003, Uemoto performed the Player Queen in Jonathan Kent’s *Hamlet*. 
Setagaya Public Theatre presented *The Tragedy of King Lear*, directed by Makoto Sato, the former art director of this theatre. He projected images of the storm on a back screen, but unfortunately this seemed to curtail the imagination of the audience. The use of a doll as the dead body of Cordelia in the last scene was also misfired, making some of the audience laugh rather than cry.

FROM REVIEWS:

*As You Like It* (directed by Yukio Ninagawa for Saitama Arts Theatre) at Saitama Arts Theatre, 11 August 2004

“Ninagawa and the art director admirably visualize the power of the forest in this play. The setting of a solemn and profound forest contrasts with the superficial set of a town just painted on board. The lighting of the forest changes from gray to green, as if it were put to be looked at more carefully than any of the characters in the play. The audience soon starts to see it as a symbol of the world we live in. ... All the characters are played by male actors in imitation of Shakespeare’s times. Some of the younger actors need more practice in speaking their lines, but the energy of the whole speedy stage is good enough to entertain the audience.” (Satoshi Tanaka, *Yomiuri Newspaper*)

*Titus Andronicus* (directed by Yukio Ninagawa for Saitama Arts Theatre) at Saitama Arts Theatre, 18 January 2004

“In the ending scene, Lucius, Titus’ eldest son, finishes his speech and leaves the balcony while the soldiers depart from the stage. After this, a soldier left alone gives Aeron’s baby to Young Lucius, Titus’ grandson. Young Lucius, holding the baby, walks slowly to the centre of the stage. He falls on his knees on the floor with the baby in his hands and says “Oh! Oh!!” lamentably looking up at the sky. The cry is repeated slowly but strongly five times. ... Ninagawa presents this grotesque play with the white settings, as if he were attempting to purify the horror. The buildings in Rome are all white and noblemen’s costumes are also white. Even the forest and its leaves are all white, but blood shed on the stage is presented using thin red threads. This caricature of blood makes the play’s cruelty and grotesque
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impression much weaker.” (Noboru Takaki, *Walks in the Forest of Arden: Essays on Shakespearean Performances*)

**Romeo and Juliet** (directed by Shoji Kokami for the Globe Tokyo) at the Globe Tokyo, 28 January 2004

“The stage setting, as you enter, is certainly striking. The audience entrance is lined with flowers and the stage is strewn with blossoms. In the center of it stands a high bookshelf labeled (in Japanese) “Love story book fair.” Browsers check the cooks, then, when one pulls out “Romeo and Juliet,” the shelf falls back, the cast emerges and the play begins. … What’s revealed is a tale of tortured love that feels up to the minute, despite the medieval sets and costume. The story speeds along, never less than absorbing. However the highlight is undoubtedly — and perhaps unexpectedly, at least for this critic — Higashiyama’s “Romeo.” The young star brings a wealth of stage experience, dancing and singing and playing to auditoriums as large as Tokyo Dome, to his portrayal of a noble and pure young Romeo. His sheer energy and exuberance is captivating, as when he effortlessly shins up to the theater’s second-floor balcony to embrace his love. … When the rival families finally bury their differences along with their beloved children, old war newsreel footage is projected across the stage’s backdrop — followed by scenes from the invasions of Iraq. The message — that cycles of conflict, if left unbroken, exact a terrible price from those involved — couldn’t be clearer.” (28 Jan., Nobuko Tanaka, *The Japan Times*)

**Hamlet** (directed by Seisuke Yamasaki for Shakespeare Company for Children) at Setagaya Public Theatre, 17 July 2004

“The whole cast appears clapping their hands to produce rhythm on the stage of a very simple setting of tables and chairs to excite the audience’s imagination. With this distinctive feature of this series, 10 actors perform this great work, cutting the text daringly down to 2 hours and 20 minutes. The play’s structure is surprisingly changed and there are many refreshing expressions. For instance, the play begins from the last scene, returning reminiscently to the first. Amusing scenes are added, such as one in which Hamlet’s father duels with the king of Norway. The scene is funny because the duel is presented as an ice
hockey game. In the play-within-a-play scene, the ghost of the former king appears next to
the queen, and Claudius turns white with fear like Macbeth. ... Uemoto’s Hamlet seems to
be a boy-like young man, but in this Shakespeare series, long soliloquies are often spoken
not by himself alone but with other players who appear as voices of the heart. Regrettably
his unique qualities as an actor were not conveyed to the audience.” (Shoichiro Kawai,
Asahi Newspaper)

**The Tragedy of King Lear** (directed by Noboru Sato for Setagaya Public Theatre) at
Setagaya Public Theatre, 6 October 2004

“The sound of the bass drums of Kodo, the world-famous taiko group from Sado
Island, heralds the opening of the play. Then, behind a sheer black curtain a torch flames
up, suggesting the great power of King Lear at the opening of the play. In the drama that
is about to unfold, we see his authority waning, as age and infirmity, both mental and
physical, take their toll. Then the curtain opens and the stage is revealed, occupied almost
entirely by a huge, very steep flight of white steps, with only a perilously narrow strip in
front of it for the actors to perform on. ... When the now-blind King Lear, having been
thrown out of both his daughters’ houses, is led to the heath by Poor Tom, we are treated to
an impressive projection on to the back of the stage, in which projects images of rainstorms
and windswept trees plays out. However, the stage effects, consciously or not, reduce the
actors’ roles to those of bit players in this scene, which should be a defining moment in the
play.” (Nobuko Tanaka, *The Japan Times*)

2005

2005 brought forth an unforgettable cross-cultural Shakespearean Kabuki production
and a further Shakespearean cross-cultural production in the Noh theatre:

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<th>Actor</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>NINAGAWA Twelfth Night</strong></td>
<td>Kabuki Theatre</td>
<td>Yukio Ninagawa</td>
<td>Kikunosuke Onoe</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>The Winter’s Tale</strong></td>
<td>Ryutopia Noh Theater</td>
<td>Yoshihiro Kurita</td>
<td>Ayumi Tanida</td>
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</table>
A Survey of Shakespearean Performances in Japan from 2001-2010

**NINAGAWA Twelfth Night** *(Figure 5)* is a complete kabuki play based on the story of *Twelfth Night*. Director Ninagawa had met Kikunosuke Onoe in the performance of *Greeks* five years previously. Kikunosuke asked him to direct the kabuki version of *Twelfth Night* after that. Toyoshige Imai, a kabuki playwright, converted the play brilliantly into kabuki style, in which the characters had Japanese names and were costumed in kimono, the traditional Japanese garment. Kabuki actors performed all of the characters in kabuki style with kabuki music. Ninagawa added Western elements to the performance by starting the play with harpsichord music and a boy singing a Western soprano song. Orsino imagines this song as the “food of love,” and the play begins. Kikunosuke performed both Viola and Sebastian. In the ship scene prior to the original opening, Kikunosuke appears in samurai dress alone as the brother on the ship, but then exits calling for his sister. In 30 seconds he reappears, as Viola, in beautiful kimono dress, and speaks in a high-toned woman’s voice. In 2005 Kikunosuke won the Shuji Terayama Award, in the fifth Asahi Theatre Art Award for this and other kabuki performances. Ninagawa also won the Special Grand Prize in the same award ceremony for this and other productions in 2005. The Yomiuri Drama Award, the Grand Prix and the Best Director Award also went to him. Moreover, the Best Staff Award was given to Yuichiro Kanai, the art director. It was his first experience as art director in kabuki theatre, but his use of mirrors, his designs of a beautiful cherry tree and of a large forward-moving ship, created an unforgettable stage. This Kabuki version of *Twelfth Night* was presented again in 2007 and 2009.

Another company has also undertaken to convey the traditional Japanese spirit through a
Shakespearean production, for audiences in Tokyo and Niigata, a provincial town.

The Ryutopia Noh Theatre, a theatre company in Niigata, inaugurated the Ryutopia Noh Theatre Shakespeare Series in 2004 with *Macbeth* as the first production and *King Lear* as the second. In 2005 the company performed *The Winter’s Tale - Barcarolle* - (Boatman’s song) at the Ryutopia Noh Theatre in Niigata and at the Noh Theatre in the Tessenkai Noh School. They usually abbreviated the Shakespearean text to a duration of about 2 hours, in accordance with the Japanese Noh play, which is usually shorter than a Shakespearean play. The Noh theatre stage has a long empty entrance space without sets. The purpose of performing without sets is to invite the audience to imagine the world in which the episode occurs, exactly as Shakespeare deployed the Globe three hundred years previously.

Although performance is always on a Noh stage, the director does not have the actors speak in the old Japanese diction of the Noh play; the actors speak naturally and realistically. The performance is easily intelligible. Ayumi Tanida performed a very passionate Leontes in *The Winter’s Tale*, and the director, Yoshihiro Kurita, performed both Antigonus and the shepherd. After *The Winter’s Tale*, the company has performed the Shakespearean plays in an original Japanese style: *Othello, Hamlet, The Tempest* and *Pericles*.

FROM INTERVIEWS AND REVIEWS:

*NINAGAWA Twelfth Night* (directed by Yukio Ninagawa for Kabuki-za) at Kabuki-za, 12 July 2005

Ninagawa, speaking in a Japan Times interview, argues that his stage is a mirror of life. He proceeds: “When the usual kabuki curtain rises and the audience unexpectedly confront their own faces, then they realize this is not an ordinary kabuki with which they are familiar. Then, when the mirrors gradually start to become transparent, you see a big beautiful cherry tree in the background and you hear music being played on both Japanese and Western instruments and a boy soprano singing. All this creates a unique fusion. When the actors appear on the hanamichi [elevated runaway] in the auditorium, to the audience members in certain areas it looks as if they are coming out from the back of the main stage
due to the mirror reflection. So, the audiences start to confuse reality and drama. I wanted to express such a double structure, just as in the play we have men acting the parts of women and one man who is acting the part of a woman pretending to be a man. Additionally, the kabuki stage is usually so two-dimensional, so I wanted to add the depth and perspective that is part of the Western drama method, and have it there on the wide kabuki stage. I wanted the mirrors to have a kaleidoscope effect and give multiple angles to view the stage. Throughout, my intention was like that — to incorporate my methods into the framework of the traditional kabuki style.” (20 July, Nobuko Tanaka, The Japan Times)

“In the ending scene, Viola’s lost brother appears and marries Olivia. His appearance clears the whole mystery of errors, at which moment Orsino proposes marriage to Viola. This change of his love from Olivia to Viola often looks too sudden, but on this stage it is persuasive because the Duke has been moved by the beautiful heart of the boy whom Viola has disguised. Shinjiro Nakanobu expertly portrays Orsino’s emotion. Director Ninagawa presented this play as the world of mirror. As the curtain opens, we see the mirror throughout the back of the stage reflecting red Japanese lanterns in the auditorium. ... From the prologue to the end, mirrors are used everywhere on the stage. They are used instead of Japanese paper sliding doors in the indoor scenes, and in the outdoor scenes they are used as basic backgrounds. On this stage, we can regard the disguised Viola as Alice in Through the Looking-Glass, and What Alice Found There. Viola and other characters are wandering in a world of mirror.” (Michie Amano, Asahi Newspaper)

The Winter’s Tale - Barcarolle - (directed by Yoshihiro Kurita for Ryutopia Noh Theater) at Ryutopia Noh Theatre and Tessenkai Noh School (“Artist Interview”, Performing Arts Network Japan) 6

The director Yoshihiro Kurita expounds in a website interview how Shakespearean plays should be directed for the Noh theatre: “Shakespeare’s plays with the Noh theatre would produce a new mixed breed of original Shakespeare that could not be experienced in Britain or anywhere else in Japan, just on our stage. The originality I have in mind is not one based on the miss-match between Shakespeare and the Noh theatre space. What I wanted to do
was not something in the vein of putting Western consommé soup in a Japanese lacquer bowl but to use the same materials and create a unique new soup that is neither Japanese miso nor Western consommé. ... For our third production, *The Winter’s Tale*, the style is one in which a mother is relating a tale to her children, so I want to use a stylization where the children appear as *kotodama*, or spirits of word, who tell the story of the play. In other words, you simply can’t put on a play in a Noh theater unless you clearly create this kind of external [narrative] framework.”

2006

A production by Shakespeare for Children deserves first mention for the achievements of 2006, together with two other notable productions:

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<th>Actor</th>
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<tr>
<td><em>Richard III</em></td>
<td>Shakespeare Company for Children</td>
<td>Seisuke Yamasaki</td>
<td>S. Yamasaki</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The Comedy of Errors</em></td>
<td>Saitama Arts Theatre</td>
<td>Yukio Ninagawa</td>
<td>Shun Oguri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Metal Macbeth</em></td>
<td>Gekidan Shinkansen</td>
<td>Hidenori Inoue</td>
<td>Masaaki Uchino</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Hamlet</em></td>
<td>Shakespeare Company Japan</td>
<td>Kazumi Shimodate</td>
<td>Koichi Iwazumi</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Shakespeare Company for Children performed *Richard III* *(Figure 6)* which, again, was entertaining not only for children. Abbreviated into a two-hour production, the performance presented to the audience an easily understandable drama of
unwise ambition. In 2012 the company again performed the play together with *Henry VI, Part 3*.

In Ninagawa’s *The Comedy of Errors*, one actor played both twins, the two Antiphoruses of Ephesus and Syracuse, while another actor played the two servants of the twins. When both twins appear at the same time on the stage, one of the twins is played by a substitute actor but the main actor speaks the dialogue of both brothers, changing the tone of his voice.

Gekidan Shinkansen has presented original rock musicals and is very popular among young audiences. Aside from rock musicals, the company has also created original plays of a new kabuki style. *Metal Macbeth* is their first attempt to adapt a Shakespeare play to their style of rock musical. The main actor and actress, Masaaki Uchino and Takako Matsu were invited from outside the company.

*Hamlet*, directed by Kazumi Shimodate, is a very unique performance. The play is set in Oushu (Northeast Japan) in the last days of the Tokugawa government (around 1868). At that time, Japan was being pressed by America to open the country, which the Shogun was failing to control effectively. Anxiety and uneasiness spread to Northeast region, as in Denmark of Hamlet’s time. The whole play is performed in a Tohoku accent, the typical local dialect spoken in Northeast Japan. The Shakespeare Company of Japan has been performing all plays in dialect since its establishment in 1922, in order to uncover and transmit the rich historical culture of the Northeast region. The company is planning to build a warm, inviting wooden theatre (like the Japanese Globe) in the Northeast region.

When I first saw the play in Tokyo in 2006, the dialect was difficult for me to understand, but upon the enlargement and renewal of the play in 2010, the dialect seemed to me to be elegant, warm, and appropriate for the performance. When a famous expression such as ‘to be or not to be’ is spoken in the regional dialect, it creates a different world, sometimes impressive, sometimes humorous. Thus it was very enjoyable and memorable.

The director, who was an artistic fellow of the International Globe in London in 2002,
produced *Romeo and Juliet* as his tenth dialect play in 2013.

**FROM REVIEWS:**

**Richard III** (directed by Seisuke Yamasaki for Shakespeare Company for Children) at the Globe Tokyo, 15 July 2006

“To the opening of this *Richard III* some scenes from *Henry VI* were added. They are the Battle of Tewkesbury, York’s triumph, the scene in which prince Edward is murdered by the three brothers of York, and the scene in which Henry VI is murdered by Richard. Thanks to these additions, the audience could understand the characters and Richard’s first soliloquy much more easily. Richard is not crippled, and does not walk with a dragging foot. Richard’s left hand is deformed, but that was expressed by the attachment of the puppet of Shakespeare to his left arm. For the first time, the leading role is acted by Seisuke Yamasaki, who wrote and directed the script. ... After killing Richard, Richmond cuts the puppet from Richard's left arm, and puts it on his own right hand.” (Noboru Takaki, *Walks in the Forest of Arden: Essays on Shakespearean Performances*)

**The Comedy of Errors** (directed by Yukio Ninagawa for Saitama Arts Theatre) at Saitama Arts Theatre, 18 February 2006

“When the Duke of Ephesus declares that any Syracusan caught has to be condemned to death, the people of the town get excited, starting to beat up Egeon. This is quite a new direction. Egeon tells his tragic story so sadly, of why he came to this nation, that one would think the play was a tragedy, if one didn’t know it is a comedy. Kotaro Yoshida tells Egeon’s story fascinatingly, as if it were an epic poem. ... In the final scene of reunion, the four characters of the two sets of twins appear at the same time, but as one actor has performed both brothers of a twin in this production, each actor ventriloquizes skillfully for their substitutes.” (Noboru Takaki, *Walks in the Forest of Arden: Essays on Shakespearean Performances*)

**Metal Macbeth** (directed by Hidenori Inoue for Gekidan Shinkannsen) at Aoyama Theatre, 23 May 2006
“The stage alternately describes two worlds. One world is set in the twenty-third century, times of endless war, and another world is set in the 1980’s to portray the story of a heavy metal band. The hero played by Masaaki Uchino is called Randomstar, a brave general of a kingdom in the 23rd century. Scolded by his wife played by Takako Matsu, he kills Lespal the King to deprive him of the throne, but like Macbeth dies at the end. Meanwhile in the scenes of the 1980’s, Uchino plays one of the members of a rock band, and Matsu plays the manager. The rise and the fall of the band proceed in parallel with Randomstar’s destiny in the 23rd century.” (Hiroko Yamaguchi, *Asahi Newspaper*)

**2007**

The best production of 2007 was *The Merchant of Venice*, directed by Gregory Doran, the director of RSC. Three other productions also deserve mention:

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<th>Title</th>
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<tr>
<td><em>The Merchant of Venice</em></td>
<td>Horipro</td>
<td>Gregory Doran</td>
<td>S. Terashima</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>A Midsummer Night’s Dream</em></td>
<td>New National Theatre</td>
<td>John Caird</td>
<td>Kunio Murai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Kuninusubito (Richard III)</em></td>
<td>Setagaya Public Theatre</td>
<td>Mansai Nomura</td>
<td>M. Nomura</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The Comedy of Errors</em></td>
<td>Shakespeare Theatre</td>
<td>Norio Deguchi</td>
<td>T. Hirasawa</td>
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Gregory Doran, the Artistic Director of the RSC, has brought Shakespearean plays to Japan: *Macbeth* in 2000, *Othello* in 2004, and *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* in 2005. In 2007 he directed *The Merchant of Venice* *(Figure 7)* at the Galaxy Theatre with some British staff in collaboration with Japanese actors and staff. Mr. Doran has professed himself to be gay, so in this production Antonio was performed as a homosexual who is in love with Bassanio. Antonio appears in the opening scene, saying he is “so sad”. His devotion to Antonio is worthy of remark in this production. Another notable character is of course Shylock, played by Masachika Ichimura. His Shylock is presented as a sympathetic character, not as a greedy villain. But as this play is one of the playwright’s comedies,
Tatsuya Fujiwara who played Hamlet in 2003, was especially good at amusing the audience in the comical scenes. In this production he played Bassanio, but also performed the prince of Morocco and of Aragon to provoke the laughter of the audience.

Another British Director visited Japan in 2007. John Caird, Honorary Associate Director of the RSC, came to Japan as a director of *Les Miserables* in Japan many times since 1987, and directed *The Beggar’s Opera* in 2006. For *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* at the New National Theatre Tokyo, he used a rather orthodox method based on his own direction in UK to direct this world of fairies and foolish men and women. This production was revived at the same theatre in 2009.

Since *The Kyogen of Errors*, Mansai Nomura once again attempted to produce a Shakespearean play. The title *Kuninusubito*, the person who stole a nation, is an adaptation of *Richard III* into a play set in ancient Japan. Mansai Nomura directed and acted the villain named Akusaburo rather comically on the Japanese noh stage (an old type of stage for traditional plays which describe rather sorrowful stories in dialogue and dance). Kayoko Shiraishi, an expert actress, vigorously performed four characters of the play.

The Shakespeare Theatre is the only company which has performed all 37 plays in Japan. The company was built by Norio Deguchi, who has directed all those plays since 1981. He is especially good at presenting Shakespeare’s comedies. Among them, *The Comedy of Errors* deserves the highest recommendation. The actors perform each character wearing eye masks to express the complicated identities of this play, but to signify the resolution of the confusion take them off in the final scene. They often perform this play or
A Survey of Shakespearean Performances in Japan from 2001-2010

*A Midsummer Night’s Dream* touring in schools and halls in local towns.

FROM REVIEWS & AN INTERVIEW:

*The Merchant of Venice* (directed by Gregory Doran for Horipro) at the Galaxy Theatre, 29 August 2007

"The audience couldn’t help laughing when Fujiwara, playing Bassanio, a suitor to Portia, also appears as the brown-skinned prince of Morocco and as the prince of Aragon stooped with old age. He must have enjoyed playing those characters with various countenances, voices, and funny gestures. His comic acting gave diversion to the play, but Gregory Doran, the English director, put the emphasis of the play on the miserably humiliated Shylock. Being spat upon, he is denounced as an avaricious Jew and his property is confiscated. What is worse, he is under coercion to convert to Christianity. In the deep loneliness after his daughter’s betrayal, Ichimura’s Shylock tries to restrain his anger and despair but cannot but show them. His acting is delicate enough to express Shylock’s anguish. In the ending scene, Jessica, Shylock’s daughter, doesn’t dream about her new life with her lover. She exits with a gloomy expression on her face as if she pitied her father. This ending seemed to be the only salvation for Shylock." (Junichiro Shiozaki, *Asahi Newspaper*)

*A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (directed by John Caird for New National Theatre Tokyo) at New National Theatre Tokyo, 5 June 2007

"Kunio Murai plays both Theseus the Duke of Athens, and Oberon the fairy king. Rei Asami plays both Hippolyta the queen of Amazon, and Titania the fairy queen. It is not unusual for a director to parallel the human world of this play to the fairy world. However, John Caird emphasizes affinity of the two couples in this production. In the opening scene, Theseus tries to convey his love to Hippolyta, but she scowls and exits. Her displeasure is due to the duke’s having conquered Amazon and having brought her as a captive to Athens. To Hippolyta, this fiancée is nothing more than an enemy. The stage in turn presents a following scene in the fairy world, in which the fairy king and queen are quarreling. These two couples proceed gradually toward reconciliation and a happy ending. Caird lucidly
"As cicadas begin to chirp, a modern woman played by Kayoko Shiraishi enters from an aisle among the audience. She goes up to the Noh stage, and mutters a haiku, a type of Japanese poem consisting of five, seven, and five syllables. The haiku was written by a poet, Basho Matsuo: “Nothing’s on the summer grass, but warriors’ ambitions were here once.” This poem becomes a sign for her to start a Japanese version of Richard III as her illusion. This unique opening was written by Shoichiro Kawai, a Shakespeare scholar and translator, and was directed by Mansai Nomura who plays the leading role. This innovative stage is a collaborative and elaborate result of the staff of traditional drama’s staff with one of modern drama. Another unique point is the emphasis on comical elements hidden in the play. In the middle of the conflict, to combine the power of the nation shared by the two families, a subject of Richard named Hisahide, to help his master ascend the throne, makes a speech directly to the audience, as if they were the citizens. The audience naturally does not answer, but he unreasonably regards this silence as their approval, which makes this scene very humorous. (Akihiko Senda, Asahi Newspaper)

Mansai Nomura, Director and actor, analyzes Richard III, in the interview for a theatre magazine: “I don’t think Richard III is simply a villain. He is attractive to me as a Kyogen actor, because he is faithful to his own desire. A lot of characters in Kyogen plays similarly fail to restrain their desire, and do what they want to do. For example, in Boshibari, a famous Kyogen play, two servants can’t help drinking their master’s alcohol, although he strictly prohibits it. In the case of Richard III, lust for power makes his evil egregious, as he
killed one character after another. But probably everyone wishes that he had never had those obstructions. Owing to this kind of human ambition, the audience is in complicity with Richard for his crimes.” (Mansai Nomura, *Replique Bis*, vol. 8, Jun., 2007)

### 2008

Together with two productions of Ninagawa's Shakespeare series, two small theatre companies and one extraordinary stage should be pointed out for the achievements of 2008.

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<td>Mikijiro Hira</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Much Ado About Nothing</em></td>
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<td>Yukio Ninagawa</td>
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<td><em>Macbeth</em></td>
<td>AUN Theatre Company</td>
<td>Kotaro Yoshida</td>
<td>Kotaro Yoshida</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Julius Caesar</em></td>
<td>Subaru Theatre Company</td>
<td>Nicholas Barter</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Richard III</em></td>
<td>PARCO</td>
<td>Hidenori Inoue</td>
<td>Arata Furuta</td>
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Mikijiro Hira played King Lear under his own direction in 2002. In *King Lear* of 2008 *(Figure 9)*, Ninagawa directed Hira as the old king. This is not their first collaboration. Hira had played Macbeth in *NINAGAWA Macbeth*, his first Shakespearean performance in 1980, and performed Prospero in *The Tempest* in the Shakespeare series of the Sainokuni Art Theatre. His deep and powerful voice always echoes in the theatre. In the 8th Asahi Stage Art Award in 2009, he received the Artist Award for the *King Lear* production of 2008 and for *The Mountain*.
Kosai Ishihara, Osamu Hirokawa

*Giants* by Pirandello, an Italian dramatist and novelist. Yushi Odashima, a drama critic who has translated all 37 Shakespeare’s plays into Japanese, recognizes him as “the foremost Shakespearean actor in Japan.” He says of him in *Asahi Newspaper* on 8 January in 2009: “We are very happy to see him who played very passionate and magnificent characters in the legendary world.”

Ninagawa’s other performance in this year was *Much Ado About Nothing*, performed by an all-male cast. The funniest character in this entertaining performance is Don Pedro, played by Kotaro Yoshida, who previously played Gloucester with very high acting quality in *King Lear*. He played Don Pedro as a homosexual man who likes Claudio, and who kisses him in the festive atmosphere in the ending scene, evoking a burst of laughter from the audience.

Kotaro Yoshida has directed and acted Shakespearean plays in AUN, his own small company almost every year since 2001. Previously he had been a member of the director Norio Deguchi’s Shakespeare Theatre, which I mentioned in 2007 above. He has also appeared many times in Ninagawa’s Shakespeare series. Consequently, influenced by both directors, Yoshida has also achieved dynamic presentations of Shakespeare’s plays. In the opening scene of his *Macbeth* of 2008, the three weird sisters appeared very grotesquely with white eyes shining in the darkness. Compared with them, Jun Mira’s Lady Macbeth did not scare us, because she was neither strong-minded nor cold-blooded. However, she showed us the feminine wife’s delicate love of Macbeth, and in contrast Kotaro Yoshida presented a very masculine Macbeth with his strong voice and passionate expression. The three weird sisters appeared again in the last scene, speaking the same words as in the opening, but stopped speaking at “There to meet...” without saying Malcolm’s name before the light went out. This *Macbeth* was a very good result of his long effort at both performing and directing Shakespeare’s plays.

The Subaru Theatre Company has often performed Shakespearean plays as well, perhaps because the company was formed by Tsuneari Fukuda, a dramatist and translator of English plays. He has translated and directed many of the plays of Shakespeare. He died in 1994 at
the age of 82. The company presented *Coriolanus* in 2004, and in this year *Julius Caesar* was brought to the stage. Until then, the company’s directors have produced Shakespeare’s plays, but this time they invited Nicholas Barter, the former principle of the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art from England, to be the director.

Hidenori Inoue, a director who directed the rock musical *Metal Macbeth* in 2006, presented Shakespeare without changing its main plot. His *Richard III* was full of present-day elements such as TV news on the back screen and a factory-like set. He showed off popular actors without songs and never lost his eagerness to entertain the audience.

FROM REVIEWS:

**King Lear** (directed by Yukio Ninagawa for Saitama Arts Theatre) at Saitama Arts Theatre, 25 January 2008

"Hira’s Lear shows blazing emotions as if exploding from a blast furnace. As his judgment dulls, while he is anxious about his weak body and mind, Lear loses his temper. Lear’s rage seems to have been brought about by the ordinary frailties of an old man. Ninagawa’s direction is based upon his former experience with *King Lear*, directing British actors in 1999. For instance, a lot of heavy stones fall from above. It became visually much stronger and wilder when the stage became thick with stones on the ground and heavy fur costumes." (Hiroko Yamazaki, *Asahi Newspaper*)

**Julius Caesar** (directed by Nicholas Barter for Subaru Theatre Company) at Owl Spot, 21 January 2008

"At first, the stage setting was attractive. On the right side in the centre of the stage, a big statue of a naked man occupied almost half of the space. The statue had no neck and arms, and its legs under the knees were buried in the pedestal. Its body was bounding with muscle like a discus thrower. The head cut from the body was floating on the stage left showing regret, as if it had been cut just now. The director Nicholas Barter had asked the art director to prepare a set based on keywords, “strive for power” and “violence” as themes of *Julius Caesar*. The setting powerfully conveys the image of “violence” on the stage. This big
statue without the head reminded me of the statue of the tyrannical Sadam Hussein, which
was torn down by the Iraqi people after the American army had invaded. ... Shakespeare
wrote this play in almost the same year as Hamlet, so the way the ghost of Caesar appeared
resembled the ghost of Hamlet’s father when he appeared in Gertrude’s closet." (Noboru
Takaki, Walks in the Forest of Arden: Essays on Shakespearian Performances) 9

Richard III (directed by Hidenori Inoue for PARCO) at Akasaka ACT Theatre, 27
January 2009

"After the cruel Richard III ascends the throne, the rebellious Richmond makes a speech
to inspire his soldiers. He is broadcast live, and on the back screen behind him is projected
a copy of the expression of the U.S. President Obama: “Change, yes I can.” This makes
Richard III our contemporary. However, Richard and Richmond are dressed in Japanese
warrior’s clothes and armor. They clash their swords, but in the end Richmond uses a gun
to kill Richard on the staircase. This Richard III produced by PARCO is kitschy. Costumes
are psychedelic like those of the 1960’s and 70’s, and the set is like a factory full of steel
frameworks. Furuta’s Richard is funny and cheerful, but other male characters never stand
out. The actresses who play Anne, Duchess York, Margaret and Elizabeth are however
outstanding." (Yoshio Osasa, Asahi Newspaper)

2009

The greatest achievement of 2008 is without doubt the production of Henry VI at the
New National Theatre Tokyo. Two local productions, including Macbeth, starring Tatsuya
Nakadai, also deserve special praise.

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<tr>
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<td>Hitoshi Uyama</td>
<td>Kenji Urai</td>
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<td>Macbeth</td>
<td>The Mumeijuku</td>
<td>Kiyoto Hayashi</td>
<td>Tatsuya Nakadai</td>
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<td>Antony and Cleopatra</td>
<td>AUN Theatre Company</td>
<td>Kotaro Yoshida</td>
<td>Mira Anju</td>
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</table>
The English War of the Roses was fought for its second time on the Japanese stage, the first time having been at the Shakespeare Theatre in 1981. The New National Theatre Tokyo presented *Henry VI, Part I~III*, *(Figure 10)* its totality of 9 hours, sometimes only one part per day, but at other times all three parts in succession. The director Hitoshi Uyama brought out on the stage the eternal folly of human nature. In a press conference, Uyama said that one of the goals of this production was “to derive a little bright wisdom for our future from these stupid but important historic struggles... *Henry VI* is constantly changing — for example, from harsh and gentle, tragic and funny. I want audiences to be wide-eyed with surprise every five minutes.” (trans. by Nobuko Tanaka on *The Japan Times* on 6 Nov. 2009) He surprised the audience without wearying them throughout the whole performance. He received the Education Minister’s Art Encouragement Prize. This trilogy also won the grand prize of the 17th Yomiuri Drama Award. Uyama directed *Richard III*, casting the same actors at the New National Theatre Tokyo in 2012.

In 2009, there was one memorable production, though it was performed only in a provincial town in Kanazawa, far away from Tokyo. Tatsuya Nakadai, the world-famous veteran actor who played the leading role of Akira Kurosawa’s film, *Ran*, the Japanese version of *King Lear*, played Macbeth at the age of 77 under the direction by Kiyohito Hayashi. He has trained young actors in his own drama school and theatre company, the Mumeijuku (School for Nameless Actors). In 2009 the Mumeijuku produced *Macbeth*, presenting the play at the Noto Drama Theatre. Nakadai supervised the design of the theatre; he had been asked to do so by the town he has visited many times for a training camp with young actors. The walls of the auditorium, being painted completely black,
are appropriate for dark plays. At the back wall of the stage is a big backdoor which when opened makes the actors appear to be outside of the theatre. Soldiers in the battle scene can appear from outside the theatre amidst the garden and forest. This was especially effective for the scene of Birnam Wood in *Macbeth*.

Kotaro Yoshida directed *Antony and Cleopatra* and played Antony in his own company, the AUN Theatre Company, in 2009. He presented the play not in the small but in the larger theatre, the Sunshine Theatre. He uses a very dynamic method of direction on the larger stage, so that one might imagine that Yukio Ninagawa had directed the play. Anju Mira, the former Takarazuka Musical Company star who had performed male roles, played the part of Cleopatra elegantly and strongly as a majestic but charming queen, leading audiences to the tragic and sublime ending of the dramatist’s mature work.

FROM REVIEWS:

*Henry VI, Part I–III* (directed by Hitoshi Uyama for New National Theatre Tokyo) at New National Theatre Tokyo, 6 October 2009

"Gently inclined, the thick gray stage is very spacious and deep, effectively implying the muddy ground of war. In this play, especially in this production, the noblemen amaze us with their desire and emotion. The Earl of Warrick goes over to the enemy without hesitation according to opportunity. His betrayal in Part III evoked laughter from the audience. Jack Cade, a leader of the rebellion, is abandoned by the people in no time at all in Part II. Such is the dynamism of power and men as objectively described by Shakespeare. Except for Talbot, a brave general, there is no character who excites the audience’s sympathy. More interestingly, among those vacillating people, there is young Henry VI, who is no good as a king, but knows that war is futile. When the king looks down the battlefield from the chair suspended from the ceiling, a son who killed his father and a father who killed his son appear on the stage. Queen Margaret and her exiled lover in Suffolk’s parting scene is also impressive in Part II. They are rather villainous characters, but their expressions of sorrow are surprisingly lyrical and moving." (Akihiko Senda, *Asahi*
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*Macbeth* (directed by Kyoto Hayashi for The Mumeijuku) at the Nohgakudo Theatre, 21 September, 2009 *(Figure 11)*

"The Nohgakudo Theatre has a big folding back door behind the stage through which the scenery, a garden at the rear of the theatre, can be seen. This production makes very effective use of the door. When it is opened, the auditorium, the stage and the garden become one grand space. ... In Act I, Scene 3, the door is opened as Macbeth and Banquo enter riding horses. The real field and green forest in the sinking sunlight of evening make us feel as if we were in the centre of the stage and a part of the scenery. The magnificent scale of the scene, larger than a movie screen, is very refreshing and impressive. ... The highlight of this production is the scene near the end of the play. Soldiers on real horses and about 50 extras recruited from the locality advance, camouflaged with twigs, while behind them the real trees of the forest are swaying. This is exactly how the scene of Birnam wood should look. This marvelous stage, as Tatsuya Nakadai, who played Macbeth, points out, has nothing to do with any themes, ideologies or concepts. This is a real stage that is impressive because of total impact of the whole theatre." *(21 Sep. Noboru Takagi, *Walks in the Forest of Arden: Essays on Shakespearean Performances)* 10

*Antony and Cleopatra* (directed by Kotaro Yoshida for AUN Theatre Company) at the Sunshine Theatre, 3 October 2009

"With string music, the play opening attracts the audience into the world of the play, showing the title of the play in English on the back screen. After this cinematic opening, the light illuminates Antony and Cleopatra in love, in a bath tub situated in the centre, while
Philo and Demetrius, Antony’s friend and subject on the right side, are talking about the two lovers’ affectionate relationship. ... Ayumi Tanida plays Octavius Caesar admirably as the antagonist of Antony. The most impressive scene is when Cleopatra dies on the throne in the tomb. Light illuminates her and poetic string music creates the solemn and tragic atmosphere, drawing tears from the audience in the sad silence." (Noboru Takaki, *Walks in the Forest of Arden: Essays on Shakespearean Performances*)

2010

2010 brought forth two excellent productions of *The Taming of the Shrew*, and one outstanding production of *Henry VI* directed by Yukio Ninagawa:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Theatre Company</th>
<th>Director</th>
<th>Actor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>The Taming of the Shrew</em></td>
<td>Sainokuni Art Theatre</td>
<td>Y. Ninagawa</td>
<td>Kamejiro Ichikawa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The Taming of the Shrew</em></td>
<td>Studio Life</td>
<td>Jun Kurata</td>
<td>Shinya Matsumoto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Henry VI</em></td>
<td>Sainokuni Art Theatre</td>
<td>Y. Ninagawa</td>
<td>Takaya Kamikawa</td>
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</table>

Ninagawa produced a surprising masterpiece, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *(Figure 12)* the best performance of all Ninagawa’s comedies with all-male casts since 2004. Kamejiro Ichikawa played Katherine, putting his skill as a Kabuki female impersonator to account. His Katherine is very amusing in some scenes, and very vigorous in others. Toshio Kakei as Petruchio never loses the battle with Katherine, giving a long speech with astonishing speed which made the audience applaud.

Another production of *The
Taming of the Shrew was very entertaining. It was a musical performed by Studio Life, a company of all-male young actors and a female director. This company has performed plays based upon manga, Japanese comics, and a play based upon Thomas Mann’s Death in Venice. In 2006, they produced A Midsummer Night’s Dream. Since then they have attempted to present such of Shakespeare’s plays as Romeo and Juliet and Twelfth Night with original songs. The Taming of the Shrew of 2010 should be remembered as their most amusing performance. The actors spoke original words in an adapted script written by Jun Kurata, and performed additional scenes to sing songs. But they entertained the audience with a nearly faithful rendition of the comic Shakespearean spirit of the original plot.

Just one year after Hitoshi Uyama performed Henry VI at the New National Theatre Tokyo, Ninagawa’s Shakespeare series presented the same play, shortening the trilogy into two parts. This was Yukio Ninagawa’s maiden approach to Shakespeare’s English history plays. He has directed Richard III before, but the play concentrates on the elements of a villain. Ninagawa used a few actors to play a multiplicity of characters, but like Hitoshi Uyama successfully portrayed human folly.

FROM REVIEWS:

The Taming of the Shrew (directed by Yukio Ninagawa for Saitama Arts Theatre) at Saitama Arts Theatre, 22 October 2010

"This play’s plot must horrify the modern audience; the husband disciplines his wife to be submissive, never giving her food nor allowing her to sleep. But the stage is very entertaining. Ninagawa insistently presents this problematic story as a fiction. He never tries to make an excuse for Petruchio’s cruel taming, but shows this play simply as an entertaining story of men and women who are extremely different from ordinary people. Two elements of this production emphasize the fictitiousness of this play. The first is the play’s opening, in which a lord prepares this play as a performance by a touring company to tease the drunken Sly. The second is its casting; it is Ninagawa’s fifth all-male cast. Kamejiro Ichikawa, a Kabuki actor, plays the part of Katherine outstandingly. He performs
Kosai Ishihara, Osamu Hirokawa

naturally as a woman, sometimes resorting the Kabuki stylization of a female character, but at other times comically emphasizes that he is a man. His acting conveys that the world of the stage is just acting. Petruchio also delivers long speeches very rapidly, quite differently from the speech of men in the real world. Petruchio's attack never completely subdues Kamejiro’s acting. As a result, there is no terrible conflict of men and women in this production." (Hiroko Yamaguchi, *Asahi Newspaper*)

*Henry VI* (directed by Yukio Ninagawa for Saitama Arts Theatre) at Saitama Arts Theatre, 19 March 2010

“The Prosperous family decays after all.” —Shakespeare’s *Henry VI* tells us the story of Britain in the 15th century, but it reminds us of *The Historic Romance of the Taira Family*, a story of the war between two families in medieval Japan. On the stage is performed a belligerent struggle for the throne. This condensed 6-hour production by Yukio Ninagawa presents those scenes of war as if they had to do with war in modern times. Here he depicts women wiping blood off the stage, and the sound of guns are often heard during the performance. ... Shinobu Otake performs seven characters such as Joan of Ark, girl in a village, a fussy wife, a princess, a queen, a lover and a mother. She expresses human pride, cruelty, desire for power and lust. Although her acting is at times too casual for a queen, it is totally marvelous. With monstrous hatred she tragically murders the Duke of York, performed by Koutaro Yoshida. The lover performed in the love scene looks like an innocent girl. Takaya Kamikawa plays a complicated Henry VI, knowing too much about the human follies to be able to do anything." (Kenichi Yamamoto, *Asahi Newspaper*)

3. A Decade of Shakespeare Productions in Japan

The selected 38 productions can be put in chronological order which Shakespeare wrote them as follows:
A Survey of Shakespearean Performances in Japan from 2001-2010

### 2001 ~ 2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Theatre Company</th>
<th>Director</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Henry VI</td>
<td>Saitama Arts Theatre</td>
<td>Yukio Ninagawa</td>
<td>2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard III</td>
<td>Saitama Arts Theatre</td>
<td>Yukio Ninagawa</td>
<td>2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard III</td>
<td>Bungaku-za</td>
<td>Leon Rubin</td>
<td>2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard III</td>
<td>Theatreical Group EN</td>
<td>Takuya Hiramitsu</td>
<td>2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard III</td>
<td>Shakespeare Company for Children</td>
<td>Seisuke Yamazaki</td>
<td>2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuninusubito (Richard III)</td>
<td>Setagaya Public Theatre</td>
<td>Mansai Nomura</td>
<td>2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard III</td>
<td>PARCO</td>
<td>Hidenori Inoue</td>
<td>2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Kyogen of Errors</td>
<td>Setagaya Public Theatre</td>
<td>Mansai Nomura</td>
<td>2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Comedy of Errors</td>
<td>Saitama Arts Theatre</td>
<td>Yukio Ninagawa</td>
<td>2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Comedy of Errors</td>
<td>Shakespeare Theatre</td>
<td>Norio Deguchi</td>
<td>2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Titus Andronicus</td>
<td>Saitama Arts Theatre</td>
<td>Yukio Ninagawa</td>
<td>2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Taming of the Shrew</td>
<td>Saitama Arts Theatre</td>
<td>Yukio Ninagawa</td>
<td>2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Taming of the Shrew</td>
<td>Studio Life</td>
<td>Jun Kurata</td>
<td>2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romeo and Juliet</td>
<td>The Globe Tokyo</td>
<td>Shoji Kokami</td>
<td>2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Midsummer Night’s Dream</td>
<td>Point Tokyo</td>
<td>Yukio Ninagawa</td>
<td>2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Midsummer Night’s Dream</td>
<td>New National Theatre</td>
<td>John Caird</td>
<td>2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Merchant of Venice</td>
<td>Hori-Pro</td>
<td>Gregory Doran</td>
<td>2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Much Ado About Nothing</td>
<td>Saitama Arts Theatre</td>
<td>Yukio Ninagawa</td>
<td>2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As You Like It</td>
<td>Saitama Arts Theatre</td>
<td>Yukio Ninagawa</td>
<td>2004</td>
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<tr>
<td>NINAGAWA Twelfth Night</td>
<td>Kabukiza</td>
<td>Yukio Ninagawa</td>
<td>2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julius Caeser</td>
<td>Subaru Theatre Company</td>
<td>Nicholas Barter</td>
<td>2008</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Merry Wives of Windsor</td>
<td>Saitama Arts Theatre</td>
<td>Shoji Kokami</td>
<td>2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hamlet</td>
<td>Saitama Arts Theatre</td>
<td>Yukio Ninagawa</td>
<td>2001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There have a lot of productions of Richard III staring from 2003. This may be an effect of the terror attack of the 11th of September in 2001 and the subsequent wars. If one should choose the best productions from these 10 years, the following performances might be regarded as the five best productions of the decade.

<table>
<thead>
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<td>2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Taming of the Threw</td>
<td>Sainokuni Art Theatre</td>
<td>Yukio Ninagawa</td>
<td>2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Winter’s Tale</td>
<td>Miki-no-kai &amp; Lyric</td>
<td>Mikijiro Hira</td>
<td>2001</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Merchant of Venice</td>
<td>Hori-Pro</td>
<td>Gregory Doran</td>
<td>2007</td>
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</table>
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**NINAGAWA Twelfth Night**, Ninagawa’s cross-cultural result at the Kabukiza, should be recorded here first of all. His effective use of Kabuki acting and all-male casts at the Saitama Arts Theatre also rendered an outstandingly interesting interpretation of *The Taming of the Shrew*. Mikijiro Hira, both as a Shakespearean actor and as a director, produced admirable performances, especially that of *The Winter’s Tale* in his own company in 2001 and 2005. Gregory Doran’s *The Merchant of Venice* is also an impressive performance which is difficult to forget, although critics may choose *Henry VI, Part I–III* at the New National Theatre Tokyo as the greatest performance of this decade.

If we were to select the best director from the last decade of production, no one would deny it is Yukio Ninagawa. He has directed more than 10 stages in 10 years, conveying his message to the audience by using Shakespeare’s text with a lot of excellent actors and staff. Aside from this world-famous genius, there are other nominees who have directed excellent transcultural productions. They are Mansai Nomura, who directed *The Kyogen of Errors* in 2002 and other years, *Kuminusubito* based on *Richard III* in 2007, and Yoshihiro Kurita, who has directed the Ryutopia Shakespeare Series (See *The Winter’s Tale* in 2005 above). Without using traditional techniques, a lot of directors in Japan have certainly begun to express their own original world and spirit through Shakespearean texts, as Seisuke Yamasaki’s Shakespeare Company for Children series have excellently shown.

After these unforgettable Shakespeare productions in the first ten years of this century, Kotaro Yoshida performed *The Merchant of Venice* in his own company, AUN in 2011, and has been presenting and acting in Shakespearean plays. In 2012, two *Richard III* were performed by the Shakespeare Company for Children and The New National Theatre Tokyo. Ninagawa has directed Shakespeare, *Cymbeline* and *Troilus and Cressida* in 2012 and *Henry IV* in 2013. His Shakespeare series at the Saitama Arts Theatre will stimulate new productions; other unique and wonderful Shakespearean performances will never cease to be created by many directors and actors in Japan.
Notes:
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid.

Figures:
   “O, she’s warm!” (Act 5, Scene 3) Mikijiro Hira as Leontes (right) and Bibari Maeda as Hermione (left) in *The Winter’s Tale* (Lyric & Miki-no-kai)
   “I am you, and you and me, but what is ‘I’ in the first place?” (The additional epilogue) Mansai Nomura as Dromio in *The Kyogen of Errors* (Setagaya Public Theatre)
   “Tear-falling pity dwells not in this eye.” (Act 4, Scene 3) Toru Emori as Richard in *Richard III* (Bungakuza)
   “I’ll have no husband, if you be not he.” (Act 5, Scene 4) Hiroki Narimiya as
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Rosalind (right) and Shun Oguri as Orlando (left) in *As You Like It* (Saitama Arts Theatre)

5. **NINAGAWA Twelfth Night** (Shouchiku: Leaflet for the revived performance in 2009 at Shinbashi Enbujo), p.19. Kikunosuke Onoe as Sebastian (left), Viola (centre), and Cesario (right) in *NINAGAWA Twelfth Night* (Shouchiku)


“If I did take the kingdom from your sons, / To make amends I’ll give it to your daughter.” (Act 4, Scene 4) Seisuke Yamasaki as Richard with Shakespeare-like-doll as his deformed left hand in *Richard III* (Shakespeare Company for Children)


Tatsuya Fujiwara as Bassanio (left), Masachika Ichimura as Shylock (centre), Shinobu Terashima as Portia (right), and Tokuma Nishioka as Antonio (down) in *The Merchant of Venice* (Hori-pro).


“Look what is done cannot be now amended” (After killing the prince for himself: the line is taken from Act 4, Scene 5) Mansai Nomura as Akutaro (Richard) in *Kuninusubito [Richard III]* (Setagaya Public Theatre)

9. **King Lear** (Saitama Arts Theatre: by Takahiro Watabe), p.29.

“No, they cannot touch me for coining; I am the King himself.” (Act 4, Scene 6) Mikijiro Hira as King Lear in *King Lear* (Saitama Arts Theatre)


“What, dost thou turn away, and hide thy face? / I am no loathsome leper—look on me.” (Part 2, Act 3, Scene 2) Tomoko Nakajima as Queen Margaret (right) and Kenji Urai as Henry VI (left) in *Henry VI* (New National Theatre Tokyo)


Tatsuya Nakadai as Macbeth (right) and Mayumi Wakamura as Lady Macbeth (left) in *Macbeth* (The Mumeijuku)

“Thy husband is thy lord, thy life, thy keeper, / Thy head, thy sovereign.” (Act 5, Scene 2) Kamejiro Ichikawa as Katharina (right) in *The Taming of the Threw* (Saitama Arts Theatre)