

A Study on the Glocal Japanese Adaptations of Greek Tragedies by Tadashi Suzuki and Yukio Ninagawa

ZARINS, MARTINS
Graduate School of Design, Kyushu University

<https://hdl.handle.net/2324/7420538>

出版情報 : Kyushu University, 2021, 修士, 修士
バージョン :
権利関係 :



Kyushu University,

Contents and Creative Design course 2019-2021

Masters Dissertation

Graduation year 2021

Supervisor: Prof. Hisao Oshima

2DS19060E Zarins Martins

A Study on the Glocal Japanese

Adaptations of Greek Tragedies by

Tadashi Suzuki and Yukio Ninagawa

Table of Contents

<i>A Study on the Glocal Japanese Adaptations of Greek Tragedies by Tadashi Suzuki and Yukio Ninagawa</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Introduction:</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>The Origins of Suzuki’s Glocal Theatre</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Trojan Women.....</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>Dyonisus.....</i>	<i>14</i>
<i>Summary</i>	<i>19</i>
<i>The Origins of Ninagawa’s Glocal Theatre</i>	<i>21</i>
<i>Oedipus Rex.....</i>	<i>24</i>
<i>Ninagawa’s Oedipus Rex from a theoretical point of view</i>	<i>27</i>
<i>Medea.....</i>	<i>29</i>
<i>Summary</i>	<i>37</i>
<i>The Potential of Japanese Glocal Direction in Theatres of Latvia</i>	<i>39</i>
<i>Conclusion</i>	<i>46</i>

Introduction:

The world of theatre is rapidly changing simultaneously along with many man made conceptions that have been considered normal up until the start of the pandemic. It is important to recall that new waves of theatre tend to start in times of turmoil or disagreement. Theatre cannot exist without a dose of shock within it - so has stated the Moscow based director Dmitry Krymov. In the Japan of 1960s it was a time when the people who had been born post World War 2 manifested their understanding of what is right, wrong, freedom and art. Theatre has always been a very convenient form of art to tackle politics and because of that political theatre has always contained passion to fight even at its' most subtlest forms. This research focuses on two individuals who through their theatrical inventions of combining the local historical theatre traditions with Ancient Greek Tragedies reshaped the way people perceive society, its' problems, theatre and their own existence within and out of the Japanese society. Their names are Tadashi Suzuki and Yukio Ninagawa. Their invented genre of theatre goes by the acronym *glocal* which simply means locally interpreted global values. My motivation for a research on this genre is the following - I believe it has taught Japanese people an unknown part of their culture and it has also impacted the international theatre society as an audience very much. The technique itself is still under-explored and needs to be defined for it to survive and potentially thrive in other developed theatre cultures. I believe that this theatre form may help nations with a widespread theatre culture like Latvia to rediscover our identity. In order to do that I have structured this paper in specific sections.

In the first section I discuss Suzuki Tadashi and his company with the internationally sounding name SCOT which stands for "Suzuki's Company of Toga". This group left the urban Tokyo for years of training in the mountain village of Toga in Toyama prefecture (from 1976 to roughly 1982) in order to build a theatre that they truly believed was mandatory for them and the contemporary society¹. Before assembling his company he had built a prominent career as a theatre director and the artistic leader of one of Tokyo's leading new theatres.

¹Tadashi Suzuki, The course of training for SCOT, *SUZUKI's Philosophy of Theatre*, <https://www.scot-suzukicompany.com/en/philosophy.php> 2009, accessed on 19/09/2020

This step allowed the troupe to undergo a very intensive and introspective training in order to give birth to a new identity, conception and theatre language originating from *Kabuki*, *Noh* and the contemporary understanding of the world. Their theatre is very much based on vocal and bodily energy. The two works chosen for analysis of this theatre language are *Trojan Women* and *Dionysus*. These works were analyzed from the perspectives of acting techniques, directing composition, covered social problems and the way how I and other theatre critics view it. I also explore how Suzuki had also chosen to train people of different nationalities and how the same plays staged at different times had tended to be different from one another.

The second section is dedicated to the late Yukio Ninagawa's theatre, with its outstanding level of artistic, cultural and atmospheric value that defines what is Japanese culture in a global light. Ninagawa's path as an actor with strong individual beliefs rose from working within the systems of theatre, disagreeing with them, eventually creating his own theatre language. It had not only left the Japanese but also the international audience with existential questions in a foreign, yet profoundly understandable theatre language. The theatre form is explored through *Medea* and *Oedipus Rex* to see how Ninagawa employs such theatrical instruments as language, symbols, acting styles and Japanese traditional theatre references. Another important focus point is how Ninagawa has adapted his work in terms of size and nationality of the audience.

Ultimately the thesis also contains a sections discussing the potential of the findings within becoming a tool for the Japanese theatre to rebirth itself locally or globally through the use of the different theatre forms under the umbrella of the same genre.

The Origins of Suzuki's Glocal Theatre

There is a statement which may very likely seem provocative and with which I would like to start off this section: Japan is a land of very powerful stage traditions, which are at the brink of extinction. The middle and the youngest generations of Japan are mostly disinterested in these traditions due to various factors, but most notably due to the pluralism of the art forms and cultures which the end of World War II has brought about to this uniquely homogeneous society. The fact that such a deep culture that encrypts so much about the Japanese civilization seems very likely to disappear in the contemporary lack of

interest is a paradox, but it is also important to note that, the power of paradox without a doubt carries the energy of advantage for a “plot twist”. Suzuki Tadashi is a theatre director prominently known all over the world as he stands as one of the contemporary pillars of the performance art of Japan that in fact uses globalism to evolve not only the Japanese theatre, but also theatre schools around the globe.

Suzuki Tadashi is a child of post-World War 2, who had started his career as a director in the underground theatre movement called *Shogekijo*, which literally means small theatre in Japanese. Suzuki at the time had adapted a decadent spirit as had many other young Japanese due to the protests related to the renewal of the American-Japanese pact that had been affecting the feeling of sovereignty of young people of Japan. Suzuki grew up in a household that had actually been practicing the theatre form of *Gidayu-bushi* which is a characteristic narrative form of narration for *Bunraku* puppet theatre. He actually has stated in an interview that it was not a very pleasant and inspiring experience as from a child’s perspective it seemed like a loud, in-comprehensive and strange text declamation accompanied by a *Shamisen*.² Suzuki stated that this experience was disenchanting and had even made him seemingly hate Japanese theatre as a youngster - that of course had all changed with time and experience. Suzuki with an intuitive start in his own interpretation of theatre with contemporary dramaturgists in the 1960’s eventually visited Théâtre des Nations Festival in Paris (Artistic Director Jean-Louis Barrault) with “On the Dramatic Passions II” which as he states by himself gave him the epiphany to start fusing the Japanese traditional theatre forms with world dramaturgy. This experience had led Suzuki to develop his own methodology that is now renown and has been taught to many theatre professionals all around the world. I personally have been in brief contact with the method (or rather a derivative of it taught by the Lithuanian director Gildas Aleksa) when I was a directing student in the Latvian Academy of Culture. Early work by Suzuki at Waseda University in the student theatre club was influenced by Stanislavsky and Ibsen. Eventually he started focusing on the re-framing of European classic plays within a Japanese theatrical paradigm, which gave birth to a synthesis of a Japanese form and Western content. Kanze Hisao's *Noh* performance at the aforementioned Theatre des Nations Festival in Paris in 1972 had left a strong impression on Suzuki concerning the theatricality of tradition. Firstly, it was design - to use a space where people had lived and is filled with history to convert it into a theatre. As Suzuki lives through a commercially enhanced career point in the 70s, he

² Roger Reynolds, *SUZUKI TADASHI: SELECTED THEATRE WORKS*, DVD interview, 2011

eventually adapts the space design concept in Toga - he uses an old farm space as theatre headquarters to train his students intensively for five years up until 1980.³

In the performance of above mentioned Hisao Kanze, Suzuki sees the strength of performance outside of a traditional *Noh* stage - he is amazed by the smallest details of the trained actors body and understands the concept Zeami defined - *yuugen*, the graceful stillness in a performance which is described as a state of full body and mind concentration best defined as the vision beyond sight. Talking strictly about acting, Suzuki reflects in his essays posted on his official website, that he focuses on animal energy of an actor:

*“To counter this debilitating modernization of the actor’s craft, I have strived to restore the wholeness of the human body in performance, not simply by creating variants of such forms as the Noh and Kabuki, but by employing the universal virtues of these and other pre-modern traditions. By harnessing and developing these enduring virtues, we create an opportunity to re-consolidate our currently dismembered physical faculties and revive the body’s perceptive and expressive capacity.. The human body has certain essential needs that must be met to support life. An infant can survive without any kind of body-awareness, but it heavily depends on the help of others. Even though its heart beats automatically, it must still be given food. For the infant to become independent, it must learn to consciously control the key physical functions required to achieve its daily needs, the most important of which are **(1) energy production, (2) breath calibration and (3) center of gravity control.**”*⁴

Suzuki ensures these values being incorporated in every moment with the *suriashi* walking technique originally encountered in *Noh*. When discussing Suzuki’s general philosophy of concept building he states these important theses:

“.. following the rules is not the only way to ensure a great performance. When a tradition can be successfully broken, the profundities of the Noh can become all the

³ Goto, Yukihiko. *The Theatrical Fusion of Suzuki Tadashi*. *Asian Theatre Journal*, vol. 6, no. 2, 1989, pp. 103–123. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/1124454. Accessed 22 Sep. 2020.

⁴ Tadashi Suzuki, *A Fundamental Technique and Theory of Acting*, *SUZUKI's Philosophy of Theatre*, <https://www.scot-suzukicompany.com/en/philosophy.php> 2009, accessed on 30/09/2020

more apparent; The most important issue for today's theatre artists is to ask what problem Japan is facing in general." ⁵

Suzuki's theatre method is very much a social commentary somewhat similar to Bertold Brecht. Suzuki puts emphasis on actor's subjectivity in the play, neglecting the authoritarian single meaning in *shingeki*. Suzuki starts the collage method of surrealist *depaysement* and that includes using traditional compositional techniques of *Noh*, *honkadori* which means "taking a foundation poem" and this regards to Zeami's principle that if a play is including a famous place or a historic site, the text has to include a well known song or a poem about the place and also a quotation from a famous poetic source. The other compositional technique is derived from *kabuki* and it is to recompose the text with as a poem and *sekai honkadori*, which is a fusion of timespace. It seems relevant to conclude that Suzuki's method means to fulfill two desires with one operation - destroying old values and creating new, yet it does take a substantial study and reinforcement of the old details to do this.⁶

As Suzuki had finalized his first training of Suzuki Company of Toga (often known as SCOT), he started working on attracting international influence from outside. In Toga, where he had based his company, an amphitheatre was built (design by Arata Isozaki). In 1982 they held the first international theatre festival in Japan - the *Toga festival*. Suzuki is responsible for the opening the window to the world theatre from Japan and since 1983 Suzuki had been holding summer training camps in Toga for international theatre artists. Eventually in 1999 Suzuki organized an event called the Theatre Olympics in Japan, whose origins involve collaborations with such great artist as Robert Wilson, Heiner Muller and Yuri Lyubimov.⁷ *The Theatre Olympics* were last held in Toga in 2019. The next one planned in 2023 April-July in Hungary, where Suzuki will showcase his genius works titled *Electra* and *Trojan Women*⁸ which is analyzed within this paper. Even though the situation with staging theatre is quite complicated for anyone involved in the physical process, especially for senior people like Mr.

⁵ Goto, Yukihiko. *The Theatrical Fusion of Suzuki Tadashi*. *Asian Theatre Journal*, vol. 6, no. 2, 1989, pp. 103–123. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/1124454. Accessed 22 Sep. 2020.

⁶ Goto, Yukihiko. *The Theatrical Fusion of Suzuki Tadashi*. *Asian Theatre Journal*, vol. 6, no. 2, 1989, pp. 103–123. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/1124454. Accessed 22 Sep. 2020.

⁷ The official Theatre Olympics website, Founding members of the International Commission <https://www.theatre-oly.org/en/> Copyright (C) 2018 Theater Olympics, accessed on 02/10/2020

⁸ The official website of the 10th Theatre olympics in Hungary <https://szinhaz.org/en/esemenyek/the-trojan-women/>, accessed on 12/29/2022

Suzuki, there is still a very powerful legacy of his previously done works lingering in the air, as the theatre world influenced by COVID-19 had the chance to review the timeless gems of the past. In the coming sections I will analyse the impact of some of Suzuki Tadashi's most monumental works of *glocality* and what are the key elements that can be compiled into practical set of principles for working in this style of fusion.

Trojan Women

Trojan Women, which is a famous ancient Greek tragedy written by Euripides, was first staged by Suzuki in Tokyo in 1974. Drama *Trojan Women* is based on the historical story taking place after the end of Trojan War in Homer's Epic. The work with ancient Greek tragedies is probably what Suzuki is associated the most, and as one can imagine he had not started right away with this type of fusion experiment. Prior to that he had gone through a myriad of various forms of theatre and dramaturgy. This performance has been rebuilt several times with different casts, venues and even also the styles of acting. **It is important to note that SCOT itself was created only in 1976 which was two years after the troupe had first performed *Trojan Women*. Not to mention the years of training that Suzuki conducted for his company.** The performance analyzed in this paper is one of 1982 performed in Toga Village Outdoor Theatre itself - it is a concentrated showcase of a method that came from hard, intensive yet very recent pedagogical work at the time.⁹ Analyzing various versions of the same performance would definitely be rewarding in terms of understanding the genesis and life of a method, but that may be another topic for a separate paper, which would be intriguing as *Trojan Women* will be once again performed after 49 years in Hungary in 2023. Undeniably there are many theatre directors who re-stage their work several times during their career, but what makes Mr. Suzuki's case special is the fact that he has, as it would be expected of a Japanese person, has scrutinized a system and he has staged his plays in different countries with different actors. And yet - there is a set of values that characterize this director's global outlook through the lens of Japan.

The play interpreted by Suzuki is an attempt to reflect on the Japanese suffering and the attempt to deal with the consequences of the World War II and this performance in my

⁹ Chronology of works and training, Tadashi Suzuki, *SUZUKI's Philosophy of Theatre*, <https://www.scot-suzukicompany.com/en/philosophy.php> 2009, accessed on 02/10/2020

opinion serves as a powerful social message to the viewers. Suzuki Tadashi's theatre may seem quite out of this world as the characters embody images that to a typical viewer are not easy to identify with, however, there is a particular process embedded with an aim through which the director is taking his audience. The setting at first takes place in the post-war Tokyo with people roaming around in ripped kimonos and carrying all their belongings in mere cloth, afterwards this plot suddenly travels through time and space to Troy.¹⁰ The same actors perform different characters with the same tragic fate, for example, Hecuba at some moment transforms into her own daughter, who is later raped in order to generate this generational and transcendent terror. I believe what Suzuki is doing is something that resembles of a Bertold Brecht style trans-formative theatre in order to deliver social narrative through action rather than to focus on one person's motivation behind a transformation.¹¹ From this, a social commentary emerges - war happens in different generations, different parts of the world, but no matter who the victim is, the horror is always the same. It is as savage as it was thousands of years ago and that is in the cruel human nature. It can make other people victims at any time when conflicting situation goes too far and emerges as a war.

In my opinion a very strong part of Suzuki's interpretation is the combination of stylistics, time-space and especially tempo. There are many moments during which these aspects appear. A vivid example would be the following: after two of the Trojan women Hecuba and Andromache have a face to audience dialogue, there is a horrid rape scene, which is performed with very naturalistic movements and violence in contrast to the unnaturalistic *Kabuki* styled dialogue. At the same time the doll which represents a child is being killed in slow, more theatrical way. This perhaps talks about the irony of being dead in peace versus suffering while being alive. The themes of mother's instinct versus the higher power is present. When a handkerchief is thrown at a Jizo statue at the end, we can feel that women's grief and sadness overpowers the religion - reality seems all there is left.

¹⁰ Lin Yu-pin, Associate Professor of the School of Theatre at Taipei National University of the Arts, theatre critic Introductory Text, *Japan "in Ruins" – Tadashi Suzuki's The Trojan Women*, <https://www.icm.gov.mo/fam/29/en/detail/articleDetail/Guide7>, 2014, accessed on 07/10/2020

¹¹ Walter H. Sokel, Brecht's Concept of Character, *Comparative Drama* Vol. 5, No. 3 (Fall 1971), pp. 178, https://www.jstor.org/stable/41152557?read-now=1&seq=2#page_scan_tab_contents



The Jizo statue being still yet performing a strong inner monologue

The religion is left alone in movement in the end. This leaves the impression that no matter how cruel is a war and no matter how merciful are the gods - everything perhaps has a painful, predestined plan that may change the world for the better in the future. Yet the cycle has to return at some point - that, in my opinion is Suzuki's incorporated idea in all levels of the play. Starting from the stylistics (influence of *Kabuki* and *Noh*), continuing to the dramaturgical influence where two spatiotemporal worlds are interconnected.¹²

Furthermore, this technique had also been used by the choice of contemporary music in the end (in case of his performance in Taiwan in 2014, he used Ouyang Fei Fei's pop song *At the Crossroad of Love*¹³). This music played at the end of the performance where the young girl must sell her body in order to survive. It definitely makes the viewer absorb the information in a color palette of perception that is intact today and makes us think about the present and the future as this problem is timeless to many people around the world currently.

¹² Cole Emma, *Post-dramatic Tragedies*, Oxford University Press, 2019, p.13

¹³ Lin Yu-pin, Associate Professor of the School of Theatre at Taipei National University of the Arts, theatre critic Introductory Text, *Japan "in Ruins" – Tadashi Suzuki's The Trojan Women*, <https://www.icm.gov.mo/fam/29/en/detail/articleDetail/Guide7>, 2014, accessed on 07/10/2020



Scene of violence that clearly contains influence of Kabuki theatre's physicality

Suzuki has restaged this play several times because the viewer's and the artists perception changes with time, experience and the trending culture in the world.¹⁴ Suzuki's use of global elements lets him conveniently adapt his theatre language to the particular viewer's sociocultural background in combination with the quickly changing trends of the globalized world. He adapts his plays to audiences individually - Suzuki intuitively feels that in order to keep the main goal of theatre functioning (to define the biggest problem of today in the society), he has to attract the viewer with empathy, shock, confusion and essentially compassion. Suzuki takes the best of the past *Noh* and *Kabuki* theatre traditions and successfully recomposes them to make a contemporary sense, not only a decorative, symbolic value that many contemporary Japanese viewers see in traditional theatre today. In the past *Noh* and *Kabuki* was carefully constructed to reference the past in order to see

¹⁴Amanda Chai, Behind the scenes of SIFA 2019's first headliner, a restaged marvel by Tadashi Suzuki, Jan 14, 2019 <https://sgmagazine.com/arts/news/behind-scenes-sifa-2019s-first-headliner-restaged-marvel-tadashi-suzuki/>

today clearly - Suzuki has found a way to keep these values alive in his theatre philosophy. His *glocal* theatre form may keep theatre alive for more than expected if continued in the same vigor as it has been done. The plot of Troyans being invaded by the Greek after the war between the two nations is definitely something that suggests this idea, but Suzuki has chosen to substantially edit this play to achieve a clear set of goals. Firstly, Suzuki has eliminated all terms that require special knowledge from the text and has left only the words that form the core of the play - this is a great idea in order to let the viewer be able to create a connection between the viewers and the newly introduced form of theatre and also the foreign play. Secondly he has arranged the text in a way so that it would make sense to the contemporary Japanese society of the time - that most probably is one of the main factors of his success as a truly contemporary theatre pioneer in Japan, because it is always important to let the audience identify their lives with what is happening in the staged setting. Apart from modernizing the play in the ways mentioned above he still appeals to the traditional values from Japanese theatre, as he finds this aspect crucial. He has worked with composed poetry and a popular song for Cassandra's monologue and the conflict between Hecuba and Menelaus in the styles which are recognizable for the audience for the play which suggests the influence of *Honkadori* from *Noh* theatre - a Greek play as a foundation for new dramatic images that allude to the familiar images of the tragedy.¹⁵



The Jizo statue is still yet the acting style constantly gives strong counterpoints through out the whole performance

¹⁵ Goto, Yukihiro. *The Theatrical Fusion of Suzuki Tadashi*. *Asian Theatre Journal*, vol. 6, no. 2, 1989, pp. 103–123. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/1124454. Accessed 08/10/2020.

In the way Suzuki has staged this play, we can also see a lot of theatrical device based evidence for a great work in the prism of *glocal* theatre. There are many aspects to cover, but I will try to cover the ones noticeable from the first watch of the performance. First of all, we can instantly notice the peculiar way the actors act - they do not impersonate, but let the rich movement vocabulary interpose the personality of an individual actor and the role. *Kata* which is a characteristic of *Noh*, is not used, but movements in the end are similar to the ones done by the traditional artists - Suzuki states that is due to Japanese being agricultural people, the derivative of the movement essentially brings the hidden persona about. One of the examples is the *Jizo* statue. A *Jizo* statue or the so called *Ojizosan* is a statue in Japan, which is said to possess the protective power towards the weaker (like women and children or sick people) and the traveling people. These statues are very common in Japan, so it is a very strong symbol in the performance, that carries out its' function in a particular style of movement.¹⁶ The *Jizo* statue appears on the stage with the help of the feet sliding technique used in *Noh* called *Suriashi* - this creates an image that he does it with an effortless glide. The actor who depicts the *Jizo* statue stands still for one and a half hour long period on stage without any movement and this *Noh* based technique is called *I-guse*: it means imagining a distant point where there is a single godlike light beam.¹⁷ Concentrations allows awareness of the body and also internal sensations allow brilliance and purity. This deity like imagery is successfully contrasted by the *Kabuki Aragoto*-like movement in the Greek soldiers to stress their strength and valor - the arms move before bodies, the legs are extended forward. Furthermore *Mie*-like movements appear with the second Greek warrior killing the female elder - the execution is portrayed as with a climax of cruelty. We can also see "full-front" performance that is usually seen in *Noh* and *Kabuki* at the scene of Hecuba and Andromache lamenting over their sadness. Dance is an element that can be felt strongly in this performance (*Ashibyoshi*), because Cassandra's movements are side stepping, dance like. Another powerful moment in the physical aspects of this performance is that the music is a combination of modern and the past, as it could be expected - the *Shakuhachi* definitely bridges the past and the present, whereas the present music is exaggerated in its' uplifting moods and therefore emphasizes the cynical and dark feeling of the play.

¹⁶Kunihiko Shimizu (Associate Professor, Faculty of Letters, Institute of Human and Social Sciences), The Jizo of Kanazawa City, Kanazawa University Public E-course, <https://open-learning.crc.kanazawa-u.ac.jp/open-e-course/docs/The%20Jizo%20of%20Kanazawa%20City.pdf>, accessed 10/10/2020

¹⁷Goto, Yukihiro. *The Theatrical Fusion of Suzuki Tadashi*. *Asian Theatre Journal*, vol. 6, no. 2, 1989, pp. 103–123. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/1124454. Accessed 10/10/2020.

After going through detailed moments like this, it would be possible to find many more points of analysis. Of course, one could also argue that someone who seeks something will always suggestively find it due to relying too much on his or her imagination, but I strongly believe that this is not really the case here as Suzuki has chosen details and stylistics in various levels that are adapted from the traditional theatre of *Noh* and *Kabuki*. One could be asked as to why he or she thinks Suzuki Tadashi has chosen this aesthetic of work and the answer can be “The director enjoys it or feels the most comfortable in it,” however I intuitively felt that Suzuki has compiled tradition in extremely high detail in order to talk about the past in a new light and to show that the past is not gone forever. It is always near us with all the greatness and the darkness. It can be resurrected at any time in a form of a contemporary theatre to bring about feelings and understanding or it can lurk up on us as unexpected terror in the real life. Suzuki is a visionary in this sense and has worked to bring the past forms for the good of the future with other highly acclaimed texts of the past - one of them is *The Bacchae* by Euripides in the performance called *Dionysus*.

Dionysus

In this section the director's tools and the overall composition of the performance called *Dionysus* is analyzed (Euripides' *Bacchae*, staged in 1990 for the first time by Suzuki Tadashi, re-staged several times - 1992, 2006, 2015). Suzuki has staged and re-staged this production several times, yet Suzuki always tends to choose the themes in his work perhaps according to the socio-political background of the audience present in different countries or on the contrary he chooses to work with the idea of lingual pluralism to bring understanding among nationalities about each other and to display the characters as individual who can acquire the highest collective energy in their own native languages combined together.¹⁸ This performance is said to have carried a few important social messages, which are re-occurring in accordance to where it was staged. As time has gone by Tadashi Suzuki's

¹⁸ Interview with Tadashi Suzuki for the 9th Theatre Olympics in Toga by Tadashi Uchino, Performing Arts Network Japan, May 7th 2019, https://performingarts.jp/E/pre_interview/1903/1.html

method of staging has changed and has therefore left large audiences in both awe and at points at a lack of understanding.

Theatre philosophies differ around the world, yet certain powerful theatre will lead the reaction of the audience to be diametrical - especially in a case of mix of traditions and cultures. A critic named Ong Sor Fern who analyzed his performance in 2019 in Singapore states that the use of various languages that are native to each of the actors cast in the play, is resembling a cacophonous riot, while Suzuki does manage to “..mould it in almost severe, stately whole..”. At the end of the critique the author states that Suzuki’s Dionysus is not able to “..transcend linguistic barriers..”, yet he also states that this production also celebrates its magic - that transcendental creative leap that allows diverse actors on a bare platform to embody, for a short while, the audience's best and worst selves.¹⁹ Of course it is only natural to assume that any director will simply have unsuccessful moments in their careers with extensive amounts of continuous non-stop work for years. In his essay Suzuki states, however, that his theatre tries to reinforce the animal energy inside of his actors.²⁰ If we assume that animal energy also lies in a possibility with the actors to communicate to each other using different languages, it does go with Suzuki’s idea. He states in the annotation of the performance of 2019 that he does so in order to make the actors to produce maximal energy that only comes out from their native language, acknowledging the hurdles and the effects that this theatrical device would bring.

It is important to analyze this performance from a live perspective of a viewer and what is the technique and the idea to extract from the performance of 2006 performed entirely by Japanese actors. In the beginning of the performance we can already see the trademark of Suzuki: *Suriashi* is being used - especially when the priests move around the central character. The lighting is used in a way that their feet are not visible - from the perspective of the plot, the movement of all the characters looks like they are flowing and it is giving an atmosphere of absolute stability and control in Thebes. Dionysus has a similar control and speed in his movement, but it is visible in his eyes that he has a very active inner monologue present even under the controlled movement - this very much embodies the true deceptive and playful being of Dionysus. Just like in the case of *Trojan Women* the contrast of passive movement and active inner monologue is present, just like in the case of the *Jizo* statue in the *Trojan Women*.

¹⁹Ong Sor Fern, *Theatre review: Tadashi Suzuki moulds disparate elements into a stately whole in Dionysus*, MAY 19, 2019 <https://www.straittimes.com/lifestyle/theatre-review-tadashi-suzuki-moulds-disparate-elements-into-a-stately-whole-in-dionysus> accessed on 12/10/2020

²⁰ Tadashi Suzuki, *SUZUKI's Philosophy of Theatre, The Promise of Theatre* <https://www.scot-suzukicompany.com/en/philosophy.php> 2009, accessed on 02/10/2020



Dionysus in Singapore



Dyonisus in China

When Bacchae enter the stage they are accompanied by *Gagaku* music. The costume color is a mix of white and red (the make up being white), while the priests are dressed are wearing a white makeup. The main character in brown - these colors interact with each other as the rest of the stage is pitch black. This is a very minimalist stage design as it only concentrates on the characters and their interconnection - they are so monumental in their movement and expression that resembles a live painting of emotion. The battle sequences are masterfully choreographed - even though the movement of swords are really slow, the

bodies seem to be concentrated as if they were to strike at any moment which raises the level of suspense in the audience. The characters retreat leaving the central character in a state of confusion - the play of light and dark is a great special effect as Dionysus escapes into the dark even though it is the center of the stage among the other characters. A character in gold appears with a rod in his hands next to the Bacchae and he leads a conversation with the white figures. Afterwards a choreographed battle sequences start - they attack the character, but it turns into a more ritualistic dance with a collective stab and a blackout. When this sequence ends, Agae appears with a head of a doll in her hands, which is poetic way to signify the atrocity committed by her towards her son Pentheus - this theatrical instrument is a likely a reference to the non naturalistic aesthetics of *Noh* theatre.

The moments when she realizes that the head she is holding is of her son, there is a great physical acting sequence which is based on a *misenscene* - as she starts facing the head, her whole body responds to the information in neglect and regret. The lighting on the head becomes dark - emphasizing the horror and the refusal to believe the unfortunate turn of events.

A very powerful tool in this production was the sound - not only the inclusion of the court *Gagaku* music when the Bacchae appear and the bass saxophone giving absolute contrast in order to describe their intoxication, but also the melody of the speech contained a lot of suspense and concentration contrasting to the musical partiture. Suzuki also used special effects sounds that very much resembled the sounds of *Pink Floyd's The Dark Side of the Moon* track called *On the Run*. This media in the performance describes Suzuki's influence of the 60s and 70s together with the ancient Japanese culture the best, however this detail has been received with mixed feelings. The critic Marianne McDonald states that Suzuki's use of modern media is appeasement to the modern world without the necessity to do so. In her named article *The Rise and Fall of Dionysus: Suzuki Tadashi and Greek Tragedy* mentions that in comparison to how Suzuki masterfully used music in his first ancient Greek tragedy productions, Suzuki nowadays (2010 at the time) seems to sell Orientalism to the West and reverse Orientalism to Japan with new technologies such as light, sound and projection.²¹ One could argue, however, that Suzuki and other directors have a right to not use modern media with mathematical calculation or with precise relevance to what individual viewers or especially critics may find important. Directing is a subjective art and subjectivity is what can be both criticized and celebrated.

²¹ MARIANNE MCDONALD
Arion: A Journal of Humanities and the Classics
Third Series, Vol. 17, No. 3 (WINTER 2010), pp. 64
Published by: Trustees of Boston University; accessed 15/10/2020

After watching this performance, I have to admit that it is quite hard to perceive for a conventional viewer as the beginning of the performance is a very long dialogue between Dionysus and the white monks, but it does keep the attention of the viewer present in some almost inexplicable way.

Suzuki successfully transforms the ancient Greek setting into his own world of different time by the use of *sekai honkadori* technique. When taking a deeper look into this technique, it seems that he really does strive to deconstructing the parts where extra knowledge is necessary to understand what really is going on in the tale of Dionysus. Very controlled body language of the monks, Cadmus and other men against the ritualistic and animal like movements of the women show that men, no matter how much they seem in control of their structures, they are very dependent on women, who can affect them in unimaginable ways. This is a great allegory for the contemporary Japanese society. Another idea that has been enclosed in this and other works of Suzuki is the control by religion and what it can do to a society - in *Trojan Women* it is the nihilist state it can bring us in in times of darkness as discussed before, whereas in *Dionysus* the theme has evolved into a theme of becoming destructive by becoming too involved with religion. Suzuki's *Dionysus* comes out coincidentally a few years before the terror act called *Chikatetsu Sarin Jiken* (The Subway Sarin incident) in 1995, when the *Aum Shinrikyo* cult members released sarin gas in 3 crowded subway stations in Tokyo killing and crippling countless people. Suzuki himself states the following about this theme in his *Dionysus* performances:

While religion may appear peaceful on the outside, there are also aspects of it that have led to some of the most aggressive battles and conflicts throughout history. That's unfortunately the world we live in, where the beauty of religion is suppressed by the presence of certain political authorities corrupting them. Religion and politics have always co-existed in human history in conflicting ways, and I wanted to question this through my production of Dionysus, which I feel has once again become so current to our times.

This text was released before one of his “Dionysus performances in Singapore in a pre-release statement.²² This statement clearly shows Suzuki’s feeling of social responsibility not only for the Japanese society but also for the international community. In his essay of *SCOT* website he also states that theatre is currently in a position, where it is being and has been scrutinized before by governments around the globe in theatre halls and outside of them in order to gain control of this historically independent media. Suzuki clearly projects the thought that theatre is something more important and decisive for the future of the world than just an art form.

Summary

To summarize Suzuki’s work in the form of glocality, there are some important points that emerge from his works, his writings and from the analysis of others. Some points are naturally characteristic of any director, who goes through the process of growth and fall in one’s career, but Suzuki has brought an enormously unique influence in the world of theatre. I will list some of the most notable points beneath:

1) Use of traditional techniques to create new aesthetics of fusion - a creation of a new world, where faraway cultures blend organically. That includes the reconstruction of dramaturgy, the setting, mix of modern and historic media.

2) Giving masterclasses to actors from around the world - masterclasses that are very hard and in spirit of authoritarian regime, but I believe that any professional training in theatre (especially, Suzuki’s) takes a lot of physical and mental effort to transform oneself and achieve the level of concentration and ultimately freedom on stage in the particular method.

²² Bakchormeeboy, *SIFA 2019 Preview: Tadashi Suzuki’s Dionysus In Rehearsal*, December 3, 2018 <https://bakchormeeboy.com/2018/12/03/sifa-2019-preview-tadashi-suzukis-dionysus-in-rehearsal/>, accessed on 17/10/2020

3) Use of languages as an accelerator of one's animal spirit, rather than try to accentuate intellectual value in a subtext. The text is used as instrument to evoke feelings rather than meaning or signals of communication to other actors. This by no means signifies that the actors do not communicate or understand what they are saying (at least for the Japanese actors) - they do, but the text is aimed towards provoking feelings in themselves and then the communication comes out in a form of a collision of feelings of characters. It is so powerful that the characters often do not face each other in these situations it is a tradition of *Kabuki*, but there is no tradition without a meaning underneath it.

4) Theatre as a social commentary, adapted to each country and period of time

Critics have expressed doubt about Suzuki's training, specifically with the theatre that has famously collaborated with Suzuki - *SITI*. In his article Paul Allain states that Shiraisi of Suzuki's troupe has been highly critically acclaimed for her physical, vocal and acting abilities. To a large extent this also goes for other actors in his troupe, but apparently not as skillful as Shiraisi. When it comes to English speakers (or any other foreign language, as he has trained also actors in Moscow's *GITIS*) to judge the training of Suzuki is tough to do so due to Japanese language inability. There is a potential result of strong barking like sounds by the Western performers in Suzuki's performances due to the lack of understanding of the meaning behind the Japanese thought process.²³ I believe that in any newfound intercultural concept, it is impossible to speed up the collision of language barriers, but failures to achieve understanding in the same language definitely can bring about revelations and adjustments for the future.

On the other hand scientists, who can express themselves in both English and Japanese (especially the Japanese counterparts) tend to show deeper understanding and appreciation of what Suzuki has achieved by his methods of fusion. Takahashi Yasunari states that Suzuki has moved the Japanese people by incorporating a lot *Enka* in his performances, even though originally it is foreign dramaturgy. He exposed the political and moral hypocrisy in *Shingeki* as a social institution both polemical and theatrical instruments, because *Shingeki* and the people involved in the making of it focused only on the ideas that the original text and the meaning behind it is what needs to be worked on, making all the actors and artists involved very unnatural and unappealing to the younger generation of Japanese people. He successfully achieved the idea that the actor can replace text in the top of the pyramid of

²³ Paul Allain "Suzuki's Training", *TDR* (1988-) Vol. 42, No. 1 (Spring, 1998), pp. 66-89 (24 pages)
Published by: [The MIT Press](#), accessed on 20/10/2020

priorities. Suzuki may remind Kurosawa in the way he transferred the time and setting of Shakespeare's original plots of *Macbeth* and *King Lear* to feudal Japanese - people may see Suzuki not being able to do the same with the limited possibilities of theatre, however, there is one key aspect that links all the aforementioned methodology and achievements together - Suzuki uses the extraordinary advantage of the power of actor's presence. He truly manifested in the first performance of *Bacchae*, where the famous *Noh* actor (Hisao Kanze), the no less famous *Shingeki* actress (Etsuko Ichihara), and Kayoko Shiraishi were brought all together to generate this clash of different aesthetics and generations.²⁴ When overlooking the methods listed which talk about Suzuki's work in *glocality*, he emphasizes the presence of the actor and that carries a great meaning, because if we imagine movements related to globalization, the best of them are usually human centered - if we look at how the music of the *Beatles* affected nations, it is evident that it "worked" on the millions of people in Soviet Union not because they understood what is encrypted in the lyrics, but because of the genuine feelings of freedom and rebellion hidden within the music itself, in the way it was performed and the ways how the group presented themselves. I believe this feeling has a close connection to how Suzuki tries to bring the true human feelings and values in the digitally controlled time that we live in right now.

The Origins of Ninagawa's Glocal Theatre

Yukio Ninagawa, who was born in 1935 in Kawaguchi, a small town in the outskirts of Tokyo, was, is and will be a director familiar to any Japanese person, when theatre is discussed. As a young man who was a son of a tailor he had the ambition to enroll at the Tokyo University of the Arts as a painter, he had tried to do so yet failed the entrance examination. This failure had lead

²⁴ Ian Carruthers and Takahashi Yasunari, Excerpt of *The Theatre of Suzuki Tadashi*, published by Cambridge University Press 0521590248 Goto Yukihiro. *Asian Theatre Journal*, vol. 22, no. 2, 2005, pp. 356–361. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/4137141. Accessed 25/10/2020.

him to the the alternative path of becoming an actor and eventually a stage director.²⁵ The important point in this story is the ambition of becoming a painter and how this ambition evolved in the alternative path the Ninagawa chose as a director. His *Medea*, which was one of the first performances that brought him to the widespread global critical acclaim is being cited as a performance of ability to “..use the stage with painterly freedom and to synthesize sounds and colour..”²⁶. Like many people in the field of directing Ninagawa had worked for 12 years in the career of acting in the theatre company *Seihai* and only then eventually he formed his own theatre company called *Gendaijin Gekijo (The Theatre of Contemporary People)* in 1967 - right at the time of small theatre movement in which Suzuki and his colleagues fought to prove their ideals. In 1972 Ninagawa went on to found his next theatre troupe *Sakura-sha*, which had a decadent attitude towards the *Shingeki* theatre by staging plays of the controversial playwright Kuniaki Shimizu. Ninagawa’s start with this playwright contained topics like reality and illusion, the present and the past, memories vs. past. These plays often contained both past and the present and there was always a question related to which one of the viewpoints of the characters is correct. Ninagawa used this to incorporate the political and social commentaries from him and his peers who were protesting the government’s stance at that time.²⁷ In 1974 the “Sakura-sha” was disbanded and it became a turning point in Ninagawa’s career as a producer working for *Toho* had noticed him and offered him to stage *Romeo and Juliet*, which allowed Ninagawa to embrace the path of crossing the Japanese culture with foreign plays. This director had noticed Ninagawa’s ability to enhance his performance visually - just like a painter, who he yearned to become originally. Ninagawa further went on to direct works like *King Lear* by Shakespeare, *Oedipus Rex* by Sophocles, *The Threepenny Opera* by Brecht and then finally *Medea* by Euripides in 1978. This performance eventually led him to travel to Greece and work on his first international production - he was wildly acclaimed with *Medea* and then he decided to continue touring to Europe every year to work on international collaborations every year, which definitely shaped his style as a director and his international reputation. He came to be famous with his collaboration productions of Shakespeare, but in this paper I solely focus on the way he saw the *glocal* theatre through his prism of Greek tragedies. He re-staged several works many times in a similar manner like Tadashi Suzuki did - I believe both of them did so due to the ritual values implemented in their theatre forms and profound interest in the theatre history of the world.

²⁵ Corrie Tan, *YUKIO NINAGAWA, THE ARCHITECT OF CULTURAL CROSSROADS* | 20th Nov 2018 |

<https://thetheatretimes.com/yukio-ninagawa-the-architect-of-cultural-crossroads/> accessed 25/10/2020

²⁶ Michael Billington, critique *Yukio Ninagawa obituary*, Mon 16 May 2016 11.29 BST, Last modified on Thu 26 Mar 2020 12.38 GMT <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2016/may/16/yukio-ninagawa-obituary>, accessed 25/10/2020

While Suzuki has written many essays on his method and philosophy, Ninagawa seems to be more abstract and reserved in the interviews that he had given to the general public. That may be related to the fact that one is focused on the verbal media, while the other - on the visual. Yet there are important points of intersection, which are important to discuss in order to create a practical material on the method of Japanese *glocal* theatre.

Oedipus Rex



Mansai Nomura in the 2002 production as King Oedipus

The first performance with which I decided to start my analysis of Ninagawa's productions is Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*. I had decided to start with this performance because I believe that choosing to analyse a work which is artistically highly appraised, yet is not as extremely successful and revolutionary *Medea* is an attempt at a slightly more unbiased look at his technique as a director. He had his heart set on crossing the borders of culture rather than focusing on his unprecedented highly successful "window from Japan to the world" with his first success. Nonetheless this performance was again showcased to a very large audience of 4000 people in the year 2004 in Athens, which is also the a city native to the dramatist. The play was first staged by Ninagawa in 1976 in Japan, re-staged in 1986 and then again in 2002 in Tokyo Bunkamura Cocoon and finally re-staged for the 2004 Athens Herodus Atticus. This performance unlike to other performances of Ninagawa seems more focused on rhythmic elements and style rather than going in depth with *Kabuki* and other traditional Japanese theatre references as much as in *Medea*.

Yet the beginning of the production begins with a flute from the court music. This, however, is combined with sounds of the gong and the piano. From Japanese court music it steadily crossfades into a requiem type music, which is definitely a signal to the people who are familiar with the traditions in Japanese theatre. The use of the court music flute is performed in a way that is more relevant to requiem rather than to Japanese court music, which seems like a statement from the director after the use of traditional *Shamisen* music playing orchestra.

The stage set is a tiled floor in a coliseum. The black and white and red and white colours is a symbolism rather easily perceived when watching. The choir acting at the beginning of the performance are wearing paper masks and rods that looks like tools that may have been used the shinto priests in Japan - the rods have a white element thunder, which is originally a Japanese symbol, yet it works well as an associative link to Zeus and Olympus. The priests all have two white holes in their masks for eyes, which gives the viewer a premonition of the eye stabbing fact in the end of the future. The chronology of symbols appearing before the actual fact happening is definitely creating a feeling of memory recollection in Ninagawa Yukio's performances. The same element can be clearly seen in *Ninagawa Macbeth* by the stage set of *Butsudan* in the beginning of the story by the old ladies. It also clearly gives this same feeling and message that it is a travel back in time.

The chorus is an element that Ninagawa uses in both *Oedipus Rex* and *Medea* - this element is highly important in his fusion technique as the chorus carries the Japanese traditional instruments - the *Tsugaru Jamisen* in *Medea* and the court music flute in *Oedipus Rex*. The use of rhythmical text, movement and the instruments allows Ninagawa to orchestrate the play musically and atmospherically.

The chorus very successfully interacts with the dialogues of the actors. When Oedipus is being blamed for the death of his father for the first time by the sage, they all together react as one character who already has an intuitive feeling for what has actually happened. During this dialogue it is becoming clear that the chorus and the colors of the stage costumes are designed in a way to resemble red and white blood bodies (erythrocytes - chorus, leukocytes - Oedipus) - the prophet is gray which may indicate symbolism of a disease. The movement and dance of the bodies is circular with contracting and spreading manner, while Oedipus bolts back and forth. It all reminds of a functioning organism. The red bodies greet the messengers and prophet by enclosing them and then Oedipus appears inside to drive the body out as a white body. This is a possible allegory of how distorted and self-destructive is

the perception of Oedipus. It resembles an autoimmune or a viral diseases that destroys the body it lives in.

As Oedipus learns the truth and stabs his eyes out, he changes colour and the chorus boils in chaos and changes its' behaviour into avoiding Oedipus. By the end of the play the flute is also accompanied by the sounds of organ, which gives a grim image of what is about to happen - Oedipus, stained by the revelation of the truth drives himself out of Thebes, while the chorus is trying to stop him.

While watching this play it is quite a riddle to me personally of what could have been Ninagawa's potential social commentary in this performance. I see it as a statement that our own ego and unwillingness to listen to others may essentially destroy ourselves - especially if the inner force is driven by the feeling of being abandoned as a child. I believe that his version of *Oedipus Rex* is a manifestation of the characteristic silence related to personal problems in combination of urge for power in the society. These problems are very important in the contemporary world.

To sum up - Yukio Ninagawa's strength in interpreting an ancient Greek tragedy is to use symbols, colors, rhythm and *misenscenes*. It is a powerful combination, as it allows Ninagawa to cross the barriers of language and culture to deliver the Greek tragedy in his own Japanese perception. The way the Japanese actors deliver the text is rhythmically and melodically absolutely different language from what we are used in the western cultures. After reading an interview with the translator of the play²⁸, I found out that in the process he made characters use *watashi* in public conversations, *ore* for a private situation and *omae* when Jocasta talks to her son, not husband, Oedipus. This may be the moment of a strong revelation to Ninagawa's reinterpretation in the Japanese way.

²⁸ Hideko Nagamine, *Artist Interview: Greek tragedy that rings true with young Japanese audiences, An interview with translator Harue Yamagata*, 2006.12.25, The Japan Foundation Performing Arts Network Japan https://performingarts.jp/E/art_interview/0612/2.html, accessed on 30/10/2020

Ninagawa's *Oedipus Rex* from a theoretical point of view

After analyzing the performance *Oedipus Rex* from only my own personal viewpoint, it is important to collect thoroughly what other scholars believe is Ninagawa Yukio's work style and trademark. I will try to explore which of these points are and to what extent they are influencing his *Oedipus Rex*. Some of these opinions come from Ninagawa's work on Shakespeare, but I believe that a director will project his deepest influences from their most favored dramaturgy to works with other authors of different times (Sophocles, ancient Greece).

First and foremost point in Ninagawa's stylistics would be the incorporation of the elements related to Japanese culture. The director tries to find the Japanese elements in the dramaturgy in order to attract international audiences when fusing Japanese staging techniques with Greek text.²⁹ In the case of *Oedipus Rex*, this point does appear to be present, especially in how the actors address each other in Japanese - this reveals underlying meanings in the text, which I had mentioned in the last report about how Jocasta addresses Oedipus and how all the characters address each other. Since the text is chosen to be translated into modern Japanese it establishes sort of a hierarchy derived from the honorifics of the language between the characters, which serves as a great obstacle for the actors to base their acting on.

An Asahi Shimbun critique writer Miyashita states that Ninagawa's success lies in the fact that he is able to gather various elements of the modern Japanese society and then stage it without any unnecessary exoticism in order to appease the foreign public.³⁰ Ninagawa's stylized acting style, while relatively "realistic" compared to the non-realistic acting style of traditional Japanese theatre, is not post-Stanislawskian naturalism; Ninagawa's version of acting resembles the melodramatic style of "realistic" acting, which was characteristic of the Shingeki actors.³¹ As much as this is more relevant to the

²⁹ Smit, Betine Van Zyl *A Handbook to the Reception of Greek Drama* (Wiley Blackwell Handbooks to Classical Reception)(EDT) 2016) May 23, 2016

³⁰ Im, Yeeyon, *The Pitfalls of Intercultural Discourse: The Case of Yukio Ninagawa. Shakespeare Bulletin*, vol. 22, no. 4, 2004, pp. 7–30. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/26349161. Accessed 1/11/2020.

³¹ Im, Yeeyon, *The Pitfalls of Intercultural Discourse: The Case of Yukio Ninagawa. Shakespeare Bulletin*, vol. 22, no. 4, 2004, pp. 7–30. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/26349161. Accessed 1/11/2020.

Shakespearean productions of Ninagawa, this does also appear in this production as it is avoiding the rhythms of haiku 5 - 7- 5 or European based rhythms - the choir is adjusted to support the dialogues that the main characters are performing in between each other - the dialogues themselves are quite naturalistic only changing to a choir talking in a group with for interludes between the dialogues to change the misenscene.

Another important factor about Ninagawa's style is that he employs the principles of popularization - he often casts a famous actor for the main characters and uses elements of popular culture³² (an example: the use of classical music in *Medea*). In the production of *Oedipus Rex* Ninagawa does not use the music of classic composers - he uses originally written music. The composer Togi Hideki, however, fuses the classical Japanese gagaku court music with a requiem style music and uses a bittersweet tone of a lead saxophone - this definitely appeals to the modern viewer, as it has chord sources linked to both present and the past. The casting of Nomura Mansai and Rei Asami definitely follows the principle of popularization as they are the leading stars in contemporary Japanese theatre scene.

Ninagawa also tries to maintain cultural authenticity of the chronotope which the director has chosen. In *Oedipus Rex* he uses burnt lotus flowers as stage design to symbolize the premonition of the kingdom and Oedipus' personal life being out of order. Also the flutes and the religious attributes of the monks carrying during the beginning of the play definitely talks about a shintoist background in his work.

To summarize, Ninagawa's work style in this particular example I would definitely like to state that Ninagawa works with the atmosphere of both - the contemporary and the chronotopical worlds. He fuses the ancient with the present and the foreign with the Japanese - the Japanese part prevail in the foreign structure. Ninagawa, of course has employed also techniques of *kabuki* and *noh*, but it seems not so framed as it is strictly done in Suzuki's method. There is still a lot to learn from other Ninagawa's productions.

³² Im, Yeeyon, *The Pitfalls of Intercultural Discourse: The Case of Yukio Ninagawa*. *Shakespeare Bulletin*, vol. 22, no. 4, 2004, pp. 7-30. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/26349161. Accessed 1/11/2020.

Medea



A poster for a performance in Edinburgh, Scotland. There are two aspects clearly visible in it - Ninagawa works with visual elements impress and also the fact that the performance is an outdoor one.

As I mentioned in this paper earlier, Ninagawa Yukio's international breakthrough happened with his version of *Medea*. The play was premiered in 1978 and performed numerous times in various venues of different countries. If we talk about the context of Japan behind the staging of this performance it is definitely worth mentioning the fact that historically was and is a patriarchal society, where the image of woman being vulnerable and not as much in control as men is a sign of virtue. Ninagawa challenges this view in his performance with his remarkable ability to create his performances in a style highly appealing to almost all age groups of Japanese people. The size of the audience has differed wildly for this performance - starting from a couple hundred in a standard Japanese theatre hall, to large halls with around thousand viewers, to finally the Herodus Atticus amphitheatre in Greece with the viewer capacity of around 7000 people. This unbelievable range of the spectator amounts means that naturally a performance is naturally modified for

every stage, because in the theory of stage directing it is clear that a performance created for a smaller stage will not be as perceivable in the larger ones. That is, of course, if there are no modifications done in the composition of direction, stage design and the *misenscene* dynamics. Ninagawa also possesses a quality that usually is considered a gift of nature in combination with extensive self education, which he has most definitely done as he had been interested in becoming a painter: his performances are stylistically of high value and are always somehow relevant to the local culture of the community that he showcases the performance for. The form of used in *Medea* and other of his performances is a successful mix of traditional references and aesthetics - the use of chorus (reference to Greek theatre), *Medea* played by a male actor (reference to Kabuki), etc. Combinations like this allow Mr. Ninagawa to widen his target audience. One can argue that these kind of details can be well perceived only by people who have something do to with theatre professionally, however, a human being is much more perceptive of what is being presented to him or her on a subconscious level than we ourselves think while we watch theatre. Ninagawa's performance is a definitely a revolutionary performance - both in its' detail and its' overall theme. Discussion on this work is definitely potentially rewarding for defining the pinnacle values on what is glocality in the Japanese perception.

Medea from a viewer's perspective

When watching this performance there are several things that struck me as important - first of all it is the contrast of what we expect and what is being presented to us. The music in the folk aesthetic accompanied by vocals made by well known Mikami is not what one would expect from an Ancient Greek tragedy. Of course one may argue that many directors use all kinds of eclectic elements nowadays in the work with Ancient Greek plays, yet Ninagawa's strength lies in setting the tone with an artist beloved by the society. For viewers of other nationalities, who may not have this knowledge still can enjoy the melancholy of the folk music and the sudden, shocking contrast that the costume of the first character on stage. With the appearance of the characters the director lets the viewer understand that the characters depicted are not from a world which is realistic. Instead it offers a parallel dimension where traditional forms of Ancient Greek drama's chorus mixes with the an orchestra of *Ohayashi* of Kabuki, Haydn mixes with traditional *Shamisen* music, modern language mixes with ancient plot of *Medea* and finally the force of a male actor mixes with

the fragility of Medea's character. Ninagawa's performance takes us by shock, however he does it gradually, revealing only a few details at a time. Most probably one of the most memorable moments was the sudden rambling of an *Odaiko* during Haydn's requiem - the use of the drum went surprisingly well together with the seemingly untouchable piece of classical music.



Mikijiro Hira as Medea

The actors were performing in quite an unrealistic, alienated form of acting, often characteristic of Shakespeare's plays. The director created the characters by using the peculiar costumes - the change of colors and the fact of stripping some clothes during a monologue and a dialogue is a way to let them undergo psychological changes. This (just like in Suzuki's performance of Trojan Women) is a form derived from Brecht's theatre, where his actors perform in an exaggerated manner thus creating a parody like theatre. The character acting really bases on this change of atmosphere that the clothing creates, because not only do the individual character appearances change, but also the chorus changes its appearance with Medea's. The whole stage gets a particular tone with this stage

due to the scale of the change. This element allows the play to be perceivable to audiences from abroad and also allows the play to be transposed to larger stage sizes fairly easily. Ninagawa's ability to speak in this universal language of colors in visual elements, sounds and movements is an instrument of the director to stimulate the emotions of the viewer so precisely that none of the viewers naturally would not have any questions about the meaning of the play.

In the previous paragraph the mentioned movement is a crucial aspect of the acting form as the form of the individual actors is not realistic, yet the chorus reflects the inner process of Medea in more exaggerated movements, grimaces and vocal sounds. This form, however, is only focused on Medea though and that gives the setting that this whole play is universe in which Medea is at its center - that is working paradox as she is an exiled female royalty, who has seemingly lost her influence (which has always been symbolical since she is a woman), yet the horrific tragedy of murdering her children brings justice to her yet at the cost unimaginable pain for her as a mother.

To summarize this whole analysis, it is not as infused with the forms of traditional theatre as in the cases of Suzuki's performances. This theatre is more associative, with less direct references to *Noh* and *Kabuki* than perhaps one expects. He does use these references in for example *Ninagawa Macbeth*, but they feel very subtle - there is also a possibility that these influences come in play as offer from the actor, because theatre is definitely not made only by the director. Ninagawa, however, has left an image of quite an authority for the actors, as they still perform his plays posthumously without him (specifically *Ninagawa Macbeth*). However, without witnessing the rehearsal process it is quite difficult to say whether devotion comes mostly from disciplinary reasons or due to charismatic appeal - the right answer lies somewhere in between as *Medea* is a groundbreaking performance which has traveled and impacted the globe.

Medea from the perspective of theatre study

There are many details, with which Ninagawa works with - especially from the semantic perspective. For example the use of the gong in the music may seem like an atmospheric detail, but it is actually derived from *Kabuki* plays which are happening in Buddhist temples. Even though Mae Smethurst in the *Journal of American Philology* states that the performance of 1993 which she analyses is too progressive in the music it presents to the older generation³³, in my opinion those are the references like this related to *Kabuki* that still win over the appeal of the older generation. The author further mentions Ninagawa evoking not only *Kabuki*, but also *Bunraku* theatre elements in the scene where the head-priestess of Medea raises her headdress which resembles that of a *Gidayu* narrator in *Bunraku* theatre. Having some knowledge about these theatre forms raises the potential appreciation of the performance. The director also changes these introductory actions from venue to venue - for example in Tokyo's venue the head priestess sprinkled pieces of paper, which resembled snow or falling cherry blossoms characteristic of *kabuki* plays, whereas in Athens she lit up torches. The fact that the cast is an all male one (which is a *Kabuki* reference), and that the chorus is moving with *Tsugaru Jamisen* in their hands (on the contrary to the typical *Shamisen* orchestra, which is usually static next to the stage) shows that the director not only involves already known traditions to convey the play from a historical context of Japan, but also to reconstruct them in a new existence. Even though we understand that the all male chorus is an embodiment of the female Medea in a larger scale, people with the knowledge about *kabuki* gives them the privilege of quickly perceiving that the chorus is an all female due to their straw hats which are characteristic of the female characters in *Kabuki* plays.³⁴ That is the key to Ninagawa's marketing success - as his theatre is effective atmospherically to people unfamiliar to the symbols and also to the people who understand these symbols and for them it induces a whole world of imagery.

33

Smethurst, Mae. "Ninagawa's Production of Euripides' Medea." *The American Journal of Philology*, vol. 123, no. 1, 2002, pp. 5. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/1561998. Accessed 5/11/2020.

Smethurst, Mae. "Ninagawa's Production of Euripides' Medea." *The American Journal of Philology*, vol. 123, no. 1, 2002, pp. 6-8. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/1561998. Accessed 5/11/2020.

There is also interesting selection in the aesthetics of acting dependent on the public that attends the performance - in the Tokyo venue Hira Mikijiro performed Medea in a voice that is characteristic of the *Onnagata*, the female depicting male actors in *kabuki*, whereas in Athens his voice was masculine throughout the whole performance. This is quite a radical change, which cannot only be attributed to a slight contextual change - it changes the whole idea of the performance. The way how the actor has prepared and carried out the role is of a very high level of professionalism in terms of being a *Kabuki* actor - in this case we can also feel the strengths of casting of Ninagawa. Of course the tone in which the author discusses Ninagawa's work praises his direction and the ability to use tradition in order to move many audiences. Yet, I would like to note down the fact that Ninagawa staged his first *Kabuki* performance only in 2005 in *Kabukiza* with Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*³⁵. It is hard to tell the artist motivation to do so, however, I believe that it was initially Ninagawa's remarkable casting gift which brought him to highly talented and knowledgeable *Kabuki* actors with their natural influence and only then he worked directly with *Kabuki* aesthetics directly. This may be explained by modesty that often accompanies Japanese people in their mentality and probably the highly isolated environment of *Kabuki* theatre makers - Ninagawa came in the scene of the aesthetic after thoroughly experimenting with it, which is also an important historical achievement as it is not the entry in the theatre in the traditional sense, yet again the feedback that Medea left in its aftermath.



In Kabukiza with Shakespeare's "Twelfth Night", 2005

³⁵ Gekisya Ninagawa Studio, Yukio Ninagawa's brief career chronology
<http://www.ninagawastudio.net/English/E-yukioninagawa.html> accessed 15/11/2020

In 1986 the American magazine *NY Times* started their article with the headline: *THEATER: ALL-MALE, JAPANESE 'MEDEA'*. Needless to say, this kind of theatre was shocking the western public as the magazine even stated that Ninagawa's performance deeply inspired by *Noh* and *Kabuki* and it acts to transform this play into a Japanese classic.³⁶ In reality it did become a classic, however Ninagawa was doing an absolute act of experimentation by assembling classic work traditions of the past. In this article it can be felt that the American audience is quite shocked by Ninagawa's choice to let Medea be performed in a deep voice by the actor:

“Except for his deep masculine voice, Mr. Hira is a totally convincing Medea, in emotional depth an equal to many English-speaking actresses who have played the role.”

In this remark it is quite clear that the Western audience was not used to the gender role discussion - Ninagawa had a quite futuristic outlook and has guessed the problems tackled in the future by large amounts of global societies.

³⁶ Mel Gussow *THEATER: ALL-MALE, JAPANESE*, *NY Times*, Sept. 5, 1986
<https://www.nytimes.com/1986/09/05/theater/theater-all-male-japanese-medea.html>, accessed 15/11/2020



Medea and her children

This publication also focuses on the music that accompanies the play, criticizing Ninagawa's choice to mix the music of the west and east. It is true that the requiem accompanies the play for purely atmospheric reasons; therefore it may be problematic to justify the use of it for the strictest of the critics:

“The score is a collage of East and West, but the director might more effectively have held to Eastern music. By far the most plangent music is the surging sound of Japanese stringed instruments played in unison by the 16-man chorus.”

Another interesting moment in this publication worth paying one's attention at is the environment in which Ninagawa had chosen to perform his play at - apparently it was an open stage, as Ninagawa tries to keep the stage as close to a Colosseum as possible. This open stage element of course brings about the possibility of the weather interfering with the performance, which the writer seemed to appreciate:

“At its opening on Wednesday night at the Delacorte Theater in Central Park, the play had an elemental directness - in two senses of the word. Despite an almost steady rain, the play was performed in its entirety. The

drizzle did not deter the Toho actors, but it certainly dampened their ornate costumes (and also the audience). One sidelight: the rain caused steam to emanate from Mr. Hira's costume. He seemed surrounded by a vaporous cloud, an evocative, though accidental metaphor for a Medea on fire."

It is interesting observing these details as we can see that Ninagawa's work with the visual elements and the atmosphere is what receives the attention the most. This specifically viewer in the West and people all over the globe who simply do not have the knowledge of all the invaluable hidden references related to *Kabuki* and *Bunraku* that Ninagawa so masterfully understands recycles in a new light. All in all from the case study related to this director, it is safe to say Ninagawa's intuitive work style appeals to very many different groups of people and make him a very strong pillar in the genre of glocality.

Summary

When looking at Ninagawa's work, it is important to say that his work form seems very much based on intuition - this however is not a statement to undermine Ninagawa's work ethics or skills. It is a statement to his chosen instruments and ways of work are accompanied by a feeling that was persistent throughout his whole career. His way took what is familiar to people and opened up a new path of theatre, which I will identify in this paragraph:

1) Ninagawa used references of theatre forms like *Bunraku* and *Kabuki* in order to create a setting, which can be appreciated by both - the people who have knowledge about these theatre and those who don't via an effective atmosphere of the latter aesthetics and modern derivatives.

2) Ninagawa uses various ways of how characters address each other - from *Medea* changing male and female intonations to *Oedipus Rex* designed in a modern Japanese

informal grammar forms. This keeps the acting of Ninagawa's actors on point and intriguing for any audience.

3) Uses another form of art to create a unique language understandable for audiences across the globe - staging style based on painting speaks through colors, rhythms, emotions.

4) Successfully learns to adapt a smaller stage format to a larger one - from a 700 people audience in Japan to a 7000 people Herodus Atticus stage

5) Uses clothing and props to let the actors embody their characters and feel the change at the necessary moment.

6) Uses elements of pop culture to find appeal in all societies (use of popular musicians, actors , different forms of chorus for different audiences)

7) Use casting and selection of venues as a tool of attracting new audiences

Ninagawa's style and theatre themes has influenced the Japanese and international societies profoundly. When speaking about theatre to Japanese people, they always resonate to his name due to the fact that his genius of theatre was dear even to people who are no so informed about theatre. Undoubtedly his theatre generated waves of discussion in the international fan base as the home of theatre in Greece resonated and kept inviting him back to open such events as theatre Olympics in 2004 before the sports Olympics. Ninagawa together with Tadashi Suzuki are the two names that defined the Japanese theatre as a large competitive player in the international business and also a contemporary narrative that encloses social issues that tell us a story which can be traced from thousands of years back to today. It is clear though that this country's theatre in shrouded in secrecy as it is craft (*waza*) like thousands of other crafts in this country and in order to reveal the mysteries in them it is essential to be trained or at least informed on the topic. This makes the theatre of these artist absolutely unique as they have chosen the theatre of Ancient Greek dramatists to encode a new language which will live its' own life in the uncertain future of the world.

The Potential of Japanese Glocal Direction in

Theatres of Latvia

The recorded theatre history in Latvia has been relatively very recent in comparison to the history of Japanese theatre. Informally - the first real theatre as we know it today was staged by servants of Latvian descent in 1818 in the *Dikļu* manor. It was a translated version of Friedrich Schiller's drama "Die Räuber" of 1781. Even though it was merely a staged translation of a German play - it speaks a lot of Latvians at the time as perhaps for the surprise of many people trying to imagine the quite modern life of European nations at the time; there was still no liberty and very little privileges for Latvians at the time.³⁷

Theatre formally started in 1860s in an underground atmosphere in various venues and festivals organized the national activists with Adolfs Alunans in the forefront - he was a director, a playwright and the first director of a theatre who was of Latvian nationality. During these events the theatre material consisted of many international adaptations of contemporary theatre material and it gradually started being written by contemporary Latvian playwrights of the time. The first theatre venue organized by Latvians is Rīgas Latviešu Biedrība (The Latvian Society of Riga³⁸) - the name of this theatre is an iconic depiction of how much theatre was reflecting of what was in the mind and consciousness of Latvians at the time, who did not have their own formal country. Theatre eventually cultivated ideas of a national identity and as the territory of Latvia was part of the Russian Empire. First notable and up to this day very much respected dramatists are Rudolfs Blaumanis who is affectionately called the "Latvian Chekhov". Equally important are Rainis and Aspazija, whose names are pseudonyms - they were spouses and playwrights of very different styles and ideas. Rainis wrote plays with elements of magical realism involving elements of mythology with the aims of provoking the strengths of an individual and a nation, whereas Aspazija focused on the realm of introspection and feminist ideas. All these personalities and their style of work, which was influenced by their genuine interest to

³⁷ Ieva Struka, *The Short Theatre History*, National Encyclopedia, last updated on 14th July, 2020, <https://enciklopedija.lv/skirklis/21722-te%C4%81tris-Latvij%C4%81>, accessed 25/11/2020

³⁸ Ieva Struka, *The Short Theatre History*, National Encyclopedia, last updated on 14th July, 2020, <https://enciklopedija.lv/skirklis/21722-te%C4%81tris-Latvij%C4%81>, accessed 25/11/2020

fortify the culture of Latvians still strongly affect the contemporary society in terms of both - watching and making theatre and understanding the roots of Latvia.

Despite of the many rulings and occupations that Latvians have gone through, the nation has a cultural history of more than 2000 years with an absolutely unique language which has only similarities with its' brother nation's language of Lithuanian. The relatively recent formal start in theatre form does not mean that acts of performance have not existed long before. On the contrary of the image of religious beliefs of Europe (especially the west and north) being solely related to church Latvia has always been slightly different. Latvians have a long history of paganism and that has contributed a lot in the national identity and stage expression even up until today. There are no certain records of Latvians performing theatre before the aforementioned information due to the fact that Latvians in their, difficult past have endured working hard labour as farmers hired by local barons of large manors. These barons usually were of a Russian or of Baltic-German (Prussian) descent. Latvians were rewarded with shelter and the permit to farm and cultivate their own crops and animals in exchange for hard work - in addition they had to submit regular payment to their barons for using their land. This system was called Serfdom.

Serfdom existed for hundreds of years in one form or another until it was abolished in the end of 19th century. Latvians did not have any group manifestations of national identity until that time, yet we know for sure that Latvians expressed their culture of paganism in various forms that influenced the future of theatre. Those were usually dances and games called *rotas* which were accompanied with texts written by people, who were unlisted as particular authors. These texts often contained ancient themes and traditions of Latvians - traditions were linked to seasonal changes, deities who were elements of nature like the Sun, the fog, the forest mother, the wind mother etc. A German scholar named Garlibs Merkelis (this is his name derived in Latvian language) wrote and published a book on Latvians - this book had a spirit of protest towards the non-liberty and harsh labor lifestyle imposed on them by the barons. He stated that Latvian people have a rich culture, which is under captivity for too long, while even the proud Brits were doing their best to give liberties to the enslaved people from Africa.³⁹ During the late 19th century a Latvian scholar by the name of Krišjānis Barons started collecting this information from household to household of Latvians to compile these bit of daily culture whose chronology ranged from from perhaps thousands of years back to contemporary at the time - these texts were eventually called *Tautasdziesmas*.

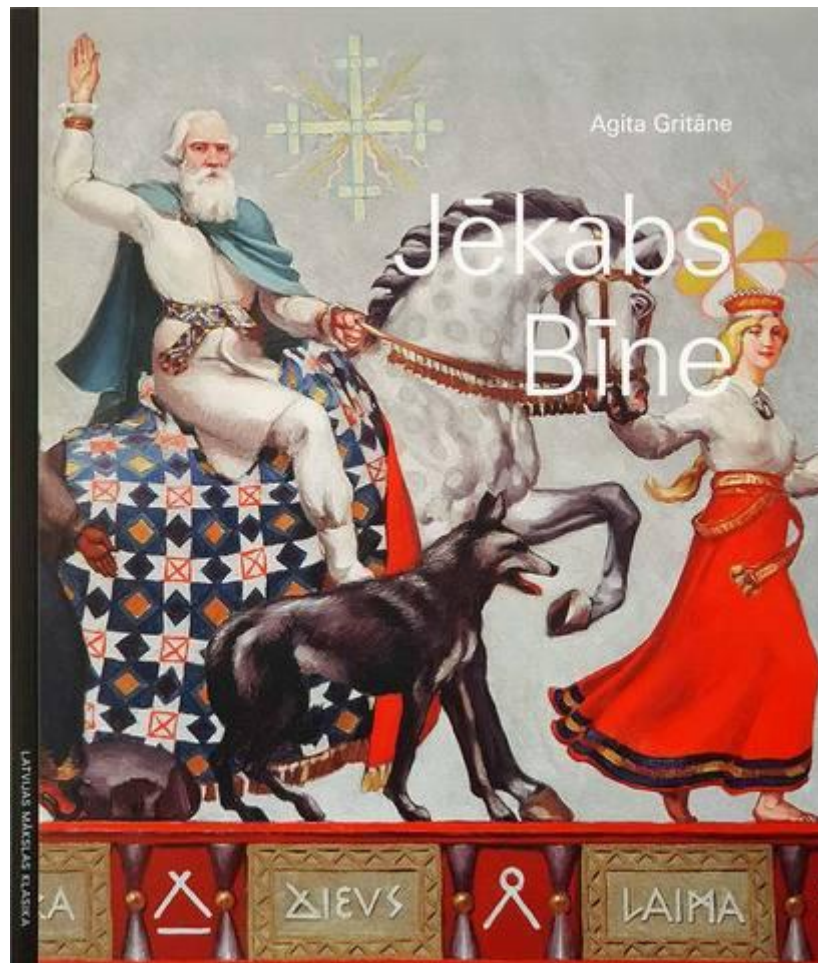
³⁹ Prof. JĀNIS STRADIŅŠ, Dr.habil.chem., Dr.hist.h.c.; Runas, referāti *Garlība Merķeļa "Latvieši" un mēs*, 1996 <https://www.vestnesis.lv/ta/id/52551>, accessed 30/11/2020

“The folk songs are but a part of the rich folklore manuscript collection at the Archives that comprises not only song texts but also fairy tales, legends, proverbs, dances, beliefs, melodies, etc., for a total of nearly three million items. There are also audiovisual representations of folklore found at the Archives.”

UNESCO, under Krisjanis Barons section



This is the physical format of the work compiled by Krišjānis Barons - it is a unique occurrence which can and is often used in various art fields of Latvia



There are many artists who have reproduced the ideas of folklore in their works. This painting by Jēkabs Bīne painted in 1932 is called "The God, Laima and Māra". This kinds of visual representation are perfect fit for the genre of Glocality

The immense work done by Krisjanis Barons is present in both - the physical format and the minds of Latvian people, which can be explored and adapted for a potential form of *glocality* in Latvia. As proverbs, dances, songs and other elements still shape our everyday life in Latvia due to festivities characteristic only of Latvia are held and discussed regularly. These elements have of course been used by many artists in their stage expression, but there have not been deliberate attempts to fuse them with culture extracted from far away elements like Ancient Greek tragedies or perhaps Japanese *Kabuki* and *Noh* plays.

Greek tragedies have also been staged and are enjoying a great popularity in popularity - among those are *Medea* and *Antigone* famous for their highly conceptual directing styles that fortify the tragedy and the social message of female vs. male inequality within the plays.

There are several precedents when a staged Greek tragedy has celebrated great popularity in the contemporary Latvian theatre society.

There are several examples - Elmārs Seņkovs's *Antigone*, which in this case is not Sophocles' play, but Jean Anouilh's version instead. Anouilh's *Antigone* in the opinion of the theatre critique write Maija Svarinska is a version which discusses more man made laws rather than focusing on the history and tradition of the city state on which Sophocles focuses on.⁴⁰ The performance is staged in a minimalist aesthetic with the essence of the dialogues in the centre of the play - the characters are in contemporary clothing, they are our coevals in how they look, communicate and act. The director himself has stated that this performance is political theatre in his opinion (*KDi*, 23. aprīlis, 2015) and to majority of Latvians it is a theatre that has dominated the theatre industry in Latvia.

The attempt to define what the society has been praising the most is an intellectual, stylistically pure theatre that drives the viewer with the power of social commentary through the strengths of acting and the dramatic composition that the director has set (for example, the shortening of text, implication of stage design that is only related to the idea that the director tries to expose the viewer to). This style is familiar to many theatre professionals due to one important fact in the Latvian theatre history. The current generation of Latvian theatre directors have all been exposed to the apprenticeship led by the legendary theatre director Māra Ķimele, whose theatre ideology lies in simple, yet very precise points of professionalism. A true theatre professional (both an actor and a director) emphasizes the value of finding the core idea of a play, understanding thoroughly the meaning of text and searching for the information related to the character and the set idea behind the performance to a degree that makes a theatre professional as precise and (in the best sense of the word) obsessed with searching and for only relevant information in a manner that is similar to a detective's work. Ķimele has always emphasized the power hidden in the mythology and history of the author and the nationalities involved, which is a point widely explored by writers, theatre professionals and the general society up to this day.

This gives good point of intersection for the idea of glocality stemmed from Suzuki's and Ninagawa's theatre in the Latvian theatre as a new sense of identity exploration in the world of post COVID-19 pandemic, which has changed everything in terms of how we perceive. Today's global circumstances also make *Antigone* a play that is as relevant as ever as it

⁴⁰ Maija Svarinska, *Critique: Izrādes Antigone recenzija. Tikumības diagramma*, Kultūras Diena newspaper, May 2nd of 2015, <https://www.diena.lv/raksts/kd/recenzijas/izrades-antigone-recenzija-tikumibas-diagramma-14096508>, accessed on 6/12/2020

discusses the collision of ways of thinking - this is globally and very much locally an existing problem in the COVID-19 struck world. And this leads to the following action plan that will be implemented in cooperation with the Latvian Academy of Culture and Latvian National Theatre in the future:

Glocality training and staging of Antigone

1) Create a study group of actors, stage designers, folklore artists and a director (this list may be edited for specific needs) to discuss and study the works of Yukio Ninagawa and Tadashi Suzuki;

2) Discuss the plays “Antigone” written by both Sophocles and Jean Anouilh - and try to answer the question of which aspects and ideas of the plays could reveal and emphasize the post COVID-19 world social problems. (Hierarchy, roots, different ways of thinking, individual vs. authority, life versus death, liberal mass thinking versus obedient mass thinking);

3) Dispatch 3 teams into research.

Team A - researches the visuals (costumes, housing, sacred art) and how they have and can evolve today and in the future;

Team B - researches proverbs, traditions, song, games and stage traditions that the ancient Latvians have used, are using and will use by using the findings of Krišjānis Barons.

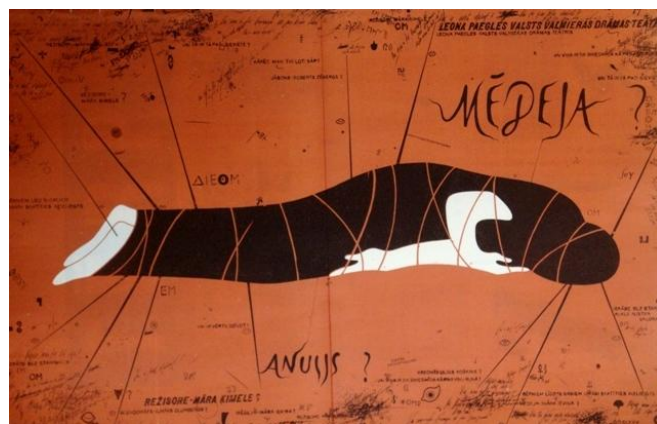
Thinking of how the aforementioned two Japanese directors would apply this knowledge in their theatre and then assembling these methods;

Team C - collects the information from the aforementioned groups, discusses it in relation to the play, the society (past, present and future of it) and eventually recreates these elements in the form of theatre language. The study of Ninagawa and Suzuki is ongoing parallel to the practical work;

4) Produce a play based on the findings. A high possibility of staging and performing the play outdoors due to a set of circumstances (safety and aesthetic reasons).

This project can eventually be involved in the study programs of Drama Stage Directing and and Stage Acting / Audiovisual Arts as it has a potential of the following things: fortifying an already well established folklore tradition of Latvian culture, spreading the conception of Japanese glocality and the names of Suzuki Tadashi and Ninagawa Yukio in the art scenes of Latvia and the rest of the Europe and last but not least - giving an opportunity for the western society to understand the way of thinking of the Japanese society through the genius of the two aforementioned artists.

Posters of Greek tragedies in Latvian theatre



Conclusion

I would like to state my findings of the research in this section of the work. These ideas are derived from an extensive analysis of primary sources like philosophical writings, interviews and performance recordings done by the artists themselves and from secondary sources like theatre analytic articles, magazines and critiques. There have been some moderate limitations in this research: most importantly the availability of older performance recordings and also sources like interviews and films being conducted in Japanese without English translation, however, the Japanese use was clear enough to understand the major ideas covered in the sources. I believe that through this work I have found a clear understanding of what the *glocal* theatre is in detail. Also due to the fact that in the works mentioned in this thesis are closely linked to *Kabuki* and *Noh*, it can be used as a guide on how to view Japanese theatre and as an explanation of how traditional theatre morphed into a form that is internationally acclaimed and modern. In order to understand these findings it is important to have seen and read the works that were made by these artists (*Trojan Women* - both play and performance, *Dionysus and Bacchae* - the performance and play respectively, *Oedipus Rex* - both performance and the play and *Medea* - the performance and the play). I believe that the best form to understand this thesis would be a course of study through the cases described with a practice inspired by the findings, just like the 3rd section suggests.

Starting the thesis with a close up at Suzuki was not a simple task as his theatre is very deep and even decadent in comparison to *Shingeki* or other more entertaining theatre forms like musicals. It seems like it is a very stylized theatre, but not the most easily perceptible theatre in the genre. While it is true, it is also important to state that it is very useful for artists like myself to experiment and discover Suzuki's defined use of stillness and concentration in movement and language on stage as a source of energy, impulse and provocation of an actor's inner process. His way of using different *spaciotemporal* structures is great to explore a hidden side of viewer's identity by letting people imagine how they would act if they were born in a different time or a different world, but with the same cultural elements like language and the way of thinking. In my opinion, the drive behind

Suzuki's published books and essays on his theatre and philosophy probably is reinforced by the way how Japanese view their theatre. They learn the background of the story and artist's idea before they engage in watching, for example a classic *Noh* play or Suzuki's *Dionysus* for the matter. I personally believe that this culture makes the traditional theatre very enjoyable, yet I also believe that theatre should leave this action as an option of choice to popularize itself for the younger audiences. This aspect however may can be a great tool to experiment with in theaters of different countries to stage materials full of folkloric elements and references for the biggest theatre enthusiasts to enjoy. It is also important to mention the undeniable strength of Suzuki's method being trained and explored all around the globe with trial and error in different cultures. Even with a smaller popularity in Japan, this is the main way to ensure the future of high quality theatre of *glocality* in its' natural habitat - abroad.

While researching Ninagawa's theatre, I had noticed quite early on that his productions are "easier" to watch due to the atmospheric richness in his performances - this quality is a language in itself. However, it does not mean that Ninagawa is not using references and traditional Japanese theatre elements. On the contrary - I suspect that in his staging style he has always thought of how to attract the unfamiliar viewer's attention with the established values of *Noh* and *Kabuki*. Ninagawa's ability of organizing theatre abroad in major venues, casting famous actors and choosing to change some elements of his performances according to the culture of the audience are qualities of a great manager. But at the same time, Ninagawa's theatre does not lose its' high artistic level - there is a balance between popularization and the need to talk about important problems that the artist feels. Another outstanding quality is to use language as a way to make ancient plays modern in terms of language. All the mentioned traits could be explained by Ninagawa's experience in various professions - acting, painting, directing and producing.

The findings within the repertoires of Suzuki and Ninagawa are truly practical tools for both the creator and the consumer of theaters around the the world in my opinion. There are a lot of practical stage directing tools to be learned from these two artists, however the main learning experience can only be harvested during the real life implications as that would be the true test of the method of *glocality*, the artists using it and the audience reacting to it. I believe that the idea behind this thesis can fuse theatre creation with the analyzing side in the future, as there is still a wide space of difference to be traversed and understood. Just like foreign audiences appreciate Japanese *glocal* theatre and learn what are the social problems, similarities and differences between them and Japanese people.

This thesis ultimately reminded me that theatre is a way to bond faraway cultures and values.

References

- Tadashi Suzuki, *The Course of Training for SCOT*, SUZUKI's Philosophy of Theatre, 2009. <https://www.scot-suzukicompany.com/en/philosophy.php>
- Roger Reynolds, *SUZUKI TADASHI: SELECTED THEATRE WORKS*, DVD interview, 2011.
- Goto, Yukihiro. "The Theatrical Fusion of Suzuki Tadashi." *Asian Theatre Journal*, vol. 6, no. 2, 1989, pp. 103–123. JSTOR.
- Official Theatre Olympics website. "Founding members of the International Commission." <https://www.theatre-oly.org/en/> Copyright (C) 2018 Theater Olympics.
- Chronology of works and training. Tadashi Suzuki, *SUZUKI's Philosophy of Theatre*, 2009. <https://www.scot-suzukicompany.com/en/philosophy.php>
- Lin Yu-pin, "Japan in Ruins – Tadashi Suzuki's *The Trojan Women*." Macau International Theatre Festival Guide, 2014. <https://www.icm.gov.mo/fam/29/en/detail/articleDetail/Guide7>
- Walter H. Sokel, "Brecht's Concept of Character." *Comparative Drama*, vol. 5, no. 3 (Fall 1971), pp. 178. JSTOR.
- Emma Cole, *Post-dramatic Tragedies*. Oxford University Press, 2019.
- Amanda Chai, "Behind the Scenes of SIFA 2019's First Headliner." *SG Magazine*, Jan 14, 2019. <https://sgmagazine.com/arts/news/behind-scenes-sifa-2019s-first-headliner-restaged-marvel-tadashi-suzuki/>
- Kunihiko Shimizu, "The Jizo of Kanazawa City." Kanazawa University Open E-course. <https://open-learning.crc.kanazawa-u.ac.jp/open-e-course/docs/The%20Jizo%20of%20Kanazawa%20City.pdf> Accessed 10/10/2020.
- Interview with Tadashi Suzuki for the 9th Theatre Olympics in Toga by Tadashi Uchino. *Performing Arts Network Japan*, May 7, 2019. https://performingarts.jp/E/pre_interview/1903/1.html
- Ong Sor Fern, "Theatre Review: Tadashi Suzuki moulds disparate elements into a stately whole in *Dionysus*." *The Straits Times*, May 19, 2019. <https://www.straitstimes.com/lifestyle/theatre-review-tadashi-suzuki-moulds-disparate-elements-into-a-stately-whole-in-dionysus>
- Tadashi Suzuki, *SUZUKI's Philosophy of Theatre – The Promise of Theatre*, 2009. <https://www.scot-suzukicompany.com/en/philosophy.php>
- Marianne McDonald. *Arion: A Journal of Humanities and the Classics*, Third Series, Vol. 17, No. 3, Winter 2010.
- Bakchormeeboy, "SIFA 2019 Preview: Tadashi Suzuki's *Dionysus In Rehearsal*," Dec 3, 2018. <https://bakchormeeboy.com/2018/12/03/sifa-2019-preview-tadashi-suzukis-dionysus-in-rehearsal/>
- Paul Allain, "Suzuki's Training." *TDR (1988-)*, vol. 42, no. 1 (Spring, 1998), pp. 66–89. MIT Press.
- Ian Carruthers and Takahashi Yasunari, *The Theatre of Suzuki Tadashi*. Cambridge University Press, 2005. JSTOR.
- Corrie Tan, "Yukio Ninagawa: The Architect of Cultural Crossroads." *The Theatre Times*, Nov 20, 2018. <https://thetheatretimes.com/yukio-ninagawa-the-architect-of-cultural-crossroads/>
- Michael Billington, "Yukio Ninagawa Obituary." *The Guardian*, May 16, 2016 (updated Mar 26, 2020). <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2016/may/16/yukio-ninagawa-obituary>
- Hideko Nagamine, *Greek Tragedy That Rings True with Young Japanese Audiences*. Interview with Harue Yamagata, *The Japan Foundation Performing Arts Network Japan*, Dec 25, 2006. https://performingarts.jp/E/art_interview/0612/2.html
- Smit, Betine Van Zyl (ed.). *A Handbook to the Reception of Greek Drama*. Wiley-Blackwell, 2016.
- Im, Yeeyon. "The Pitfalls of Intercultural Discourse: The Case of Yukio Ninagawa." *Shakespeare Bulletin*, vol. 22, no. 4 (2004), pp. 7–30. JSTOR.
- Smethurst, Mae. "Ninagawa's Production of Euripides' *Medea*." *The American Journal of Philology*, vol. 123, no. 1, 2002, pp. 5. JSTOR.
- Gekisya Ninagawa Studio, "Yukio Ninagawa's Brief Career Chronology." <http://www.ninagawastudio.net/English/E-yukioninagawa.html>

- Mel Gussow, "Theatre: All-Male, Japanese." *The New York Times*, Sept 5, 1986. <https://www.nytimes.com/1986/09/05/theater/theater-all-male-japanese-medea.html>
- Ieva Struka, *The Short Theatre History*. National Encyclopedia, last updated 14 July 2020. <https://enciklopedija.lv/skirklis/21722-te%C4%81tris-Latvij%C4%81>. Accessed 25/11/2020.
- Ieva Struka, *The Short Theatre History*. National Encyclopedia, last updated 14 July 2020. <https://enciklopedija.lv/skirklis/21722-te%C4%81tris-Latvij%C4%81>. Accessed 25/11/2020.
- Jānis Stradiņš, "Garlība Merķeļa *Latvieši* un mēs," *Latvijas Vēstnesis*, 1996. <https://www.vestnesis.lv/ta/id/52551>. Accessed 30/11/2020.
- UNESCO. *Krišjānis Barons and the Latvian Folk Songs (Tautasdziesmas)*. UNESCO Memory of the World Archive. Accessed 2020.
- Maija Svarinska, "Izrādes *Antigone* recenzija. Tikumības diagramma." *Kultūras Diena*, 2 May 2015. <https://www.diena.lv/raksts/kd/recenzijas/izrades-antigone-recenzija-tikumibas-diagramma-14096508>. Accessed 6/12/2020.