

Intercultural Performance of Shakespeare's Plays: An Exploration of Intercultural Understanding by Focusing on *The Winter's Tale* by Ryutopia Noh Theatre¹

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I. Shakespeare and Intercultural Performance

1. Interculturalism Today

Intercultural performances attempt to explore new relationships between different cultures through interchange, learning and understanding, in order to create an original and innovative work. Rustom Bharucha writes that interculturalism can be “viewed as a ‘two-way street,’ based on mutual reciprocity of needs.”² However, he and other postcolonial critics have often criticized that in reality, such has not wholly been the case. There are theoretical and practical difficulties, problems, and even dangers of interculturalism ranging from “excessive desire for others,” through the spread of globalization and the interplay of globalization and localization, to the increasing complexity of contemporary cultural exchange, transformation, and hybridization. While respecting postcolonial critics but avoiding from their recurrent concepts of a dominant culture, exploited culture, hegemonic culture, etc., and aspiring instead to transculturalism, “métissage,” and integration, Josette Féral writes all the same that interculturalism should head toward the avowing of our differences through *respect for others*, in contrast with globalization that seduces us into sameness; only true interculturalism can put our self-conscious resistance at the centre of its concern and can stress crossings and cuts between cultures and allow us to *mutually learn from each other* without robbing from each other.³

2. Learning and Understanding Cultures as a Life-Long Journey

Political and economic factors are usually involved in intercultural encounters and it is vital to consider such cultural dynamics. However, I shall focus on learning and understanding cultures through an intercultural performance. Intercultural performances have a dual purpose: one is to fuse different cultures and create an original and innovative work, and another is

to promote intercultural awareness and to learn and understand cultures--learning and understanding as an ever-changing process and a life-long journey. Although most scholars of Shakespeare are concerned with the former, my main concern is with the latter because it must be the very basis of a good intercultural performance. Without good intercultural awareness, we cannot properly fuse cultures. If our goal were to be toward transculturalism, it would also presuppose and depend on our understanding of cultural identities, differences, etc. When we watch a good intercultural performance, in other words, a good result of cultural fusion, we want to dissect it and consider what cultural traditions and styles have been used and how they have been combined. Many persons of contemporary theatre incorporate a wide range of cultural traditions and styles from all over the world so extensively that it is no easy task to identify them. However, it is vital to identify the most notable factors and appreciate the artistic synthesis. I therefore would like to explore intercultural performances of Shakespeare's plays from the perspective of intercultural awareness, and hope my endeavour will complement other approaches toward intercultural performances of Shakespeare's plays.

There are many kinds of intercultural performances of Shakespeare's plays, traditional or highly experimental, in Japan. In this paper I shall focus on *The Winter's Tale* performed by Ryutopia (Niigata City Performing Arts Center) as part of its Noh Theatre Shakespeare series. It is because I find its performance highly promising in terms of intercultural awareness. In previous papers I have discussed *Titus Andronicus* directed by Yukio Ninagawa, *Othello* by Satoshi Miyagi, and *Hamlet* by Mansai Nomura. Ninagawa is internationally acclaimed for his spectacular work and Japanization; Miyagi explores the fusion between the East and the West, and Nomura, a popular *kyogen* actor and director, tackles Shakespeare's plays in his own way. Although Ryutopia is a rather new company, founded in 2004 and directed by Yoshihiro Kurita, it has been acclaimed in Japan as well as in Eastern Europe and Germany for its splendid fusion of cultural traditions. Kurita, a director and actor who trained for many years in traditional Japanese *Buyo* dance and at the *kabuki* theatre of Ennosuke Ichikawa, was eager to fuse Shakespeare and noh in an original performance. As such, the intercultural project *The Winter's Tale* by Ryutopia was born. At one artist interview, he said that he "hoped this marriage of a Shakespeare's play with Noh theater would produce a new mixed breed of original Shakespeare that could not be experienced in Britain or anywhere else in Japan, only on our

stage.”⁴ In the examination of the performance of *The Winters Tale* by Ryutopia, one finds a series of intercultural encounters experienced by Kurita, the members of his company, and the audience in Japan and Europe. Further consideration of the problems and possibilities of intercultural performance that develop from these encounters will be of great interest.

II. The Performance of Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale* in Noh Theatre by Ryutopia in Japan and Hungary

1. Ryutopia, directed by Yoshiriro Kurita⁵

In Japan noh adaptations of Shakespeare's plays have been performed for many years; including the recent examples of Ueda Kuniyoshi's *Hamlet* at Suidobashi in 2005, and *Lear* at the Cerulean Tower Noh Theatre in Shibuya in 2008. Ryutopia's main concept is to perform Shakespeare's plays in the Ryutopia Noh Theatre (*nohgakudo*), or to be more exact, to perform the abundant words of Shakespeare on “the empty stage.” It is a simple wooden stage that is 6 square meters with four pillars⁶ and *hashigakari*, the narrow bridge to the right of the stage used by the principal actors to enter the stage. As can be seen by the props and gestures, noh, a major form of Japanese musical and dance drama, together with its closely-related *kyogen* farce, is characterized by its simplicity and symbolic expressions. Noh plays have “shown” their profound visions to the imagination of audiences since at least the fourteenth century. The noh stage is the epitome of minimalist aesthetics; it is indeed an empty space or a naked stage. The more a stage is filled with realistic props, the greater the loss of the great dimension of the invisible expanse. The noh stage is the ultimate dramatic space where you can see the universe with your imagination.

There are some similarities between the original Globe Theatre where many plays of Shakespeare were performed and the noh theatre. First, both of them had thrust stages, surrounded by the audience. Second, whereas *nohgakudo* possesses ritualistic nature, the structure of the Globe Theatre might have reflected the contemporary alchemical thought as inferred by Frances A. Yates in her book, *Theatre of the World* (1969). Third, both theatres had simple lighting and props, as well as empty stages left to the imagination of the audience.

Kurita states that Shakespeare is a great British dramatist of the late sixteenth and the early seventeenth century and is famous for his rich verbal expressions. In his play, a main character undergoes a series of violent

upheavals of fate, as if influenced by celestial movements: a divine will seems to be at work. It is a magic of words that is able to show such a gigantic world. If that great world is filled with realistic props or gorgeous ornaments, or if it is reduced to a daily scale, its true nature would be lost. In the Noh Theatre Shakespeare series by Ryutopia, Kurita's company restores the world of Shakespearean imagination on the noh stage by means of the Japanese spirit and techniques. His ambition thus is truly intercultural.

Kurita wonders what impact his Japanese company will have on the world, by performing Shakespeare's dramatic texts, which are now both British and world classics. Although Shakespeare's plays are considered universal, it is still good to question why they have become so popular all over the world. With the Noh Theatre Shakespeare series by Ryutopia, Kurita hopes to go beyond transmitting his dramatic message to contemporary Japanese people and to challenge the classics from a contemporary, international perspective. Shakespeare's plays give him such impetus. He hopes to continue to try new ways, while training his actors in the best way possible. They cannot move ahead if they only imitate their predecessors; they cannot produce anything new without experimenting. Together with the actors and staff, Kurita wants to explore the plays of Shakespeare for what they truly are and to create something that no one has ever watched.

Shakespeare and noh theatre seem totally different. However, when Ryutopia began the Shakespeare series in 2004, the audience found them amazingly compatible. As mentioned above, Elizabethan theatre had a thrust stage, which was virtually empty except for a few props, surrounded by an audience left to its imagination. This is much the same as the structure of a noh theatre; with the same thrust stage in an auditorium, with few props and an audience left to its imagination. Shakespeare wrote his plays for his contemporary theatre and used it to the full. Scenes were changed simply by the appearance of characters and physical expressions. The audience enjoyed the plays, imagining a great deal on its own. Shakespearean plays have come to life and have shown their real worth in the noh theatre in Japan in this twenty-first century.

Kurita has directed five Shakespeare's plays, *Macbeth* (2004, 2006, 2007) in collaboration with *kabuki* actors in 2006 and 2007, *King Lear-His Shadow* (2004), *The Winter's Tale* (2005), *Othello* (2006), and *Hamlet* (2007), which were acclaimed for their intercultural experiment and original synthesis. In particular, *The Winter's Tale* was invited to the Shakespeare Festival in Romania, and so Ryutopia toured Eastern Europe in 2006.

Because of its enormous popularity, the company was invited to the 4th Shakespeare Festival in Gyula, Hungary, performing on the final day of the two-week festival, July 12th, 2008. I went to observe how the local audience responded to an intercultural performance by a Japanese company.

2. Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale* by Ryutopia Noh Theatre in Japan

Ryutopia performed *The Winter's Tale* in its hometown Niigata, a provincial city, and in Tokyo in September 2005. Main cast members were Ayumi Tanida (Leontes, King of Sicilia), Ken Nakaide (Polixenes, King of Bohemia), Haruyo Yamaga (Hermione), Michiko Yokoyama (Mamillius/Perdita), Yoshihiro Kurita (Antigonus/Shepherd), and Takuya Minami (Florizel).⁷

Kurita used the Japanese text translated by Kazuko Matsuoka, who has been translating the complete plays by Shakespeare. While retaining most speeches in the play with the exception of the shepherds' feast and other clownish scenes in Bohemia in Acts 4 and 5, he re-organized the mythological play with brilliant simplicity.

The performance employs a variety of elements, Western and Japanese, ranging from its theme music "Barcarolle (The Boatman's Song)," a popular solo-piano piece from Tchaikovsky's *The Seasons*, to beautiful costumes, to snow-white petals which keep falling in the background throughout the performance. Although most of the actors were young, they were trained well, if not sufficiently, in voice and acting. Kurita showed his talent as an actor as well; playing the comic role of the Shepherd, inviting the laughter of the audience. Tanida was impressive with his presence and realistic actions as Leontes stricken with madness and jealousy, and he also played the King with complete repentance and royal dignity in the second half. Yamaga played the Queen with beauty, elegance and moral strength. The petite Yokoyama played Mamillius and Perdita with charm.

One of the novellest directions in this performance of *The Winter's Tale* is its use of *kotodama* (word spirits and sounds that are pleasing to the kami—a term used to refer to gods in Shinto), which are played by four silent girls in kimonos, who often appear on stage with round paper lanterns, gliding across the polished floor or standing or sitting in the rear section of the stage. With regard to *kotodama*, Kurita says the following:

For our third production, *A [sic] Winter's Tale*, the style is one wherein a mother is relating a tale to her children, and therefore, I wanted to use a

stylization wherein the children appear as *kotodama*, or spirits of word, who narrate the story of the play.⁸

In fact, the children's performance is more than what is mentioned by Kurita. The play commences with the appearance of *kotodama*, in the form of the four girls. They place twelve lanterns, representing the twelve months of the year, on the darkened stage. (There is a type of performance called "candle noh" in which a play is performed by candlelight. It inspired Kurita when he organized the stage presentation of *The Winter's Tale*.) Mamillius then takes a lantern from a white *oke* (pail), and toward the end of the play, Perdita repeats the same act with her mother and puts it back into the pail; the play ends with a mysteriously-lit lantern ascending over the darkened stage. The *kotodama* represent the mysterious power that people in ancient Japan believed in; that is, that *kotodama* could grant their wishes. As the Delphic oracle functions dramatically in *The Winter's Tale*, *kotodama* symbolize divine verbal powers. They can also represent the wonder of the world formed by such powers along with that of Shakespeare's verbal art and tales.

Kurita's greatest sense of direction is shown in the second half of the performance where the supposedly dead Hermione remains on stage. The Queen, accompanied by Paulina, is tried for adultery and is believed to be dead at the end of the first half. Having lost his infant daughter, his son, and his wife, a guilt-stricken Leontes repents and mourns for sixteen years. In the second half, Hermione is concealed within a *miya* (a kind of shrine), like a masked sculpture of a beautiful woman, before appearing in the recognition scene. In Shakespeare's original play, Hermione suddenly appears at the end of Act 5. However, in this performance, she remains motionless on stage for over one hour so that the audience can feel the length of her sixteen years of suffering. When Perdita, Florizel, Polixenes, and Camillo come to Sicily from Bohemia, Leontes finds his estranged daughter and her lover, his friend, and his courtier; Paulina accompanies them to see the sculpture. To everyone's surprise, she tells it to move. In the dead silence, and then to the subsequent romantic melody of "Barcarolle," the sculpture begins to move very slowly and embraces her daughter and husband. After sixteen years, the royal family is reunited at last with the great loss of Mamillius. This is indeed a dramatic moment of sheer wonder and beauty. Although Mamillius dies in the first part of the performance, his spirit remains on stage and walks quietly with a lantern until he is saved by the reunion of his family. In this noh theatre performance of Shakespeare, it is of vital importance for the dead or spirit to

be purified and saved in the end, thus representing the underlying belief of noh. In this connection, it is equally important for Leontes, who committed a grave sin, to finally be saved after his longtime remorse.

While understanding the cultural traditions of Shakespearean theatre and Japanese theatre, Kurita effectively employs the Japanese spirit and techniques and creates an original performance of Shakespeare with brilliant simplicity. Combining Shakespeare with noh and other Japanese traditional styles, *The Winter's Tale* by Ryutopia revisits the true virtue and beauty of words and also makes them accessible to the contemporary Japanese audience.

Kurita does not appear to resist the authority of Shakespeare unlike most postcolonial critics and leftist theatre people in Asia and elsewhere. Instead, he respects the classics, both Shakespearean and Japanese, and at the same time, as a talented director and actor, aspires for originality and innovation by challenging them. In fact, he is critical of modern, western down-to-earth realism and its Japanese equivalent, along with the Japanese productions of Shakespeare's plays in that style. He is ambitious in performing the plays of Shakespeare in their "true" form. He attempts to create a new performance, restoring the original and at the same time challenging its cultural boundaries.⁹ While watching *The Winter's Tale* by Ryutopia, we are aware of Kurita's interpretation and direction of the original Shakespearean play in English and its Japanese translation through the actors' bodily movements and actions, costumes, music, lighting, and other elements. All of these elements interact in a complex manner and affect the senses.

3. *The Winter's Tale* in Gyula, Hungary

Gyula is a beautiful resort town located in the Southern Great Plain of Hungary, three miles from the Romanian border. It seems that Shakespeare festivals are booming with the development of tourism and cultural industries in post-socialist Eastern and Central Europe. Following Gdansk (Poland) and Craiova (Romania), the Castle Theatre in Gyula launched a Shakespeare Festival in 2005 as "a new place of cult" "to worship the 'Half of Creation,' as Shakespeare was named by the Hungarian poet Sandor Petofi" with the "aim to let the highest quality of Shakespeare productions be performed in Gyula."¹⁰ Ryutopia was honoured to be invited to perform *The Winter's Tale* at the festival in the summer of 2008, as well as in other cities in Romania, Moldova, Poland and Germany.

I went to see it for several reasons. First, Romanian theatre reviews translated into Japanese, British reviews, and Kazuko Matsuoka's interview of Kurita at the annual Shakespeare Festival by the Shakespeare Society of Japan in April 2008, all reported on the company's triumphant performance of *The Winter's Tale* at the fifth triennial Shakespeare Festival in Craiova, in south-west Romania in 2006. They all said that the European audience loved its formalization and spirituality. Regarding their success in Craiova and requests from England, Germany, Israel and Holland, Kurita says:

They all said they loved the formalized Shakespeare. It made them see that Shakespeare is not "realist" theater as most European dramatists understand it. They had forgotten that point, and many Shakespeare's plays nowadays fail because the actors are just declaiming long plots in a quasi-realist style. They said they like the way we formalized the play in one tone and filtered out unnecessary elements to make it simpler.¹¹

I wanted to examine for myself what kind of response the intercultural performance by Ryutopia would receive from a foreign audience. Although the company toured throughout Europe for several weeks, I could only go to Hungary for a week.¹² Toward the end of the above-mentioned interview, I asked Kurita how much the European audience could have understood the Japanese traditions of *noh*, *kabuki*, etc. He answered that his company does not perform a *noh* Shakespeare, nor a *noh* adaptation, but instead hopes to show a Shakespeare play in Japanese spirituality and style. He added that it would be futile for his company to compete with the Royal Shakespeare Company; however, it could "perform a sin (or sins)," a performance which could be understood by a foreign audience. This was another reason why I went to Hungary; I wanted to confirm the validity of his remarks.

I would like to describe what I saw and could consider there. While my description is limited, especially since I do not know Hungarian (the Magyar language), it is an integral part of my research exploring the intercultural performances of Shakespeare's plays.

The Winter's Tale by Ryutopia was performed on Saturday, July 12, on the final day of the 4th Shakespeare Festival in Gyula, and the first day of the company's 2008 European tour. It was described by Lökös Ildikó in the programme:

The Winter's Tale is one of the most important performances of Ryutopia

Noh Theatre. The director, Yoshihiro Kurita combines noh theatre with Shakespeare. The young theatre company, which was founded only four years ago, started with *Macbeth* and continued with Shakespeare. Two worlds are mixed in *The Winter's Tale*: a world of insanity and a world of humanity. Besides, the distinctive features of a Shakespearean tale—foundling, baseless jealousy, sudden revenge, unexpected meetings—are also found in the stories of the noh theatre. Also, the personified time is part of the Japanese mentality. Kurita has never tried to take over the European theatrical traditions. Instead, he found an [*sic*] European story, and to this story, he looked for an empty space. Finally, he found this looked for empty space in noh theatre.¹³

A member of Ryutopia wrote a brief note about the July 12th performance in Gyula on his website.¹⁴ Apart from Hungarian subtitles provided by the Festival authorities, the company brought English subtitles from Japan. Considering the theatrical effect of projecting them on a gossamer curtain as if they were rising in space, the company planned to use the English as pieces of *kotodama* (word spirits). However, when they showed subtitles in two languages simultaneously, the director of the Festival insisted that this would confuse the audience and suggested performing the play without English subtitles. Furthermore, he insisted that people in the audience would have to sit from the ninth row or else they would have difficulty watching the Hungarian subtitles and the stage. The company had to give up projecting subtitles in two languages. People were not allowed to sit in many seats in the front row and as a result, the close relationship between the stage and the audience of a noh theatre was not completely there. Yet for all these conflicts, the Ryutopia member was content that the performance was successful and the enthusiastic audience gave a warm applause. In fact, I observed an eager audience in Gyula watching the stage and Hungarian subtitles, and a five minute applause at the end of the play. Two days earlier, I watched an internationally-acclaimed *Macbeth* performed by a Lithuanian company with Hungarian subtitles and I found only a few in the audience clapping perfunctorily. In comparison with that, it was evident that the Hungarian audience was fascinated with *The Winter's Tale* by Ryutopia.

The performance was held at the Erkel Arts Centre from 8:35pm to 11:05pm with a fifteen-minute intermission. Approximately 180 people were in the audience, and appeared to mainly be Hungarian. Everyone received a free Hungarian-English leaflet of the main programmes of the Shakespeare

Festival, and a more comprehensive booklet of the festival was also available in Hungarian. Description of *The Winter's Tale* by Ryutopia seemed quite concise. The local audience was provided with minimal information of the Japanese theatre company, including noh and the empty stage, as well as the affinity between noh and Shakespeare. It is not clear whether or not “the personified time is part of the Japanese mentality,” but the idea “time will resolve it” is common in Japan, suggesting that time is like an almighty god. Moreover, an old man is a stock character in noh, and can represent personified time, a godlike wise person who knows everything.

In Japan most in the audience would most likely feel cleansed by watching not only *The Winter's Tale*, but also other Ryutopian Shakespeare in the noh theatre, as if experiencing a vision of a purification ceremony in another world. At the Gyula festival, Ryutopia performed *The Winter's Tale* on, not a noh stage, but just an ordinary theatre stage. This was surely a great change. In my view, however, a noh stage is not necessary for this performance. An empty stage is required; as such, any ordinary stage could serve as an empty stage, such as the Owl Spot in Tokyo, where Ryutopia performed *Hamlet* in 2007 and *The Winter's Tale* in 2008.¹⁵ In addition, there were several differences between the performance in Japan and Gyula. For example, Polixenese was played by Hirokazu Kohchi, who played Leontes in the 2006 Romanian tour, Perdita was played Misaki Machiya, Florizel played by Maeko Ohyama who cross-dressed; the four girls playing *hotodama* wore in orange-coloured kimonos with small triangular veils in Japan, but in Gyula they were chalk-faced in white kimonos just as spirits and/or sculptures. The company used Hungarian subtitles for the local audience. Although Kurita changed his directing to suit a proscenium setting, his leading concept of this performance remained intact. The recognition scene where Hermione starts to move with truly dramatic effect and sheer beauty impressed the audience in Gyula; “Barcarolle” composed by a Russian composer sounded just right in a Central European country. Unfortunately, I do not think that the Hungarian audience, nor the theatre people really understood the symbolic function of *hotodama*, which is further discussed in detail in II. 4.

I cannot say much about the intercultural understanding in this performance since my knowledge and observation are very limited. This said, *The Winter's Tale* in Gyula was surely a good start for the Ryutopia company, the Hungarian people, and scholars of Shakespeare to explore the possibilities of developing Shakespeare performances, to broaden our

perspectives, and to deepen our cultural awareness. In fact, I was convinced of the validity of Kurita's idea of "performing a sin (or sins)" among a foreign audience. Having a Japanese theatre company, or any other company that can grasp the essence of a Shakespeare's play, perform a simpler or filtered form today, rather than to realistically perform the whole plot and speeches for three and a half hours, seems more effective. Actually, *The Winter's Tale* by Ryutopia employs both realist acting and formalist acting: Tanida played Leontes who, all of a sudden, turns madly jealous with violent words and movements with realist force verging on disrupting the first half of the performance. In the second half, by strong contrast, he plays the King in a formalist style, with deep remorse and grief over his sins as seen in his facial expressions, postures, pauses and silence rather than by his words. Although more integration is needed, the performance succeeds in representing a sin or human folly with non-realistic acting, enabling those in the audience to see it effectively in their minds.

4. Problems and possibilities of *The Winter's Tale* by Ryutopia as an intercultural performance

The Winter's Tale by Ryutopia appears to be an intercultural performance without serious problems in Japan. Said this, its noh theatre Shakespeare series as such might face possible limitations of modernizing his plays on the noh stage due to strict rules of its use. Furthermore, another difficulty may arise especially in performing comedies because they are not always suited to noh theatre; however, Kurita has at times employed the comical *kyogen* style in his Shakespeare series including *The Winter's Tale*, and could possibly combine Shakespeare comedies with Japanese traditional styles.

Although *The Winter's Tale* by Ryutopia was a success at the Shakespeare Festival in Gyula and greatly contributed to the cultural exchange between Japan and Hungary, it did have some problems and limitations. I would like to consider one example here. A major problem appears to be that both theatre people and the audience do not fully understand the nature and function of *kotodama*, one of the most important and profound dramatic inventions in this intercultural performance.¹⁶ Most educated and older Japanese audiences understand it without any particular explanation. *Kotodama*, word spirits, are well suited for a Shakespeare play in noh style since the demons, spirits, and gods in noh play are usually other-worldly. *The Winter's Tale* is one of Shakespeare's greatest romances, created

by his verbal magic. It is indeed a splendid idea to start the performance with the appearance of *kotodama* and finish it with a piece of *kotodama*, thus symbolizing the magical power of Shakespearean words and tales.

The audiences in Gyula and elsewhere in Europe seem to appreciate *kotodama* only as a kind of spiritual and beautiful show.¹⁷ *Kotodama* are Kurita's addition and do not appear in the original text, and even if they were not properly understood, this does not change the overall success of the performance. Nevertheless, it is a pity that such a great idea is not fully understood abroad.

When a play is performed interculturally, one hopes to create something new but at the same time, one puts oneself at a risk of losing one's cultural identity or traditions in the midst of cultural conflicts, interchange, and compromises within a set time. This said, I wonder if both sides of the performance, the Ryutopia company and the Gyula Festival attendees, had sufficiently communicated, and I hope that their relationship improves in the future.

Much can be expected of Ryutopia since it is still a young and challenging company with a talented director, well-disciplined or promising players, and a capable staff. I hope they continue to perform Shakespeare's plays, and can add the knowledge gained from their tour of Europe and other places.

Collaboration is vital for any good intercultural performance. Kurita is a great collaborator in that he combines Shakespeare's plays with Japanese styles; he employed *ningyo joururi*, a Japanese traditional puppet theatre, in *Hamlet*, and performed *Macbeth* with kabuki actors, and has been experimenting ever since. Although he is not overtly political, he resists the expansion of globalization, tries to retain Japanese traditions in his own way, and hopes to perform his works abroad. This may provide a good opportunity for the company to hold workshops or collaborations with other, especially foreign, theatre companies and further develop intercultural awareness, leading to an even more hybrid form and original intercultural performance of Shakespeare's plays and providing greater understanding on how the performance is understood and received abroad.¹⁸

III. Conclusion

This paper examined the performance of *The Winter's Tale* by Ryutopia in Japan and in Hungary. Although the latter was a very significant

performance, there were some problems from the perspective of intercultural awareness, as evident by the example of *kotodama*. Considering the language and cultural barriers, both sides should have been better equipped to understand each other. Most non-Japanese people, Hungarian and otherwise, would not understand *kotodama* without an explanation. A post-performance discussion by Ryutopia or any other theatre company would have been useful in providing the eager audience with an opportunity to ask questions and satisfy their curiosity. On the other hand, it would become acutely apparent how little the Japanese know about the Hungarian and other Eastern and Central European cultures. We, the Japanese, would be overwhelmed by the sheer amount of information we could learn and understand. However, Shakespearean scholars cannot remain ignorant of that part of the world; Hungarians regard Shakespeare as their native author. Further, the World Shakespeare Congress will be held in the Czech Republic in 2011; it is now time and will continue to be important to reconsider Shakespeare in that region.

We can expect more intercultural performances of Shakespearean plays around the world. These will present further problems and possibilities that merit investigation. With the advance of performance studies, scholars of Shakespeare, whether Asian or not, have been vigorously engaged in creating a new paradigm, both theoretical and practical, while attempting to view Shakespeare from a diversity of perspectives. More than ever, it is also vital to promote intercultural awareness in this age of unprecedented cultural mobility through the performance of Shakespeare's plays with innovative theatrical and critical insight.¹⁹

Notes

- 1 This is part of my project, "Intercultural Performances of Shakespeare's Plays: A Model for Promoting Intercultural Understanding," conducted for the 2007–2009 Grants-in-Aid for Scientific Research (Kakenhi) (C), the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science. I have published the following papers related to this subject: "The Intercultural Performances of Shakespeare: Yukio Ninagawa's *Titus Andronicus*, Satoshi Miyagi's *Ku Na'uka Dream Noh Othello*, and Mansai Nomura's *Hamlet* Considered," in *Shakespeare's Culture and Language*, ed. Hiromi Fuyuki (in Japanese; Tokyo: Waseda UP, 2007) 279–304; "A Report on the Performances of Shakespeare's Plays at the 2007 Edinburgh International Festival Fringe," *Essays in Teaching Foreign Languages* (in English; Tsukuba University, Foreign Language Center), Vol. 30 (March 2008): 171–181; "The Outcomes and Problems of

Intercultural Theatre Collaborations with Focus on *Mobile*, a Collaboration by Singaporean, Thai, Philippine, and Japanese Theatre People,” *Studies in Literature and Language* (in Japanese; Tsukuba University, Graduate School of Humanities and Social Sciences), Vol. 51 (March 2008): 11–26; “*Thondan*: A Report on *Titus Andronicus*, translated in literary Tamil in Singapore,” *Shakespeare News* (in Japanese; the Shakespeare Society of Japan), Vol. 47, No. 3 (March 2008): 37–40. As I have already discussed or mentioned major references on Shakespeare and intercultural performance in these papers, I shall not mention them in the present paper, unless necessary; instead, I shall include a select bibliography at the end of the paper.

- 2 *The Theatre and the World: Performance and the Politics of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1990): 2.
- 3 “*Bunka kara Ekkyobunka he* (Beyond the Cultural Perspective Toward Transculturalism Identities, or Is Interculturalism Still),” trans. by Masako Hirai, in *Engekiron no Henbou* (Changes in Theatre Studies), ed. Mitsunari Mori (Tokyo: Ronsosha, 2007) 75–105. My italics. Josette Féral is a professor at L’École supérieure de théâtre de l’Université du Québec, and the former president of the International Theatre Institute, 2000–2003.
- 4 “Artist Interview: A meeting of Eastern and Western classics: The Noh-staged Shakespeare of Yoshihiro Kurita,” the Japan Foundation, *Performing Arts Network Japan*, 15 March 2005, online, 11 August 2008. See also the summary of the discussion between Kurita and Kazuko Matsuoka, *Shakespeare News*, Vol. 48, No.1 (September 2008): 67–73.
- 5 This section is based on the following source: <http://www.ryutopia.or.jp>, in Japanese, online, 11 August 2008.
- 6 In the Ryutopia Noh Theatre in Niigata one of the pillars, *metsukebashira*, which is especially vital for a masked noh player to act or dance but can obstruct the audience, can be removed when a Shakespeare’s play is performed.
- 7 The DVD of Ryutopia Noh Theatre *Winter’s Tale* is available. See <http://www.ryutopia.or.jp>.
- 8 “Artist Interview: A meeting of Eastern and Western classics: The Noh-staged Shakespeare of Yoshihiro Kurita,” the Japan Foundation, *Performing Arts Network Japan*, 15 March 2005, online, 11 August 2008.
- 9 Yong Li Lan concludes her paper as follows: “What survives of Shakespeare without his language is how he has come to represent our need to recover, at the same time as we reject, the original. And it is the loss of, and need for, an authentic cultural identity that, finding a stage in Shakespeare’s universality, constitutes the signature of his intercultural performance.” (548) “Shakespeare and the Fiction of the Intercultural,” in *A Companion to Shakespeare and Performance*, ed. by Barbara Hodgdon and W. B. Worthen (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007) 527–49. Although he is not a self-conscious postcolonial director, Kurita might understand her position.
- 10 Adrienne Darvay Nagy, “Shakespeare Festival—Gyula: Summary,” *Shakespeare*

Fesztivál Gyula 2005–2007, ed. Adrienne Darvay Nagy (Gyula: Schneider Nyomda Kft., 2007) 57.

- 11 Nobuko Tanaka, "Yoshihiro Kurita: Filtering Shakespeare with Noh," *The Japan Times*, 17 August 2006, online, <http://search.japantimes.co.jp/cgi-bin/ft200608017a1.html>, 11 August 2008.
- 12 In summer 2008, the company toured as follows: Gyula, Hungary, 12th July (Shakespeare Fesztivál Gyula); Oradea, Romania, 16th July, Cluj Napoca, Romania, 19th July, Botosani, Romania, 22nd July; Chisinou, Moldova, 26th and 27th July; Gdansk, Poland, 2nd and 3rd August (Festiwal Szekspirowski, Gdansk); Neuss, Germany, 9th August (Shakespeare Festival im Globe Neuss).
- 13 "4th Shakespeare Fesztivál Gyula, June 30-July 12, 2008, Main Programs."
- 14 <http://rnseuro08.exblog.jp/blog.asp?iid=&acv=&dif=&opt=2&srl=9263396&dte=2008%2D07%2D16+11%3A03%3A00%2E000>, online, 11 August 2008.
- 15 With regard to the Craiova Shakespeare Festival held in Romania in April 2006, however, Kurita himself says, "'The Winter's Tale' we performed there was completely different from the one in Japan. I changed the directing to suit a proscenium setting and to create a noh-style space, we placed twelve paper lanterns in a big circle on the floor and the actors acted inside that circle for the most part. In addition, I positioned human pillars at the corners to create an imaginative representation of a noh stage." Nobuko Tanaka, "Yoshihiro Kurita: Filtering Shakespeare with noh," *The Japan Times*, 17 August 2006, online, <http://search.japantimes.co.jp/cgi-bin/ft200608017a1.html>, 11 August 2008. I do not believe that Ryutopia *Winter's Tale* in Gyula as well as in Craiova is not "completely different from the one in Japan," as Kurita says, even though it made a significant change in his direction for a proscenium stage. Although a noh stage was unavailable in Europe, I am fairly convinced that Kurita managed to create its alternative empty stage.
- 16 As discussed above, the Hungarian director did not appreciate the English subtitles as *kotodama*; the programme misspelled it as "KOZODAMA." (To his honour, he was very excited to have a Japanese company in the festival.) It was not mentioned in its reviews in Romania in 2006; according to Kurita, however, a Romanian reviewer made incisive comments on *kotodama* in 2008. When I asked Kurita if the Europeans understood the function of *kotodama*, he was doubtful. Although the Romanians did not understand the function of *kotodama* in 2006, however, he obtained a review of his company's performance in 2008, in which the local reviewer discussed *kotodama*. This is precisely an example to illustrate that intercultural understanding has been promoted along with closer ties.
- 17 There is a possibility, however, that in Central and Eastern Europe, where Catholic and Orthodox Churches are traditionally dominant, the local people are accustomed to watching candles flaring in the dark dome or church and that the lanterns (*kotodama*) remind the local audience of that or similar religious sight. Incidentally, in the programme of *The Winter's Tale* performed in Craiova in 2006,

Kurita writes: "The visualization of time: that is to be able to see through the eyes of the gods./In Shakespeare's plays, two worlds are intermixed./One sets forth the foolishness of mortals, the other is seen through the eyes of the gods that preside over the human world./*The Winter's Tale* is surely thus: a play in which we are confronted with the strangulation of existence in the human world/through the action of foolish people, and how it is recovered under the gaze of the gods./The ray cast into the dark of a world closed off by a long winter, as revealed in this play, could also be asked to serve as a herald of dawn to the corners of our world that even now do not know this light./And in the light that burns in foolish human hearts, in the instant in which true brightness is restored,/and treachery made sagacity, is there not also the possibility of salvation of one's self?"

- 18 In fact, a collaborative project between Kurita and a Moldovan theatre company is likely to materialize in the period 2009–2010.
<http://rnseuro08.exblog.jp/blog.asp?iid=&acv=&dif=&opt=2&sr=9263396&dte=2008%2D07%2D16+11%3A03%3A00%2E000>, online, 11 August 2008.
- 19 See the three conditions for intercultural performance of Shakespearean plays in order to promote intercultural awareness as discussed in my paper, "A Report on the Performances of Shakespeare's Plays at the 2007 Edinburgh International Festival Fringe," *Essays in Teaching Foreign Languages* (in English; Tsukuba University, Foreign Language Center), Vol.30 (March 2008): 171–181.

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