

PERFORMING ANGLOPHONE LITERATURE WORLDWIDE INTERVIEW WITH JONAH SALZ

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Dr. Érica Rodrigues Fontes (Federal University of Piauí, Teresina, Brazil) interviews Dr. Jonah Salz, Associate Professor of Theater Studies at the International Studies Department, Ryukoku University, Kyoto, Japan.

I met Professor Jonah Salz virtually in 2015, after discovering his book *The History of Japanese Theater* on the Internet. I had been studying Japanese Language for quite a while, and it genuinely arose my interest to build a bridge which would connect the structure of Classical Japanese Theater and the adaptation of literary texts to the stage. The latter was something I have done since 2003, when I initiated my PhD at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. There are still many more coincidences between Dr. Salz's work and mine: our background as English majors and Professors of English and Literature. We also share the idea that Literature and Performance are intricately connected and may be used with an educational intent. Moreover, we passionately believe that Literature has the potential to reach out to the non-academic and the academic communities through Performance.

Dr. Salz has been fortunate enough to meet some of the most vibrant performers, directors, and playwrights of his time: Richard Schechner, Jerzy Grotowski, Augusto Boal, Eugenio Barba and Samuel Beckett. And I had the chance to meet Dr. Salz in Japan last year (2019). Our encounter occurred in July, after I moved to Kyoto, Japan, where he has resided for approximately thirty years. I went there to develop research on a Japan Foundation scholarship under his supervision.

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Dr. Salz is a theatre director, producer, professor, scholar, and translator. But, above all, he has been a visionary since the beginning of his academic and artistic career. After graduating from Haverford College, in Pennsylvania, with a major in British literature and a minor in Drama, he worked for *Inter-action*, a community education/theatre cooperative dedicated to innovative projects in northern London. He assisted ED Berman in the performance of Tom Stoppard's *Dirty Linen/Newfoundland* in London and in the first UK/U.S. tour of the British American Repertory Company (BARC). Willing to discover the global roots of theatre, he taught English – his mother tongue – while enjoying a wealth of Traditional Theatre and ritual in Japan in 1980. He visited the Asian country multiple times before finally moving here in 1996, when he became a founding member of the Intercultural Studies (now International Studies) faculty at Ryukoku University, in Kyoto, teaching courses in Traditional Japanese Theatre, Euro-American Theatre, Comparative Theatre, Intercultural Performance, Filmmaking, and Fieldwork Methodologies. Shortly after moving to Japan, he received his PhD in Performance Studies from New York University, where he was advised by Dr. Richard Schechner.

Due to Dr. Salz's multicultural experience with theater and performance, his whole work is rooted in the concepts of fusion and accessibility. There are at least two clear products of that: together with Japanese Kyogen actor Akira Shigeyama, he co-founded the Noho Theater Group, in 1981, and the Traditional Theater Training, also known as TTT, in 1984. TTT has welcomed more than 500 performers and theater scholars from Japan and abroad (approximately 30 countries) who have examined and performed Traditional Japanese Performing Arts profoundly during three weeks of intense work.

Noho has toured cities in Japan, the USA, England, Scotland, France and Hong Kong. It uses Traditional Japanese Theater principles from Noh (lyrical and tragic masked classical Japanese theater) and Kyogen (comic traditional Japanese theater) to perform Western texts. The bilingual group has produced 50 plays, based on the work of playwrights such as William Shakespeare, Woody Allen and other Anglo-Saxon and international writers. Various plays written by Samuel Beckett, for instance, including his lesser known ones, were adapted to noh-kyogen style by Noho. Dr. Salz met Beckett in person in 1982 in Paris and they discussed about their work with the theater, Beckett's plays and Noh, in preparation for the world premiere of Beckett's *Quad*, directed by Dr. Salz. Beckett's theatrical texts value details that are also treasured in the Eastern Drama tradition, such as silence, pausing, waiting. His focus on the evanescence of human existence clearly coincides with Asian philosophy. This and more of Dr. Salz's considerations on Beckett's work may be found in the academic article "Convergences and resonances in the dramaturgy and mise-en-scene of Noh and Samuel Beckett," available for download on the Internet (www.academia.edu). They had a fruitful partnership. Many Japanese premieres of Beckett's short plays were directed by Dr. Salz and performed by Noho. On December 14, the day before the premiere of the group's 39th anniversary performance, I was invited to contribute with comments and

suggestions on the show. It was a moment of learning and of being exposed to the group's creative process, technical capacity, and generosity.

For this interview, Dr. Salz and I met twice: on May 23 (on Zoom) and on June 01 at Ryukoku University. Even though he has worked extensively with performance of literature worldwide, I focused on questions which concentrated on his work in the English language. For instance, when performing Anglophone writers, even in countries that do not speak English as their native language, was there an intention to promote his native culture abroad? You will find the answers as follows.

EF: I am very interested in your work in general but what first caught my attention in yours was a coincidence - the fact that we both initiated our academic studies as English majors and that is also how we started to work with drama, which was your minor in college. In your opinion, is there a clear connection between English language and drama? I am asking because many language teachers work with plays, skits and similar things, but they are not really focused on theater, drama *per se*. The focus is not on drama exercises, but on literature reading or something similar.

JS: In my college, which was just a small undergraduate college, they did not have any theater major. They had some classes in drama. I created a new focus within English and Literature combined with my drama interests. I wrote a play instead of a graduate thesis about the life of Alexander Pope and afterwards I wrote a report on how I developed the play and that was my Honor's Thesis. Now, at my former college, they have a Theater Program, but at the time they did not. I only focused on British Literature which is what eventually took me to London. At Haverford, there were only two classes on Theater. One of them, the Modern Theater class, dealt with William Butler Yeats and his influence from Noh. The professor who taught the class introduced me to *Theater East and West: Perspectives Toward a Total Theater* by Leonard C. Pronko. The work inspired me to visit Japan. When I started to teach English language in Japan, I used skits and drama because I had some experience as a director and because, if you do a skit or a play itself, students are more entertained than when they only read something from a textbook. When they did skits of different kinds, they grew as human beings and as language learners.

EF: If I understand correctly, your students had to develop original pieces. It was not something they simply reproduced from a text by someone else.

JS: Well, I started by using the standard textbooks, but I adapted the exercises, so that the students would be standing, doing group work, moving and mingling. And the classes were mostly acting classes. I wrote a book using this methodology. It is a textbook called *Stages of Life: Mimes, Improvisations, Roleplays and Skits*

for English Language Learning. In this book, I elaborate on some classroom activities, such as a “Performance Haiku,” clearly based on the simplicity of form you will be able to find in a haiku, a three-verse Japanese poem. The situation would be presented to the students in brief expressions and images, so they would not waste time trying to memorize a long text. Let me give you an example: one person – functioning as narrator – would read: “A man is sitting on a bench and a young woman comes by and picks up a flower.” Two other students would act it out. We repeated it many times and the results were very satisfactory.

EF: I do not know if you can recall much about your experience with *Interaction*. You worked with innovative projects, such as *Shakespeare in Schools*. At the university where I teach in Piauí, there is an annual Shakespeare Festival. Even though Brazil is not an English-speaking country, Shakespeare is truly beloved there. I surely would want other authors to achieve fame as well, but I do comprehend why Shakespeare is so well-known. If possible, I would like for you to say more about these projects, focusing on the one about Shakespeare.

JS: The projects are directed by ED Berman whose work has much in common with Augusto Boal’s work and his belief that playing games and using people’s natural playful energies may transform the world positively. Berman has an incomplete PhD from Oxford University. Nonetheless, not being a doctor did not impede him from developing his ideas through practical works, starting at *Interaction*, then using these city farms, (expired British Rail land), where children could work with elders. It was developed as a pilot project which was reproduced throughout the country, the *City Farms Movement*. And he also did a Radio Van with teenagers from Council Flats (governmental apartment complexes for financially vulnerable people). These adolescents had the opportunity to rent a van completely equipped with radio apparatus and interview elderly citizens about meaningful political and social experiences, such as their wartime memories. This material was edited into a radio show, which was broadcast on one of the FM stations. The *Shakespeare in Schools* project was another way of developing the art of theater, which he and I were preoccupied about, because many times it presents itself as elitist. And he pondered upon how it would be possible to take theater into the schools in such a way as to make the children enthusiastic about it. ED would dress a player as Shakespeare, and the player would enter the school with a lute in his hands. It was rather amusing because the actor really looked like Shakespeare (he was somewhat bald). He would refuse to answer any questions using modern terms, pretending to not know what they meant. And he would also only speak in Elizabethan English while talking about his [Shakespeare’s] life. Afterwards, he would read sonnets and play songs. The whole experience was extremely convenient and easy to book by schools because it required only one person. Transportation, production, and performance were not complicated to arrange.

ED was really a genius managing to attract charitable contributions or to monetize his projects and find co-sponsors. ED would take a small project, transform it into a larger one and eventually institutionalize it, so he would be able to leave that project and focus on something else. I learned a lot from him and his experience. But the main influence for Noho was the British American Repertory Company. There are some rules from the Actor's Union through which the British actors cannot work in the U.S. unless they are famous and recognized publicly. The same thing happens in Britain. ED once asked: "What if you have a company that is half American and half British and they are touring for half the year in the US and for half the year in Britain, and the playwrights and staff are also half and half?" This was how the Unions reached an agreement for the first time. I worked for the company during its first year of existence, assisting ED, not as a director, but producing and travelling to Boston, arranging Tom Stoppard book signing events and so on. I only spent one year in London and was there for the beginning of that project. When I moved to Japan, I wondered about creating an international company inspired by his. As an American, I searched for a Japanese collaborator to facilitate the process and staged mostly British and Irish writers – specifically Yeats and Beckett – in the beginning. Our work would thus be done in an equitable manner.

EF: Do you think that nowadays schools and educational institutions are more open to this type of experience, that is, artistic interaction, the use of dramatic games, or do you consider the work of Boal, Berman and your own work as still unique and groundbreaking?

JS: I am not a pioneer at all. And I did not publish much about it. But theater in schools and theater in education are extremely important in Britain. In Japan, it is not the case. Hirata Oriza, currently the President of Hyogo Prefectural University (renamed University for Tourism and Arts, mostly Theater Arts) and a Japanese playwright, director and producer defends theater as basic to human communication. He suggests workshops should be developed and taught by professional actors in all the schools in Japan. And he is moving towards that – politically and practically.

EF: Have these experiences and contacts inspired you to continue in the field of Intercultural Performance?

JS: I was interested in Yeats first and then in Beckett. I directed several readers' theater versions of Beckett in college, so I chose *Act without words I & II* for Noho's premiere. Performing Beckett here in Japan with pantomime was the most convenient way because I would not be stopped by the language barriers I had in the beginning. As a matter of fact, the lack of spoken language made it

more convenient for everyone in the group. And that is how we started to attract attention and were able to establish our work. Later, texts were added to the performances which have used lines in English, Japanese and sometimes in both languages, in the same piece. The group has existed for a long time now. In June, the Noho Theater Group will celebrate its 40th anniversary.

EF: Congratulations on Noho's work! On a different note, could you elaborate on Theater and education in the UK? I am curious about it because, at the Dublin Theater Festival in 2016, I was deeply surprised with the high-quality of performances and variety of themes. As a frequent theater goer, I have noticed that in Brazilian commercial theater there is a tendency to produce more comedies than tragedies because public preference affects production. In Dublin, I had the pleasure to see *These Rooms* by ANU in collaboration with CoisCéim Dance Theatre and directed by Owen Boss, which inserted the audience in the Revolution of 1916 and in the perceptions of locals, especially women. The immersive experience made the audience perform the piece together with the cast at a former hospital. It was extremely uncomfortable and truly remarkable.

JS: The British are incredibly open to drama and in drama and as an extension of this openness to theater and drama-related activities, they have offered PhDs in Performance Practice as Research for a long time. I do not know if you have that in Brazil.

EF: No, we do not.

JS: We do not have that yet at most schools in the US or in Japan.

EF: Academic studies in Performance and Drama are extremely limited in Brazil – there are some fields, such as Screenwriting or Playwriting, which are not offered. Even if you want to take a course, it is expensive and mostly offered in the biggest cities.

JS: What I am talking about is a little different from doing practical written work. I do not actually agree with its philosophy. I do not know about it enough, perhaps, but they allow students to do a performance, instead of elaborating a written dissertation, as their final research project. They have to do presentations and small reports to go alongside it. But the performance itself is their research culmination. The fact that they value performance at every level is an extension of the early work of theater in education.

EF: Does it happen at the undergraduate level as well?

JS: Yes. It happens throughout theater education and performance is seen as a worthwhile research activity, not just the sideline to people who are writing. Basically, you direct a performance, you present it to your faculty advisors, and that is your M.A. or PhD. They will give you a PhD certificate, a diploma, and you do not need to write down anything, you do not need to explain yourself. It is hugely different from my experience in the US.

EF: Even though you did something different by writing a play, you had to explain your work?

JS: Yes, I had to show the historical background to Pope was founded on scholarly research. But strangely, years later, being in the theatre capital of America, at New York University, I realized Performance Studies there was not practical at all. It was only for graduate students. Most students and professors had some practical experience, but all the professors were writing books and articles and only thought about research and demanded reports from us. These reports could be based on our own work. But sometimes professors complained about what was written, sometimes saying papers were too subjective. They taught that performance analysis is important as something new, but your own performance just helps you to analyze better. It is something that enables you to experience it deeply and to give an anthropological participant-observation perspective, rather than to approach it from the outside.

EF: Would you say that there are great performers in Britain because of the status performance has in the region?

JS: Yes. Every high school student reads Shakespeare and goes to a production. The play of the year is decided by the British Government. Every high school in Britain teaches that play, and every theater company that wants to make money will perform that play, so that people all over the country can see it. Going to the theater in London, as you know, is so easy. You can decide on the same day, pick up a half-price ticket, if you wish. And the main theaters are very centrally located. You can decide at the last minute. In the United States, movie theaters are like that, but not theaters. In Britain, there are also many price options shown on signs – full price, students, stand-by, standing-room, unemployed people, disabled people, special obstructed view. People have many alternatives to choose their price bracket.

EF: That is inspiring and should be seen as such by many societies. Returning to the conversation on your career, how has working under Richard Schechner's

supervision during the PhD Program at New York University influenced you and your work?

JS: I have had some lucky coincidences in life. In the case of graduate school, I had been in Japan since I was twenty-three, planning on staying three months, then one year and then two and a half years, when I started Noho. But I decided I would have to get a graduate degree to find a good job and explore the issues I was working with in Noh and Beckett. At first, I was going to apply for Directing or Theory at Yale and, when I called, I was informed that Robert Brustein, who was then the Head of the Department and a great theater critic, was leaving for Harvard. And, because of that, Yale's program was somewhat suspended. Taking this into consideration, I decided to try Columbia University in New York. I was interviewed by someone who heard my research proposal and said: "This is much too intercultural and experimental for us. We are very literature-oriented, and you would be best trying NYU." So, I went to the directing program at NYU, but I did not have any appointment because I had planned to have an interview only at Columbia. I went to NYU unexpectedly. This was in the Summer and the woman at the desk was a Performance Studies PhD student. She heard of my interests, informed me that all professors were away for the summer and added: "The Directing Program here is great, but I think you should be looking at Performance Studies. It is a new program, it just started two years ago, and Richard Schechner would be interested in your work. Here are two of his books. You can have them." And she gave me two of his early books! I read them, was rather stimulated by what I read, and decided to enroll there. Until then, everything was coincidental. But as I started studying, my perspectives broadened about theater's place in society. Schechner is similar to ED, in the sense that he looks at Performance Studies from the broad spectrum. He considers many things as performance: sports, games, politics, sex, rituals, as well as dance and theater. While I was there, famous theater people, such as Boal, Eugenio Barba, Suzuki Tadashi, and Grotowski gave lectures invited by Richard. Let us say I was in NYC at the right time in my life and was motivated by all these situations.

EF: I would see Schechner's openness as something very American, very cultural. And I do think that helps conversation and cooperation, which to me is how ideas start and grow.

JS: On the other hand, Richard is heavily criticized for not being an expert, not knowing the native languages of the cultures he researches, so he gives superficial Performance Studies analyses about these cultures, based on English resources, such as *Japanese Theater*, by Faubion Bowers. British scholars normally concentrate more on studying the language of the culture they investigate and read many well-known scholarly resources before they will reach an opinion. I found him open and stimulating, but I could not do anything as freewheeling

as he did. I had to focus on a true anthropological sense, which was particularly important to me, considering I minored in Anthropology in the PhD Program. I needed that perspective because I desired a more ethnographical focus while writing my dissertation on Japanese theater.

EF: Do you think Japanese Theater has an inspirational basic structure for every theater practitioner? I mean, if someone is not a specialist in Japanese Theater, do you think it would still be useful, it would still help to make things simpler in a way?

JS: I do not think that simplicity is the only lesson you may have from it. An American musical specialist, for instance, would not benefit much from learning about minimalism, but from the lifelong training that professional actors have, and the ongoing necessity of being exposed to lifelong teaching. In Japanese Theater, teaching is part of a professional's life. Even the greatest stars in Noh and Kabuki have disciples who may be their own family members or paying disciples from the outside world. Another useful concept is *Ma* (間). Timing and spatial relations in Japanese Theater are extremely important, exaggerating and emphasizing every particular movement that occurs on the stage, so that Kabuki is dance, as well as Noh. In Japanese, you *dance* (*mau*) Noh, rather than act it (*enjiru*). And every fixed position [*kata*] is precise and dynamic, therefore, like a dance step.

EF: If you want to adapt any kind of literature to the stage, would the principles of Japanese Theater facilitate the process?

JS: Yes! For adapting literature to the stage, the storytelling forms and structures of Kyogen and Noh (for some plays) would be very useful. It would also help selecting well-known stories from a different angle or partially, the way Noh does. Or the way Kabuki does it, using the seeds of a great play to tell the story employing a pre-existing narrative structure from the original piece that can accommodate it. This is a great way to begin adaptations. I spoke more about it in the article "Kyogen comedies embedded dramaturgy: 13 lessons for theater practitioners", available online (www.academia.edu), where I highlight some specific acting rules of this kind of theater and explain how this fixed structure will aid in the adaptation of literature.

EF: Do you think that performing Woody Allen, Shakespeare and Beckett using Noh and Kyogen make Japanese people understand Anglophone culture in these [authors'] perspectives better?

JS: Yes. Well, I did not intend it to be Anglophone-centric, in particular. The Anglophone part is just my own background. I use their work in a more humanistic angle, especially when I adapt Beckett. But the Jewish New Yorker humor of Woody Allen is hard to translate. I do not think of Shakespeare, Beckett or Yeats as particularly Anglophone culture. I think it is more humanistic, like Japanese Noh, once you remove the exterior parts.

EF: I am considering now that Shakespeare uses many historical events, but they are not necessarily related to the English world.

JS: Well, my Ophelia was a young girl who was given bad advice or treated very poorly by everyone around her. And, in a confused state, her ghost comes back to discover why. I am sure similar social situations still happen around the world. Shakespeare loves to talk about the core of the human soul and that essence will never change. In that sense, things that he mentioned in his plays centuries ago will still happen repeatedly.

EF: Do you want people in Japan to understand more about the English world through the presentations of Noho, considering it is a bilingual group?

JS: I think that early on in my publicity I talked about the spirit and structure of Noh and Kyogen fusing with Western literature. This was when I was first initiating Noho, but since then I expanded to original Japanese plays and bilingual Kyogen [in Japanese and English]. In the beginning I performed only plays by native speakers of English because this was my academic background.

EF: It might happen everywhere, but public universities in Brazil have a focus, a philosophy which defends applying professors' work beyond the classroom. It means that professors should be involved with promoting special courses, lectures, cultural activities, etc. How beneficial is it for an educator to work beyond the classroom, considering worldwide experiences, such as your participation at the Edinburgh Festival and the Avignon Festival?

JS: Well, I was not a teacher at that time. And I had no ambition to become a professor. I was more interested in becoming a professional director. When I enrolled at NYU, I had the choice of entering the PhD or Master's Degree program and I chose the Master's Degree Program. Only after a year and a half did I decide to continue into the PhD Program. I became a professor by default. It was not my original plan. In other words, I was not getting involved in theatre because of my classroom work. It was quite the contrary: I started teaching because I was involved with the theatre. And making my work available to innumerable

audience members in Japan was of extreme importance to me. However, I thought it would only be able to be assessed as a successful intercultural performance if people in Britain (because what I performed was based on Beckett) could see the work as well. I was pleased when Beckett's publisher, other Beckett experts and my former French professor from college came to the show and could appreciate what I had done, which led to further invitations. As you can see, it brings results. Nowadays, I continue to bring my students to all my Noho shows and I teach about aspects of my theater projects in my classes on both Western and Japanese Theater. Personally, it is important to my teaching. If the original and traditional Japanese sensibility is considered, I am a misfit. Most of the members of the Japanese Theater Association have perhaps translated some plays or moderated discussions about live theater, but they have very little practical experience because it is not part of their culture. In Japan, Fine Arts and Music were considered subjects worth studying, but most theater genres have always had associations with riverbank beggars and prostitutes, until the early 20th century.

EF: Considering the 20th century and its main directors, you have worked with Eugenio Barba. How did the performance of *Ur-Hamlet* (directed by Barba) influence your work?

JS: This performance was a great moment, but I honestly cannot share much because Eugenio had the idea of going to Saxo Grammaticus, the Danish historian, using potent images of Hamlet deranged, brother jealousy, and murder. I assisted him in the production of the piece but did not have much to do with development of this story.

EF: So, if we return to Noho, what performance of the group was truly remarkable to you?

JS: There were several, but if I think about an English author, I have to remember Shakespeare's *Ophelia*. It was a bilingual and original adaptation of *Hamlet*, and the whole narrative was shown through Ophelia's perspective. We did not change Shakespeare's text. We only changed the point of view. While we had experimented with bilingual English/Japanese kyogen or other comedies previously, this was the first time we tried a serious piece bilingually (1989).

EF: Have you used students in your Noho performances?

JS: No. I separate my academic teaching from my practical theater experience completely now. The students may help at the door or usher people to their seats. I once had a stage manager who was a recent graduate. However, I always like to

reinforce that Noho's cast is professional. I am the only one who is not. Students' importance for Noho rely on the fact that they are now my main audience.

EF: Have you worked with TTT people as actors?

JS: Yes, one of the main reasons for us to initiate the Training was to use it as a laboratory for developing new works, called Nohow (Noho Workshop) productions.

EF: You have performed new works and adaptations of classical literature such as Mark Twain's 1876 *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* which was performed in the piece "Tom Sawyer" in your latest Noho performance *Tom Sawyer Paints the Fence and Other Plays*. Could you share more about the staging process of "Tom Sawyer" *per se*?

JS: In many ways, this was one of the most ambitious Noho projects I directed because it was our first performance in four years. It featured over ten performers and we rehearsed for four months. The script underwent numerous revisions. That was Noho's 39th anniversary, and there was a fear that it could be the last. For 2019, I selected an entertaining piece, which is also a classic literary text. It is based on a simple artifice that snowballs to involve a whole yard full of friends. Aunt Polly catches Tom skipping school and punishes him with a Saturday task: whitening the fence at their house. Tom notices he can use some "treasures" to bribe his friends, because the slave Jim and brother Sid deny him help. So, instead, he pretends to enjoy his expert task while school friends beg for an opportunity. This situation appears perfectly adaptable to certain Kyogen characters: the severe Owner, outwitted by the lazy Servant, enlisting the aid of the gullible Servant(s). This was a Nohow production at Portland State University's Summer class in 1992, and I liked its slapstickish nature together with its darker view of ur-capitalism (the exploitation of masses who were offered rewards in exchange).

Although the piece was a musical, it was naïve of me to consider it could be defined as *kata* early, learned by the whole cast in different moments, then practiced together only a few times. In fact, we had many scheduling issues – traditional and modern actors following separate schedules and teachers' timetables facing divergences. In fact, our only rehearsal with all members was on the afternoon of the 14th, one day before the premiere! However, the result was powerful: brothers and sisters united in one common painting task using Kyogen onomatopoeia.-

In relation to the script, I had intended to use everyone's contributions, but very few had had any contact with the original version of the novel, even though, in the United States, it is a beloved children's book. Agreeing to actors' demands, I wrote

down a script with stage directions. Sadly, many things which were originally planned had to be simplified.

In the end, our silly costumes, the formality of the painting gesture, the rhythm of the song and good humor won over the audience. The presence of a real child, showing us that all the ease and joy in work succeeded in reaching a state of rapture and good-natured American/Japanese fun was a highlight. The success of the piece was a hard-fought consequence of various personal lessons on team management. But it also shone a light on how Kyogen actors and my Western sensibility differ regarding rehearsal process, comedy, and staging. In that sense, it was an experiment in the old, Noho-style of slapdash potential. Yet I can see this calcifying into a true *shinsaku* Kyogen (new piece of Kyogen) that might someday enter the repertoire. Judging from comments and student reports, it was certainly an audience favorite that night.

EF: In December of 2019, the whole situation with the Coronavirus had not yet caused as much trouble as it is causing now. How has the pandemic situation affected your work with the theater and in the theater?

JS: Not much immediately because we were not planning to do anything until the fall to commemorate the 40th anniversary. But I am terribly sorry for some public theaters in Japan which are not so big and can only sell 50% of their capacity because of the pandemic. These have been tough times for people who work with culture and entertainment. Noho's case is different because the actors have other jobs and do not depend completely on our productions. Originally, for the anniversary, we were going to do something related to the Olympics, but we discarded that idea. Our planning would start in March by scheduling the performance dates. The Noh and Kyogen actors were reserving their first semester, organizing their repertoire, but had to change everything. Now we consider performing at E9 Theater with its contemporary stage a good option for us, even though, according to my co-director Akira, everyone's schedule is changing. All the cancelled and postponed performances in the Noh and Kyogen world must be planned again. I am afraid the Fall is going to be remarkably busy for them and am thinking we might have to do a Zoom streaming performance instead, similarly to what the professional actors are doing now in Japan and all over the world. We will be able to have a worldwide invitation to our 40th anniversary performance on Zoom for free.

EF: I am glad I will be able to attend, even though I will already be in Brazil.

JS: On Zoom, I do not think Tom Sawyer would work, but we will perhaps try some Beckett.

EF: I would like to thank you for this interview. I feel really honored to have been supervised by you and to have been able to work with you during this one year in Japan. You have had a remarkable lifelong experience with the English language and the theater in such distinct nations. Everyone who works in this field of knowledge can be inspired by your creative and innovative path.

JS: Thank you so much. It has been my pleasure.

Reference

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