



Dialogue
Creating the Next 60 Years

Project Report

October 25, 2015

ICU 60th Anniversary Project

Homecoming: Drama as Dialogue



60th Anniversary Project

INTERNATIONAL CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY



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The first ICU Homecoming Symposia was held two years ago in celebration of the university's 60th anniversary. This year's theme was "Drama as Dialogue," and the presenters discussed how drama can be a form of dialogue, and at how – whether in ancient times or the modern day, in the East or West – theater has always been an integral part of our lives.



Coordinator

Yoshinori Sano, Professor | Classical Studies



Lecture 1

The dialogue between actors and the audience:
"kojo" and "home-kotoba" in kabuki

Kenji Yanai, Associate Professor | Japanese Literature

Yanai In kabuki, there is a type of dialogue that takes place between the actors in the fictional world on-stage and the audience in the real world in the form of callout phrases.

The call-outs made by the actors to the audience – made in the persona of the actors themselves rather than the characters they play – are known as "kojo." There are even examples in which the play will stop mid-performance for kojo to be uttered.

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Kabuki performances present a concept known as “three-level fiction.” Actors have their birth names, their stage names, and while on stage, they also take on their character’s names. When speaking *kojo*, the actors take on their stage personas, and when they finish, they return to the persona of the role they are playing. In modern plays, actors tend to remain in character, but in kabuki, it is almost as if a series of translucent veils lie between reality and fantasy, separating the triple persona each actor maintains but leaving each somewhat visible.

On the audience’s part, we have the traditional “*kake-goe*” calls that are still heard in modern performances, but in the past there was also a custom of calling out “*home-kotoba*.” Literally translated the term means “words of praise,” and they involved a representative from the audience climbing up to the “*hanamichi*” portion of the stage and praising an actor. These phrases began to be written in a diverse array of beautiful verse using poetic meter, and theaters thought that amateurs would be unable to say them correctly, so actors eventually took over for the audience. Pamphlets containing transcriptions of *home-kotoba* even began to be published. The pamphlets also described when the phrases should be called out, and people began to think that it would be better to go watch a show on days when the *home-kotoba* could be heard. In 1872, at a performance of *Kokusenya Sugatano Utsushie* at the *Murayama-za*, seven geisha from *Asakusa* performed *home-kotoba* for an actor named *Sawamura Tanosuke the 3rd*. The event became so well-known that it appeared in woodblock prints, which shows that *home-kotoba* were seen as one part of the enjoyment of kabuki performances.

The end of a performance of *Sukeroku Yukari no Edozakura* at the *Kabuki-za* in 1896 is the last recorded instance of *home-kotoba* being heard during a play. With the end of the Meiji emperor’s reign and the beginning of the Taisho era, western theatrical influences began seep into the kabuki world. A clear separation between actors and audience became the norm, and theaters wanted performances finish in the advertised time rather than change in length at the whim of the performers as they had in the past. Even the kabuki world had become modernized, and the characteristic dialogue between the audience and the actors in kabuki disappeared.



Lecture 2

Student dialogue in drama production

Christopher E.J. Simons, Senior Associate Professor
| English Literature

Sano Senior Associate Professor Simons was unable to attend the symposium due to having to present at a conference, so in his stead, a video message from Simons and clips from films produced by his students were played. Simons’ students analyze and review dramatic

works from a historical and literary perspective, then perform and film the plays. The first two clips the audience were shown were from different performances of Shakespeare's *King Lear*. The clips showed portions of Act one, Scene one, in which Lear tells his three daughters of his plans to abdicate his throne and split his realm between them. When he informs them of his plan, his two elder daughters ply their father with sweet words, pleasing him greatly. However, his youngest daughter, Cordelia, gives him her true opinion, and he becomes angry. The first of the clips seems to have been filmed in an izakaya. The second opens with the figure of the king after his betrayal at the hands of his two elder daughter, then the credits are presented, and the audience sees the scene in which Lear speaks with his daughters. We see how each group aimed to create their own interpretation of Shakespeare's famous play.

The next clip showed a scene from *Copenhagen*, a work by the English playwright Michael Frayn. The play is based upon an actual meeting that took place between German physicist Werner Heisenberg and his mentor, the Danish physicist Niels Bohr, after they found themselves on opposite sides during World War II, each engaged in research aimed at developing the atomic bomb. One day in 1941, Heisenberg visited Bohr and his wife in Copenhagen, which was then under Nazi rule, and this play is a fictional look at what they may have talked about that day. It was interesting to see how the ICU students interpreted the imagined conversation of the two men.

ICU students in the drama classes taught by Simons engage in dialogue by discussing how to perform and interpret each work, and the clips the audience were shown provided a glimpse into the process of producing dramatic works.



Lecture 2

Drama as dialogue through translation of French theatrical works
Shoichiro Iwakiri, Professor | French Literature

Iwakiri People tend to think that dialogue – i.e. conversational exchanges between characters – is the heart of drama, but lines in dramatic works actually come in three forms. Drama includes monologues in which a character speaks with himself, and dialogues, through which two or more characters communicate. However, there is yet another form of speech through which a character speaks with someone outside the world on stage, for example, with God or some other such figure who does not answer. These three forms of communication can be seen through the works that Professor Iwakiri has translated into Japanese from French.

First is *Rhinoceros*, a play by Eugène Ionesco. The drama allegorizes fascism through a story in which all of the characters except the main protagonist turn into rhinoceroses. The performance

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presented during this lecture included a monologue that wasn't in the original play, composed of lines of an Ionesco's prose work. In this way, the director of the play was able to present his audience with a philosophical statement.

The attendees were shown a scene from the Albert Camus play *Caligula*, in which the eponymous dictator gives a monologue, whereupon a noble named Cherea appears and the two speak to each other. Dialogue is normally seen as a way for two people to share differing opinions and find common ground, but in *Caligula*, we see dialogue used to achieve two different ends. The first has Caligula gaining increased awareness of how others view him and brings Cherea's morality (or lack thereof) to light, while the second has the two characters become conscious of their fated conflict.

The final work presented was *The Lark*, a play by Jean Anouilh. The scene showed Joan of Arc confined to her cell as the audience watches her speak to herself. The Earl of Warwick enters and engages her in conversation. Then Joan begins to speak again, this time in a sort of monologue in which she calls out to God and to the saints. Joan is answered by neither God nor the saints, but through that presumed dialogue, we see Joan re-discover her true self. The one-sided interaction differs from the typical understanding of the term "dialogue," but it is certainly one form of dialogue that appears in dramatic art.

Panel Discussion

Expressing dialogue without words

Question 1: The theme for this year was dialogue in drama, but I feel that Japanese people are starting to lose their ability to engage in dialogue. What do you think?

Iwakiri: When engaging in dialogue, it is necessary to think about how we view the other person and how the other person views us, but perhaps the problem is that now many people are only able to consider their own form of logic. I think maybe people are losing the ability to listen to others who think differently.

Yanai: Dialogue is built from language, naturally, so perhaps people's reduced ability to engage in dialogue is due to their having a weaker understanding of linguistic structure. This is why I always tell my students that they should be reading older works.

Sano: I absolutely agree. There is so much value in reading something that has been passed down to us aware of the differences they have with other people, and improve their linguistic abilities at the same time.

Question 2: Dialogue is traditionally thought of as something that is generated through language, but could you talk a little bit about those forms of dialogue that require no words, such as classical ballet and pantomime?

Sano: There's a saying that states, "lines become a part of you." Practicing lines over and over again takes those lines – lines that were once mere words – and merges them with the actor's

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body, such that every time the actor moves, dialogue is expressed in a physical sense as well.

Yanai: We could also say that things that cannot be expressed in words must be expressed with the body. Through words and movements, performers can express a character's psychological or emotional state through, for example, using their entire bodies to show something like sadness. In kabuki and other traditional arts, this technique is called "haragei." (Liberally translated, the term would be similar in meaning to "acting from the gut.") The technique has been considered an important part of kabuki since the Meiji period.

Iwakiri: Perhaps intervals and stage directions are another form of expressing dialogue without words. Some movements are traditional and therefore set, but there are a great many forms of physical expression that do not appear in the script. The question is how one should perform to communicate the message of a work, and that is another reason why movement is necessary.

Sano: There is still much to say on these subjects, but unfortunately, we have run out of time. The panel discussion is now over, but hopefully everyone will continue to engage in dialogue in the future. Thank you very much for taking part today.

