

Sugimoto Bunraku “Sonezaki Shinju: *The Love Suicides at Sonezaki*” 2013 European Tour - Madrid / Rome / Paris

The Japan Foundation and the Odawara Art Foundation proudly present the European tour of the Ningyo Joruri Bunraku (Japanese puppet theatre) performance “Sugimoto Bunraku Sonezaki Shinju: The Love Suicides at Sonezaki” over a one-month period from September to October, 2013.

The new version of Chikamatsu Monzaemon’s highly acclaimed drama was premiered in August 2011 at the Kanagawa Arts Theatre. The piece is normally shortened from its original text by Chikamatsu due to production constraints, but this version—directed by visual artist Hiroshi Sugimoto with lyrical and musical accompaniment composed by Living National Treasure Seiji Tsurusawa—is a faithful reproduction of its original form, and has been highly praised by a number of audiences and critics in Japan.

The European tour, the first overseas performances of the work, will start in Madrid as part of the commemoration of the “400th Anniversary of Japan-Spain Relations.” Celebrating the 400th year since the Keicho Delegates reached Europe and cultural exchange between Japan and Spain began, the piece will be shown at Madrid’s Teatro Español. After Madrid, the show will move to Rome and be performed as part of the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the Istituto Giapponese di Cultura in Rome, which opened in 1962 as the first Japan Culture Center to be founded abroad. The venue, the Teatro Argentina, is one of the most prestigious theatres in Rome, known as the venue of the premiere of Rossini’s opera “The Barber of Seville.” And finally, eleven performances will be given at the Théâtre de la Ville in Paris as part of the main program during the Festival d’automne à Paris, a world-famous festival of the performing arts.

Working closely with other institutions and organizations, the Japan Foundation has been implementing a wide range of international and cultural exchange programs across all regions of the world, with its headquarters in Tokyo, a branch in Kyoto, two affiliate organizations (Japanese-Language Institutes in Urawa and Kansai), and 22 overseas offices established in 21 countries. The Japan Foundation acknowledges the long-term relationships with different institutions in these countries that have enabled this valuable opportunity to present such a creative and outstanding performing art to audiences in Europe at the above-mentioned historical, prestigious theatres.



© Hiroshi Sugimoto, courtesy of Odawara Art Foundation

Sugimoto Bunraku European Tour

Madrid: September 27th (Fri) and 28th (Sat), 2013. *Total of 2 performances at Teatro Español.
 Rome: October 4th (Fri) and 5th (Sat), 2013. *Total of 2 performances at Teatro di Argentina.
 Paris: October 10th (Thu) to 19th (Sat), 2013. *Total of 11 performances at Théâtre de la Ville, Paris.

Organizers: The Japan Foundation, The Odawara Art Foundation
 Planning and production: The Odawara Art Foundation
 In cooperation with: The Japan Arts Council (The National Theatre of Japan/The National Bunraku Theatre),
 and Bunraku-Kyokai
 Supported by: Osaka Prefecture **, Osaka City **
 * currently being arranged ** application being arranged

Madrid

Sugimoto Bunraku: Sonezaki Shinju (*Los amantes suicidas de Sonezaki*)

Organizers: The Japan Foundation, The Odawara Art Foundation, Teatro Español
 Co-organizer: The Embassy of Japan in Spain
 Supported by: Mitsubishi Corporation, Nippon Express Co.
 Venue: Teatro Español
 [Commemorating the 400th Anniversary of Japan-Spain Relations]

Rome

SUGIMOTO BUNRAKU: SONEZAKI SHINJU

Doppio suicidio d'amore a Sonezaki

Organizers: The Japan Foundation, The Odawara Art Foundation, Teatro di Roma
 Co-organizer: The Embassy of Japan in Italy
 Supported by: Japanese Chamber of Commerce in Italy
 Supported by: Yoko Nagae Ceschina, Chizu Suzuki, H.I.S., Fuji Television Network, Inc.,
 Alcantara S.p., Mitsukoshi Italia S.p.A., Bridgestone Technical Center Europe S.p.A.,
 Shiseido Company, Limited, Alphanet s.r.l., m&m medeiaservices s.r.l., Miki Travel
 Agency Italia s.r.l., Viajes Hanshin S.a., YKK Mediterraneo S.p.A
 Venue: Teatro Argentina
 [Celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the Istituto Giapponese di Cultura in Rome]

Paris

Sugimoto Bunraku Sonezaki Shinju –

Double suicide à Sonezaki d'après Chikamatsu Monzaemon

Organizers: The Japan Foundation, The Odawara Art Foundation
 Supported by: Boucheron Paris, Fondation d'Entreprise Hermès, Fondation Franco-Japonaise
 Sasakawa, Fondation pour l'étude de la langue et de la civilisation japonaises sous
 l'égide de la Fondation de France
 Co-production: Théâtre de la Ville, Festival d'automne à Paris
 Advisor: Emmanuelle de Montgazon
 Venue: Théâtre de la Ville

Production Details

Sugimoto Bunraku: Sonezaki Shinju tsuketari Kannon meguri

(The Love Suicides at Sonezaki with "Kannon Pilgrimage")

- Production Title: **Sugimoto Bunraku: Sonezaki Shinju**
- Original Text:
Sonezaki shinju tsuketari Kannon meguri written by Chikamatsu Monzaemon
(from *Shin-Nihon koten bungaku taikei*, Iwanami Shoten Publishers)
- Producer / (Artistic) Director: Hiroshi Sugimoto
- Composer / Director: Tsurusawa Seiji
- Choreography: Waka Yamamura
- Video: Tabaimo, Hiroshi Sugimoto
- Cast: Tsurusawa Seiji, Yoshida Minosuke, Kiritake Kanjuro and 24 others
- Running time: 145 minutes (including 20-minute intermission)

The Background of *Sonezaki shinju tsuketari Kannon meguri*

Author: Chikamatsu Monzaemon

On April 7, 1703 (Genroku 16), Tokubei, a clerk to the soy sauce merchant Hirano-ya, and his lover Ohatsu, a courtesan from Dojima Shinchi, committed suicide together in the forest of Tenjin at the cape of Sone in Umeda. A month later, on May 7, 1703, this actual event was turned into a play by Chikamatsu Monzaemon entitled *Sonezaki shinju tsuketari Kannon meguri*, which premiered at the Takemotoza theatre in Osaka. The play was so successful that Takemotoza was able to repay all the debts it had at the time. Furthermore, *Sonezaki shinju* was the forerunner of the *sewamono* genre, which dramatized current events.

Artist's Statement

Although a subject for poetry, the evocation of eros, that is, the portrayal of amorous love was never a religious concern in Japan until the playwright Chikamatsu Monzaemon first presented on the ningyo joruri puppet stage the revolutionary notion that by consummating their passion through double suicide (shinju) two lovers' souls might be united in Amida's Pure Land paradise.

The first act of Chikamatsu's *Sonezaki Shinju* (Love Suicides at Sonezaki) finds the courtesan Ohatsu on a pilgrimage to various Kannon temples (Kannon meguri) saying "Let our love be a bridge to the Buddha realm," foreshadowing her ultimate resolve toward faith in the Bodhisattva of Mercy. When the play first premiered in the mid-Edo period, so powerful was its message that the "impossible loves" of this world might be realized in the next, it set off an explosion of suicides among young lovers constrained by feudal morality. As a result, in 1723 (Kyoho 8) the Tokugawa shogunate banned not only all performances of *Sonezaki Shinju*, but also funeral services for all love suicides, the idea being to deny them the promise of Buddhist salvation. It wasn't until 1955, some 232 years later, the play was finally revived, although in the intervening centuries we nearly lost all sense of how the lines were intoned or puppets handled in Chikamatsu's time. All that remain are Chikamatsu's yukahon narrator's script and puppet master Tatsumatsu Hachirobei's movement diagrams.



Hiroshi Sugimoto

Hiroshi Sugimoto Biography

Born in Tokyo in 1948. After graduating from Saint Paul's University, he moved to the United States in 1970 and started his career with photography in New York in 1974. Sugimoto has received international reputation as a photographic artist through his solid technique and clear concept seen in the series such as Seascapes and Theaters, and his works are collected by major art museums throughout the world. In 2008, Sugimoto held a solo exhibition at the 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa, entitled History of History, which consisted of both his own works and works from his collection of antiquities. In recent years he has been expanding his field of activity to literary and architectural work, and in 2008 he published his second title of essays, Utsutsu-na-zo (Shinchosha). The same year, he founded New Material Research Laboratory, and he was involved in the interior design and landscaping of the Izu Photo Museum, which opened in 2009. Most recently, he has designed the entrance space of oak omotesando in Tokyo, which is due to open on April 4, 2013. An appreciator of traditional arts, Sugimoto has also led the direction of the sanbaso production "Kami hisomi iki" in 2011, was presented at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York in March 2013 and once again in Tokyo in April 2013.

His works have won many awards, including the Mainichi Art Prize in 1988, the Hasselblad Foundation International Award in Photography in 2001, and the 21st Praemium Imperiale in 2009.



© Tabaimo/ Courtesy of Gallery Koyanagi

Contemporary artist Tabaimo's animation to be screened during the "Kannon Meguri" scene

Tabaimo's original animation will serve as a fascinating accompaniment in the background of Ohatsu's dance scene "Kannon Meguri," puppeteered alone by Kiritake Kanjuro, creating a masterful marriage of traditional theater and contemporary art.

Tabaimo Biography

Born in Hyogo prefecture, Japan, in 1975. In 1999, the animation video installation "Japanese Kitchen" ("Nippon no Daidokoro") that she created as her graduation project in university was awarded the Grand Prize at the Kirin Contemporary Award. In 2001, she participated in the first edition of Yokohama Triennale as the youngest artist. Tabaimo has taken part in a number of international and collective exhibitions such as the Sao Paulo Biennale (2002), Sydney Biennale (2006), and Venice Biennale in 2011 as the representative of the Japanese pavilion. One of the most sought-after video installation artists today, Tabaimo has had solo exhibitions: "YOROYORON" at the Hara Museum of Contemporary Art (Tokyo) in 2006, "TABAIMO" at the Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain (Paris) in 2006, "TABAIMO: DANMEN" at the Yokohama Museum of Art and National Museum of Art, Osaka in 2009–2010. A large-scale solo exhibition is currently planned at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Australia (Sydney) in 2014.

Images for press use

For press images, please contact Ms. Taira (masako@tmpress.jp).



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Information about the Performance

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