

**(RE)SHAPING THE BODY:  
REINVENTING TRADITIONS IN CONTEMPORARY  
SHAKESPEARE PERFORMANCES IN ASIA**

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## **Declaration of Authorship**

I, Bo Ram Choi, hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: 13 May 2019

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## Abstract

This thesis explores the mechanism of cultural translations of Shakespeare's plays, which have been frequently performed in Korea and Japan from 2000 to 2014. I particularly focus on the theatrical aesthetic of performers' bodies to investigate how modern Korean and Japanese directors perceive their own cultural and social contexts as well as Shakespeare's text. Rather than emphasising the theatrical effect of Shakespeare's poetic language, modern Korean and Japanese directors have been more concerned with constructing the presence of the actor/character for the history of a theatrical aesthetic emphasising performers' physical sensibility. In this context, as a symbolic form, the performers' bodies allow us to re-examine the value of traditional practice and the notion of cultural identity while exploring new ways of performing Shakespeare in line with contemporary audience expectations. Historically, Korea and Japan share several critical moments in adapting Shakespeare from its translation during the period of Japanese colonisation to the dynamic changes of theatre forms and acting styles influenced by avant-garde movements. In many ways, however, Korean and Japanese directors have pursued different approaches in performing Shakespeare based on their indigenous theatrical conventions and cultural contexts. By examining the performers' physical presentation in eight productions of Shakespeare's two comedies – *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Twelfth Night* – in Korea and Japan, this thesis attempts to deal with two main subjects: the cultural psychology that motivates the directors to portray supernatural aspects of human life; and the concept of gender and sexuality by studying performers' physical expressions and their semiotic meanings in relation to particular cultural contexts. Through a comparative study between Korean and Japanese productions, this thesis shows how these subjects are explored by each director, looking at the cultural meanings behind their different attitudes and vision in adapting Shakespeare's plays for a modern theatre.

## Note

In this thesis, Korea(n) indicates South Korea(n).

In writing Korean and Japanese names, I followed Korean and Japanese convention so that the family name is written first, followed by the given name.

All of the quotations from the studies originally written in Korean or Japanese and the interviews with Korean and Japanese artists are translated into English by the author.

All quotations from Shakespeare's plays are from *The Riverside Shakespeare*, second edition (1997).

The full performance recordings of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* by Yang Jung-Ung and Miyagi Satoshi, *Twelfth Night* by Yang Jung-Ung with their original and translated scripts into English, Chinese, Japanese, Korean languages are available at the website 'Asian Shakespeare Intercultural Archive' (<http://a-s-i-a-web.org>).

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## **Introduction:**

### **The Body, Shakespeare and Culture**

#### **(Re)Staging Shakespeare in Asian Theatre**

Shakespearean performances in Korea and Japan have gained worldwide recognition for their role in the emergence of a new artistic form based on indigenous traditions in each country. Performing Shakespeare in these countries seems to demand a great critical negotiation in the process of translating Shakespeare's text into their own cultural contexts. Shakespeare performances in both countries have been getting more elaborate with how directors reimagine the original text as well as their own culture and traditions. Theatre scholars and practitioners such as Jan Kott, Leonard Pronko, Ariane Mnouchkine, and many others agree that Asian traditional forms can be used to reinvent Shakespeare according to our own times by exploiting the potential of the actors' stylised physical expressions and the integration of music and dance. Regarding Kurosawa Akira's *Throne of Blood* (1957) which transposes the plot of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* from Scotland into feudal Japan with stylistic elements drawn from *Noh*, Kott (1974) asserts that the director "rediscovered the historic and sensual, dramatic and psychological, relevance of *Macbeth* for our time" (p. 127). Also, Pronko (1996), who studies the productions approaching Shakespeare through *Kabuki* theatre form, states "it [*Kabuki* Shakespeare] is exciting, explosively non-realistic, and, perhaps most surprising of all, a step in the direction of authenticity, of recreating the theatre world of Shakespeare's day" (p. 24). In addition, Mnouchkine (1996) who might be the most articulate advocate for an oriental Shakespeare insists that "[w]e have taken Asian forms of theatre as a base to work from because the very origin of theatrical form is there" (p. 97). These creative activities generate protean forms of Shakespeare in such a way as to infuse new energy into the theatre culture in Asian countries.

Traditionally, in Korea and Japan, theatre was not really different from a festival along with the deep sense of shamanistic ritual, which was always present in everyday life in their culture. The bond between theatre and religion is very strong even today. Many theatre forms in Korea and Japan can be regarded as a kind of

spiritual meditation. Unlike the role of an actor in Western theatre in which the actor uses his or her personality, memories, expressions to create a role, the actor in ritual performances in Korea and Japan receive the role of god, spirit or mythological character to serve as its embodiment. In the Western monotheistic religions such as Christianity, the human body is regarded as something sinful, and thus corporeal art forms were evicted from its ritual. God can be only praised through visual arts, architecture, and singing. However, in Asian religions, particularly Buddhism, since human body has retained its holiness, it has been accepted as a worthy medium to praise gods and spirits. Thus, the great strength of performance in Korea and Japan lay in the fact that the essential knowledge of performer's body. Actors needed to justify their existence by emphasising their physical presence, stressing the aesthetic beauty in their movements.

In Asian theatres, actors' physical expressions have been handed down from generation to generation. Over several centuries, the performers of *Noh*, *Kabuki*, *Talchum* (traditional Korean mask dance), and *Pansori* (traditional Korean musical storytelling) have learned and practised the aesthetic of traditional theatre from their father or master who has attempted to keep the ultimate ideal of the artistic form through personal transmission. The high purpose of these traditional theatre forms is "to induce a personal communication, an immediate experience, a mood raised through the combination of dance, music and poetry drawing a response beyond the limits of empirical time and place in the onlooker's mind" (Scott, 1972, p. 1). In traditional Korean and Japanese performances, a theatrical reality can be established through the presence of the actors' bodies as a physical phenomenon in which the audience can possess a spontaneous reality. In this condition, actors' bodies can be experienced as a unified whole which is fully integrated with each part and each sensation of their own bodies. Even though the society has become modernised due to the influence of a Western social system throughout the twentieth century, such traditions still remain and influence the form of modern Korean and Japanese theatre.

According to Anzai Tetsuo (2010, p. 19), it is natural that modern directors explore various performance modes of traditional and modern theatres since the full range of a theatrical history from ancient folk ritual to postmodern theatres is existing in contemporary Korean and Japanese theatre. In this condition, Shakespeare is often

considered “as an archetype of the theatre” (Anzai, 2010, p. 19) through which directors expect to explore their own theatrical methods and cultural identity. This kind of attitude may be related to the awareness of their history, which is greatly associated with the influence of modern Western social system and culture. They attempt to create new acting methods to reflect their own perspectives on current social and cultural conditions which are mixed with various cultural elements from traditional and modern Asian and Western countries. Over the last several decades, many Korean and Japanese directors have adapted and presented Shakespeare in their own traditional theatre forms which emphasise the presence of performers’ bodies and their physical sensibility. In this way, they could broaden the range of their expressions by using various theatre forms from the past to the present Western and Asian performance modes in eclectic ways. The hybrid style of theatre presents not only the directors’ creative perspective on using traditional elements, but also the possibility that Shakespeare’s text can be freely imagined and performed by local directors.

However, unlike the development of theatre forms focusing on actors’ bodies in Korea and Japan, Shakespeare’s language and its aesthetic as poetry have been considered the most dominant element in Western performance culture. Much of the long history of appreciating and thinking of Shakespeare has emphasised “his unsurpassed originality, the sanctity of his texts, and cultural taboo on presuming to alter them” (Fischlin, 2000, p. 1). In the nineteenth century, Shakespeare’s original version was regarded as one of his supreme achievements; therefore, it was somehow too big to be thought of as submitting to theatrical limitations.<sup>1</sup> As a “cultural deity” (Levine, 1988, p. 53), Shakespeare has been one of the privileged sites around which Western culture has struggled to authenticate and sustain Shakespeare as itself. According to Dennis Kennedy (1993), “the understanding and formal assessment of his work have been in the hands of critics and editors with profound allegiance to English literature” (p. 1). As critical theory has taken hold in academic institution, “scholars have become increasingly interested in text and source, text and context, authorship, originality, interpretation, and the production of meaning” (Fischlin,

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<sup>1</sup> In 1811, Charles Lamb wrote an essay, ‘On the Tragedies of Shakespeare, considered with reference to their fitness for stage representation.’ He noted that particularly Shakespeare’s *King Lear* “is essentially impossible to be represented on the stage” (p. 26), preferring to experience it in the study.

2000, p. 1). It seems that the scholars believe that Shakespeare's plays are stable and already have imminent meaning, so directors and performers can only interpret rather than make new meanings of his works. In this condition, the performer's body in modern Shakespearean productions used to be often repressed in the more verbally focused theatres.

The tradition of a language-oriented perspective has been often applied to Asian Shakespearean productions, which could be observed from some British critics' reviews in major newspapers. Regarding Yang Jung-Ung's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, which was performed at the Barbican Centre in 2006, Pete Wood (2006) argued that Yang's performance does not show the richness of Shakespeare's *Dream*. He insisted that by omitting the scenes at the Athenian court and the Mechanicals, Yang's *Dream* "misses the richness afforded by the full panoply of characters inhabiting the various world of court, forest and company of Mechanicals, a richness of interconnections which was likened by Auden to a series of Chinese boxes" (Wood, 2006). Also, Fiona Mountford (2006) in her review, '*Dream* lost in translation,' insisted that "[u]nfortunately, what Yang omitted to lift from the original is any real sense of magic, peril or poetry." She continues, "Yang's pared-down text alternately whizzes over and lingers excessively on all the wrong parts of the story, and takes an unwise and lengthy detour into lavatorial humour." Furthermore, Sam Marlowe (2006), critic from *The Times*, saw the production has "a jolly storybook aspect that, while it rarely ventures anywhere near the play's dark emotional underbelly, jogs along amiably enough. What's entirely missing is the poetry." Like Wood and Mountford, Marlowe argued that Yang's adaptation does not "enhance our understanding of Shakespeare"; rather it "diminish[es] the play's metaphorical richness." Consequently, Yang's "inelegant text" failed to "offer much lyricism or psychological complexity" (Marlowe, 2006). The critics were in agreement that Yang's performance does not successfully deal with the depth of Shakespeare's text and its aesthetic as poetry.

Not only Korean directors, but also Japanese directors' Shakespearean productions have been evaluated and reviewed by certain critics based on the tradition of language-oriented criticism. Regarding Ninagawa's *Kabuki Twelfth Night* staged at the Barbican Centre in 2009, most critics argued that the performance was

successful in presenting an impressive visual spectacle based on some images of traditional Japanese theatre form, *Kabuki*, but it failed to revive the richness of Shakespeare's poetic metaphors. John Morrison (2009) stated that "[t]he Kabuki style adds a lot, but it also takes away [...] The comic scenes lose most of their punch as Shakespeare's words are simplified for a Japanese audience." He also wrote that "in some respects I felt Ninagawa was choosing to neglect some of the play's most potent ingredients" (Morrison, 2009). In addition, Lyn Gardner (2009) suggested that Ninagawa's work does not deal with the "heart of the play and the mix of melancholy" due to the "endless set changes" that cause the length of the performance to be extended to over three hours. Similar to the reviews on Yang's *Dream*, these critics emphasise the responsibility of the modern directors to revive and reproduce the insights of Shakespeare's works in their theatre. From their responses to both Korean and Japanese productions, it is possible to assume that they believe there must be something essentially 'Shakespearean' in Shakespeare, and it may disappear when his text is translated into a new language or performed in a radically unfamiliar performative mode in different cultures. The critics seem to consider Shakespeare's work as a stable and already complete work in itself rather than a genre of performance whose meaning can be freely explored by artists and audience members.

However, the critics' concept of Shakespeare, simply as the author, does not deal with how his plays can be explored and practised from different cultural perspectives. What they fail to take into account is the radical contingency of performance which is unpredictable, often the result of the intersection of history, social context, and reception that promotes a wide range of varied readings contingent on cultural context. Surely, the cultural differences that motivate the interpretations produce varied 'readings' of Shakespeare's texts, so there is a continuous interaction between written text and performance text. Thus, when we understand Shakespeare productions in different countries, the main focus should be about how the director attempts to present his own cultural vision *through* Shakespeare's text, rather than whether the director was faithful to the original text or not. Yang and Ninagawa's productions are not translated works of Shakespeare's texts. Rather than focusing on the meaning of Shakespeare's poetic language, they

attempt to reposition Shakespeare's *Dream* in a Korean or Japanese context by exploring their own traditional theatre forms which are again reused and reframed in accordance with the taste of modern audiences. By emphasising the function of the actors' bodies as a central place in which various physical expressions created and developed in traditional and modern theatre forms are harmonised, Yang and Ninagawa try to give the modern audience some insight into their own culture.

### **Cultural Translation through the Body**

Korean and Japanese theatre has pursued different styles of expression from that of the logo-centric focus on language in Western theatre culture. As previously mentioned, most traditional Asian theatre is rooted mainly in gestures, movement, dance, music, and song, which make Asian performance a total sensory and emotional experience. Actors' gestures can be naturalistic or symbolic in suggesting qualities or feelings by stylised choreographic patterns. A. C. Scott (1972) points out that "[g]esture in the Asian theatre does not supersede language but it often carries on where language leaves off. Action on the stage and the reaction of the spectator are not intellectually separated; there is an immediate and total sensory impact" (p. 14). In fact, Shakespeare was one of the examples in Antonin Artaud's denunciation of Western theatre as a work of language and psychology as opposed to the physical theatre of Asia which emphasises non-verbal expression. Artaud (1958) argues that our incapability to give an idea of Shakespeare is due to the fact that "we have lost the sense of their theatre's physics" (p. 108), that is, the concrete gestures of an actor who can materialise Shakespeare. The replacement of a logocentric dramatic work with the systems of physical training and practices of Asian theatre have fulfilled an anti-realistic conception of Shakespeare. This is particularly true for modern theatre practitioners who have been looking for a way of exploring Shakespeare in their own style and methods of interpretation.

In this sense, Shakespeare's texts cannot be simply read or understood as literature, but rather should be considered as ongoing work that imagines a new version of cultural events in contemporary theatre. Roland Barthes (1977) insists that the text is not an object but the field of production which can be best approached

through “the activity of associations, continuities, carrying-over” through “playing” (p. 158) in the postmodern sense. Also, Jerome J. McGann (1991) points out that “a ‘text’ is not a ‘material thing’ but a material event or set of events, a point in time (or a moment in space) where certain communicative interchanges are being practiced” (p. 21). He argues that performance is the work of the process of cultural negotiation through which the production can continue its existence rather than a derivative re-visioning of text as an authoritative reproduction. Likewise, in Korea and Japan, Shakespeare’s texts have been involved in ongoing negotiations of the text’s own identity continuously changing according to their indigenous cultural conditions. Shakespeare’s work as a text for a putative performance prods the modern Korean and Japanese directors into understanding and communicate heterogenous historical, social, and cultural situations. By reinterpreting and revising Shakespeare’s texts in their own ways, the directors can reinvent the aesthetic of traditional theatre forms, which allows them to explore and express their own cultural imagination and vision in creative ways.

In this case, the concept of translation is not limited to the work of translating Shakespeare’s language into Korean or Japanese, but it includes the process of *cultural* translation. According to Kim Hyon-Mi (2005), cultural translation includes the act of “perceiving the internalised cultural meanings of other languages, behaviour patterns and cultural values, and remaking them according to the context of target culture” (p. 48). She also insists that “it [cultural translation] includes the work of decoding the meaning of words in the original text by analysing its context and re-coding new meanings, rather than being limited to the work of transcoding a word into another word” (p. 53). Korean and Japanese directors focus not only on the basic meaning of each word, but find other ways to convey the internal meaning behind the use of particular words and expressions. Since the subjective view of directors as translators is always involved in the work of cultural translation, their work cannot be neutral or indifferent from the social ideology. Directors need to concern themselves with their position in the network of various cultural elements in order to work both roles as active readers and creators. They also need to have a critical view on how different cultural elements are working together in a broader

context and participate in the centre of the dynamic work of cultural interactions to present their interpretation.

Korea and Japan have shown similar historical developments in translating and performing Shakespeare's plays due to the influence of Western culture since the Japanese occupation of Korea between 1910 and 1945. Thus, the directors in each country have similar perspectives on their own social conditions which were influenced by Western social and political system throughout the twentieth century. However, as each culture has a unique character of its own, their theatre cultures have pursued different values and aesthetics which represent their own cultural identity and perspective as distinct from one another. The differences of the historical and cultural backgrounds behind the aesthetic of traditional theatre have influenced the ways that the directors perceive and adopt their traditions and traditional forms. For modern directors, Shakespeare performances can provide the audience with an opportunity to think of the importance of traditional practice that allows them to re-examine the notion of cultural identity and the meaning of tradition in current society.

In Korea, according to Baek Hyun-Mi (2001), "people tend to think that tradition is cultural heritages in the past before the western social system and culture arrived at Korea through Japan" (p. 120). Since the succession and preservation of traditions were interrupted at several historical moments such as the Japanese colonial period and the Korean War, rediscovering and reinventing the value of tradition have always been an important task for Koreans. As Baek (2001, p. 113) states, when Japan was influenced by Western modernisation, the nation and the public officials attempted to seek a Japanese identity by inheriting the traditional forms, which were designed particularly for high social class. However, since there was no government in Korea during the period of Japanese colonialism, people explored more radical and productive lifestyles by adopting the traditional forms which were consumed by the public. In this historical context, "tradition is not an objective or universal concept in Korea; its meaning and function can be changed and reconstructed depending on individual perception and the alternation of hegemony" (Baek, 2001, p. 120). Thus, tradition has been involved in the process of modernisation as local and individual activities in

Korea. As the traditional theatre forms are revived and refunctioned by artists in the 1970s and the 1980s, people's awareness of traditional performance has increased. In this condition, directors and actors were concerned with the position of traditions in relation to westernised social life.

Like Korean directors, many modern Japanese directors also are concerned about the value and position of traditions in their productions (which will be discussed in this thesis by examining Ninagawa and Miyagi, and Yasuda's performances in Chapter Two and Four). However, unlike Korean performances, "Japanese directors tend to think that a performance should be a completed form by putting some distance between the stage and the audience" (Baek, 2001, p. 120). Also, as the ways of depicting characters in the traditional Japanese theatres such as *Noh* and *Kabuki*, modern Japanese directors show the characters' emotional state in abstract, restrained, and metaphysical styles, which is different from Korean theatre in which performers show the characters' emotions in exaggerated gestures and vocal expressions. The bodies of Japanese actors seem to symbolise a particular meaning in clear and stylised manners. Their presence as a visual image representing cultural symbols makes an ensemble between the theatre space and music, which has a profound impact upon the audience as if *watching* short and powerful poetry such as *haiku* (a three-lined Japanese poem). For these reasons, in contrast to Korean performances emphasising dynamic interactions with the audience to enhance the sense of community, Japanese productions deal with the same issue in abstract and symbolic ways.

As Korean and Japanese societies started to modernise and technology developed throughout the twentieth century, old traditional values began to fragment and fade. Young people in Korea and Japan were educated and nurtured from the social and political systems of the west since they were deeply conscious of their need to catch up with Western technology and industrial advancement. The pursuit of modernism does not necessarily compensate for a lack of indigenous cultural depth which is the measure of a nation's innermost being. People became to sense a loss of their cultural identity. As Suzuki (2015) points out, due to the impact of modernisation and globalisation, human life becomes "standardised" and "homogenised" (p. 104). Miyagi also insists that the influence

of Westernisation promoted “an integrated, stable, and homogeneous Japanese identity” which is losing confidence and face to face communication and then becomes only a “part of the system” (Martin, 2007, p. 225). People work within the rigid social system in which they greatly rely on online networks instead of direct communication with other people, which leads them to lose their physical sensibility. In this condition, Japanese directors gave the young generation an opportunity to understand the values of traditions as well as old generation by mixing the traditional and modern theatre form from their own culture. In this way, the directors try to “reaffirm the theatre’s critical role in the age of globalization” (Suzuki, 2015, p. 104) and believe that the creation of a new new theatre form is necessary to preserve the integrity of its cultural origins.

Korean directors such as Oh Tae-Suk and Lee Yun-Taek have also tried to deal with the subject related to modern society by reusing or reinventing traditional theatre forms which focus on actors’ bodies as a central place connecting nature, human, and society. Notably, Oh Tae-Suk (2014) tries to “deal with the current social issues and problems through Korean traditional theatre forms” and insists that the social responsibility of theatre becomes more crucial than at any other time. Kim Bang-Ock points out that “Oh Tae-Suk and Lee Yun-Taek have attempted to emphasise the importance of traditional theatre which had been weakened by the influence of Western theatre forms and recover the effect of theatre as play, the relationship between performers and audiences” (Cited in Kim, 1997). Through self-examination concerning their own theatre culture in relation to the influence of Western modernisation, Korean directors concentrate on the functions of theatre as a place where people can communicate with each other and overcome the alienation from other people and society. In this way, they attempt to connect to the past in the form of nostalgia for an older Korea before its possibilities were foreclosed by Westernisation. By examining and adapting the elements from their own theatre culture, the directors use their indigenous cultural sources and traditional theatrical form to deal with the subject of their cultural identity while developing their own aesthetic.

In this respect, one of the main points of this thesis is to explore the process of cultural translation in adapting Shakespeare’s plays in contemporary social contexts.

In Korea, according to Shin Jung-Ok (2006, p. 10), one of the reasons that Shakespeare has been popular and broadly performed in the 1960s and the 1970s is that the stories and characters in Shakespeare's plays, particularly *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, and *Othello* are reminiscent of the tragic conditions of Korean history during the period of colonialism and war. In particular, the subjects such as violence, bloodshed, betrayal, and vengeance have been dealt with in many Korean productions such as Oh Tae-Suk's *Romeo and Juliet* (1995), Yang Jung-Ung's *Hwan* (2004) and *Hamlet* (2009), and Lee Hyon-U's *Hamlet Q1* (2009). Also, Shakespeare's narratives focusing on the heroic deeds and tragic mistakes of historical or legendary figures have been the main subjects that modern Japanese directors attempt to explore through their works. The productions like Kurosawa's *Throne of Blood* (1957) and *Ran* (1985), and Ninagawa's *NINAGAWA Macbeth* (1980) set the performance background in an older Japan in which feudal hierarchy was its main system, and the main character shows a samurai-style suicide at the end of the production. Andrea Nouryeh (1993) states, "both the Elizabethan and Japanese dramatic tradition show the supernatural effect upon the natural world, balance tragic with comic scenes, and present refined and barbaric sides of human behaviour in the same play" (p. 255). As these examples show, modern directors explore not only the social structure of the Elizabethan time by examining the characters and their relationship with the society described in Shakespeare's texts, but also their own social conditions through a comparative view through the work of translation.

In this context, the aim of this thesis is to explore the performers' bodies – focusing on their aesthetic and phenomenal qualities in relation to a cultural and social context – by examining contemporary Shakespearean adaptations in Korea and Japan. Since the 1970s, along with the influence of postmodernism as well as the movements against Western realism, Korean and Japanese directors such as Yang Jung-Ung, Lee Jong-Hun, Yasuda Masahiro, and Miyagi Satoshi (whose adaptations of Shakespeare's plays will be examined in this thesis) have attempted to restore and reinvent their own traditions which were undiscovered or often forgotten in a westernised social life and political system. In particular, they have tried to rediscover the potential of performers' bodies through training systems based on the principles of traditional theatre forms from their own culture. In their productions,

the directors translate Shakespeare's ideology of the body for his actors and audiences into a modern vocabulary of physical movement and image, which signifies familiar cultural codes to a modern audience. By investigating the relation between social ideology and the shape of the body, this thesis reveals how the modern directors' perception of actors' bodies has changed and developed throughout the history of theatre in each culture. Also, this research focuses on how the directors reimagine the traditional values and traditional theatre forms as a creative power to deal with the phenomenon of modernisation in which a society pursues a standardised system and mentality.

### **Literature Review**

Since the 1990s, there has been a large increase in academic interest in the body. Notably, there was the term "somatic society" (p. 12) coined by Bryan Turner (1992) who describes how the body in modern social systems has become "the principal field of political and cultural activity" (p. 162). Also, Mary Douglas (2003) insists that "[t]he physical body can have universal meaning only as a system which responds to the social system, expressing it as a system" and the body as a natural symbol "can express the relation of an individual to his society at that general systemic level" (p. 81). In addition, Chris Shilling (2012) argues that in the conditions of high modernity, "there is a tendency for the body to become increasingly central to the modern person's sense of self-identity" (p. 1). He states that "the body is a receptor, social constructionism has been used as an umbrella term to denote those views which suggest that the body is somehow shaped, constrained and even invented by society" (p. 70). Their works allow us to see the special attention to the discourse on the body symbolising specific social ideology and cultural systems. The body can be an archaeological place in which every historical and cultural signature can be inscribed in the condensed form. It might be invisible, but certainly present in a solid flesh.

For this reason, studying the body in Asian representations of Shakespeare requires broad knowledge, which cannot be achieved using a single method. There is, instead, a need to study various dimensions: the concept of the body described

in Shakespeare's texts; the art of translation from the written body to a visible embodiment on the theatrical stage; the aesthetic of acting and corporeal image in a specific social context and their reception by the modern audience. By adopting various modes of research – examining the artists' biographies, studying the contents of several interviews with the artists, exploring theatre histories of Shakespearean adaptation, analysing performers' physical expression and appearance in video recordings, and finally participating as a dramaturg in a production – this thesis will raise important discussions related to the presentation of a particular set of cultural identities and practices which determine the meaning and effect of performers' bodies in the selected productions. This combination of research methods might be useful in revealing the intersection of historical and social meanings of performers' bodies, and the development of acting styles within the social context of both the past and the present. Also, these different approaches to studying the body demonstrate how a theory of the performers' bodies in a particular cultural context works within a system of performance codes.

There have been a number of academic studies that considered cultural influences as an important factor in the ways of constructing the metaphoric body in theatrical space. Among others, Patrice Pavis (1989) argues that a play text cannot simply be translated linguistically, but it provokes the directors to “confront and communicate heterogeneous cultures and situations of enunciation that are separated in space and time” (p. 25). He attempts to show how translating for the theatre entails more than verbal transfer from a linguistic code to another form; rather, “a real translation takes place on the level of the *mise-en-scène* as a whole” (p. 41). He emphasises the phenomenon of translation for the stage that reaches the audience through the actors' bodies. Also, Freddie Rokem (1997) insists that performance is “the process of interpreting the text on stage by ‘translating’ the text back to visible bodily behaviour” (p. 222). For him, performance is a concrete bodily realisation of the human body that draws our attention to the cultural and aesthetic codes of bodily behaviour. In addition, Markus Hallensleben (2010) argues that the human body in literature is a cultural object that binds the political with the theatrical. He explores body images from various cultural and historical perspectives including art history

and performance studies to emphasise the human body as a producer of interactive social spaces. He insists that “since there cannot be a universal definition of the body due to its culturally performative role as a producer of interactive social spaces, body images can be discussed in relation to cultural spaces from diverse cultural, historical and disciplinary perspectives” (p. 10). By studying the intersection of body and space, he tries to show that there is no distinction between performing and theorising the human body, and therefore fosters a unique interdisciplinary approach to the theme of performative bodies and spaces. Pavis and Hallensleben’s studies emphasise that actors’ bodies work as a vehicle for decentring the author, presenting how Shakespeare can be re-produced through corporeal signs by functioning as a broader symbolic identity, not only limited to a theatrical illusion, but “a metaphor of society at large” (Shilling, 2012, p. 3).

More recently, Simon Shepherd (2015) explores the art of bodies and the physical responses to literary and dramatic studies. He explains how the body makes meaning and carries value by close reading of a written text, and suggests how to read for the body and explore the written text as a discipline of the body. His work contains cultural references and theoretical approaches to body analysis and phenomenology. By introducing new ways of analysing dramatic text and providing theatrical history and dramatic criticism, Shepherd helps the reader to understand the interplay between literary works and the physical body as a cultural embodiment of these. Also, Suzuki Tadashi (2015) argues that, far from the belief that theatre originates from a script, “it is clear that actors – this group of people who specialize in expressing with their bodies and voices – came first, and that texts emerged as a way of giving the public access to them” (p. 140). Suzuki’s assertion reveals that the body does not merely function as a visual image that substitutes the role of language to transmit the text’s meanings, but can be considered as a central site in which the complicated mechanisms of translation occur in both textual and cultural aspects. From these arguments, it is possible to insist that Shakespeare inscribed his contemporary ideologies of bodily expression for his actors, which can be transformed through a modern vocabulary of movements through actors’ bodies. Thus, it is important to study how modern directors understand the body in Shakespeare’s text, and how they attempt to apply the concept of body which may

symbolise the work of political and cultural mechanisms in early modern culture to the ways of interpreting their own political and social conditions.

In the process of cultural translation, what lies at the centre of Shakespeare's art is the most important question for modern directors when they translate the text into their own cultural context. In Shakespeare's texts, there are plentiful images of the body, which provide great inspiration to modern artists. Shakespeare's linguistic expressions – imagery, juxtaposition, alliteration, and the use of devices like puns – lead the directors to freely imagine their own psychology related to their indigenous cultural background and visualise it into an embodied form. Through a deep analysis of Shakespeare's language, it might be possible for the directors and actors to grasp how Shakespeare constructs the putative image of the body in his drama. As Kristin Linklater (1992) insists that “a large part of the power of Shakespeare's writing lies in his archetypal stories and characters” (p. 194), in an interview, Yang Jung-Ung (2011) revealed that “Shakespeare's plays contain lots of dramatic moments and compelling characters in his stories which give me great inspiration to create my performance.” This shows that Shakespeare's texts provide the directors with a platform for the examination of cultural differences.

Among others, David Hillman (2007) explores ‘the interior of the body’ in Shakespeare's drama to reveal how Shakespeare's imagination of the human body reflects the specific historical circumstance of the Renaissance period in metaphorical ways. Also, Martha Diede (2008) studies the image of a ruler's physical and conceptual body as “a head of the body politic” (p. 2) in Shakespeare's historical and tragic plays. Most notably, *Shakespeare and the Body Politic* (2013) edited by Bernard Dobski and Dustin Gish explore the images of the body that led to the examination of various themes – romantic love, family life, justice, and the pursuit of honour and glory – that inevitably emerge within particular political communities. In this case, the tension between the desires of individuals and the pursuits of community forges the sinew of everybody politic, something illuminated in Shakespeare's drama. According to Dobski and Gishi (2013), Shakespeare's work provokes thought of the body politic, which is “perhaps the most vivid and enduring image in speech describing political community ever proposed” (p. 1). Thus, it is significant to understand how the body in Shakespeare's texts symbolises the work

of political mechanisms in early modern culture, and how this frame can be applied to the ways of interpreting the meaning of ‘body’ in many theatrical works in different political and social contexts.

As the popularity of Shakespeare’s plays has greatly increased in non-English speaking countries over the last several decades, there have been many studies that focus on how Shakespeare has been a medium for exploring the social conditions of different cultures.<sup>2</sup> By understanding the process of adapting the original text to the particular cultural context, scholars such as Kennedy have worked on translations of Shakespeare, including critical analysis of directorial concepts and cultural linkage to the stage *mise-en-scène*. In particular, Kennedy’s collection, *Foreign Shakespeare* (1993), explores the circumstances of performing Shakespeare’s plays in cultural conditions different from the conventions and tendencies of performances in major English-speaking countries. The main argument of his books is that the Anglo-centric perspective and approach to Shakespeare have been a limitation to understanding the meaning and significance of Shakespeare’s works. In his recent edition, *Shakespeare in Asia* (2010), Kennedy mainly focuses on Shakespeare in Asian popular cultures while exploring intercultural revisions of Shakespeare’s plays in China, Singapore, India, Japan, and Korea. He states, “even in England the meaning of Shakespeare is vastly different today than in London in the sixteenth century, and the greater the cultural difference the greater the reception difference” (p. 4). His studies show that the styles of *mise-en-scène*, the performers’ bodies, the presentation of indigenous forms, the social circumstance of the audience, and the position of theatre within the particular culture become a large part in how we understand Shakespeare which has been remarkably changed by time and place.

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<sup>2</sup> A number of intercultural discussions have centralised the issue of Shakespeare adaptation in academia over the last twenty years. The VIII World Shakespeare Congress in Brisbane, Australia (2006), focused upon “Shakespeare’s World/World Shakespeare” with topics of discussion including ‘local Shakespeare’s in an age of globalisation. The Asian Shakespeare Association was established in 2014 and held its first conference “Shakespearean Journeys” in Taipei, Taiwan. Exploring the study and performance of Shakespeare, this conference focuses on the “increasing exchanges and collaborations among Asian Shakespeareans, and between Asia and the rest of the world” (Asian Shakespeare Association, 2017). These two conferences focus on the vastness and diversity of Shakespeare’s plays and their modern adaptations in non-Western countries.

Also, Sonia Massai's *World-Wide Shakespeare* published in 2005 brought together international leading scholars to explore the various representations of Shakespeare's plays in film and theatre around the world. The authors focus on how Shakespeare becomes a medium to explore the social conditions of different cultures by examining the process of adapting the original text to the particular cultural context. Her book provides a critical method to explore the appropriation of Shakespeare's texts in modern theatre, and also offers theoretical reflections upon the tension between global and local Shakespearean productions within recent debate about interculturalism. By borrowing Bourdieu's notion of "cultural field" (pp. 6-11), Massai suggests that Shakespeare is constantly modified by local artists. She points out that the artistic fields can be characterised by "the permeability of cultural boundaries" (p. 5) that shows the boundaries of Shakespeare as a cultural field are always moving. After all, the work of renegotiating the cultural position in the process of translating Shakespeare into different cultural fields is a continuous process. At the same time, the cultural border remains a stimulant for the artists to develop their own styles and perspectives on Shakespeare.

Aside from the works by Kennedy and Massai, a number of Korean and Japanese scholars have attempted to study their chosen appropriations in specific history, practice, and concerns of local culture, often stressing "how Shakespeare has become a means to address issues of national or subcultural identity through a global medium" (Lanier, 2007, p. 563). Among a number of academic studies, Kishi Tetsuo and Graham Bradshaw (2005) study the history of Shakespeare adaptation in Japan since the late Meiji period, particularly focusing on the translations of Shakespeare text by Tsubouchi Shoyo, Fukuda Tsuneari, and Kinoshita Junji and their impact on Japanese literature, film, and theatre stage. According to them, Tsubouchi was so stimulated by Shakespeare's plays that he published his first translation of *Julius Caesar* in 1884. For him, Shakespeare was considered a path towards the discovery of a modern Japanese literature. Thus, Tsubouchi completed his translation of Shakespeare's texts including sonnets in 1928. Also, Minami Ryuta (2010) explores the early modern and traditional theatre productions, particularly Shakespeare in *Kabuki* and *Kyogen* (traditional

Japanese comic theatre) as well as the modern productions directed by Ninagawa Yukio, Deguchi Norio, Suzuki Tadashi, and Noda Hideki. It is noticeable to focus on their experimental practices and unique visions in performing Shakespeare productions by exploring the principles of Japanese traditional theatre styles. In addition, Sasayama Takashi (2010) concentrates on the modern productions of Shakespeare in Japan with some significant theoretical concepts such as interculturalism. His work provides a critical perspective on how the modern directors and audiences perceive the concept of tradition through the modern Shakespeare productions which use the forms of *Noh* and *Kabuki*.

Regarding the Shakespeare adaptations in Korea, *Glocalizing Shakespeare in Korea and Beyond* (2009) edited by Lee Hyon-U deals with some representative Korean productions by Han Tae-Sook, Lee Yun-Taek, Oh Tae-Suk and Yang Jung-Ung whose works have been continuously performed in and out of Korea for more than ten years. Also, this book provides substantial historical background of Korea in adapting Shakespeare's plays since 1990 and studies each director's particular characteristics in performing Shakespeare by adapting the principles of Korean traditional theatres in the context of cross- and interculturalism. Recently, Lee published *Korean Shakespeare Renaissance* (2016) in which he studies several significant features of Shakespeare productions in Korea according to a few but significant cultural and social changes such as the impact of democracy and globalisation on Korean theatre. In particular, he focuses on how Korean traditional theatre forms and discourses such as feminism and politics within Korean society have been explored in modern productions of Shakespeare.

One of the great strengths of these academic works might be that they clearly and concisely sketch out the local contexts they examine. However, it seems that the theoretical model or methodological frame is not substantial enough to discuss the role of the body in the dynamic interactions between theatre productions and cultural fields and ideologies in these two countries. So far, there are no academic researches which deal explicitly with the presence of actors or the

function of their corporeality<sup>3</sup> in performing Shakespeare's plays in Korean or Japanese theatre, and as such, these studies lack a thorough understanding of how the performers' bodies can function as a site that reflects cultural and social ideology. For these reasons, this thesis not only investigates the textual and practical aspects of the body as an artistic form, but also explores the process of constructing it by considering how each director has developed their particular methods of performing Shakespeare based on their understanding of indigenous culture and society.

The performances of Shakespeare's plays in modern Asian theatre have been often explored through a number of studies focusing on the concept and practice of interculturalism. In the 2000s, intercultural connections were widespread in Asian society. Asian artists attempted to seek out new ways to stage Shakespeare's plays while exploring their indigenous theatre practices that realist theatre had denied during most of the twentieth century. According to James Brandon (2012), Asian directors created the performances of Shakespeare's plays "based on confrontation of the textual values of canonical Shakespeare with the immediacy and vitality of indigenous theatre techniques and aesthetics" (p. 31). He calls this performance "intercultural Shakespeare" (p. 31). Brandon (2012) insists that "intercultural Shakespeare" is the expression of modern Asian directors and audiences "who live daily with one foot rooted in local, traditional culture and the other foot planted in a contemporary globalized commodity culture" (p. 31). In other words, intercultural performances of Shakespeare in Asia take various theatre forms adopting local theatrical traditions, which can appeal to not only Asian but also international audiences.

Such an intercultural clash between text and performing style can be observed in many modern Korean and Japanese productions. For instance, Yang and Lee adapted *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in Korean cultural contexts by transforming British fairies into Korean dokkaebis who dance *Talchum* to emphasise their mischievous and playful personalities. Ninagawa produced

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<sup>3</sup> In this thesis, the term 'corporeality' is used to emphasise the materiality and tangible embodiment of actors' body, which can be experienced by audience members through their basic senses and feeling. See Erica Fisher-Lichte (2004), p. 98.

*Twelfth Night* to present the aesthetics of traditional Japanese theatre form by casting *Kabuki* actors. As these examples show, it is common to see in the 2000s local and foreign sources coexisting in many Shakespearean productions in Asia with or/and without the authority of Shakespeare. These modern directors radically adapted Shakespeare's plays by rearranging and cutting their plots in a process of freeing their productions from Shakespeare's canonical authority. These modern Korean and Japanese directors also started to create their own actor-training system to improve the performers' physical and vocal qualities, and trained them to exhibit intense physical expressions.

Charlotte McIvor (2016) posits that "intercultural performance opens up the possibility of disintegrating an old, and constituting a new theatre through joining up elements from multiple performance traditions" (p. 7). As the intercultural stage is considered a place where two or more cultural traditions meet, the directors' performances become an intercultural space where multiple cultural forms and styles from the past and present are mixed through hybridity. Also, Ric Knowles (2010) points out that theatre refers to "all cultural forms" and intercultural evokes "the possibility of interaction across a multiplicity of cultural positions" (p. 4). According to him, since "hybridity and syncretism (the merging of forms) become increasingly characteristic of cultural production everywhere", interculturalism becomes "an urgent topic in the twenty first century" (p. 3). Due to the contemporary effects of globalisation, the study of interculturalism becomes a way of re-examining and rethinking cultural and social issues related to identity and subjectivity. The social discourse of Korea and Japan became more complicated and enriched by various issues like gender and identity along with the movement of globalisation. Modern directors such as Yang, Oh, Yasuda, and Miyagi attempt to deal with such kinds of issues through their productions. Knowles (2010) proposes that intercultural theatre is "a site for the continuing renegotiation of cultural values and the reconstitution of individual and community identities and subject positions" (pp. 4-5). In the same context, Royona Mitra (2015) sees intercultural performances as "a processual and embodied aesthetic that generated from [artists'] own lived, othered realities with multiple affiliations to cultures, people, nations, performance traditions and histories" (p.

27). In other words, intercultural performances contain a spirit of mutating through interactions with different people and cultures on a global scale.

The directors' multiple uses of various theatrical practices within their own country can be explored in the concept and practice of intracultural theatre. According to Pavis (1996), the intracultural refers to "the search for national traditions, often forgotten, corrupted or repressed, in order to reassess the source of a style of performance, to situate it better in relation to external influences and to understand more deeply the origins and the transformation of its own culture" (p. 5-6). By expanding the meaning of Pavis' intracultural, Bharucha explores how intracultural performance contributes to the realities of Indian society and audiences. He asserts that the concept of intracultural as "the sharpest way of puncturing the homogenized categories and pretensions of multicultural state" emphasises the interaction and translation of diverse cultures (Bharucha, 2000, p. 9). He claims that "the task of any intracultural initiative in India is not to reconstruct 'dying' traditions, but to create new possibilities of interaction and exchange within and across a weath of 'living' traditions form vastly different time frames and cultural contexts" (p. 63). Bharucha's concept of intracultural can be useful to understand Shakespearean productions in Korea and Japan since intraculturality focuses on the differences existing within a particular region that is assumed to be a homogenised culture. There are internal cultural diversities due to the influences of modern Westernisation in both countries. What modern directors in Korea and Japan attempt to achieve through their productions is not only to explore their national traditions and reassess their values in relation to modern social and cultural context, but also to emphasise the cultural differences within their country.

The modern directors discussed in this thesis present the body in Shakespearean productions as an intracultural mode that reflects their perspectives on the value of traditions and traditional theatre forms which are reconsidered and reexplored in modern theatre. In an interview, Oh Tae-Suk (2006) states that "I believe the job of the theatre is to bring the tradition closer to the young audiences" (Cited in Shevtsova, 2009, p. 168) so that they can realise the beauty of their own traditions and rediscover the value of them which used to be forgotten

and lost. In contrast to some Western artists such as Ariane Mnouchkine and John Briggs who are self-conscious in their belief in using the aesthetic of traditional Asian theatre forms to reinvent Shakespeare, Korean and Japanese directors use Shakespeare to rediscover the lost value of traditions within an urbanised culture and think of their importance and meaning in relation to the contemporary social condition. Directors such as Oh, Suzuki, Miyagi, and Yasuda commonly deal with the subject of traditions, particularly their position and role in modern society.

In their analysis of Oh's *Romeo and Juliet* and Yang's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in the Barbican Centre in 2006, both Maria Shevtsova (2009) and Brian Singleton (2009) attempted to reveal how each director understands their position as a mediator between traditional and modern in their own culture through their performance work. In particular, Singleton insists that these two Korean productions can be explored by focusing on the "intraculturality" since "the Korean traditions were used to communicate both a sense of performative authenticity and an ownership of Shakespeare within a foreign national tradition, but also were able to communicate in an intercultural context, without hybridising or appropriating any other culture" (p. 184). Also, regarding Ninagawa's *Kabuki Twelfth Night*, Minami Ryuta (2010) argues that the director joined the recent movements to modernise *Kabuki* as contemporary theatre and questions how the old theatre form can be understood by not only foreign audiences but also Japanese audiences who are not familiar with such traditions. By searching for "performative idioms within their own traditions" (Singleton, 2009, p. 196), these directors show that not only Shakespeare is their source, but also their own traditions can be a source to illuminate their productions (and also themselves) as national and international, local and global.

### **Research Methodologies**

Korean and Japanese directors have a number of opportunities to perform their productions for their indigenous audience members and non-Korean or non-Japanese speaking audiences. However, their works, particularly the performers' physical expressions as a cultural aesthetics, have never been studied or

considered as a main topic in academic fields of theatre in and outside Korea and Japan. Until now, there have been a number of studies that compare Japanese and Korean translation practices, literature, religion, and language, but there are no academic works on Shakespearean adaptation in theatre or translation between Korea and Japan, particularly the cultural perceptions on physical aesthetics in relation to their historical backgrounds. Thus, this research focuses on three critical issues: the historical, social, and artistic conditions of the indigenous environment in which Shakespeare has been recreated and accepted by the modern audience; the modern directors' vision and attitudes towards traditional theatre forms in developing their own philosophy about performers' bodies and theatrical practices; and the audience's responses to the performance. Through a critical mapping of cross-cultural and intra-cultural Shakespeare in Korea and Japan, this thesis attempts to deepen both academic and practical understanding of modern Shakespeare in relation to the role of the performers' bodies.

To explore a theme of performers' physical expressions in relation to their cultural context, this thesis focuses on eight productions which were commercially successful and, therefore, frequently performed in Korea or Japan for several years. To understand the meaning of the actors' physical expressions in each production, it is necessary to present clear and accurate depictions of their movements which need to be closely observed and interpreted as specific examples. For this reason, this thesis mainly focuses on the productions performed since 2000; around this time, they were heavily documented, and this has given me the opportunity to carry out in-depth study on these productions. The productions which were mostly recorded between 2000 and 2014 can be accessed through the official website of Shakespeare Performance in Asia (SPIA)<sup>4</sup> or Asian Shakespeare Intercultural Archive (A|S|I|A).<sup>5</sup> These projects, which are notable

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<sup>4</sup> SPIA offers a collection of videos of Shakespeare performances produced in Asian culture with interviews with directors and actors to help the audience understand intercultural Shakespeare. (<http://web.mit.edu/shakespeare/asia>)

<sup>5</sup> A|S|I|A has shared approaches to Shakespeare performance in East and Southeast Asia through a collaborative, multilingual online database and archive of materials for scholars, practitioners, and audiences who have an interest in this area. (<http://a-s-i-a-web.org>)

archive projects of Shakespeare performance in Asia, offer a great opportunity to watch many foreign Shakespeare productions carefully selected by scholars.

To study each director's method and performance style as well as their main concept of the productions, I firstly searched academic books and journals which contain the interviews with the directors and their cultural backgrounds. There are a number of studies about and Yang's and Ninagawa's productions from the perspective of interculturalism or performance imagery.<sup>6</sup> Since Yang showcased his first performance of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in 2001, there have been many articles about the production not only by Korean scholars, but also by Western scholars who are interested in Yang's unique aesthetics that combine traditional and modern elements from Korean and non-Korean cultures.<sup>7</sup> In Japan, Seiji Furuya and Minami Ryuta study of Ninagawa's *Twelfth Night*, particularly focusing on the aesthetics of *onnagata* in his performance which was initially designed for modern Japanese spectator. However, none of these studies explores the performers' bodies as a main subject in these productions. Also, although the performances by Kurata Jun, Yasuda Masahiro, Lee Jong-Hun, and Oh Dong-Shik are worth enough to receive attention as they have been performed several times due to their popularity among the audience members and critics, these productions have not been studied by theatre scholars. Since Miyagi's productions at Ku Na'uka Theatre Company, particularly *Othello* and *Hamlet*, are popular in Japan, his performance style adopting traditional Japanese theatre forms such as *Mugen Noh* (Supernatural *Noh*) have often been studied by Japanese and Western scholars.<sup>8</sup> Still, there are only a few academic papers about his recent productions

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<sup>6</sup> Elaine Ng studies Yang's *Dream* to reconceptualising existing notions of authenticity in her "Performing Shakespeares: (dis)locating the authentic in a Korean intercultural *Dream*" (*Shakespeare*, 10.4 (2014): pp. 428-442). Also, Jang Eun-Soon explores the aesthetics of imagery in Yang's production in "YANG, Jung-Ung: A Global Stylist of the Theatrical Aesthetics" (*Journal of Kkorea Theatre Research*, 48 (2012): pp. 359-84).

<sup>7</sup> There are a number of studies about Yohangza's productions: Lee Sang-Hwon's "A Study on the Non-Verbal Elements of Performance Focused on *A Midsummer Night's Dream* by The Theatre Company Yohangza" (Department of Theatre and Cinema, The Graduate School, MA Thesis, Hanyang University, 2009); Bae Jeong-Ja's "A Study on the Textuality of Yohangza's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* to the Linguistic Approach" (Department of Korean Literature and Language, The Graduate School, MA Thesis, Dongguk University, 2005).

<sup>8</sup> See Ted Motohashi's "I saw Othello's visage in his mind", or "White Mask, Black Handkerchief": Satoshi Miyagi's *Mugen-Noh Othello* and Translation Theory" in *Multicultural Shakespeare*, 13(28),

including *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at Shizuoka Performing Arts Centre (SPAC). Therefore, to gain information about the directors and their productions, I had to rely on secondary sources such as directors' interviews and reviews by theatre critics in theatre magazines and newspapers published in Korea and Japan.

Aside from volumes and journals, I studied audience's reviews of each performance on their personal blogs or homepage. The audience members, particularly younger generation, tend to express and share their thoughts about theatre productions on personal or community spaces in the Internet. Although most of the audience left short reviews, some of them present sharp and analytical criticism at a professional level, which was useful to understand the productions from different perspectives. By reading almost every review on each production, I attempted to trace some common points shared among the audience members. Some of their reviews are cited in this thesis to show how they watch and assess the performances and also support the main argument of each chapter. Unlike Korean audiences, however, Japanese audiences seems less enthusiastic about sharing their thoughts on performances through online reviews. There are only a few webpages discussing about Japanese productions by modern Japanese directors. For this reason, I necessarily relied on the reviews by some of Japanese critics who have been vigorously working in the Japanese theatre field.

In Korea and Japan, performances are generally attended by female audiences whose ages are between the twenties and thirties rather than by male audience members. According to the Interpark, which is one of the most popular ticketing websites in Korea, Yang's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (2006) was mostly booked by female audiences (78.3%), aging between their twenties (34.6%) and their thirties (53.9%). According to Seo Min-Soo (2010), in Korea, "female audiences prefer to watch the productions adapting Western plays in modern context" since they are interested in the play-text (p. 170). In Japan, according to Yoshiko Fukushima (2005), "the young generation have been chosen as a target, because they will form the next age group of consumers" (p. 198). She

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(2016), 43-50; Mika Englinton's "Ku Na'uka's *Hamlet* in Tokyo: An Interview with Miyagi Satoshi" in *Asian Theatre Journal*, 28(1), (2011), 234-243; Michael Ingham and Kaoru Nakao's "Come, You Spirits": An Alternative Afterlife to Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and *Othello*, as Mediated through Japanese Classical *Nō* and *Kyōgen* Theatre" in *Asian Theatre Journal*, 35(1), (2018), 112-132.

also insists that “the increase of female audiences was observed in commercial theater” (p. 198). Also, Senda Akihiko (1995) claims that “the government-sponsored project, the ‘age of culture’ in the 1980s somehow transformed itself into the ‘age of women,’ encouraging many women to participate in various cultural activities” (p. 108). From this information, it is possible to assume that the younger generation’s taste and preference can be some of the main interests for the directors who are also responsible for this new taste in both countries.

While undertaking this research, I had several opportunities to have interviews with the directors (Yang Jung-Ung, Oh Dong-Shik, and Kurata Jun), assistant director (Abe Nozomi) and actors (Koji Ishitobi, Kim Hong-Geun, Kim Ji-Hui) in London and Seoul. Some of the common questions asked to the directors were: why did they choose to perform Shakespeare’s play?; what were the most important points they considered when they translated Shakespeare’s play into their own cultural context?; and what was the process of translating Shakespeare’s language for modern audience? Each director shared their ideas gained from their own experiences of making their distinctive productions. Their answers became concrete evidences for my analysis of their stage works and at the same time avoid the danger of misunderstanding their intentions for particular actions in relation to each cultural context. In addition, I had an opportunity to be part of the creative process of *Trans-Twelfth Night* between 1<sup>st</sup> of July and 5<sup>th</sup> of October in 2014 as a dramaturge. By observing the training every day, I could get a concrete idea of how the director and actors developed their techniques to perform particular genders. Also, I could interview the actors and director about the general direction of the performance as well as character development.

While studying each production created in Korea and Japan, this thesis utilises a comparative study to provide a useful framework for identifying the process of cultural and social mechanisms, which might be a comprehensive and suitable method to discuss the role of the body in theatre productions in different cultural fields. The purpose of the comparative approach is not simply limited to emphasising the differences or similarities between the Korean and Japanese theatre conventions by pointing out some distinctive features in terms of acting techniques. Rather, it is for stressing the unique aspects of each culture behind the

aesthetic of performers' physical images and movements by examining their expressions in comparative perspective. Since this study is about the live presence of the actor – more specifically, the visual, ephemeral, and kinaesthetic vitality of the actors – each chapter attempts to theorise a particular performance phenomenon by studying the moments where concepts of body and practice intersect.

### **Outline of the Thesis**

This thesis explores eight productions of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Twelfth Night* in Korea and Japan. Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, these two plays have frequently been performed in both countries. By performing *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, modern Korean and Japanese directors need to translate Shakespeare's metaphoric expressions for the fairies and their world into the physical expressions through the actors' bodies that utilise a contemporary attitude. This process requires a broad understanding of the folk culture and traditions in England as well as Korea or Japan because it inspires the directors to construct the performers' appearance and movements as well as the stage *mise-en-scène*. The theme of the body can be further developed in the study of gender and sexuality in Shakespearean adaptations of *Twelfth Night* in these two cultures. As Korean and Japanese societies have developed throughout the twentieth century and the social position of women became problematic in both countries around the 1980s, the subject of gender and sexuality has become important social issues along with the increase of public interest in the rights of women. Historically and culturally, Korean and Japanese societies have been conservative in their attitude towards gender issues due to the influence of Chinese Confucianism that emphasises the dominance of male gender for hundreds of years. In this complicated social condition, performers' bodies represent not simply the characters' gender in Shakespeare's text, but also the general social ideology related to gender and sexuality of both male and female who are faced with the dynamic conflicts caused by the differences between traditional and modern perspectives and attitudes towards gender roles and behaviours.

Before studying the productions of these two plays, in Chapter One, I will provide a survey of previous academic studies and historical performances of Shakespeare's work in Korea and Japan. The cultural meaning related to the performer's physical expressions in current productions can be read more clearly through the study of particular historical trends since modern adaptations of Shakespeare are always associated with the practices of traditional theatre conventions. Hence, this chapter reviews the brief history of Shakespearean adaptation in both countries and includes critical interpretations of kinaesthetic expression in significant historical and cultural moments. Along with the study of social and political ideology in each culture, I will focus particularly on theatre culture as a response to historical impacts such as the Meiji Restoration (1868-1912), Japanese colonialism, realism and avant-garde movements, and globalisation. This chapter shows how these historical events and social changes influenced directors' changing attitudes towards ways of presenting the performers' bodies in their productions.

In Chapter Two, I examine two Japanese productions of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* directed by Yasuda Masahiro (2004) and Miyagi Satoshi (2011). Both productions deal with the problems of "modern people who lack the ability to communicate with their surroundings and other people as Japanese society became modernised, therefore, their bodies are always alienated from the world" (Yasuda, 2000). Yasuda tries to show "how modern Japanese people sensitively and even neurotically react to their surroundings and other people" (Yamanote Jijosha, 2015) in their social condition with restricted body actions inspired by the small square space of *yojo-han*, a typical Japanese tearoom. On the other hand, Miyagi deals with the same subject by depicting the inner state of a character, Soboro (Helena), in a surreal atmosphere in which she comes to realise her own suppressed unconscious in relation to other characters and struggles to overcome the problem with the help of fairies. For both directors, it is important to develop the techniques of perceiving and expressing their inner world, which can be presented through the practice of Japanese traditional theatre that stresses the aesthetic potential of physical expression. Therefore, they describe the forest as a chaotic space where the alienated characters become engaged with other characters' lives and find a way to communicate with

one another. In this magical place, the characters realise their own desires and at the same time cure people who suffer in a heartless world, that is, modern Japanese society.

In Chapter Three, I study two Korean adaptations of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*: Lee Jong-Hun's *Moon Night at Shilla* (2000) and Yang Jung-Ung's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (2006). Unlike Japanese productions which explore the four lovers' problems in relation to the social condition of modern Japanese society, these Korean directors focus on the presence of the fairies based on traditional Korean myth and folktales. In this context, this chapter studies how the directors understand Shakespeare's language and translate it into their own dialogue that composes a visual poetry of physical movement. The directors transformed the fairies into *dokkaebi*,<sup>9</sup> goblins in Korean folklore, who is mischievous and playful like Shakespearean fairies. To construct the physical images of the fairies, they adapt Korean traditional theatre forms and styles, particularly through various dance forms, such as *Talchum* (Korean mask dance), martial arts, and contemporary choreography. Lee's production relies heavily on Korean traditional sources for its setting, character, lyrics, and dance movements referencing the Shilla dynasty (57 B.C.-935 A.D.) and the early Goryeo period (918-1392) in Korean history. Meanwhile, Yang's *Dream* focuses on the visual aesthetic of the performer's body images and actions with highly stylised scenography with a synthesis of elements from (non-)Korean genres in eclectic ways. Both productions emphasise the notion of *shinmyeong*<sup>10</sup> by encouraging the audience to freely interact with the performers, which makes the general atmosphere of the performance more vibrant and ebullient.

Chapter Four deals with the concept and practice of gender ambiguity in Japanese theatre culture by examining two modern productions, *Kabuki Twelfth Night* (2009) by Ninagawa Yukio and *Twelfth Night* (2011) by Kurata Jun. Both directors employ an all-male cast to emphasise the subject of gender ambiguity and fluidity. By adapting the traditional *Kabuki* form and referencing the styles of *shōjo*

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<sup>9</sup> In this thesis, the term '*dokkaebi* (or *dokgabi*)' is used as both a singular and a plural.

<sup>10</sup> *Shinmyeong* is an intense feeling of excitement when repressed emotion is released, which is often expressed in Korean traditional performance. In a theatre space, the performers and audience relieve and soothe any painful or negative emotions in a positive way and refresh themselves through the performance as a healing device.

*manga* (*manga* mainly targets young girls roughly between ages ten and eighteen), each director attempts to create an illusion of ‘the third beauty,’ neither female nor male but somewhere in between in traditional Japanese theatre culture. In particular, Ninagawa tries to recreate the beauty of ideal femininity through the tradition of *onnagata* (a male performer specialising in female roles in *Kabuki*), which can be understood in the context of Japanese cultural preference for ambiguity in representing gender and sexuality. Likewise, Kurata explores gender ambiguity through designs by Uno Akira, a Japanese illustrator, who has an influence on other *manga* artists in Japan. However, throughout their productions, the actors present a series of stereotyped gender actions based on the principles of *Shingeki* (literally ‘New Theatre’ adapting the principles of realist acting in Japanese style), which highlights the distinction between female and male roles in modern society. Thus, although their theatrical practices of gender ambiguity allow the audience to explore multiple gender roles, they are not radical enough to represent ‘female voice’ which has been marginalised within the patriarchal Japanese society. It seems that Ninagawa and Kurata’s eclectic use of different acting forms reflects the anxiety of Japanese culture regarding both conservative and radical attitudes towards gender.

In Chapter Five, I explore two Korean productions of *Twelfth Night*: Yang Jung-Ung’s *Twelfth Night* (2011) and Oh Dong-Shik’s *Trans-Twelfth Night* (2014). By emphasising the practice of ‘theatricality,’ both productions explore the concept of gender and sexuality in a Korean cultural context. Yang casts all-male actors inspired by Korean traditional theatre convention, particularly *Namsadangnori*<sup>11</sup> to stress the practice of exaggerated gender actions and images for the modern audience. Although he attempts to deal with the problems of gender representation, in general the production does not present a critical perspective on gendered behaviour or promote further reflection on the subject. On the other hand, Oh’s production focuses on the effect of cross-gender casting to achieve more radical critiques of conventional gender images. In this production, the female characters,

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<sup>11</sup> *Namsadangnori*, literally “the ‘all-male vagabond clown theatre,’ is a multifaceted folk performance tradition originally practised widely by travelling entertainers and now kept alive by professional troupes” in Korea (UNESCO, 2000). The actors perform their repertory of six different acts in succession: *Pungmul* (famer’s music performed by folk instrument), *Beona* (balancing and spinning of sieves and bowls), *Salpan* (a combination of tumbling acts and a sleight of hand act called *ollun*), *Eorum* (Korean tight-rope walking), *Dotboegi* (a mask drama), *Deolmi* (puppet play).

who were male characters in Shakespeare's play, are performed by female actors. In this way, the audience can see how the lines originally written for male characters are now spoken by female characters. Thus, it is possible to see how the director subverts the intention of Shakespeare's language that implies the stereotypes of gender image. These two productions present the subversion of stereotyped gender images by emphasising the performativity of gender actions. At the same time, their works reflect the changes in women's social position as being as important as that of men in modern Korea.

## **Chapter 1.**

### **Actor's Body: Shakespeare Performances in Korea and Japan**

Throughout the twentieth century, Korea and Japan shared several significant political and cultural moments such as colonial period, cold war, postmodern trend along with global movements in the history of performing Shakespeare's plays. As Western social and cultural influences have continuously affected the structure of Japanese and Korean society, the balance of life as it had been maintained until then was irrevocably upset. When Japan opened to Western countries in the late nineteenth century, they admired and imitated European and American culture as well as their modernised city. To transform the agricultural Japan under the rule of Tokugawa Shogunate (1600-1868) into an industrialised country, many Japanese scholars went to Western countries to study their science and languages. Following the path of Western industrialisation, the Japanese government firmly supported the prosperity of business, economy and industries. The communication networks and transport system were also improved due to the large governmental investments.

Unlike Japan, Korea was passive to open its gate to Western cultures in the nineteenth century. Following the Japanese annexation in 1910, modern systems of government and administration were adopted under the rule of Japan. The Koreans built railroads, hospitals, and schools, which brought rapid social transformation to Korea. Although these changes were intended to make the colonial economy of Japan more effective, the development under Japan provided some foundation for the economic growth of Korea after the liberation from Japan in 1945. The economic development in Korea was possible only after the Korean War in 1950. Since then, economic modernisation has brought dynamic social changes that have also provoked the emergence of a pluralistic society. As people began to use Western-derived methods to bring about changes in their life, the old and new came to coexist side by side. This duality is found in even today, and it is inevitable to create a new identity which is not just an imitation of the West or incompatible with traditional resources in the past. To understand the aesthetic of actors' physical expression and acting style in any contemporary productions in Korea and Japan, it is necessary to

study the history of how theatrical methods constructing actor's physical expressions have been invented and developed.

In "Seven Stages of the Reception of Shakespeare in Japan: 1885-1996" (2016), Daniel Gallimore and Minami Ryuta divide the history of Shakespeare adaptation in Japan into seven different stages according to the changes of acting style in response to several historical events: Shakespeare productions by foreign residents between 1866 and 1891; Shakespeare in *Kabuki* style from 1885; Shakespeare in *Shimpa*<sup>12</sup> style from 1901; Shakespeare in *Shingeki* style from 1904, Shakespeare after the Second World War; and Shakespeare in the 1970s and the 1980s. They state that "[s]tyles and conventions adapted in producing Shakespeare's plays reflect not only the development of modern Japanese theatre but also the country's shifting relationships with the imagined West" (p. 484). The history of Shakespeare performances in Korea reveals similar patterns of change in theatre culture such as the emergence of *Shimpa* and *Shinguk*, the influence of the Second World War, and the avant-garde movement in the 1970s and the 1980s. In "The Process of Shakespeare Acceptance in Korea" (2005, 2006, 2007), Shin Jung-Ok investigates how Shakespeare's plays have been translated, performed, and studied by Korean scholars and practitioners by dividing the period into three different time scales: the first encounter with Shakespeare and the reception during the Japanese colonial period and Korean War (1906-1961), the development of Shakespeare translation and performance (1962-1979), and the influence of globalisation on Shakespeare adaptation (1980-1987).

Although the purpose and aesthetic direction of performing Shakespeare might be different, it seems that Gallimore, Minami, and Shin agree there are a few significant historical moments which were influential on the changes of theatrical trends and acting styles in both countries: in particular, the influence of Western

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<sup>12</sup> *Shimpa* is a form of Japanese theatre which usually features melodramatic stories in contrast to the traditional *Kabuki* style. According to Scott Nygren (1993), it "originated in the 1890s and maintained a dominant popularity from about 1900 to the mid-1920s" in Japan, and "Shingeki thereafter displaced *Shimpa* as a primary cultural influence, beginning with experiments in theatre in 1909" (p. 134). The acting styles of *Shimpa* influenced the creation and development of *Shinpa* (a similar theatre form to *Shimpa*) in Korea, which was popular until *Shinguk* ('New Theatre' adapting the principles of realist acting in Korean style) became dominant in Korean theatre culture.

theatrical realism, the Second World War, and postmodernism and globalisation. In this Chapter, I will focus on three broad stages of theatre development in Korea and Japan, specifically, the trend of *Shingeki* and *Shinguk* between the 1900s and the 1950s, the rise of ‘New Wave’ movements between the 1960s and the 1980s, and the contemporary theatre culture from the 1990s to present in relation to the aesthetic of physical expressions.

### **The Influence of Western Realist Theatre between the 1900s and the 1950s**

The presentation of the body on stage reflects the history of Japanese and Korean modernisation, particularly, the experience of Western cultural hegemony. In the history of Korean and Japanese theatre, one of the important theatre movements is theatrical realism, which has been influential in even today’s performances, especially, performers’ acting styles. This was a major paradigm for the modern plays in European countries that affected the development of a new genre called *Shingeki* and *Shinguk* in Japan and Korea. Due to the influence of Western realism on Japanese and Korean theatre companies, the traditional practices have been less popular, particularly in the first half of the twentieth century.

Traditionally, Japanese performances emphasised actors’ physical sensibilities, but in the period of between the 1900s and the 1950s, as the trend of Japanese theatre culture has been changed to a modern theatre form, *Shingeki*, modern Japanese directors came to rely on realist acting style and stage forms. As *Shingeki* troupes dominated the Japanese stage, performances of Shakespeare and other Western plays by Henrik Ibsen, August Strindberg, Anton Chekov, and Maxim Gorky were often produced. During the Meiji period in Japan, *Bungei Kyokai* (the Literary Arts Society, 1906) of Tsubouchi Shoyo and *Jiyugekijo* (the Free Theatre, 1909) of Osanai Kaoru were the central groups that led the new theatre movements. They attempted to develop *Shingeki* style theatre by translating European plays into Japanese language and they recruited amateurs to train them to perform Western plays in a realist acting style. According to Nouryeh (1993), *Shingeki* style performances “were greatly relied on to mediate Western ideals and standard for Japanese society” (p. 267). As a result, it had two major consequences: first, “it

imposed western taste while it belittled Japanese sensibility”; and second, “it generated a paradox: despite the ease with which the Japanese used western modes as their standards for theatre, they were unable to reconcile them with Japanese culture” (p. 267). As *Shingeki* became increasingly dominant in Japanese theatre around the 1920s and the 1930s, many artists accepted this realist acting style and tried to break away from the aesthetic of traditional theatre forms.

According to Minami Ryuta *et al* (2010), during these periods, along with the new style of theatrical form, Shakespeare was regarded modern theatre as a way to “enlighten the public” (p. 4). Although *Julius Caesar* (1884), the first Shakespeare production in Japan, was performed in *Kabuki* style because there were only *Kabuki* actors who had the professional competence to perform Shakespeare, Japanese directors focused on the textual authenticity of Shakespeare according to the tradition of Western realist theatre. According to Akihiko Senda (1998), a Japanese theatre historian and critic, by presenting Shakespeare in *Shingeki* theatre, Japanese performers attempted to follow English or European examples.

The players tried to look like Europeans on stage by wearing Renaissance-style clothes, dying their hair red or blond, or even using artificial noses. What was happening at that time was not limited to the world of theatre: people at large were endeavouring to imitate their Western counterparts. Thus *Shingeki*, in a sense, epitomised the ethos of the age when the whole nation was making strenuous efforts to overtake advanced Western nations. (p. 17)

Kishi Tetsuo and Graham Bradshaw (2005) also point out that Shakespeare was generally performed by imitating Western theatre that “tended to be rather simplistic and superficial” until the late 1950s, and the “*Shingeki* artists became more and more antagonistic to the Japanese traditions” (p. 29). Suzuki (2015) states that realism was developed to explore “the mental and spiritual interior of the human being” (p. 11). According to him, Japanese *Shingeki* artists think that “realism is intended as a representation of things we can directly perceive, rather than a revelation of things we can’t” and this might lead them to think that “visible, exterior reality mirrors the invisible human interior” (p. 11). Therefore, the Japanese artists and audience came to believe that the relation between each and every action of a particular character and underlying psychological motivation should be logically explained and

expressed through the external body. This is different from the acting style in *Kabuki* in which the actors show stylised motions and postures as ‘formalised beauty’ to deliver a collective concept of the characters’ gender, class, and age, the actors in realism attempt to explore human individuality by examining interior aspects such as emotional or psychological idiosyncrasies from various angles.

In Japanese theatre, according to Guohe Zheng (2016, p. 274), *Shingeki* had not completely ignored the classical theatre around it since the theatre artists such as Tsubouchi and Osanai had dreamed of creating a national theatre in the early twentieth century. Thus, *Shingeki* collaborated with other traditional and modern Japanese theatre forms such as *Kabuki* and *Shimpa*, which presents that audience could accept three very distinct modes of realism. However, as *Shingeki* style became dominant in Japanese theatre culture in general, Suzuki was concerned with the trend of young directors blindly following the techniques of Western realism without understanding the meaning of realism, while ignoring the value and importance of tradition. He points out that “the contemporary [Japanese] theatre has only one challenge to face: how to acquire a sense of historical continuity while relying on the spontaneity of the human body and spirit” (Suzuki, 2015, p. 53). Along with the development of *Shingeki*, Shakespeare had come to occupy a vital part of the Japanese literary tradition and achieve popular status over the last hundred years. Even in the period of anti-Western and nationalistic movements between the 1960s and the 1970s, Shakespeare maintained the same position in Japanese theatre culture. The traditional Japanese theatre forms were often regarded as an old form which seemed to be inadequate in dealing with contemporary issues in general.

The Japanese colonial occupation continued for thirty-five years which overlapped with the process of modernisation in Korea. During this period, Shakespeare’s plays were introduced and translated in Korea. According to Kim Mo-Ran (2012), “Korean intellectuals made use of Shakespeare as a means to popularize their principles” which was “nationalism related to anti-colonial struggle against Japanese rule” (p. 201). For Korean intellectuals, Shakespeare or Western culture was considered “a companion in their struggle for emancipation from Japan rather than a new cultural authority” (Kim, 2012, p. 202). Thus, they believed that Shakespeare, as a guide, could lead them to Western culture, and represented what

the Koreans had to learn in order to catch up with the Japanese. By learning about Western culture from Japan, Korea attempted to find the ways to surpass Japan, the ruling power for the present. This peculiar situation of Korea in relation to Japanese colonisation reinforced and reproduced the authority of Western culture within Korea.

From the first performance, the main criterion to evaluate the productions of Shakespeare's plays in Korea was how much they were faithful to the meaning of the original texts. Since learning Western drama itself was considered an urgent priority, Korean dramatists could not think of adapting Shakespeares in their own style. Until the 1920s, there was no professional theatre company that could perform Shakespeare's texts. During this period, Shakespeare was studied and produced by amateur theatre companies run by students or *Shinpa* companies by theatre practitioners pursuing commercial aims. According to Kim Bang-Ock (2014), "[a]lthough moderate differences exist regarding the specific period, theatrical culture in the Western sense is largely agreed to have begun around 1908" (p. 13).

In the early 1930s, students who studied Western literature and art in Japan such as Hyeon Cheol, Kim Woo-Jin, Hong Hae-Seong, and Yu Chi-Jin returned Korea and imported the new theatre form from Japan. By organising Theatre Arts Research Association, they introduced and imitated modern forms of Western and Japanese theatre, in particular, realistic dramas and performance styles along with Western plays. The principles of theatrical realism were also practised and developed in Korea until the 1930s through a new dramatic form called *Shinguk* influenced by Japanese *Shingeki*. Notably, they attempted to establish a new theatre form based on Western acting methods such as Stanislavski system, and also translated Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (1922), which is the first complete Korean translation of a Shakespeare's play.

*Shinguk* was particularly dominant in Korean theatre due to its strong nationalistic and ideological purpose, which was employed to raise Korean national consciousness against Japanese oppression during the period of colonisation. According to Kim (2014), "their productions generally failed to surpass the simplistic level of proclaiming enlightening morals or sentimental impressions," but they "sought realism through their passionate composition and performance of

dramas focusing on modern identity, resistance to Japanese aggression, and poverty under colonial rule” (p. 14). As a result, *Shinguk* became popular among the theatre practitioners and audience as a standard for a good theatre whose form is appropriate to deal with contemporary social and political realities. In Korea, there were not many professional theatre companies that could perform Shakespeare during the period of Japanese colonialism between the 1910s and the 1940s and the Korean War and reconstruction in the 1950s.

During the war in the 1950s, “[Korean] refugees enjoyed a few of Shakespeare’s tragedies such as *Hamlet* (1951), *Macbeth* (1952), and *Othello* (1953) which were performed by *Shinhyup* Theatre Company in their shelter” (Shin, 2006, p. 10). These productions were performed in Busan by Lee Hae-Rang and Yu Chi-Jin who were mainly performed their work in *Shinguk* style. According to Shin (2006), because of the compelling stories of revenge, love, and death in these plays, many people who were already suffering from the tragedy of colonisation and the war were attracted to the adaptations of Shakespeare’s text. Since the 1950s, Shakespearean performances underwent a great change compared to the productions during the period of Japanese occupation. His plays were staged by commercial theatre companies for the public, and Korean dramatists began to remake Shakespeare in familiar forms and styles to attract the audience’s attention. Since the 1950s, Korean artists have attempted to present an intellectual and critical vision not only for achieving self-realisation and new realist theatre forms, but also the modernisation of Korean society. Among the new productions of Shakespeare plays, *Hamyeltaeja* (1976) drew an attention of critics in and out of Korea. Based on Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, the performance was considered the first production that started a new era of Shakespeare adaptation in Korea. Director Ahn Min-Su shortened the plot of *Hamlet* into a ninety-minute performance and was set in historical Joseon Dynasty (1392-1910) and used Korean indigenus theatrical elements such as traditional Korean costumes, dance, music, and ritual. As Ahn provided a new way of interpreting Shakespeare’s play, his production received great attention from the critics in US, Netherland, and France.

*Shingeki* and *Shinguk* styles are still employed by a number of theatre companies and directors today. Modern Japanese and Korean directors often

performed Western plays by Ibsen, Shaw, and Chekhov since their plays emphasise real-life problems in modern life, and offered young artists the hope that theatre could be used as a medium to deal with social issues. The directors such as Ninagawa, Kurata, Yang Jung-Ung, and Oh Dong-Shik use realist acting styles in their productions which are combined with other traditional and modern theatre forms in eclectic ways. In other words, they attempt to reconcile the uncomfortable coexistence of the old and the new, the indigenous and the foreign by exploring their own theatrical heritage in the context of modern culture and theatrical practices. Nouryeh (1993) insists that “[b]y identifying themes which had significance to Japanese mores and customs, and by developing production styles which balanced Japanese stage traditions with western realism, these directors bridged the chasm created by differences in language and in culture” (p. 268). In this sense, the modern directors’ Shakespeare productions can be considered an intercultural practice which assimilates Western dramaturgical and performance techniques to create a new theatrical paradigm and at the same time to develop a theatrical form for modern society.

Shakespeare has been continuously explored and adapted in this dynamic intercultural process in which foreign and familiar cultural aspects were confronted and intermingled to formulate a modern approach to the new productions in Japan and Korea. The imitation of Western models was important for creating a cultural context in which the traditional Japanese and Korean theatre could be re-evaluated and reinterpreted. Through the hybrid style and emphasis on the themes in Shakespeare’s plays which have parallels in Japanese and Korean literature and theatre, the modern directors were able to deal with the crisis of their culture such as the “ongoing emulation of Western values to the detriment of a distinctly national identity” (Kennedy, 1993, p. 268). Therefore, their productions of Shakespeare’s plays served “not as didactic tools to understand the West but as instruments to enlighten” (Kennedy, 1993, p. 268) the modern audience about their own culture and traditions.

### **Reinventing the Traditional Theatre Forms between the 1960s and the 1980s**

There were various theatre movements in the 1960s which had ambivalent attitudes towards using traditional theatre forms with modern realist acting styles. The multiple countervailing factions led Japanese and Korean artists to forge their own particular experimental theatre from the 1960s to the 1980s as a reaction to the conservatism of *Shingeki* and *Shinguk*. According to Kan Takayuki (2016), the paradigm of theatrical movement in the 1960s consisted of three strands: “challenging standard realism; searching for independence from the norms of European modernity; and questioning rationalistic views of the world and humanity” (p. 289). By departing from the dominance of *Shingeki* and *Shinguk*, directors sought to produce new theatre forms to reflect the social condition of modern Japan and Korea. In the 1960s, the physicality of performers’ bodies had been a central concern, particularly in reappraising of Korean and Japanese identity.<sup>13</sup> The body presents a history of these countries’ modernisations and tragic history: the experience of Western cultural hegemony, colonialism, war, and devastation. As the site of the unconscious, of pathos over logos, the body presents “a counter-discourse to the rationalism of modernity” (Poulton, 2016, p. 339). In addition, in this period, new theatrical forms combining various different genres such as music, poetry, film, and photography challenged the authority of the traditional theatre forms in order to align with disagreeing social movements. In this condition, new methods of physical expression were required as counter-strategies to overcome the stereotyped theatre form of *Shingeki/Shinguk*.

During the 1960s, there was the rise of New Wave with *Shogekijo Undo* (Little Theatre Movement), the avant-garde *Angura Undo* (Underground Theatre Movement), and post-*Shingeki* stages among young theatre professionals in Japan. These theatre movements strove to create a new vocabulary of performance by connecting to indigenous Japanese performance forms and privileging the physical body over language. The laboratories of the *Shogekijo Undo* created “new acting and dramaturgical methodologies, plays of great poetic and dramatic intensity a ‘return of the gods’ through myth, festival, and traditional forms, and new relationships between performers and spectators which continue to influence present organization

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<sup>13</sup> See Kan Takayuki (2016) ‘Sixties theatre’, in Salz, J. (ed.) *A History of Japanese Theatre*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 291.

and practices” (Kan, 2016, p. 291). These experimental movements changed the general trend of modern Japanese theatre and some of these still remain influential today. According to Uchino Tadashi (2009), a Japanese theatre historian and critic, *Angura* is “now unanimously considered to be an impressive period of both theatrical innovation and cultural intervention” (p. 81). This was the time of “rare productivity and creativity in Japan’s theatre history, especially if we compare it with the preceding twenty years of repetitious reflection among Shingeki theatre practitioners” (p. 81). By refusing the traditions of *Shingeki* performance that emphasise the supremacy of dramatic texts, many artists started to produce Shakespeare’s plays in Japanese styles associated with their own culture and history rather than simply imitating old Shakespearean styles. According to Senda (1998), the directors “incorporate their new ideas and devices into the established patterns embedded in well-known history or stories” (p. 30). In other words, they interwove the art of traditional Japanese playwriting with the scenes of Shakespeare as a new theatrical technique.

By borrowing solid dramatic structure as well as large-scale stories from Shakespeare’s plays, they [directors] intended to charge their stages once again with dramatic energy. Especially remarkable among these troupes at this period was the technique with which they tried to project upon Shakespearean texts the mental climate of contemporary Japan, or the social situation of Asia, in order to create a new drama. (Senda, 1998, p. 30)

Along with the rise of small and big theatre movements, one of the crucial events in the history of Japanese Shakespeare might be the several visits of the Royal Shakespeare Company in the 1970s, which prompted Japanese artists such as Noda, Suzuki, Ninagawa, and many others to expand their limited perspective on new theatre. Trevor Nunn’s *The Winter’s Tale* and Peter Brook’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* in particular left a strong impression that “shattered the fixed ideas of a Shakespearean stage cherished among them” (Senda, 1998, p. 20). These performances allowed the Japanese artists to liberate themselves from imitating the Western stage and develop their own productions of Shakespeare in unique styles. In this condition, the problem of how to visualise the performer’s body was an important issue, which was explored by Suzuki, Ohta Shogo, and Kara Juro, who developed their own methodologies for the practitioners to focus on their internal

energy for constructing the external visible body. There were also a lot of creative productions experimenting with theatre language, particularly physical expressiveness. Above all, they tried to re-evaluate the Japanese traditional theatre forms as popular entertainment for the modern audience.

Around the early 1970s, the *Gendaijin Gekijo* (The Theatre of the Modern), which was the avant-garde theatrical troupe led by Ninagawa became the most important theatre company in Japan. Even though performing Western plays, they adapted them radically in their own unique styles of expression, which reveals “an aspect of the revivalism of Japanese identity in contemporary theatre” (Senda, 1998, p. 18). Suzuki also established his company in Toga in 1976 where he developed his system of actor training, which was inspired by Greek theatre and traditional Japanese theatre practices. This method was devised to help actors to be aware of their own bodies as a centre of energy not only for their natural expressiveness but also for the dynamic communication with the audience through their body. In this experimental environment, Shakespeare was regarded as an appropriate text for artists to deal with the complex cultural condition in which traditional, modern, and experimental sources simultaneously exist. Regarding Ninagawa’s *Romeo and Juliet* in 1974, Nakane Tadao, a producer of Toho Theatre Company describes Japanese theatre culture in the 1970s,

Theatrical fashion at that time was quite different from what it is now. For example, while Kabuki was appreciated for its style, and modern plays (Shingeki) for their words, there were also underground theatre groups focusing on using the body for expressive rather than narrative purposes, and commercial plays which relied on the actor’s presentation of personality in a character role. All of these approaches existed, but almost without connection to each other. So I wondered if I could mix them together in the same production. However, there wasn’t a single playwright available who could write for such a new genre.

That’s how I came to realize that only Shakespeare was powerful enough to pull together all the elements in the Japanese theatre scene into one production. That’s why I wanted to work with Ninagawa to combine classical

stylization and the pop culture embodied by Hagiwara<sup>14</sup> within the framework of Shakespeare. It was a chance meeting of two related ideas. (Minami *et al*, 2010, p. 210)

Ninagawa and many other Japanese directors started their theatre careers as actors or directors of *Shingeki* but then shifted into the new theatre movement. Their unique style and passion for combining or mixing different cultural and theatrical traditions have also provoked meaningful arguments about the conceptual clarity and integrity of traditional Japanese theatre in the 1970s. During this period, Japanese directors such as Ninagawa and Suzuki adapted the strategy of referring to traditional forms (perhaps a kind of imaginary *Noh* or *Kabuki*) as the source of their performative imagination.

Although Ninagawa, as a first-generation director of the Little Movement, has been internationally acclaimed for his impressive visual aesthetic, the second and third generation directors of the theatre movements failed to establish themselves as mainstream. According to Miyagi, “most of the companies in the Little Theatre movements disappeared due to the low level of acting; at that time, actors were not necessarily professionally trained and the acting did not suit the content and style” (Eglinton, 2011, p. 239). Although this movement produced many cutting-edge and experimental works, the most significant motivation for the movement was always “connected to Japanese commercialism, the masses, and the economic boom without being aware of the situation” (p. 239). Therefore, young directors attempted to take a critical stance on simply mixing different elements from art and non-art, old and new, Japanese and non-Japanese.

Although the directors such as Ninagawa and Miyagi’s reference to tradition was “a conscious strategy against the then-dominant *Shingeki* mode of theatre practice,” their theatre practice was also “a part of narrative that explains the success of modernized Japan” (Uchino, 2009, p. 85). Zheng (2016, p. 282) states that though *Angura* theatre itself showed signs of returning to the *Shingeki* form from the mid-1970, it did not show any sign of revitalisation despite the easy availability of

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<sup>14</sup> Hagiwara Kenichi (1950 - ) is an actor and singer representing Japanese pop culture. He was “the lead singer of The Tempters, the ‘bad boys’ of the Group Sounds Japan pop scene in the mid to late 1960s” (‘Kenich Hagiwara’, 2017).

multiple new theatres built in the 1980s. It seems that the ideal shared by *Shingeki* and *Angura* theatre artists who – despite their differences – wanted to create a suitable performance form to deal with current issues related to Japanese identity in modernised society has been lost, rendering the decline of both theatre movements inevitable. In the 1980s, Japan’s theatre culture tried to remove any visible signs of cultural influence from Western countries, but there was a tendency to find “a correlative theatrical representation with the ideology of ‘Japan’s Japan’; finding what were by now internalized self-images of Japan where ancient tradition and advanced technology miraculously met” (Uchino, 2009, p. 88). Also, Cody Poulton (2016) insists that the “angura spirit into mainstream theatre was not accompanied by a similar political mobilization” (p. 326). He continued to state that by the 1980s the Japanese public had become “increasingly conservative and complacent, accustomed to the miraculous nature of Japan’s postwar reconstruction” (p. 327).<sup>15</sup> During this period, the theatrical space provided the audience with “a self-celebratory fantasy world” (Uchino, 2009, p. 87) where particular social or political issues are effaced. In this way, although the traditional form was experimental and radical at the time of its emergence, it made Japanese cultural identity a rigid form or image reconfirming the internalised self-image of Japan rather than providing other chances to explore different visions or perspectives on Japanese theatre in relation to the influence of Western culture.

In the 1960s, as in Japan, a new generation of artists, who were sceptical of the unconditional acceptance of the *Shinguk* style, emerged in Korea. The artists began to seek “a truly Korean theatre through experimentation, hybrids and mining the past and traditional theatre for elements to transform the modern Korean drama” (Wetmore, 2014, p. 155). After liberation from Japan, a number of new colleges and universities were established and students began to read Shakespeare’s plays, and at the same time, there were many Shakespeare translations which were published by scholars such as Seol Jung-Shik and Choi Jae-Seo who had previously studied English literature in Japan. Along with the academic studies and the new

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<sup>15</sup> Poulton (2016) states that “[n]either Kokami nor Noda professed any particular interest in politics. Noda described himself as an “anarchist,” but playing on the Japanese word *ana* (“hole”), suggesting a latent emptiness” (p. 329). Both practitioners and audiences intentionally abstained from any serious or ponderous social issues, which was one defining features of Japanese theatre culture in the 1980s.

establishment of theatre companies and theatre buildings, many experimental performances were produced in this period. At the same time, theatrical realism had entered a phase of stability and continued to be published alongside works of eclectic realism by writers. This indicates that Korean dramatic literature developed into a mature art form during this period. One of the important directors is Yu Chi-Jin who established a Drama Centre in Seoul where he performed *Hamlet* (1962) and *Romeo and Juliet* (1963). Since these productions, Korean theatre has frequently performed Shakespeare's plays, particularly his tragedies, and these productions mostly focused on Shakespeare's language and the internal state of the main characters based on the practice of theatrical realism.

In the history of Korea, the 1970s and the 1980s were also times of radical transition both in society and in theatre. According to Kim Bang-Ock (2014), Korean plays began to “gain greater awareness in terms of identity and showed signs of escaping the uniformity of drama-based representational theatre to the intense theatricality of non-representational theatre with the emphasis on performance” (p. 20). Many Korean directors began to study the principles of Korean movement based on the communal activities in traditional theatres, and finally a new genre called *Madangguk*<sup>16</sup> was developed. This theatre form is often considered a resistance against Western realism, but its primary purpose was to achieve a dynamic interaction with audiences during a performance and to deal with diverse social and political issues satirically by adapting Korean folk tales. Like Japan, during these periods, Korea also focused on economic development under the strict control of the government, which provoked the youth to aspire to liberation from this kind of social oppression and to raise violent protests against the restrictive policies. Kim (2014) insists that in this period,

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<sup>16</sup> As for *Madangguk*, ‘*madang*’ literally refers to the front or back yard in a traditional Korean house, which served as a multi-purpose space used for housework, farming, entertaining guests, and rest, whereas ‘*geuk*’ simply refers to a work of theatre. In *Madangguk*, actors perform “a variety of entertainment ranging from puppetry to mask dance-dramas. Their performances not only provide diversion from the monotony of rural life, but also served to bring communities together” (‘*Madangguk*’, 2001). By showing exaggerating or distorting reality in order to mock the elite and hypocritical religious leaders, performers draw their audience into the fun.

the recovery of interest in traditional performing arts, combined with intense curiosity toward Western non-representational theatre, generated a sensational wave of new theatricality; under the ideologies of nationalism and populism, traditional performing arts became a means of restoring identity and opposing dictatorial rule. (p. 21)

Moreover, during these periods, unlike Japanese theatre which dealt with less political subjects, Korean artists and university students made their voice against the power of dictatorial governments within the Yushin System<sup>17</sup> by President Park Jeong-Hee. In this condition, theatre artists used to perform *Madangguk*, which started on university campuses in the late 1970s and spreading throughout the nation after the Gwangju Democratic Uprising, addressed “individual rights, the problems of rural communities, resistance to the American presence in Korea, environmental problems, class conflicts (especially between labour and management) and the divided Korean peninsula” (Wetmore, 2014, p. 161). Specialists in the theoretical study of *Madangguk*, Im Jin-Taek and Chae Hee-Wan (1992), explain,

central to the medium is the idea that the performance and the audience form a whole, and by extension, the audience is the master of the play; and therefore, the encounter between the performance and audience symbolizes equality, openness, collectivism, and participation. Furthermore, as the boundary of “madang” is not defined, the stage is created naturally once the audience surrounds the performers, and therefore, this spatial concept is fluid and variable in nature. (p. 205)

Because of its emphasis on dynamic interplay with audiences, the performers needed to develop their skills to control the energy within their body. They kept the Korean spirit of *shinmyeong* appealing to the audience’s empathy, which is another method of communication distinct from that of language or dialogue. Due to the effect of *shinmyeong*, the boundary between performers and spectators becomes ambiguous as they can share similar emotions in the same space at the same time. In *Madangguk* and *Namsadangnori*, the concept and practice of *ki* (spirit or energy) and

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<sup>17</sup> The term ‘Yushin’ means ‘rejuvenation’ which has the same Chinese root of ‘restoration’ as component of the Japanese Meiji Restoration. The significance of this allusion is in the ‘imperial’ role attached to the presidency under the Yushin Constitution, which effectively concentrated all governing power in Park’s hands. Between 1972 and 1979, the government of South Korea was regulated by the centralised authoritarian ‘Yushin System’.

*heung* (excitement) as well as *shinmyeong* are crucial, which are all different kinds of positive energy circulating in the theatre that function to enhance the intimacy between the performers and audience, particularly their physical interaction and emotional bond. Like *Commedia dell'arte*, *Madangguk* has a simple, typical plot and flat characters without detailed psychological depictions unlike the types of characterisation represented in naturalism. While the actors are presenting improvising gestures, they speak some lines, which are in most cases instantly created by themselves. Since there are not many performance texts used in the traditional Korean performances today, the performers' bodies have been in a central position that leads the whole process of a performance. Without proper stage sets or technical devices, *Madangguk* actors had to focus solely on their physical body as they performed on the bare ground or stage. In this place, the audience can voluntarily participate in and freely express their reactions to the performers.

In this tumultuous atmosphere, many theatrical movements influenced by the avant-garde were created by young artists who rejected the typical styles of *Shinguk* and aimed at developing their own theatrical modes. Among others, Lee Yun-Taek and Oh Tae-Suk, who are Korea's leading and innovative playwrights and directors working consistently until today, have performed experimental productions by presenting Shakespeare's plays in Korean traditional theatre forms. As Oh's productions were a reaction to the dominance of the realist theatre, he attempted to search for a Korean ethos by "exploring Korean history and relating it to the present through imagery, repetition, ritual and non-linear narratives" (Wetmore, 2014, p. 157). By breaking down the fourth wall, his characters directly address their lines to the audience without looking at each other to emphasise the presence of the actor communicating with the spectator. In his performances, the actors' bodies make a harmonious ensemble with not only other spectacular theatrical elements such as stage set, traditional costume, music, and props but also the audience by encouraging them to experience and interrogate the meaning of the corporeality of the performers' bodies.

It seems that since the 1980s, theatre artists attempted to recover the meaning of the performers' bodies and emphasise their engagement with the spectator in both Korean and Japanese theatre. While these theatre cultures shared some similarities in

terms of embodied expression in performance, the main difference might be the methods of communication with the audience. For instance, while *Noh* or *Kabuki* requires very delicate, detailed, and stylised physical expressions that allow the audience to experience the beauty and power of physical images, Korean folk performances focus on the flow of energy of the performers' body movement which affects the general atmosphere of the performance with the practice of *shinmyeong* that allows the audience to be involved in the situation on the stage and to share the emotions of the character. Therefore, as Earle Ernst (1974, pp. 73-78) points out, the body actions in *Noh* or *Kabuki* can be read as poetic images such as *haiku* that reveal a condensed and symbolic impression of a specific moment of bodily aesthetic called *mie*<sup>18</sup> and its energy in a very static way. However, in Korean theatres, the actors always need to be trained to maintain cheerful energy for unexpected and improvised moments and reactions from the spectator who as the second performer participating in the stage situation develops the meaning of the theatre through dynamic interaction with the actors on stage.

### **The Presence of the Actor in Postmodern Spectacle since the 1990s**

As the theatre artists in Korea and Japan were influenced by the waves of postmodernism and globalisation since the 1990s, they attempted to explore their cultural identity and position in the multicultural circumstance. According to Kennedy (1993, p. 294), the contemporary tendency to seek artistic renovation is connected with postmodern circumstances in which young directors came to explore new ways of expression for Shakespeare in place of the emphasis on intellectual meaning of postmodern performances. In fact, a number of Korean and Japanese directors sought to formulate unique acting styles by combining traditional acting methods with modern styles of movement as a new aesthetic. According to Lee Hyon-U (2016, p. 38), between 1990 and 2011, about 298 Shakespeare performances out of 411 productions were experimental works combining various performance modes including traditional Korean theatre forms. Lee states that

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<sup>18</sup> *Mie* is a powerful and emotional pose to emphasise the instant moment of freezing the body, or the actor is skilfully performing a particularly difficult passage.

the directors such as Oh Tae-Suk, Lee Yun-Taek, Han Tae-Sook, Sohn Jin-Chaek, and Yang Jung-Ung who represent Korean theatre culture attempt to recreate Shakespeare within their own cultural context, which also influences not only the field of Shakespeare in Korea, but also the general tendencies of Korean theatre. (p. 537)

In Japanese theatre, it is well known that the works and acting methods of the directors such as Suzuki Tadashi, Yasuda Masahiro, Ninagawa Yukio, Miyagi Satoshi were inspired or influenced by traditional Japanese performance forms such as *Noh*, *Kabuki*, *Bunraku* (traditional Japanese puppet theatre), and *Kyogen*. Their productions have led the audience members to think of new possibilities of traditions and theatrical conventions which have been considered an old and remote heritage in Japanese culture. By mixing heterogenous elements of performance modes from the past and present theatre culture, the directors in both countries have attempted to create and develop their new methods of physical expression that might be suitable to deal with current social conditions and issues.

In particular, Yang and Ninagawa played a vital role in the theatre cultures of Korea and Japan for their unique perspectives on Shakespeare in relation to their cultural context, which is explored through their aesthetic of physical expressions influenced by ancestral performance forms. They have developed their own directing methods by exploring various Western theatrical practices and traditional Asian forms to meet the sensibilities of popular culture. In particular, they focus on the aesthetic of performers' physical expressions as one of the important values that has been pursued throughout the long history of theatre culture in Korea and Japan. By reinterpreting and reframing the traditional theatre forms for the modern audience, Yang and Ninagawa attempt to develop their own performance styles and acting method as well as their sense of shaping actors' bodies and stage *mise-en-scène*. Not only Yang and Ninagawa, but also many other modern directors in both countries have perceived and expressed the abilities of the performing body to the full by creating their own training methods, and have long endeavoured to show the body itself and its physical sensibility and beauty in both traditional and modern ways in theatres. They have focused on the possibilities of performers' corporeal bodies as a means of expression through new combinations of indigenous theatrical traditions

and modern theatre practices. The actors' bodies are considered as a concrete place where every cultural and historical signature is *represented* and *reexperienced*.

Throughout the twentieth century, there have been significant academic activities exploring aesthetic theories of the body among theatre scholars and practitioners in many other countries. In particular, Korean and Japanese directors studied and practised the theories of Adolphe Appia, Vsevolod Meyerhold, Antonin Artaud, Edward Gordon Craig, Max Reinhardt, Jerzy Grotowski, Eugenio Barba, and Peter Brook, who experimented with the actors' bodies in relation to theatre space and its potential as a central focus of theatre. According to these Western theorists and practitioners, "the text becomes a score of physical actions" (Harrop, 2005, p. 75) responding to the stimulus of moments created by performers' corporeal bodies, which focuses on the interactions with the audience. They point out the limitations of acting styles based on the principles of naturalism, attempting to create an illusion by imitating social behaviour. They share the idea that the performers' corporeality can create a powerful effect of immediacy and liveness, which influenced many Asian practitioners to develop their own physical aesthetics.

Since the 1990s, the general tendency of theatrical adaptation of Shakespeare in Korea and Japan seemed to be greatly changed from a text-oriented focus to a visual aesthetic emphasising the performers' corporeality.<sup>19</sup> Many famous directors and scholars such as Robert Wilson, Josef Nadj, and Philip Zarrilli visited Korea and Japan to give performances, lectures, and workshops in which they explained their own principles of acting and directing methods focusing on the performers' bodies. Simultaneously, the concept of corporeality was introduced as one of the characteristics of postmodernism or post-dramatic theatre by Erica Fischer-Lichte (2004) and Hans-Thies Lehmann (2006). According to Fisher-Lichte and Lehmann, corporeality, as a visual and material phenomenon, can be experienced by the audience who can grasp the moment only by concentrating on their own senses and

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<sup>19</sup> According to Kim Bang-Ock (2014), "[f]ollowing the 1990s, the process of adapting Shakespearean plays with modern, deconstructive, and Korean attributes accelerated as a trend, which was joined by not only Lee Yun-taek, Kim Ara, Cho Kwang-hwa, Ki Kook seo, but also Oh Tae-suk, Han Tae-sook, Yang Jeong-woon, Park Keun-hyeong, and Koh Sun-woong. Oh's *Romeo and Juliet* and *Tempest*, Han's *Lady Macbeth*, Yang's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and Koh's *Killbeth* were widely introduced to the world as representative works among post-2000s theatre" (pp. 120-21).

feelings toward the presence of the body on stage. In other words, corporeality is fundamental to the processes of embodiment that “enables the performer to bring forth his body as energetic and thereby animate the spectators to experience themselves as energized” (Fischer-Lichte, 2004, p. 98). In this context, performers’ corporeality is understood differently depending on contexts; generally, it is understood with the concept of phenomenology and performativity.

The meaning of corporeality has been differently adapted, developed, and applied by Korean scholars who were involved in dynamic academic discourse of the trend of contemporary performance and post avant-garde. Some of the important scholars might be Kim Bang-Ock who accepted the arguments of Fischer-Lichte and Lehmann said that “a performance can happen only when performers and audiences’ corporeal bodies coexist in the same space and time” (Cited in Lee, 2014, p. 362). Also, Lee Sang-Lan (2010) insists that “performers are not simply a medium to represent a character in theatrical reality, but the corporeality of their bodies directly function with the presence of the audience” (p. 170). Shin A-Young (2000) argues that “in theatre, performers feel their own bodies through which they can sense their emotion and the audience also needs to be involved in a performance with their whole body and feeling, not with their mind” (p. 160). In addition, Na Jin-Hwan (2010) understands “corporeality as a poetry of corporeal image which becomes a part of stage *mise-en-scène* constructing a series of general images in theatre that compose a narrative in the conceptualized physical space” (pp. 80-81). These images encourage the audience to feel the presence of the performers’ bodies and freely interpret their meanings in various ways based on their experiences. In other words, the body not only belongs to the work of semiotic process, but rather functions as a phenomenological corporeality.

In this condition, the live energy of performers makes the audience excited and free to participate in the situations on stage. In this way, the distinctions between artist and audience, body and mind, art and life become blurred thereby allowing the artists to explore another new method of interaction with the spectator. In this spontaneous and improvisatory atmosphere, Shakespeare’s narrative and stories are dismantled in favour of fragments, which are rearranged for an alternative

performance score that foregrounds the aesthetic of bodily presence. According to Minami *et al* (2010), between the 1980s and the 1990s,

younger directors and playwrights [used] ... Shakespeare as a vehicle to project their contemporary problems or concerns. It will not be amiss to think that they regard Shakespeare not as canonical, but as a material resource to exploit. Their textual alterations of Shakespeare are sometimes so radical that their works can be treated as new plays rather than adaptations. (p. 146)

This tendency is observed in many Japanese and Korean productions by Suzuki, Noda, Oh, and Yang, who often present deconstructive performances in which Shakespeare's language is cut or changed. They have used the body not for figuring characters or delivering the meaning, but for exploring the body itself as a corporeal experience which might give unfamiliar perception and emotional feelings. Also, they freely use a variety of genres, scenography, acting style, and theatre forms which are fused into a single aesthetic experience to invent new ways of expression in eclectic ways. While these directors experiment with the use of stage imagery through bodily practice to entertain the audience, they maintain their interests in multifaceted and contradictory perspectives on political, social, and historical issues as well as concerns with loss of humanity in modernised society. The artists performing Shakespeare are always asking themselves why they perform Shakespeare, how the texts relate to themselves and the audience, and how their production can provide new concepts of corporeal aesthetic and critical perspectives. For instance, according to the Korean director, Chae Seung-Hun (2000),

It is now common that we focus on the relation between a performance and its original text, such as what the story is about, what the author's philosophy is, and how the story is presented in the performance, or how it has been changed. As a director, however, I am interested in the form of the performance. For example, the questions – such as how the particular performance form can be positioned in many different genres of expression in contemporary Korean theatre, how we can decide our general direction in creating other productions after this work, and ultimately how this kind of performance can be helpful to the field of Korean theatre – are all important to me. (p. 223)

Artists' creative perspectives have become essential in order to explore the potential of the original text in a different time and cultural context. Directors value the inherent potential of the visual and kinetic language of the body as much as poetic language. For the Korean directors, such as Lee and Yang, performers are vital to determine the pace and rhythm of their performance. For this reason, their physical training focuses on traditional theatrical dance and movement through which they attempt to generate multifaceted theatrical images and physical scenography. In this circumstance, it seems that there is no single representative form of acting style for performing Shakespeare in Japan and Korea. Many different elements from traditional to modern culture and theatre forms are strategically interwoven into a collage, which becomes a dominant aesthetic. W. B. Worthen (1997) also argues that "the actors' performance occupies a familiar postmodern position, the unstable terrain where personal and cultural history and identity meet in the register of representation: the terrain *pastiche*" (p. 128). After all, theatre became to function as a mediated place at which directors explore their physical aesthetics of new visual and corporeal expressions that reflect complex concepts and perspectives on the drama text as well as the cultural context. Therefore, since the 1990s, from established art forms like the traditional theatres to the modern realism of *Shingeki/Shinguk* as well as the avant-garde movement, various types of physical experimentation have been flourishing.

According to Kim (1997) and Uchino (2009), the ontological status of the body in contemporary theatre culture is 'flat' and 'superficial' rather than 'deep' without formal containment of body, which is often observed among the younger generation of artists. For this reason, performance culture in this period can be characterised by the dominance of a "junk body" which is an amateurish, convulsive, and undisciplined body reflecting "the contemporary ontological status of the body in our everyday life" through a peculiar aesthetic quality (Uchino, 2009, p. 119).<sup>20</sup> The ambiguous position of the body influenced by various visual images and information

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<sup>20</sup> According to Poulton (2016), inelegant and amateurish movements in postmodern performances represent Uchino's "junk body," which is a way to "portray the lack of subjectivity of modern Japanese," especially young generation (p. 341). He sees that "such amateurism (sometimes inspired, sometimes just sloppy) contributed to an intensification of the youthful spirit and restless quest for novelty of so much contemporary Japanese performance" (p. 331).

from social media is presented through such a combined form of expression. The state of the performers' bodies and visual depiction on stage certainly reflects the current tastes of popular culture favouring visual aesthetics which also reflect a pre-occupation with the erotic and with the heightened voyeurism of contemporary spectators. Patsy Rodenburg (1994) notes that people are now living in the media culture which is "an age of cacophony, of dissonance and discord" produced by the media saturation of modern industrial culture (p. 37). Since today's audiences are exposed to huge streams of visual images from television, magazines, and the Internet every day, they may find different meaning from the liveness of performer's bodily presence to counteract the hyper-saturation of media images. This type of body cannot be achieved only through traditional genres such as *Kabuki* and *Talchum* but needs to be explored through new aesthetic of physical expression. Thus, in the process of constructing the physical presence in theatre, traditional theatre styles are fused into a contemporary amalgam of styles. From this attempt, another new form of expressiveness can be discussed and explored through various cultural and ideological levels and perspectives.

The study of the historical and cultural background of Shakespeare productions, particularly the ways of presenting performers' bodies in traditional and modern Korean and Japanese theatre as well as Western theatre, is crucial to understand the productions which will be discussed in the following chapters. Although the directors attempt to emphasise the importance of performing Shakespeare in relation to current social context, the concept of performers' bodies and their acting styles are inspired by various theatre forms previously practised throughout the last century. From *Shingeki/Shinguk* to experimental performance forms, all theatre forms have been used in hybrid or eclectic ways as a new aesthetic of physical expression. For this reason, the information about each theatrical convention and the indigenous theatrical culture from a historical perspective will be useful to understand the aesthetic of bodily expressions in each production examined in this thesis.

**PART I.**  
***A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM***

In Part I, I explore four productions of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in Japan and Korea to reveal how the cultural and social context of Japan and Korea influenced the use of the body as a key to the aesthetics of modern Japanese and Korean theatre. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* has been frequently performed with great popularity in these two countries. In Korean and Japanese theatre, there have been unique ideas and images of the supernatural figures. In the productions of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the performers' physical presence reveals their imagination of the invisible spirits based on the depictions in myth and folklore in each culture. Korean directors such as Yang Jung-Ung and Lee Jong-Hun, and Japanese directors such as Yasuda Masahiro and Miyagi Satoshi attempt to visualise their perception of the fairies by reading their own cultural sources to find appropriate physical parallels to the symbolic and psychological implications of the world of fairies in Shakespeare. In their productions, the presence of the invisible figures reveals their excitement at interpreting and visualising the imagery of Shakespeare's language in different styles. Each director attempts to create the fairy world based on the visual information from their indigenous folk literature while visualising its physical appearance and movements in a highly stylised design and manner that are most often derived from traditional theatre forms.

Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is a suitable example to study the function of performers' bodies on stage since this play contains abundant metaphoric expressions and references to the physical presence of fairies. When performing this play, one of the main points might be how the directors visualise the fairies in the forest during a midsummer night which is traditionally "a time of magic" (Barber, 1959, p. 123). The productions required "real" fairies in order to express the fairy world in the play. Clearly, Shakespeare's imagination concerning the human body is described in his linguistic metaphors. In particular, his imagery provides specific information about the actors' appearance as fairies, especially their bodily gestures and actions: "Swifter than the moon's sphere" (2.1.7); "Swifter than arrow from the

Tartar's bow" (3.2.101); "Swifter than the wand'ring moon" (4.1.98). The image and the movement of their bodies as "small and light" (Latham, 1972, p. 67, 110) highlights the illusory atmosphere of the fairy world. The image of the fairies' appearance and actions provides a visual landscape directing attention to the invisible and liminal aspects of the world. Therefore, studying the metaphorical features in Shakespeare's language to illustrate the fairy world raises an interesting question of how modern directors from different backgrounds translate this metaphoric imagery into their own cultural style of expression. From their productions, the audience can perceive not only how the directors interpret Shakespeare's text, but also how they understand the performers' bodies as a way of exploring their collective imagination of the supernatural presences in their own culture.

Marjorie Garber (2013) explores the function of the verbal ambiguity in the text. She insists that Shakespeare's puns and metaphors are a kind of "dream condensation" (p. 5), and especially in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the audience's eye is continuously directed to "the act of metaphor-making, the visible exchange of literal for figurative and fictive" (p. 76). In some sense, the motif of the dream is a meta-aesthetic form to reveal how the dream as a creative and imagined realm reshapes the reality of the human world. Garber's observation is important because in the act of artistic creation the style that reveals the author's conscious in relation to the unconscious activity of his memory and imagination is now transformed before our eyes into a series of fictional images and movements. Furthermore, Caroline Spurgeon's *Shakespeare's Imagery and What It Tells Us* (1965) has been very influential on other scholars who investigate the effect of Shakespeare's language on the psychological perspective of the artists and audience. By concentrating on the effect of linguistic imagery, she tried to understand not only the cultural imagination which envisaged fairies in Shakespeare's era, but also the social context that framed them in the Elizabethan period. In other words, she explores how the author's imagery reveals the consciousness of his period as well as his own characteristics. Hollindale (1992) focuses on the physical movements of the fairies and the vivid imagery of the verbal expression to explain how these qualities create a magical and illusory mood in the theatre. These works provide an understanding of the function of Shakespeare's visual language to evoke the appearance of the fairies and their

world in relation to British culture and beliefs. Spurgeon's analysis, in particular, greatly influenced productions in the twentieth century. Thus, studying the performers' bodies in Japanese and Korean productions of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* can provide an opportunity to get a new perspective on Shakespeare's play itself and a deeper understanding of the overlapping of Shakespearean aesthetics with the cultural contexts of Korea and Japan.

## Chapter 2.

### *A Midsummer Night's Dream in Japanese Theatre*

First staged in Japan in February 1866, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was not performed by a professional theatre company again for forty years, becoming one of the most loved plays by modern audiences and readers as it was frequently staged from as early as the 1930s. One possible reason why it fell out of favour at the end of the nineteenth century was that the original play has many references to fairies and myths of British culture, which were unfamiliar to Japanese people. Also, Japanese intellectuals regarded the play as light rather than serious because of its lack of any obvious references to political or social issues. Due to its apolitical nature, during the wartime in the 1940s, the play was often staged as an entertainment show, particularly as a musical comedy. However, modern directors such as Yasuda and Miyagi attempt to deal with current social issues by performing *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in which they show their perspectives on the problems related to human identity and communication in modern Japanese society. Since this play describes the complicated relationships between the four lovers in an illusory atmosphere, the directors focus on their inner conditions as a means of describing modern Japanese people whose desire and imagination have been suppressed within the unified social system of modern Japan.

As Japanese society has been transformed from a network of agricultural communities to a modern industrialised society, Japanese theatre forms have been greatly affected by the change. Traditionally, Japanese theatre forms such as *Noh* and *Kabuki* emphasise actors' physical sensibilities. However, as the trend of Japanese theatre culture has been changed to a modern performance form, *Shingeki*, performers focused on their character's psychology, which continued until Peter Brook performed his revolutionary production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in Tokyo in 1973. Inspired by Brook's experimental production, Japanese directors explored different ways of theatrical expression far from the techniques of *Shingeki*. They tried to create their own method to show their perspectives on current social issues and problems. As Japanese society has moved through the industrial and

information ages, it tends to increase the disengagement of the body from everyday life. People were not interested in how the social network through the virtual and electronic has influenced their life style and their relationship with other people. They do not attempt to engage with any social activity, which leads them to a lack of understanding of their own identity and social role in relation to other people. Suzuki (2015, pp. 55-65) explains that the younger generation has become ignorant of political and social issues around them as well as the importance of the relation between their lives and their social conditions. According to him, most people are forced to function as a part of society which is fully packed with repetitive daily routines. Their bodies are boxed into limited activities that make it difficult to explore the potentiality of the human body itself. As the modern social system encourages standardised systems and homogenised lifestyles, everyone lives in the pursuit of equanimity and universal commonality of thought, both of which affect methods of human communication in modern Japanese society.

In this condition, the young directors such as Yasuda and Miyagi focus on human body as a way of recovering the full range of human communication which, they believe, was possible in the pre-Meiji period (Yasuda, 2000; 2008). They think that the condition of modern society hampers the development of physical sensibility, which also causes the absence of human communication and identity. As Kan (2016, p. 320) insists, people might find answers to the question “Who am I?” through finding a way to investigate ourselves and the world through languages of the body. What the directors want to achieve through their theatre works is to explore how modern people can gain satisfaction from their life within restricted social conditions by restoring their physical sensibilities through the aesthetic of their acting methods. They aim to understand a broader spectrum of social activities through theatre, which is, they think, the duty of artists today (Miyagi, 2012, p. 29). To deal with the subject of the body in theatre, the directors first illuminate the problems of modern society since it is important to give the audience a clear picture of the social conditions in which they are living. By exploring the principles of traditional theatre forms, modern directors might show how to restore the ability of physical sensibilities forgotten or lost in the westernised social system.

In this chapter, I shall explore two productions – Yasuda’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (2004) and Miyagi’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (2011) – in which both directors explore the performers’ bodies as a way of describing the psychological state of the characters by emphasising their physicality. Both directors attempt to restore a dynamic spectrum of physical sensations through the performers’ bodies which become the key to achieving this purpose. Their concept of bodies is influenced by older Japanese directors in the 1980s and the 1990s, such as Suzuki, Ohta, and Kara who tried to explore the theme of loss of human identity in modern society. During these periods, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* was popular for its capacity to accommodate radical re-writing and its complex structure which can be explored in surrealistic dramaturgy. Also, in the same periods, drama was taken up and developed with unique techniques such as collage, through which “several motifs and narrative strains intersect and introduce widely disparate elements culled from Western and Japanese popular and classical culture” (Poulton, 2016, p. 326). These features are still found in the productions by Yasuda and Miyagi who describe the presence of the fairies and their magical world based on various Japanese myths and folklore or contemporary cultural backgrounds. In particular, they create and develop their own acting methods inspired by traditional Japanese theatre forms such as *Noh*, *Bunraku*, and *Rakugo* (traditional Japanese verbal entertainment) to present their perspectives on the social issues related to human identity and communication. By emphasising the presence of performers’ bodies and their relation to circumstances within a theatre, the directors prod the audience into thinking of the identity of not only the characters but also themselves living in modern Japanese society.

**The Play of Relations: Yamanote Method, Restoring Physical Sensibility in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (2004) by Yasuda Masahiro**

There have been various theatre movements that view performers’ bodies as a place for exploring critical questions related to social and cultural conditions. Under the influence of *Shogekijo Undo*, which reinvigorated contemporary theatre in Japan, modern Japanese directors have explored their own aesthetic of physical expressions

in theatre. However, William Marotti (1997), who has investigated political readings of the body in the history of modern theatre, has a critical perspective on the movement of modern theatre as a part of “(re)creating the Japanese body” (p. 88), and insists that it has been one of the aims of many underground theatre companies in Japan since the 1960s. According to Marotti, no “Japanese body” can transcend time as long as the conditions of our bodies are restricted within the social and economic structure; also, Japanese directors’ attempts to find the traditions of the Japanese body are only limited to a part of supporting social ideology of modern Japan (p. 88). He concludes that recent experiences in modern Japanese theatre show a paradigm shift from considering the performers’ bodies as a site for exploring social and cultural inquiries, and toward the bodies signifying fixed representations of Japanese identity. In other words, in modern Japanese theatre, the actors’ bodies as a physical embodiment of the approved and legislated cultural practices only supports the maintenance of a monocultural tradition in Japan. Thus, Japanese performances have come to signify an idealised concept of cultural essence rather than functioning in a broad historical context.

As Marotti points out, human bodies are closely engaged with the work of social and economic systems and become a determined entity far from presenting new possibilities for themselves. However, it seems that he overlooks the philosophy of modern directors’ methods for physical training, which are the result of their concern about the tendency to pursue a particular image of national identity as Japanese society became modernised. Unlike Marotti’s perspective, Japanese directors are already aware that art and theatre have been presented in a setting in which people are searching for a national identity. Thus, they attempt to resist the vision of seeking a unified cultural identity by developing their own style of performance. As Peter Eckersall (2001, p. 314) maintains, the central importance of the body and its interrogation in recent Japanese performances can be read as a return to theatre that offers strategies for resisting the body that has supported mainstream social ideology. He has explored the radical possibilities for the body in Japanese avant-garde theatre and investigated the future prospects for the use of performers’ bodies as a political-aesthetic sign in contemporary Japanese theatre culture. According to Eckersall (2001), the body in modern Japanese theatre needs to be

understood as a sense of dislocation from “fixed notions of the body, fixed concepts of performance, and fixed ideas and assumptions about the nature of Japanese culture” (p. 314).

Modern Japanese directors such as Suzuki, Miyagi, and Yasuda devise their own acting method to present other possibilities for the body beyond the uniform set of physical actions designed only for the restricted social life. They attempt to open new spaces in which radical questions and perspectives on the human body itself can be made in relation to current Japanese society as well as its cultural ideology. For them, it is important that people do not forget the possibilities of their own bodies as a site where new meaning can be explored and discovered, which is not possible within the fixed historical conditions. Thus, the directors attempt to develop a means of discovering a self-awareness of performers’ interior bodies through which performers learn to become conscious of the many layers of sensitivity within their bodies. Developing such skills may give them a sense of the strength inherent in it. For this reason, the directors’ performing methods are not a forum for the actors to show off their abilities to present the inner condition of a character as reflected through the methods of realist acting. They allow the actors to cultivate flexibility and sensitivity in identifying and playing with their own physical sense of being on stage. In other words, their methods are not simply a matter of technique, but they possess a base level of concentration, imagination, and capacity to perceive and manipulate physical sensibilities and action.

Since Yasuda founded Yamanote Jijosha Theatre Company in 1984, he has explored performers’ physicality by inventing and developing his own acting method, called Yamanote method, to enhance performers’ physical sensibilities. Yasuda has practised his method through the Yamanote Jijosha theatre workshop open to the public every year since 1996.<sup>21</sup> In his workshops, the participants can enhance their physical sensibilities through various training methods. They start with very simple movements of the fingers which count numbers asymmetrically: while

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<sup>21</sup> For *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, Yasuda cast some of the actors from among the participants of his workshops. Through the physical training in the workshop, they could experience communicating with other actors, staff, and directors. By learning the ways of interacting with other members in the process of making a performance, they can develop their communication skills for both the theatre and their lives in general.

the fingers on the performers' left hand start to count from number one, the other hand begins to count from number two. At first, the performers might be disappointed and irritated by the fact that they cannot follow the repetitious movement, which seems to be simple and easy. According to Yasuda (2008), however, "their bodies are not programmed to do such a movement from the beginning. They need some time for an observation and training in order to do the action without mistakes" (p. 41). People tend to think that they can easily control their bodies, but this is not true. Contrary to their expectation, their bodies cannot be fully managed according to what they think or desire. Yasuda states that "[t]his experience leads them to rethink their own bodies as an independent entity and its relation to their consciousness" (p. 42). Ultimately, his workshops help them to think of their physical sensibilities that have atrophied in everyday life, and to realise how this debilitated state prevents them from being able to communicate.



Figure 1. The interior of a public bath in Act 1, Scene 1 (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 2004)



Figure 2. The four lovers are sleeping in the forest in Act 4, Scene 1 (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 2004)

In his *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (2011), Yasuda focuses on the presence of performers' bodies and their ways of making a relationship with other characters by emphasising the 'play of relation.' In this way, he tries to present his perspective and vision on the human body and particularly its relation to other people in modern society. For him, Shakespeare's *Dream* seems to be an appropriate play for dealing with such subjects since there are descriptions of complicated relationships among the characters and how they resolve their problems within the performance's multiple plots. Yasuda particularly focuses on the function of the forest as a place in which each character – from the nobility to the mechanicals, as well as the fairies – gets along together. Since Yasuda attempts to make the audience think of their own

presence within the social context, he replaces the forest with a public bath in order to emphasise the theme of communication among the characters (Figure 1 and 2). He describes how the four lovers and Bottom achieve their desire through the interactions with other characters in this unique place. According to the director's note in the performance programme, what Yasuda was most concerned about was how to design the forest to reveal the concept of relation:

When directing the famous happy-ending comedy, I need to think of 'how to understand the forest which is the main stage of this performance.' The forest is not simply a place of woods. It is a meeting point for the lovers and the mechanicals, and also a living space for the fairies: the lovers have a horrible night for the fairies' mistake; the mechanicals' rehearsal is interrupted by Puck's mischievous trick; and the fairy queen and Bottom with an ass head fall in love due to the magical power. In other words, the characters representing a particular community – the aristocracy, low rank, and non-human beings who do not have a chance to meet before – arrive and mingle together at this place. In fact, the word 'forest' is derived from a Latin word '*foris*,' which refers to geographical 'outside' along with the meaning of 'foreign' country. The forest is depicted as a chaotic place full of madness that leads the four lovers to have several reversed feelings and experience confusion in relation to each other. In this case, such madness or confusion should not be undervalued as a negative influence since it ultimately helps the characters to resolve their problems in a single night. Perhaps, the confusion may represent the invisible or unexplainable aspect of our life rather than visible things. [...] I think it is important to provide the audience and performers with chances to have various physical experiences. (Yasuda, 2004)

In Japanese culture, a public bath is not only a place for washing bodies and purifying minds but also a common place for communicating with other people who have never met before. By transforming the forest into a sociable place, Yasuda explores the concept of social community where people can practise forming relations without the great difficulties in expressing their thoughts and emotions. He thinks that such a unique place allows the performers and audience members to recognise themselves having trouble showing their feelings or communicating with other people due to the restricted social atmosphere. In a public bath, people who are completely naked or half-naked get along with others without judging them based on any social standard or prejudices when they first meet. In Yasuda's performance, all

the characters wear *yukata* (a casual version of the traditional *kimono*) which prevents the audience from judging the characters' social background from their appearance. In the same context, Yasuda paints the stage floor and backdrop white, a colour symbolising a neutral space – neither the Athenian court nor the fairies' world – where the structure of human relations can be emphasised and explored. Though the performance starts in an emptiness like a white sketchbook, this simple/minimalist design evolves as the performance progresses and starts to represent a social place filled with various conflicts and negotiations among the characters.

Yasuda attempts to visualise the complicated mechanism of human communication through the performers' physical motions. In Act 1, all the performers appear on stage and begin to show unified gestures along with the sound of music. It seems that the directions and angles of their actions – arms and legs – are fixed with accurate motions. Each of their movements is sensitive to the rhythm and speed of music throughout the performance, freely picking up the slow and fast beats, which represents the wide range of emotional states in each character. The performers' postures are changed in many different ways and also connected to the series of motions. The actors are standing and sitting on the floor while constantly moving in response to the other characters' movements. These various movements – representing the heterogeneous characteristics of each character – make a harmonious combination with other choreographic movements within an arranged formation. The actors attempt to maintain physical balance in various postures and movements which present a strong impression of visual imagery. There is no physical touching among the characters but only a series of formalised actions representing the concepts of violence, love, and tension occurring between them. Except for this first scene, the actors' movements are not strictly fixed, but move freely according to the politics of power with other characters. In some sense, their restricted movements seem to represent how modern Japanese react hysterically to other people in a competitive society.

Their fixed motions are reminiscent of the acting style of traditional Japanese theatre forms such as *Noh*, but imitating such performance modes is not what Yasuda tries to pursue in his art. Rather, he borrows the vision of physical expression that

lies within the traditional theatres which “focus on performers’ physical senses which can be freely explored within their own space with high concentration on their own bodies” (Yasuda, 2000). In traditional Japanese performing arts, performers’ physical sensibilities were developed through an understanding of the relation between their bodies and the theatre space since the form of performers’ expression grew out of a daily lifestyle shaped by the unique culture of architecture. In particular, Yasuda has designed his acting method by adopting the spatial aesthetic of *yojo-han* and sets up several steps that actors need to follow. In his method, all the performers’ actions seem to be linked to a strong sense of physicality in traditional Japanese architecture since they bend and draw up their knees within a limited space as if they are moving in a small *tatami* room (Figure 3 and 4). In fact, the term *yojo-han* means four and half straw (*tatami*) floor mats (*jo*) that approximately occupy the area of as little as eight square metres. In the sixteenth century, Sen no Rikyū (1522-1591) set the size of *yojo-han* as enough space for people to attend tea ceremonies. Since then, *yojo-han* has physically defined the movements of Japanese people in their daily life and also symbolises a sense of constraint in which “they are caught in the middle between duty and desire” (Yamanote Jijosha, 2015). They need to concentrate on their own actions and inner state, which is required for participants in tea ceremonies. At the same time, they emancipate themselves from their everyday affairs since they were not allowed to bring any personal belongings into the room.



Figure 3. The actors showing unified movements in Act 1, Scene 1 (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 2004)



Figure 4. The performers showing same gestures in Act 1, Scene 1 (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 2004)

In this space, the performers’ bodies are strongly related to the notion of centrality, which is associated with the hierarchical structure of the old Japanese house. The concept of centrality seems to be inspired from *tokonoma* in a *tatami*

room, which became the standard living room size for Japanese until the 1970s. People would find an alcove called the *tokonoma* area, a sacred space representing the authoritative power of religion as well as patriarchal hierarchy in traditional Japanese families. Therefore, a person sitting in this place symbolises the most powerful position within the household. He has to be constantly aware of his position and how other people will observe his presence. Even if he sits alone in the room without others' eyes on him, his physical awareness and sensibility are still required and disciplined. Regarding *tokonoma*, Suzuki (2015) states that "this place becomes the centre of the traditional house at which the Japanese sensibility can be experienced and developed" (p. 143). In other words, the room itself demands a strong physical consciousness, similar to the acumen needed by an actor in performances.

By adopting the conventions of the spatial and physical aesthetic of the Japanese *tatami* room, Yasuda seems to draw a link between the concept of human relationships and the concept of centrality in his *Dream*. Each character strives to take the centre focus in the power struggle with others throughout the performance. Yasuda places nine white lockers at the centre of the stage, which symbolise the shape of *tokonoma* but in its modernised form. The lockers are filled up to make a mini-platform on which each character fights for the central position. Anyone who takes the top area assumes authority and power in relation to other characters. At the beginning of the performance, the male characters such as Theseus and Oberon, both of whom have strength in the play, often stand up and look down on the other characters from the top of the white blocks. Their standing posture reflects their arrogant and confident attitude, which effectively contrasts with the powerless figures who are trampled under the feet of the powerful figures. In Act 1, Theseus and Hippolyta start their performance with the talk about their wedding ceremony on the platform, which presents their high social position as duke and duchess. In this scene, Theseus speaks his words while looking down on Hippolyta who is lying on the blocks as the weaker in the relationship with him, which represents that their marriage is not based on a happy relationship (Figure 5 and 6).



Figure 5. Theseus and Hippolyta taking the centre in Act 1, Scene 1 (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 2004)



Figure 6. The four lovers looking up Theseus in Act 1, Scene 1 (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 2004)

This scene visualises the authoritative power of Theseus, who also represents the law in Shakespeare's fictional Athens. Also, when Egeus enters with his daughter Hermia to deny her wish to marry Lysander by using the power of Theseus, Egeus and Theseus – who represent the power of patriarchal system – stand on the platform in order to threaten Hermia with the violence of the law. This kind of portrayal of power relations continues throughout the production. The person who takes the central position frequently changes, from Theseus to Helena, and then Lysander. At the end of Act 1, Helena is described as a powerful figure who takes control of Hermia and Lysander's relationship. However, in Act 2, as Lysander (once passive, but who is now under the spell of a love potion), chases Helena, their positions on the white lockers are reversed: Lysander now stands on the platform with a triumphant smile while Helena as a powerless figure is trodden under him. In this way, Yasuda emphasises the structure of power relations between the characters by simplifying their expressions into some physical gestures rather than exploring their psychological state. Depending on the situation each character is faced with, the power relations between the characters are altered and depicted through different shapes created by physical constructions of the performers' bodies around the lockers.

Throughout the performance, the interactions between the performers' movements look harmonious within a limited space. Basically, the performers are sensitive to the actions and voices of other characters; if other characters speak to them, they freeze their movements and attentively listen to what the characters are saying. In other cases, they continue their movements as a way of reacting to the

surrounding environment or the presence of other characters. Rather than relying on the text, they try to construct their movements based on their own interpretation of other characters' words or bodily expressions. Just as Yamanote Jijosha (2015) states that "theatrical experiences are to feel sensuously the literary images created by directors and dramatists," the actors seem to perceive their own physical actions which are essentially engaged with their emotional state. For Yasuda, acting is not an expression of emotional or psychological idiosyncrasies, nor a revelation of human individuality acquired by examining the psyche from various angles. The theatre form that Yasuda tries to explore through his performances is clearly different from the conventions of realist theatre, which emphasises the characters' inner worlds. He thinks that "realism acting style based on the life of nineteenth century bourgeois in Europe is not felt as real in the eyes of the middle-class Japanese today" (Yamanote Jijosha, 2015). Instead, Yasuda attempts to emphasise the connecting point that links various relations among the characters, which might be expressed in abstract ways, perhaps closer to Expressionism. For him, it is important to show the audience how a character is in relation to his or her society within a performance, not simply focusing on a character who is not involved with any social activities or relationships with other people.

Before the Meiji era, the Japanese did not imagine that a character representing a person living an ordinary life could be performed on stage since they believed that the performers' bodies are only a place for spiritual souls. The audience watching a *Noh* or *Kabuki* performance used to experience a precise image conjured up by the actor's physical sensibilities rather than cultivate a new perspective on human psychology. The ultimate goal of traditional theatre forms was to create something removed from our daily life, perhaps a fiction that the audience engages with through the performers' bodies. With the onset of the modern age, however, there has been a drastic change in how people use their own bodies to interact with society and others. In this sense, Yasuda (2000) insists that performers' bodies need to be trained like the actors in *Noh* and *Kabuki*. He observed that there are particular forms of *Noh* and *Kabuki*, which have been passed down and explored by modern Japanese directors and actors. In fact, Japanese theatre history has generated a variety of physical play which might be regarded as symbolic and abstract forms from the perspectives of

contemporary audiences. The survival of these forms reveals the collective consciousness of Japanese culture in which Japanese society developed through a network of incredibly strong human bonds. As Suzuki (2015, p. 48) also argues, the abstract form of traditional theatre forms such as *Noh* emerged as a guide when Japanese society encountered conflicts that relate to the crisis in communal identity. One of the purposes of these theatre forms might be probing the body's hidden potential for expression by exploring the unconscious through physical activity.

By employing the virtues of traditional Japanese theatre forms and other pre-modern traditions, Yasuda has attempted to revive the body's perceptive and expressive capacity. In Yasuda's *Dream*, the dynamic of the performers' physical energy keeps changing. Each of their movements invites the audience to imagine that they are watching a dance performance with elaborate choreographic images and gestures. Yasuda reveals his idea about the difference between dance and physical movement in theatre in a discussion with Miyagi Satoshi and Shanghai Taro, who have been also striving to restore the wholeness of the human body in performance:

I think that language is a vulnerable technique based on an unstable structure in human history. But the act of play has supported its weakness. A theatrical body is a body designated as something. By comparison, the body in a dance performance is not a designated body. What society is currently asking for is not a thing named with one thing and another, but something that cannot be named or easily defined, which might be an appropriate subject for a theatrical expression. The task of theatre is to make a space for exploring something unnamed, comparable to dance, rather than named values; Miyagi attempts to achieve this by dividing performers' bodies into physical expression and words ... It might be an exciting moment for the performers when they sense their presence to be something between A and B through their physical experiences. I would call it 'a change of tension.' We may feel pleasure if we handle the tension beautifully. (Simokitazawa, 2008)

Actors exist in the moment at which they possess a spontaneous reality and express their rich inner state that ultimately moves the audience. To explore this aspect in theatre, the actors in Yamanote Jijosha attempt to make their bodies flexible and agile, which is practised by various physical trainings grouped into five categories: "flexibility, improvisation, short story practice, impersonation, and

RPAM (rhythm, play, acting, and movement)” (Yamanote Jijosha, 2015). These practices have been designed especially for modern Japanese actors who do not know how to express their ideas and feelings or communicate with the audience through bodily movements. In these basic practices, “feeling strong emotions, actors must utter words and move their bodies smoothly” (Yamanote Jijosha, 2015). This includes walking exercises, such as basic movement ‘two-beat’ in which “actors move bodies and change facial expressions in tune with various emotions, practice in changing movements in everyday life into stage acting, and training for enhancing imagination through body movement” (Yamanote Jijosha, 2015). In this way, not only the actors themselves, but also the audience, can see how the inner condition of characters is changed as the story progresses by observing the performers’ movements. In the practice of short stories, the performers are given some basic situations selected from among more than ten thousand suggestions to act out immediately so that they will enhance all the senses required to develop their physical ability. After the actors draw short sketches of the given situations through group discussions, they might mimic someone who gave them a strong impression in their life. This method has been developed to train actors by enhancing the sense of body through self-examination. Yasuda and his performers examine closely all the postures used in daily life. They attempt to objectify the bodily situations and create each set of circumstances in which the relationships can be concerned and expressed.

Through these practices, it is possible for the actors to imagine the atmosphere and condition in which they can develop and continue their own drama. Yasuda believes that if the performers expand the scope of their physical expressions, they can escape from narrow perspectives on their own living conditions. He insists that one of the roles theatre directors need to pursue is noticing a kind of tension in the process of exploring performers’ physical sensibility in relation to their repetitive daily life, and then attempting to devise how such tension can be conveyed to the audience:

I think that directors are the people who make every moment and event on stage necessary. [...] Making things inevitable is a process of finding or understanding a new meaning of coincident events. In other words, it is a work of discovering the meaning of human behaviours from the relationship between people in specific time and space. As a result, we can present a

feeling of tension, which can be experienced in our daily life under specific intentions, to make the audience feel it with their physical senses, that is, a collective form of physiological experience. The job of directors is to create an aesthetic of a theatre space in which each element is arranged under a certain order, and to judge the entire process of these works from a broad and general perspective. What kind of tension he/she as a director wants to create in his/her production becomes an important source for constructing the performers' movements and the world the actors belong to. (Yasuda, 2000)

Yasuda asserts that a director is not someone simply transplanting the language in a play text into performers' physical movements in a contemporary context, but a creator who embodies the essence of theatre in which performers' acting can celebrate the inner states of their bodies. For him, the actors need to express various stage sensibilities rather than simply presenting an everyday emotion on stage since they are people who play with the sensation of being on stage. Yasuda believes that if we recognise our behaviours and bodily expressions, it is possible to understand how we have communicated with the world. He insists that ignorance of our own body leads us to lose ourselves, which also causes indifference towards other people around us: "We are living in an affluent society, but we are often faced with the news that people hurt or even kill themselves after their solitary life with no connections to the outside world" (Yasuda, 2008, p. 43). In fact, recent social problems such as individuals' depression and *hikikomori* (reclusive adults who withdraw from social life) might be representative phenomena related to the apathy of the interaction with other people.

For this reason, the purpose of Yasuda's workshop is to make participants experience different feelings of existence on stage than they do in ordinary life; therefore, they can extend the range of their physical expression as much as possible. Yasuda (2008) argues, "people easily forget the history of their own bodies. [...] Our body is the place in which lots of memories and meanings of physical activities are filled up, but it becomes difficult to be conscious of the meaning of each action" (p. 43). Through theatrical activities, Yasuda attempts to help people to see themselves more clearly, particularly their relation to society and their attitude towards the outer world. Indeed, many participants who experienced problems with communication – not only themselves but also with co-workers in their workplaces – reveal that they

could restore the ability of expressing their feelings to other people. Yasuda presents individuals' perspectives on human society and devises certain ways for them to express their own uniqueness and identity, which has been undermined in their routine life. In this way, they can think of their social system from a critical perspective, perhaps encouraging themselves to see other possibilities for their own bodies, which used to be controlled under a restricted social system. For instance, Takeshi Yukino and Kurihara Masayuki, both members of the workshop by Yamanote Jijosha, claimed that theatre provided them with an opportunity to break out of their corporate life which often occupies their world. Takeshi revealed that she was always nervous in her work place:

I realized I'd never used my body to express myself effectively, and there is a limit to what you can communicate just with words. So, I always hid my feelings, and my boss and others didn't understand me. But thanks to the workshops, I started to realize that other people aren't perfect after all, and that made me much more relaxed about everything. Now, I'm not socially nervous at all. (Cited in Tanaka, 2014)

Yasuda insists that his theatre workshop allows people to recognise the meaning of their own presence in relation to social structure. Through this workshop process, participants are made to discover what sort of society they are living in now and what kind of life they are living. He believes that it might be difficult for people to develop their relationships with others without a broad picture of their society. Through the practice of imagining the general condition of society and their own position within it, people can decide how to interact with the environment around them. Likewise, in theatre, if actors are not trained enough to interpret or understand their roles in relation to the social context portrayed in the play, they cannot express their characters' inner condition through spontaneous movements since they have already lost their ability to extract them. Therefore, in his performances, all the theatrical elements such as scenic art, lighting, music, and costumes need to be designed to help the performers and audience expand and explore anew their sensory experiences, which used to be blocked within the restricted condition of the social structures.



Figure 7. The four lovers wearing *yukata* in Act 1, Scene 1 (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 2004)

In his *Dream*, Yasuda tries to explore the concept of gender by casting male performers for Helena and Titania, and female actors for Oberon and Lysander. This can be an example to consolidate the concept of gender in relation to social and cultural ideology. According to Yasuda (2007), “whether we like or not, we have to engage with our sex, appearance, and psychophysical condition – including various desires – during our life.” Our physical body cannot choose the place, region, or social and home environment when we are born and grow up. Basically, a public bath represents a social place where gender division based on biological differences between men and women are fixed. This can be one of the examples that reflect the conservative attitude and perspectives on gender in Japanese society. In Yasuda’s performance, however, the spaces of male and female are combined into one space in which the legitimacy of such dichotomy loses its power and authority. Also, by repositioning the characters’ gender roles, Yasuda attempts to play with the existing concept of gender and sexuality in Japanese culture. The play’s female characters, such as Hermia and Helena, wear pink and red *yukata* while male characters have blue or green ones to reveal their gender roles originally determined by Shakespeare (Figure 7). In Asian cultures, warm and soft colours such as red and pink have been considered feminine whereas cool and dark colours like blue and green symbolise masculine qualities (*Intage*, 2003). Therefore, multiple signs of opposing genders are overlapped on each performer’s single body.

In addition, Yasuda double casts two actors; a male actor (Yamamoto Yoshi) takes the roles of Theseus and Titania while a female actor (Kurashina Junko)

performs as Hippolyta and Oberon. In this situation, though the relation between Theseus and Hippolyta presents a heterosexual couple in a patriarchal social system, the combination of Oberon and Titania seems to reflect the power of women in a matriarchal society. In other words, the presence of the female actor playing Oberon belies the authority of a male-dominated society and presents new perspectives on gender that can be interpreted and practised differently. By emphasising the gender differences between the character and performer within a single body, Yasuda tries to show that the performers' movements are not always bound to particular images of masculinity or femininity which have been socially constructed and accepted as natural. Also, the actors focus on the different degrees of energy to describe how each character feels and express their emotions in different ways according to the situation which is continuously changing. This shows that the performers' speaking tone and style are not fixed to a particular gender but rather are the result of visualising the power relations amongst and between the characters. After all, human identity is not always fixed into a specific condition or defined by one's gender or race because of biological limitations from the beginning of a person's existence. By changing the gender of some characters, Yasuda conveys a clear message that the intrinsic value of our bodies should be the first things in human relationships rather than our appearances presenting a particular race and gender.

Theatrical expressions do not merely consist of bodily motions. What makes the performers more powerful is related to all the associations and meanings of their bodies when they speak. Indeed, language and behaviour are some of the important factors that express our psychological and social being. In his *Dream*, Yasuda explores the relation between language and the body by focusing on how a character's body reacts to the content of the words spoken by other characters. Based on the motions of each character, the audience can discern the relationship between them. While a character is speaking, the other characters stop their movements and listen to what the character is saying. During this moment, they need to control the weight of their own bodies and read the flow of the speaker's physical energy, reacting instantly to the content of what they hear. Their movements are not specifically fixed or determined, but rather promptly created according to their experience in relation to the speaking person. The audience can see that the

characters are open to hearing and reacting to the presence of other characters and their physical power, which might be one of the meanings Yasuda attempts to emphasise through this performance. In this performance, unlike in the modern *Shingeki* performances, the performers do not always speak in perfect or complete sentences in reality. They use modern spoken language, which may give a sense of reality to the audience, who might observe such expression from daily life. Depending on the physical and psychological condition of characters, performers' bodily expressions – tone, rhythm, and style of speech and action – are different rather than fixed in a particular form.



Figure 8. Yanagiya Karoku performing as the mechanicals in Act 3, Scene 1 (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 2004)



Figure 9. Oberon and Titania talking behind Yanagiya as Bottom in Act 4, Scene 2 (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 2004)

To emphasise the aesthetic of linguistic expression in Japanese, Yasuda cast Yanagiya Karoku, who is a young professional *Rakugo* actor (Figure 8 and 9). As a form of the Japanese tradition of verbal entertainment, *Rakugo* is “a sitcom with one person playing all the parts” (Harrigan, 2007). In Yasuda’s *Dream*, Yanagiya plays all the characters by switching very smoothly and seamlessly from one character to the other, and from one part of the story to the other with great skill. Sitting in the middle of the stage, he tries to stimulate the general hilarity with tone and limited, yet specific, bodily gestures. In this process, he can be a narrator and other characters in the story while using only a few props and sound effects so that the audience can focus on his speaking. The speaker plays a number of roles without identifying whom he is playing. The differences between the characters are depicted only through changes in pitch and tone, as well as a slight turn of the head, which presents concrete images of each character. The characters’ theatrical presence and identity are closely related to the context of the dialogue and dramatic situations Yanagiya

creates. The audience would notice that Yanagiya performs all the roles of the Mechanicals – Peter Quince, Snug, Flute, Snout, Starveling, and even Bottom – by listening to his linguistic and physical expressions. He alone plays the scene in which the characters are practicing rehearsals in the forest for the courtly entertainment for the royal wedding party of Theseus and Hippolyta.

From the descriptions of the speaker, it is possible for the audience to imagine a scene. According to Katsura Shijaku (1996) another actor of the art form, *Rakugo* “is in the skill that draws on the audience’s imagination like in the free association of a dream.” The function of the audience’s imagination in *Rakugo* can be linked to the idea of imagination that Theseus emphasises regarding the mechanicals’ performance in Shakespeare’s play. According to Theseus, though the quality of their interlude might be silly, what makes their performance excellent is the audience’s imagination: “The poet’s eye, in a fine frenzy rolling, / Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven; / And as imagination bodies forth / The forms of things unknown, the poet’s pen / Turns them to shapes, and gives to aery nothing / A local habitation and a name” (5.1.12-17). The speaker’s speech act, like “the poet’s pen,” depicts the details of each character’s qualities, which leads the audience members to have a clear idea of the characters as well as the situations with which they are faced. Yasuda often emphasises the power of imagination since it is a fundamental source for developing our perspectives on human relationships and their association with social circumstances:

I believe that play allows us to develop the power of our imagination. The world without imagination has no hope or dream. Imagination requires the ability of critical observation and lots of knowledge. Play trains people to broaden their imagination. I hope that not only children but also men and women of all ages can become familiar with play and have a chance to improve their imaginative power through theatrical works. (Yasuda, 2000)

Yasuda thinks that a director should provide his or her actors and audience with a space to explore such imaginative play. In his *Dream*, the *Rakugo* artist induces the audience to draw clear images of a certain condition or character through his speech technique. According to Simokitazawa (2008), “for the metaphoric effect emphasising the similarities between two different events, it is possible for the

audience to think of their relationship.” In this way, the audience thinks of how a scene Yanagiya is describing is related to the next scene, the whole production, and the social condition of modern Japanese society. In the first scene, for instance, while Yanagiya sitting on the stage is performing a number of different characters, other performers slowly enter and walk around him to find their position for the next scene (Figure 10). Soon, Yanagiya’s personal space is surrounded by other people whose space represents a social community and network (Figure 11).



Figure 10. Yanagiya performing *Rakugo* in Act 1, Scene 1 (*A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, 2004)



Figure 11. The performers playing in their own space in Act 1, Scene 1 (*A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, 2004)

As two different territories overlap at the same time and space, the audience is induced to think of the relation between the different zones, particularly how the characters in each territory influence the event or other people in different area. Katsura (1996) states that “*Rakugo* deals with human nature, the universal – a man wants to associate with a woman, someone gets sleepy, one’s reaction to the smile of a baby – humans respond to universal themes, no matter where they are from.” Ultimately, in Yasuda’s performance, the aesthetic of linguistic expressions of *Rakugo* is reused to emphasise the theme of human relationships and reaction to the human and the outer worlds.

At the beginning of the performance, the methods of communication between the *Rakugo* actor as Bottom and of the performers playing the fairies based on the Yamanote method show the contrast between the two different types of performance genres. While Yanagiya is speaking in Act 1, a group of performers slowly enters and sits in random positions around on the stage. The actors’ unified movements to the sound of contemporary music interrupt the audience’s concentration on

Yanagiya's performance. This allows the audience to recognise that the performer's physical movement based on the Yamanote method is quite different from the aesthetic of verbal expression by Yanagiya. In particular, when Bottom (Yanagiya) meets Titania, she and her fairies react to his every sentence with exaggerated physical expressions while he is speaking. The communication between Bottom and the fairies is not interactive at first.



Figure 12. Lysander holding a bottle of milk in Act 2, Scene 2 (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 2004)



Figure 13. Bottom (Yanagiya) feeling a strong sexual desire in Act 3, Scene 1 (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 2004)

However, as his one-man show progresses and the reactions of the fairies become more dynamic, Bottom begins to express his pleasure with strenuous physical actions like the fairies. At this moment, his words are not heard very well as he is mumbling to himself at the end of his speech. Soon after, Yanagiya joins the Yamanote method and changes the form of his acting style from verbal art to bodily expression. The power of Bottom's physical expression is intensified with his sexual desire. Following the command of Titania, the fairies make him drink from a bottle of milk, which symbolises the characters' sexual desire as well as the power of masculinity within the male-centred world as it was used by Lysander as a prop representing the male sexual organ in Act 2, Scene 2 (Figure 12). The fairies also cover his head with a pair of brown tights that symbolise a head of an ass. The pressure of the spandex fabric tightens Bottom's face so it is twisted and distorted, and this ugly face is seen by the audience during the scene in which he has sexual relations with Titania (Figure 13). His excessive sexual desire makes his body look grotesque, which seems to be another level of physical expression different from *Rakugo*.

In this way, Yanagiya gradually loses his position as a narrator, and then begins to focus on his own physical senses, which allow him to show how Bottom reveals the primitive desire originating from his unconscious. Titania and Bottom make choreographic movements symbolising their sexual intercourse. Bottom, who used to be an expert in the art of speech, is now a slave to his own feelings and his physical desire which cannot be described by any words. While he is experiencing ecstasy, the fairies circle around him and Titania, and electronic psychedelic music with repetitive computer-generated beats plays, including the sound of sensual voices, which heightens the magical mood of the scene. At this moment, the scene gives an impression that reality and fantasy cannot be separated but are tightly interconnected, emphasising a chaotic atmosphere on stage. This scene reveals the performer's linguistic expressions as intermingled with his physical gestures, which represents the ideal condition of human communication that Yasuda is striving to achieve in this performance.

The aesthetic of Yasuda's acting form looks radical and experimental and, as such, audiences may find it difficult to understand the main idea of his performance. In addition, due to the symbolic use of props and the performers' movements, the audience might feel that they are seeing the structural aspects of the play rather than the detailed information of each character's inner condition. However, as Yasuda reveals, the purpose of his performance is to explore how the performers interpret the relationship between the characters and how they express their ideas through their bodies as a corporeal form. From this point, the audience can fill in the schematic gap with their imagination to complete the story of the performance. As one of the audience members commented, Yasuda's production caused him to focus on the visual and auditory effect of the play rather than its plot:

When I had watched the production for about ninety minutes, I had a sense of brainwave from my own body. The sound of the performers' speech just goes into one ear and out the other, but it was like that visual beauty and sound of their voices are built up inside me. Of course, without understanding the story, it might be difficult. At first, I thought I might be the only one who felt the performance was interesting, but I heard someone say the same thing though s/he does not know the story. (Kawahira, 2004)

Yasuda also emphasises how the audience's imagination is essential to understand the aesthetic of the *yojo-han* acting style and its relation to the social conditions of contemporary Japan. As he sees it, the restricted social conditions have caused considerable damage to individuals' lifestyles as well as the art form of performance in Japan. Consequently, the potential of the human body has undergone a weakening of communication between people. However, based on the imaginative power they experience in theatre, it might be possible to discover the meaning of the performers' physical and verbal expression, allowing the audience to explore unknown values in their lives. That is, the self-awareness of our own identity can be achieved by understanding our own position and identity in relation to social condition and environment. In his *Dream*, Yasuda deepens the meaning of his own method and uses it to deal with the subject of human identity and relationship in modern society. The methods and techniques of the Yamanote Jijosha theatre workshop are still evolving in a spirit of experiment and creativity. By experimenting with the theatre form with the participation of the public every year, the practitioners and audience will have more opportunities to foster the sense of confidence in themselves, which is necessary for healthy communication in human relationships and the communities they form.

**From Hatred to a Utopia: The Psychology of Surreal Bodies in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (2011) by Miyagi Satoshi**

After the Meiji Restoration in 1868, a new mono-linguistic consciousness was fostered by the national authorities as Japan began to emerge as a nation state. In the process of constructing a unitary national language, doctrines of the pre-Meiji period were ignored and undervalued. Traditional Japanese artists used to perceive the world as a place where “existence consists in the interplay of a plurality of elements whose true nature is indescribable and whose source is unknown” and thus “there is no permanent matter, for substance has no continuity nor duration, being merely a manifestation of sense perception” (Ernst, 1974, p. 74). This is in contrast to the perspective of Western artists who tend to think of a world in which “mind, matter, and time are relatively tangible things” (Ernst, 1974, p. 75). They accept the visible

world as a reliable, continuous field for investigation. As Japanese people were influenced by Western social and cultural ideology, the ways of their communication have been changed and their “internal differences were suppressed whilst difference from the outside world was highlighted in order to define, and thereby create, the idea of a Japanese nation” (Heinrich, 2012, p. 3). Consequently, the conventions of contemporary drama result in “dead theatre” as it has “discarded that which once bound drama to the greater world beyond, that which simultaneously presided over both theatrical and non-theatrical worlds, the collective imagination” (Tsuno, 1970, p. 15). In this condition, one of the important questions for modern Japanese directors is how to best use the productions of the pre-modern “collective imagination” to transcend the limitations of modern theatre.

According to Carol Martin (2003), the “nostalgia for an older Japan, before its possibilities were foreclosed by Westernisation, can be found among a number of younger Japanese artists today.” Notably, Miyagi insists that theatre should be a platform that shows human diversity and the problems modern people experience. His perspective seems to be influenced by Suzuki who also believes that the social responsibility of theatrical performance is more crucial today than at any other time. Both directors have been concerned that people have become alienated as they lack communication skills and also suffer an identity crisis in modern society. In particular, Miyagi has been interested in people, “who have trouble adjusting to their surroundings, who have difficulty reading situations and others’ intentions, and it is not just as characters in the play but in the actual people” (Yamaguchi, 2012, p. 7). Within the complex system of Japanese modernism, Miyagi thinks that “it became very hard to imagine a language to express an authentic emotional experience” (Martin, 2003). He finds the problems of contemporary communication to be located in the disassociation of the word from the body as they are torn from each other in modern theatre, and tries to show the audience the extent to which they are vital to each other. Thus, Miyagi attempts to develop his own acting method to explore the relation between verbal and physical expressions which may help the audience to enhance their ability of communication. In this way, he has produced performances with the objective of rediscovering confidence in the power of the human being as a ‘total life being’ and sharing this idea with modern audiences.



Figure 14. Noda Hideki's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in 1992  
(MIT Global Shakespeares, 2011)

It is in this context that Miyagi decided to perform Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* because this play deals with the subject of human (un)consciousness and desire, which are often suppressed and invisible. His production may lead the modern audience to look into the inner condition of the characters, who actually represent a new generation of modern society. By reviving Noda Hideki's renowned adaptation of Shakespeare's *Dream* written and performed in 1992 (Figure 14), Miyagi attempts to focus on the relation between human identity and modern Japanese society. Noda has been well known for his unique style of adaptation by interweaving the structures and characters of various Western literatures with Japanese folklore and myth. In particular, he incorporates the stories of *Alice in Wonderland*, *Faust*, and *Peter Pan* with Shakespeare's *Dream*. According to Noda,

I introduced those images [Alice and Mephistopheles] because of [their] dream quality. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Alice in Wonderland*, what the characters believe they really saw in a forest turns out to be dreams. That's a very simple way to relate the two, but that would be the reason I had *Alice* in the play. (Minami, 2010, p. 225)

These stories contain supernatural fantasy and deal with the matter of representation and human desire and identity. In his programme note for *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in 2011, Miyagi wrote that Shakespeare's work is "the encounter between a type of theatre that deals with large philosophical questions" (Eglinton, 2014). Through this performance, he attempts to explore what cannot be wholly represented: "the utopian pre-Meiji world and the invisible force of global

capitalism” (Martin, 2003, p. 233). In this way, Miyagi presents his visions for restoring self-confidence and discovering the identity of the characters who fail to understand other people as well as even themselves by locking themselves up inside their own fantasies and unconscious.

By relocating the Athenian court of Theseus to a 130-year-old Japanese restaurant called ‘Hanakin,’ Miyagi emphasises the hierarchy in the restaurant in which the characters are bound to “the strict rules of the world of cooks” (1.3). In this way, he presents Hanakin as a place representing a fixed hierarchy and strict conditions of human life in modern Japanese society. The restricted social conditions and their influence on the characters’ mentality are presented in the performers’ physical expressions, which are stiff and rigid within a limited scope of movement. In Act 1, Scene 2, six people are standing in a row and performing a series of quick and precise movements to deliver specific messages to the audience (Figure 15). Each gesture seems to be measured and the characters pressed for time as if they work in a kitchen in which they have to be speedy but precise. In this scene, Miyagi emphasises the presentational effect through the performers’ non-realist acting style (Figure 16). While describing the trouble between Tokitamago (Hermia) and her father (the restaurant owner), the restaurant workers look straight ahead until the end of the scene. Every character faces forward without seeing or talking to each other, which shows that there is no actual communication between the members of the restaurant staff, family, even lovers. This shows that they are accustomed to such a restricted lifestyle, and their reactions are exactly the same, even to the serious matter that Tokitamago disobeys the order of her father, who wants her to marry Demi (Demetrius), and cancels her wedding a day before the event.

OTEMOTO. Master —

HANAKIN’S MASTER. After I’ve killed you, I’ll take my own life.

FUKUSUKE. What’s going on?

OTEMOTO. Quick! Separate them!

FUKUSUKE. I’ve done what you asked, now I would like an explanation.

OTEMOTO. As a servant, I’m afraid I can’t serve you.

HANAKIN’S MASTER. Argh!

OTEMOTO. Lady Tokitamago is now talking about cancelling the wedding and there are only four days to go.

HANAKIN'S MASTER. Argh! (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 2011, 1.2)



Figure 15. Tokitamago, Ly, and the workers in the restaurant Hanakin in Act 1, Scene 2 (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 2011)

Figure 16. The performers playing in non-realistic acting style in Act 1, Scene 2 (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 2011)

This scene presents the dark aspect of the coherently ordered, hierarchical Japanese culture. The characters suffer within the strict hierarchical system in which they lose their ability to express their feelings, desires, and thoughts; Tokitamago's wish to marry Ly (Lysander) is denied by her father, and Soboro (Helena), a daughter of the stew maker in the restaurant, is betrayed by Demi, who wants to take over the restaurant by getting married to Tokitamago. Even though Hanakin's master gets very upset because of his daughter's decision, his emotion is only expressed with some formal gestures like other characters whose restricted and stiff gestures are also in contrast to his fiery temper. Standing on a piece of a fish head, which visually represents his high position within the restaurant, he upbraids Tokitamago for her decision, but never steps down to the ground to talk with her to resolve the conflict. The trouble between the father and daughter is described by the restaurant workers, who can only observe the superficial condition of their relationship from the outside. This scene posits that each character does not know how to communicate or understand others within the strictly structured life system, not even between family members in modern Japanese society. The audience sees that the characters fail to express their emotions or develop relationships with other characters who also do not know how to show their thoughts and feelings throughout the play.

Throughout the performance, Miyagi deals with the problem of identity crisis in modern society. The identity of individuals has been considered less important within a westernised social system in which each person is forced to support the

power and authority of the social structure and ideology. As Japanese social and economic structures have become automatic, people no longer need to maintain face-to-face contact with others and are reduced to being nothing more than a part of the system, which can be replaced by a substitute at any time. According to Miyagi (2002), although the highly-developed information society of today brought us various conveniences, it also “made us lose confidence in the human being.” In this condition, people rarely have the opportunity to experience themselves as whole beings, and begin to doubt their unique value with a feeling of personal powerlessness. In his *Dream*, Miyagi describes that the characters do not understand themselves and feel confused by their own identity. Soboro says: “I don’t know who I am. At least, I know who I was when I got up this morning, but I think I must have been changed several times since then. I can’t explain myself, I’m afraid I’m not myself” (2.4). She does not know exactly who she is or where she comes from. These lines show that Miyagi attempts to deal with “the psychic problems of Japanese identity” (Martin, 2007, p. 226). In the same way that the Mechanicals have difficulty in distinguishing between theatrical illusion and reality in Shakespeare’s play, the restaurant workers seem to have a similar problem. They take the lines from Alice, who does not know whether or not she is dreaming throughout the story, which shows that the characters are confused of their identity as well as the relation between illusion and reality.

FUKUSUKE. Who are you?

OTEMOTO. “I can’t remember. When I woke up this morning I remembered who I was, but after that I’ve transformed so many times.”

FUKUSUKE. It’s Otemoto.

TOFUYA. Explain that to me more clearly.

OTEMOTO. “I myself can’t explain it.”

FUKUSUKE. Why?

OTEMOTO. “Because I’m not myself you see, being so many different sizes in a day is so confusing.”

KOHRUYA. So many different sizes? That’s Alice’s line. (1.13)

As these lines show, the confusion of identity is intensified by the complex structure and characters of the play in which some recognisable allusions to Western literary classics can be found. In Miyagi’s *Dream*, the characters’ attempts to figure

out their true selves is often interrupted by Mephisto, who is a devilish figure representing the dark aspects of each character (Figure 17). In Act 1, Scene 11, Puck begins to lose his identity due to the trick of Mephisto. Mephisto locks Puck inside a cage to steal and play out his role, but nobody recognises that Mephisto disguises himself as Puck. This shows that the vitality of the society is already weakened through the indifference to other people and the disintegration of community. In this condition, Mephisto eats up people's suppressed desires he represents the characters' inner worlds. He particularly represents the unspoken desire of Soboro who has been suffering from the broken relationship with Demi. As Soboro's alter ego, Mephisto reflects her unconscious, which presents that they share similar negative feelings such as sorrow, loneliness, and jealousy.



Figure 17. Mephisto directing the Mechanicals in Act, Scene 13 (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 2011)

In Act 1, Scene 4, Mephisto states that Demi used to love Soboro, but betrays her because of his ambition to succeed to the restaurant owner after Tokitamago's father. Although Soboro did not express her sorrow and agony outside, the audience can notice that she has been jealous of Tokitamago through the dialogue between her and Mephisto:

SOBORO. This bad dream was created by swallowed words. The conditional tense I repeated when I saw the happy Tokitamago. I also want to be loved by the two men and have her know how painful it is to be hated by the one you love.

MEPHISTO. Who called me to this forest?

SOBORO. It is I who called you here. (2.8)

Soboro's "swallowed words" that she believes to be unheard and unknown to anyone and call forth the presence of Mephisto to the forest. Mephisto is an embodied form representing all the negative thoughts and (un)conscious that complete a bad dream. For this reason, Mephisto is depicted as a handicapped person who often shows jerky and shivering movements, which reflects Soboro's unstable psychological state. His pale face and black suit define his presence as a ghost, in contrast to the presence of fairies, whose movements are lively with light and delicate gestures. As Mephisto who is "a tapir who eats up midsummer night dreams" (1.19) appears, the stage is full of hatred: not only the four lovers, but also the King and Queen of the fairies hate each other because of an Indian boy – who is Titania's changeling boy, and later it turns out that he is in fact Mephisto – and they make the four lovers fall into trouble with a drop of juice from a magic flower. Like Mephistopheles who makes a contract with Dr Faust to take his soul, Mephisto makes contracts with Oberon, Titania, and Soboro to control them under the power of a contract which can only be cancelled by following Mephisto's words. Each of them makes the mistake of signing a contract with Mephisto, who intends to destroy the forest by instigating the conflict between the lovers, whose hatred in the end burns up the forest: "Following orders from the Queen of the forest, I will leave these young and quarrelsome lovers to their own demise. Then, following orders from the King, I will curse this forest with eternal night" (2.3). Soboro does not realise that Mephisto was created by her own desire at first, but as the production proceeds, she comes to understand herself as full of hateful, which ultimately causes other characters to get into trouble. After that, she struggles against Mephisto's plan to destroy the forest by listening to other characters' unspoken desires and wishes.

In a climactic scene toward the end of the play, Soboro calls on the power of words in the contract with Mephisto to prevent the destruction of the entire forest from the flame of rage intensified by unspoken words and thoughts. It is important for the fairies to search out Mephisto, who disguises himself as one of them, in order to break down the contracts with him to save their world. If the world is not protected, the fairies will lose the only way to recover themselves from the state of hatred and make the world a utopian place in which it might be possible to restore the ability to communicate between each other and cure themselves, exhausted from

broken and superficial relationships. Mephisto brings about disharmony among the characters that results in the crisis of the dream world, almost creating a catastrophe. However, watching the forest burning down, Mephisto feels sad and cries as he realises that his presence will be erased and forgotten along with the forest, and he will have to live in loneliness forever. Ultimately, his tears turn into the shower on the forest, and save the fairies' world from the fire:

SOBORO. As he [Mephisto] watched the forest burn he became very sad.

After the forest had burnt out, he would have to live in the forest forever invisible. As he thought about it, he shed tears in spite of himself. Like the tears shed by Freya which became pure gold, beautiful tears poured out from the eyes of Mephisto. Those tears began to relieve the forest.  
(2.10)

In this scene, the audience realises that Mephisto has never been loved by others, which is the catalyst for him to do such terrible things. Mephisto is a devilish fairy in this production, but he is also an alienated figure who also needs care and concern from others. In some sense, Mephisto symbolises a self-portrait of Japanese people whose minds and mentality are more and more devastated by the social conditions that pursue rapid modernisation and industrialisation to Westernise the country. From this point onward, the presence of Mephisto is not just that of a religious figure described in *Faust* or simply an embodied presence of hatred and malice, but rather a painful figure like us who is suffering from such negative feelings. Soboro's unspoken words, desire, jealousy, and hatred devastate the fairies' world, which is a metaphor for the modern society overrun with ambition to get a high social position by competing with other people. Deploring the loss of humanity, Miyagi describes these characters who face tough reality with pity and sympathy. Miyagi emphasises the importance of understanding the nature of the negative feelings and the characters' true voices in order to present a solution to the problems. The world was full of hatred at the beginning of the play, but it becomes a healing place in which the characters can have an opportunity to understand how their inner state is related to the life of other people and, more broadly, their society.

For Noda and Miyagi, it is important to explore the power of invisible values in order to lead our own society to a more positive condition. The 1980s Japanese

theatre served as a place “to practice socialization skills and explore burgeoning interest, fantasies, talents, and sexuality” (Poulton, 2016, p. 331), and during this period Noda and other members of his generation attempted to deal with modern Japanese society by displaying various features of Japanese popular culture. In this context, the productions during the 1990s take their shape and theme from human imagination and dreams, which lead the audience to question the nature of the human unconscious itself and its relation to reality. According to Margaret Shewring (1998),

Noda’s scripts juxtapose a series of visual images creating an effect that is comparable to that of channel-hopping on television, flipping through comic books, or even surfing the internet. The overall effect is of a surreal kaleidoscope of colour and movement which, like surrealism, draws on both illusion and a deeply rooted reality. (pp. 95-96)

In his text, Noda emphasises the transformation of the characters whose appearance is changed into other things in different sizes every day. Indeed, the narratives of *Alice*, *Faust*, and *Peter Pan* cover different areas of life, such as the sky, the earth, and the sea and include their inhabitants like gods, mythic figures, monsters, and half-beasts.

Inspired by the surreal atmosphere described by Noda, Miyagi positions various creatures of the sea and forest, which enhances the confusions and absurdity of a midsummer night. In this enriched illusory world, humans talk to animals, and they sometimes become or combine with inanimate objects or other living creatures as in a dream. He depicts the fairies’ world with a wavy hill and bushes along with a number of bamboo poles often used as skewers and a piece of a big fish and snail shell made of newspaper (Figure 18). The newspaper seems useful to visualise the fairies’ world full of surreal and uncanny images, which represent an illogical state of the human unconscious. It becomes a material used for various shapes of the characters’ physical appearance due to its flexible texture; also, everything on the stage – mountain, cloud, moon, trees, plants, and even the fairies’ clothing – is made of newspaper. By twisting the newspaper, the costume designer Komai Yumiko makes Oberon’s costume reminiscent of the root of an old tree that looks solid and heavy. On the other hand, Titania’s costume is decorated with unfolded flat newspaper, which is associated with her light and static features as opposed to

Oberon's energetic movements of jumping and running around the stage. The lightness of newspaper makes the performers' movements look dynamic and lively.



Figure 18. The Fairies wearing newspaper costumes (A *Midsummer Night's Dream*, 2011)

In surrealist art, the artists tend to create strange creatures from everyday objects that allow the unconscious to express itself. According to Antonin Artaud (1958, p. 51), as an early surrealist, Western theatre interrupts having a mystical and metaphysical experience which might be linked to the unconscious minds of performers and spectators. He believes that “emotions, feelings, and the metaphysical were expressed not through language but physically, creating a mythological, archetypal, allegorical vision, closely related to the world of dreams” (Cash, 2016). In this sense, the aesthetic of Miyagi's surreal images through the performers' physical bodies and the poetic effect for a dramatic experience of feeling allows the audience to explore the illusory world in which human bodies can be imagined in various ways which are full of potential. Above all, he emphasises the beauty of the human body, which can be extended to another level of expression by combining other materials such as trees, rocks, leaves, sea creatures, food, and other human bodies. The performers' bodies are free from any restrictive frame or structure, and the characters explore their new possibilities by transcending different time zones and worlds. The grotesque and surreal images of their bodies break down the sense of binarism; they connect strange and familiar happenings, innocence, and erotic desire in human consciousness.

A leitmotif running through much of Noda's *Dream* in 1992 was the move away from a sense of original order, perfection, and harmony to what he sees as the

fragmented state of modern society resulting from split personalities and confused, blurred identities. In his work, the plot becomes complex, often juxtaposing different time and place within a single scene as he combines some old and new tales of quests and adventures for self-discovery of the main characters. Noda was initially interested in revitalising Japanese theatre by breaking away from the stylised theatre of *Noh* and *Kabuki* (Minami, 2010, p. 210). In fact, his enormous popularity in the 1980s and the 1990s was largely built upon exuberant acting, spectacular staging, and his unique style of combining various plots of Western literature. In his *Dream*, the performers run, jump, climb on the construction, and fling themselves across the stage while delivering their lines at breakneck speed and often at the top of their voices. Their physical presence looks powerful and dynamic, which exudes a strong animalistic power and excitement. According to Shewring (1998), Noda's genius with language derives from "distinctly modern sources including the rapid, almost 'telegraphese' juxtaposition of fragments culled from the great words of world literature coupled with the debased clichés of the twentieth-century mass-media-led global village" (p. 96). With extraordinary energy and dexterity, his performers switched from myth to myth, from identity to identity, pushing each narrative or anecdotal fragment to its illogical conclusion with the surreal aesthetic.

Noda is himself, like Shakespeare, not only a playwright but a poet. He uses various language forms in literary and conversational styles, including lots of poetic metaphors and similes that integrate the dramatic and visual modes to make the performance powerful. Shewring (1998, p. 103) maintains that Noda uses the performers' bodies as a means of naturally extending the ideas in Shakespeare's script in which the fairies' world is full of surprising illusions interwoven with the illogicality of dreams. His language is rooted in the immediacy and unpredictability of bizarre actions rather than the considered lexicon of poetic analysis and psychological self-scrutiny. Visualising the poetic language through the performers' physicality suggests that the non-realistic illusion can be embodied as a realistic value that helps the audience to approach the condition of the characters' unconscious. While Noda emphasises the verbal and physical skills to bring out the richness of poetic language that is the great strength of Shakespeare's scripts, Miyagi combines these two elements to compose a poetry in the theatre space in which the

performers' physical bodies depict the magical world with precise and fast-paced movement. In his performance, Miyagi develops a series of visual and verbal juxtapositions that belong to a postmodern vocabulary full of metaphors and allusions, emphasising the sense of surrealism. Through the work of the materiality of body and narrative, as a condensed form of physical articulation, the audience can experience a dynamic cosmos of fictitious time and space.

In Miyagi's *Dream*, the performers' bodies construct the landscape of uncanniness and, in such a supernatural circumstance, the themes of representation and human desire can be explored. The characters' bodies are often compared to Japanese dishes, and they actually become a part of the food in this production. Noda revealed in an interview that he thinks Shakespeare's *Dream* is "a play about liking and disliking people," so he presents it as "a play of 'appetite'" (Minami, 2010, p. 224). Thus, he adds some lines like "I want to eat you" along with lots of metaphoric expressions of food, and in this way the characters' food-bodies become an erotic subject to stimulate the appetites of the male characters. When Ly and Demi express their love towards Soboro, they compare her physical beauty with Japanese dishes such as sashimi and noodles, which look "transparent" and "delicious." This gives the audience concrete images of her which imply she is like a fish lying on a cutting board:

LY. And I dare to jump into fire like *shabu shabu* for thy sake, beautiful Soboro. You're as beautiful and transparent as *shirataki*. My bosom is pierced through like *yakitori*. [...] I cannot be content with Tokitamago. Forget it! The time I spent with her was like over-boiled *soba*. It's you Soboro, not Tokitamago whom I want to eat! (1.12)

DEMI. Oh Soboro, compared to your beauty, caviar is mere deer droppings. Your lips are like ripe cherries seducing these lips to eat them up. Let me kiss your white hand, like a transparent fish. No, let me dance madly and eat your white fish. [...] Now I can recognise that Tokitamago is just an ethnic restaurant that you occasionally choose to eat in. However, Soboro, I return to you and feel at ease with your taste. (1.18)

These lines show that there is no distinction between the human body and food, both of which are present in one body as an integrated form through which various human sensations such as visual and gustatory senses can be explored at the

same time. This kind of body also emphasises the interaction between different senses that causes the audience to form new perspectives on our bodies beyond our everyday experiences. The poetic effect of this scene lies not in a precise intellectual concept but in a terse statement of sensuous images, producing a sense of the fragmentary imagery. Similarly, Titania feels a strong attraction for the flexible and soft mollusc-body of Fukusuke, a shoemaker, who represents Bottom. Along with the transformation from human to an octopus, Miyagi exchanges the position of Fukusuke's face and belly as well. His body parts are dislocated and relocated as a hybrid form mixed with human and mollusc, which emphasises the absurdity and chaotic condition of not only his presence itself but also his omnipresent and multiplicity of desire. In this way, the human body becomes the central place in which contradictory elements are mixed up and fused into a single entity that ultimately crosses over the limitation of the physical boundary.

In his performance, Miyagi attempts to visualise this confusion and mixed-up condition, which seems appropriate to represent the sense of chaos and confusion of illogical conditions in our dreams. For him, it is important that this illusory space function as a place for self-examination that allows each character to face his or her own desire. This experience will lead the characters to see a different side of themselves. Thus, he makes the theatre space infinitely flexible without interrupting continuity and in full view of the audience: Miyagi's fairies look light and elegant; their bodies glide smoothly through the air, inspiring the mysterious atmosphere of the dream world. The character's bodies are dispersed in the air as if they are swimming in the forest-sea world, which composes a landscape representing human unconsciousness as a deep, condensed form. The performers' corporeal presence can be 'experienced' by the audience, who sees the particular moments at which the performers' bodies are extended, spread, and merged into other elements to become a different creature or object with unlimited potential. The scenography of the stage set with the performers' bodies as visual images is not simply designed to show the beauty of surreal fantasy for the modern audience's visual pleasure. Rather, Miyagi emphasises the continuity between the dream world and reality from which each character is inspired to explore their own imagination and unspoken desires (Figure 19).



Figure 19. Chaos in the unknown forest (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 2011)

Throughout the performance, Miyagi emphasises the significance of the fairies' invisible presence, which is associated with human life. The purpose of Mephisto is to make the fairies invisible and forgotten, and therefore they disappear forever from the memory of human history. When Mephisto burns up the fairies' only clothes that make them visible to humans, they lose the means of showing their presence to the world. The fairies ask Soboro to remember their presence; otherwise, they will disappear into the air as if they never existed in the world. It is crucial for the fairies that people believe their presence even though they are invisible to human beings. They can survive through the belief in the same way that Tinker Bell could be revived upon the live audience's belief in fairies in *Peter Pan*. Puck introduces himself as "Master Puck of the unknown forest" (1.6) because according to him people forget everything that happens in the forest once they leave. He also says, "Human folk are stupid, they only believe in what they see" (2.3), which reflects the director's concerns that modern people do not see the value of invisible things – the power of imagination, fantasy, and dream.

The sources of this play, such as fairy tales and folklores, embody the aspirations of the majority of people and show how society views itself. They also convey people's notion of social and cultural beliefs that need to be kept and remembered long after the stories have been told. The folklore helps the readers to develop the power of their imagination which can provide the people with the opportunity to explore the meaning of *raison d'être* by considering their own lives. According to Salman Rushdie (2008), imagination is accepted as "the innate ability

and process of inventing partial or complete personal realms within the mind from elements derived from sense perceptions of the shared world” (p. 178). Thus, it can be the key to a new development of the mind and can be shared with others, progressing collectively. Without the belief in the power of imagination, people may simply become a component of the social mechanism. In Miyagi’s *Dream*, the presence of fairies, as the products of human imagination, leads the audience to see limitless potentiality of the human imagination that allows them to explore a way of dreaming of a life beyond restricted social mores. In this way, they can create their own illusions which can be used to understand social interactions from a perspective outside of society itself.



Figure 20. Soboro looking up the fairies in Act 1, Scene 1 (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 2011)

In this context, Miyagi embodies the invisible imaginary world with concrete and clear images, along with the use of various theatrical techniques such as costume, light, music, and linguistic expressions. At the beginning of the production, Soboro’s opening speech is “part soliloquy and part invocation of the fairies’ world” (Eglinton, 2014). She questions the human capacity to subsist in the face of the unknown: “Whenever something mysterious happens, people blame it on the night or they blame it on the summer. Then they accept it as part of their imagination and forget what they’ve seen. Or they think they’ve had a dream. But trust me, these mysteries are not imagined” (1.1). Soboro thinks that if she feels mystery, there might be some invisible presence that becomes an echo and disappears, but in fact they do not disappear into the darkness of the forest, hanging around her as always (Figure 20). In this space, it does not seem strange to experience something

mysterious and uncanny that might not be happening in our real world. As the stage is lit up after her words, the audience can see the spectacular scenery full of surreal images: the fairies are hanging up on the tree branches and talking to Soboro, who has a strange feeling of something invisible around her. The fairies' world, which is made of newspaper, sprawls across the stage. Here, the newspaper is a symbolic prop presenting the importance of invisible values. According to Mika Eglinton (2014),

[i]n the case of the first production in 2011, the set was entirely made out of newspaper, so too were the fairies' costumes. This time, newspapers are printed on cloth. In both versions, though, the flimsily fashioned stage can be taken as commentary on the popular distrust of mainstream Japanese media in its reporting on the nuclear disaster. At the same time, the use of newspapers can also be read as an affirmation of language, both literal and metaphoric, along the lines of the remark by Titania – Oberon's wife, the Queen of the Fairies – that “the words human folk swallow are not necessarily all rubbish.”

Basically, newspapers report something that was forgotten or an invisible truth to be exposed to the world. However, at the same time, it often omits something that needs to be revealed, which is similar to the condition of the fairies, who are not visible when they really need to be seen by people. This shows that the world does not only consist of visible things but also invisible things, which may be close to the truth that people have been looking for. The crucial point is that people try to see the invisible truth behind the visible things; that is, their critical perspective on given information whether or not it is visual is necessary to achieve clear ideas of themselves and the social conditions around them.

Along with the powerful stage design which emphasises the presence of the invisible fairies' world, Miyagi stresses the power of words with the dynamic play of various musical instruments, which also deepen the effect of the poetic imagery. The characters' speeches are often accompanied by a sound of drums from the ensemble led by the musical director, Hiroko Tanakawa. While dialogue is delivered by the characters, a percussion section of the orchestra functions to reveal the tension of their inner state which is not shown to the outside. Throughout the performance, the musicians keep playing the percussion instruments, whose rhythm, dynamics, and harmony can be an impetuous expression of the inner world of the characters. It becomes a way of communicating with other members of the cast, and helps them to

feel their own primitive energy beneath their consciousness. In this context, Miyagi states that music, particularly the sound of percussion, is one of the unique features in his productions:

I began using percussion as a form of training to help build the actors' awareness of each other's bodily movement. When they become aware of what the other person wants and when you can feel that desire, they can really enjoy beating the drum and it sounds good to the listener too. When I saw this I thought it was good enough to include our performances, so we gradually began to include live percussion performance in our stages. Being able to play percussion means you are able to deliver lines and move the same as the actors. I tell them that the percussion is part of the script, it is like a conversational exchange with your fellow performers. (Yamaguchi, 2012, p. 10)

Miyagi has developed his own idea of the relationship between music and performers' movements since his work in the Ku Na'uka Theatre Company.<sup>22</sup> He used to put a number of pieces of music into something like a suite and then fit the lines of the script to the music and *vice versa*. But then he felt the actors' movements were not in tune with each other's bodies because they were not aware of each other's physical presence and movement. Therefore, he began to use "percussion as a form of training to help build the actors' awareness of each other's bodily movement" (Yamaguchi, 2012, p. 10). The musical enchantment prods not only the performers but also the audience into sending out sparks of the images and lyric poems in their minds. The sound of music and its rhythm, beat, and melody, along with affluent poetic imagery in Noda's script, become sources of describing the different worlds of each character. In this way, Miyagi believes that the primitive image of human beings can manifest itself on the theatrical stage.

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<sup>22</sup> Previously, Miyagi was the main director and playwright of the Ku Na'uka Theatre Company, where he developed his own method of acting based on *Noh* and *Bunraku* puppet theatre. Miyagi is known as part of "a younger generation of Japanese directors who are adapting traditional Japanese theatre techniques to both Japanese and Western literature as a way to explore new approaches to performance and text" (Martin, 2003). Currently, he is the artistic director of Shizuoka Performing Arts Center (SPAC), which is Japan's first public arts organisation, where he pursues his vision for creative activities managing a public theatre with a group of creators. Therefore, he does not greatly rely on the previous method inspired from *Bunraku*, but rather attempts to develop new theatre methods that might appeal to the public by using various theatre forms, from traditional to modern performance techniques.

In his productions, Miyagi has emphasised the strength of words, which is different from the theatre of Western realism. In a talk about his performance, Miyagi states that “the spoken language in theatre is different from everyday expressions, and should be a poetry”; thus, as a director he is “looking for a way of expressing the problems of modern society in a poetic style” (Miyagi, 2011, p. 60). For him, the quality of a word can be judged in terms of its strength, and one of his purposes in making theatre is to find out the power of each element, not based on Western theatre culture but through new challenges that he calls ‘restoration of poetry’ and ‘weak theatre.’ According to Miyagi, ‘weak theatre’ would be a place “for a more fragile body susceptible to the power of the words that come down on it,” and a place where “words (poetry) would be freed from the desires of actors and revered” (Yamaguchi, 2012, p. 12). In other words, the excellence of an actor in a stage performance can be the ability of the actor to control his or her body skilfully and at will, and to deliver his or her lines with powerful acting. After all, the actor’s role is to orchestrate each theatrical element – such as language (words) and body (physicality) – to enhance its own strength to the full extent, which creates a strong poetry. Miyagi admits that this sounds still theoretical, which is in fact in the process of progressing through various practices and training methods. Miyagi states, in actual practice, he has “the actors train by going on stage with no script memorised and then using a projector to show the lines and have the actors speak them for the first time as they appear in succession” (Yamaguchi, 2012, p. 12). In this way, the performers do not trap themselves in the meaning of the words even before they imagine their bodies to be situated in a particular moment of time and space in theatre.

After all, the complex work of incongruent harmonies among the illusionary visual images, music, movement, and words becomes the element for composing powerful poetry that reflects a part of the human unconscious. In an after talk for *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, Miyagi revealed that he designed the acting style in accordance with ‘poetry,’ ‘music,’ and ‘everyday speech,’ which represent the worlds of noblemen, fairies, and the working classes (Cited in Nakanishi, 2011). For instance, the speech used by the working-class characters consists of everyday speech and music while noble characters’ speech contains poetry, music, and some

speech. Therefore, their speech style is always different depending on the condition of the language type, just as breathing and the heartbeats of the human body are not always the same in their repetitious work. In this sense, the relation between the performers' bodies and language is not fixed but always changeable according to the form of language; the body needs to be flexible and fluid in order to respond to the frequent change of linguistic structures. When a person experiences an event, his or her body becomes changed; the body can no longer present as itself. Deguchi Norio, a famous Japanese director, emphasises the importance of developing performers' physical skills to perform Shakespeare. He insists on his idea of physical acting in relation to Shakespearean dramaturgy:

In the world of Shakespeare, there are vigorous changes. Suddenly everything changes in a moment. Those changes are very important. We are doing a silly exercise nowadays, which is called 'Becoming an octopus.' While you are playing an octopus, suddenly you are told to become a globefish. The actors learn how to change from being soft to being hard. They love each other as octopi and hate as globefish. It's very important to learn the art of fast transformation ... Speed and flexibility are the basic elements of acting in Shakespeare. Transformation is a basic element of acting anyway, so, of course it's important. It is very important how they play the moment when their minds and bodies transform. (Deguchi, 1995)

The presence of performers' bodies exists in the interplay of a plurality of elements whose combinations instantly flash into a form of image and soon disappear. The momentary appearance of combinations of elements is conceived to be partly illusion and at the same time reality. In this production, Soboro's arms are actually changed into soba noodles, and Mephisto swaps Fukusuke's face for his belly, before he is again transformed into an octopus by Mephisto's dark magic. Just as the stories that make up Noda's narratives shift and interrelate, so the characters seem to metamorphose in front of our eyes (Shewring, 1998, p. 98). Along with this visual aesthetic for stage design and performers' grotesque bodies, Miyagi attempts to deal with the characters' minds and dreams, which are unreal ideas. Their minds are only transitory states of consciousness arising out of the momentary meeting of observer and observed, both of which will change in the succeeding moment. In this condition, time is an empty concept invented by the mind; the only concrete reality is

the moment. The performers' bodies hang on the branches in the fairies' forest and are often combined with other entities, such as an octopus or food made of newspaper, and then suddenly disappear into darkness. Their position and gestures continuously change, giving a sense of loss and absence. Ironically, this melancholic impression prolongs our pleasure for recovering what has vanished like the fairies' final speeches:

PUCK. Before long, the invisible fairies in the earth will rise up through trunks and turn into fresh green leaves.

OBERON. And when young lovers walk through the forest, those fresh leaves will rustle and you will all be blessed by the sunlight through the leaves.

SOBORO. Those leaves are all the invisible fairies living amongst the trees.  
(2.10)

Throughout the production, Miyagi's imagery, with its emphasis on the concept of split identity, develops the narrative of the performance. This is achieved "partly through visual, musical, and verbal echoes and partly through the inclusion of brief moments which seem to freeze the action as the characters glimpse their true selves" (Shewring, 1998, p. 102). The visible world is therefore flame-like, shifting, and evanescent, possessed of no durable validity, similar to the aesthetic of *haiku*, which Miyagi attempts to explore through his performances. According to Yamaguchi Hiroko (2012), Miyagi strives to "create something like haiku poetry, bonsai, the rock garden of Ryoanji temple and the paintings of Sesshu" (p. 11). This shows that Miyagi reduces the number of compositional elements, whilst also making each of the elements extremely powerful so the audience never forgets them. Like the traditional Japanese theatre forms such as *Noh* and *Kabuki*, Miyagi's scenography tends toward a single, significant, visual moment at which the point of dramatic communication is reached in terse visual images through the performers' movements.

Miyagi finds in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* an invitation to step into a world of dreams full of carnival madness and illogical imagination, which might present the solution to a lack of communication and the identity crisis in modern society. The fairies' world in Noda's adaptation offers a freedom of location in a strange land where reality and identity become confused and blurred. Miyagi states, "If the early

modern theatre was a place where people gathered to reconfirm that they all shared the same values and to gain assurance in that knowledge, the late modern theatre is a place where a truly diverse cross-section of people gather” (Yamaguchi, 2012). In the process of mixing different stories, characters, times, and space – as well as the traditions of Japanese and Shakespearean cultures, styles, and allusions – into a larger vocabulary, the performance becomes a place where a diverse collection of ideas and a variety of worldviews can be put together. According to Eglinton (2016), “national crises present opportunities to re-evaluate the power of the arts” (p. 61). Japanese artists perform Western plays as a means of exploring possibilities for “a future dramatic art for future Japanese plays” (Powell, 1975, p. 76). Miyagi’s *Dream* ends with a hint of hope, suggesting that there is the potential to rebuild after the destroyed world that used to be full of intense darkness. The process of resolution seems quite clear but open-ended as Soboro again swallows her words which promise there will be another story of conflict. Asada Akira (1989) positions Japan in “infantile capitalism” in which “people become carried away by word play, parody, and all the other childlike games of differentiation” (p. 275).<sup>23</sup> This kind of world seems simply anarchic at first glance, but she warns that such a playful utopia might turn into “a terrible ‘dystopia’” (p. 275). Asada points out that children can play ‘freely’ only within a certain protected area, which is precisely the core of the Japanese ideological mechanism.

In Miyagi’s *Dream*, however, the importance of a child-like world is not limited to simply reconfirming the existing social hegemony. The performers’ playful actions and excitement give fresh new experiences to the audience which are different from their monotonous lives, which encourage them to think of themselves in relation to society and devise a better position and attitude towards the world. It may also lead them to realise how they have been educated and socialised within the restricted system without sensing the potential of their own bodies. Miyagi maintains that “art needs to play an important role for the people who has a desire to change themselves and help them become master of their own life to achieve their goals”

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<sup>23</sup> According Asada (1989), “In Japan, there are neither tradition-oriented old people adhering to transcendental values nor inner-oriented adults who have internalized their values; instead, the nearly purely relative (or relativistic) competition exhibited by other-oriented children provides the powerful driving force for capitalism” (p. 275). He calls this ‘infantile capitalism.’

(Miyagi, 2012, p. 29). To avoid repeating these social concepts, performances should always present creative and productive perspectives, far from the stereotyped mindset of social ideologies rather than simply exploring a delirious parody. From this perspective, Miyagi's *Dream* does not just depict a utopian world with shallow visions and vague promises, but presents a solution based on deep concerns and a realistic analysis of modern Japanese society. Based on this experience, it can be possible to restore the collective popular imagination of the actors and audience who can revive the ancient Japanese mind and tradition, and inspire a new vision of society for the modern audience.

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Both Yasuda and Miyagi emphasise the importance of understanding the current Japanese social condition in which modern people are alienated from the society but simply work as a part of the social system. In this condition, people have fewer chances to recognise their inner condition and gradually lose their ability to relate to other people around them and the outer world. The directors consider Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* as a play to explore the subject of human relationship and identity in modern Japanese society since it shows complicated relations between the characters within multiple plots. It seems that Yasuda and Miyagi see Japanese society standing in an ambivalent position: while Japan has achieved a splendid modernisation by accepting Western culture, social system, and scientific technology, the Japanese are familiar with the values and conventions of the past social system and tradition. This complex cultural condition allows the directors to pay more attention to the "internal cultural diversities" and differences within their social communities (Bharucha, 2000, p. 9). Unlike intercultural practices across national boundaries, the intracultural dynamics tackled by these directors challenge the generalised tenets of nation, and facilitate a critical examination of differences within a regional culture. Yasuda and Miyagi's hybridised aesthetics through the use of the performers' bodies as unfixed and transient nature constantly pushes the boundaries of understanding Japanese culture far beyond the dominant cultural hegemonies. Their works engage with modern Western theatre forms and aesthetics

in terms of presentation, stagecraft, and development of the theme, and lead them to present new and unique perspectives on their own society. Both directors attempt to develop actors' physical sensibilities as a way of understanding and expressing their inner state which is filled with the feelings of alienation and anxiety in relation to others and the social conditions. By enhancing the performers' physical sensibility as a means of exploring the inner condition of the characters, Yasuda and Miyagi try to show how the characters focus on their own psychology and restore the relationship with other people in modern Japanese society.

In particular, Yasuda adopts traditional Japanese theatre forms such as *Noh* which represents some parts of Japanese culture that emphasises human body as a central place in relation to the social space in the past. He focuses on the performers' bodies as a way of exploring not only their own physical sensibilities through various physical practices but also perceiving their position in the relation to other people and social structure. Based on his unique theory of *yojo-han* and its practice, Yasuda attempts to show how the sense of restraint that Japanese people may feel in their daily life can be expressed in a symbolic way. The aim of his acting method is to improve performers' "techniques for dialogue and enhance the sense of body through self-examination" (Yamanote Jijosha, 2015). In an effort to create an original acting style that reflects the realities of contemporary Japanese, Yasuda radically deconstructs the conditions that characterised the acting styles of Japanese traditional theatre. By imposing restrictions on the movements of actors, he tries to express how modern Japanese people can concentrate on their own bodies and their relation to the social space around them.

Different from Yasuda's acting method which focuses on the performers' physical expressions, Miyagi explores the subject of identity and the unconscious by emphasising the aesthetic of visual aspects of performers' bodies. Based on Noda's script, Miyagi describes the characters' dream world, replete with myths, symbols, puns, and physical tricks of all kinds. He visualises the continuity between the illusory world of the fairies and reality from which the characters are inspired to explore their own imagination and desires. By creating a surreal atmosphere, Miyagi leads the audience to explore new possibilities of the body which can be mixed up with non-human beings and objects to create a hybrid entity. In his *Dream*, the

performers' bodies do not function as a single entity bound to a particular time and zone, but keep changing their shapes by transcending the boundary between dream and reality. While watching the actors' pliable bodies, the audience concentrates on how the performers' physicality deals with the absence of communication in modern society. Through the performers' bodies, Miyagi attempts to show how the characters can restore their ability of communicating with others and curing themselves, suffered from broken and superficial relations in modern society.

### Chapter 3.

#### *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in Korean Theatre

When performing *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, it is challenging for modern directors to stage the presence of the fairies as palpable entities while maintaining their illusory and magical characteristics. In Shakespeare's play, the fairies are usually described with the aura of evanescent and ambiguous things, representing unknown and invisible aspects in human life. For this reason, a Victorian critic, Charles Lamb (1818) claimed that in this play "[s]pirits and fairies cannot be represented, they cannot even be painted, – they can only be believed" (p. 31). He also states that "we have only materialized and brought down a fine vision to the standard of flesh and blood. We have let go a dream, in quest of an unattainable substance" (p. 5). He thinks Shakespeare's *Dream* was written less for stage representation than for description within the audience's imagination. In the same vein, William Hazlitt (1818) argued that this play could not be properly presented on the stage since Shakespeare's "poetry and the stage do not agree well together" (p. 223). In other words, his idea of "an airy shape, a dream, a passing thought" cannot be staged because it immediately becomes "an unmanageable reality" (p. 223). Both Lamb and Hazlitt point out the difficulties of presenting supernatural figures on a theatrical stage. This is because at the moment in the history of English Shakespeare production, the critics believed it was better to read Shakespeare than to perform his plays. Unlike their arguments, the play has been represented not only by its narration. As Shakespeare insists through Theseus's words,<sup>24</sup> the power of imagination makes the theatrical illusion become a meaningful reality. In fact, Shakespeare's *Dream* explores the particular condition of theatre in which performers and audience members can share their ideas of the supernatural aspects of human life through the act of imagination. Directors' imaginations give a structure to the fairies – unseen, disfigured, imaginative beings – and such palpable depictions might help the

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<sup>24</sup> "The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling, / Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven; / And as imagination bodies forth / The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen / Turns them to shapes, and gives to aery nothing / A local habitation and a name" (5.1.12-17).

audience to form their own ideas about the invisible presences during the performance.

It is difficult to know how the illusory world is represented for other audience members because the art of representation is involved in psychological processes linked with our feelings, perception, memory, or expectations of certain ideas. According to David Summers (2003), there are normally three factors in the discussion of representation: “a thing, its actual image, and a *mental* image” (p. 3, emphasis in original). The last one is likened to a work of art made by the mind as “it is itself a representation that is always interposed between anything and its actual image” (p. 3). As we know, things are mediated through our senses as a work of negotiation with the world, the represented images cannot be the same. In theatre, the audience can only share the actual images of things, and the unified images will be presented to the minds of the audience members that becomes a way of grasping things in the world as a whole. Therefore, the actual forms and images displayed on a stage reflect the director’s psychology in relation to the illusory world that also reveals how he or she understands the actual world around them. In this context, Shakespeare’s *Dream* cannot be staged in any ideal format – as if the play actually existed as a virtual object – but freely reimagined and readdressed by the artists, who also explore the possibilities of the play being interpreted differently and embodied from culture to culture. Since its use of Elizabethan fairy tales and English Renaissance conceptions of classical mythology is central to the role of the imagination in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, directors especially focus on designing the fairies’ appearance and stage spectacles to give each audience a magical illusory effect in terms of their own theatre.

Shakespeare’s *Dream* was translated into Korean in 1920s, but it was first performed by the students majoring in English Literature at Ewha Womans University, in 1958. This performance was directed by Kim Gap-Soon who focused on Shakespeare’s language. In the 1960s, the play was performed by undergraduate students and non-professional actors at first, and then played by professional theatre companies which explore various ways of expressing the play on stage. Due to the movement of restoring Korean culture in the 1970s, Shakespeare’s plays were often translated and performed in traditional Korean theatre form which is combined with

some elements of modern Western theatre forms such as realist acting style and stage setting in experimental ways. Between 1990 and 2007, there were fourteen productions of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in which the directors and actors performed the play based on their understanding of Korean culture rather than respecting Shakespeare's language. Among the fourteen productions, about seven performances translated the text in the context of Korean culture. This trend was initiated by Western directors including Peter Brook whose directing style was introduced to Korean artists due to the movement of globalisation

Since the 1990s, Shakespeare's *Dream* has been one of the more popular productions in Korea – more so than any of Shakespeare's other comedies – since it contains the elements of magic, fairy lore, and classical mythology, which inspire Korean directors to imagine the presence of the fairies and design their illusory world in an embodied form based on the context of their indigenous culture. Shakespeare's *Dream* has been reinterpreted in the context of Korean culture, and at the same time the adaptations allow modern directors to explore their own styles and acting methods that reflect their perspectives on the indigenous culture as well as the trend of modern theatre. Many Korean directors have attempted to construct the invisible world on the stage based on their own interpretation of the fairies described in Shakespeare's play. Shakespeare describes the fairies, particularly Puck, as a “merry wanderer” (2.1.43) who favours mischievous behaviours and tricking human beings by changing their appearance into different figures to make people frightened. Likewise, in Korean culture, people believe that *dokkaebi*, which are mythical spirits or goblins that appear in old Korean mythology and folk tales, are very pleasant and humorous beings who love mischief and playing “tricks on ‘bad’ people or punish them for their ‘evil deeds’ (or, conversely, reward ‘good’ people with wealth and blessings)” (Bax, 2016, p. 155).

Among others, in the adaptations of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* by Lee Jong-Hun and Yang Jung-Ung, Shakespeare's fairies are transformed into *dokkaebi*. Unlike the fairies that are believed to be ghosts of dead people or spirits of nature in British culture, in Korean folklore, *dokkaebi*, as defenders against evil spirits, was considered “a part of the community and possess a disposition similar to human virtues as well as human vices” (Huang, 2010). In this context, Shakespeare's *Dream*

allows the directors and audience to explore the performers' bodies, particularly the presences of the fairies, as a cultural symbol that reflects a collective imagination of Korean culture. Therefore, this chapter attempts to study how Lee and Yang explore the theme of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in their adaptations, and how they express the root of collective imagination of the supernatural figures in the context of Korean culture. By adopting the forms of traditional Korean theatre, Lee and Yang particularly focus on the theme of imagination which is central to the theatrical experience in relation to the performers' bodies. Through their imagination, audiences can see how directors struggle to construct the unseen, disfigured presences to be seen and presented in theatrical reality. By examining the figures of *dokkaebi* depicted in their performances, it is possible for the audience to learn what sort of belief systems held the attention of people in past Korean society and how it is interpreted and newly embodied in modern performance.

### **Figuring Cultural Imagination: Singing and Dancing Bodies in *Moon Night at Shilla* (2000) by Lee Jong-Hun**

Lee Jong-Hun's *Moon Night at Shilla* was performed in the open-air theatre of the Sejong Cultural Art Centre by the Seoul City Musical Company in 2000, 2001, and 2007. The aim of the company is to present the audience with a modernised form of traditional art while maintaining the principles of its aesthetic. Previously, Lee produced Shakespeare's play *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in musical form, which was faithful to the story and characters of the original play. However, in the performance programme in 1997, Lee revealed that he would perform Shakespeare's *Dream* in repertory each year by interpreting the play from different perspectives. He stated, "it can be produced in a traditional form next year while it might be also presented in modern styles in the following year" (Lee, 1997). Lee changed the title of the second version of the production to *Moon Night at Shilla* as he thought Shilla is "the birth place of Korean spirit and culture" (Hong, 2000). As one of the world's longest sustained dynasties, Shilla achieved cultural enrichment in art and developed the most powerful national strength in Korean history. In this respect, Shilla seems to be an appropriate choice to explore the collective social consciousness of past Korea,

which might be useful to understand the current social context of Korea. One of the aims of *Moon Night at Shilla* is to invite the audience to feel comfortable with the elements of traditional theatre by presenting some familiar physical gestures inspired from Korean folk performances such as *Talchum* and *Madangguk* and a series of catchy songs. In Korean culture, not only literature but also dance and theatrical forms emphasise musical effects which were applied to creating the musical theatre. The directors' purpose is to create a Korean-style performance for the modern audience to experience the aesthetic of traditional arts by adopting historical resources such as poetry and dance.



Figure 21. A group of *hwarang* performing martial arts in Act 1, Scene 1  
(*Moon Night at Shilla*, 2000)

Lee's production shows how Shakespeare's play can be presented in various ways reflecting the artists' imagination of the fairies' world and their presences in the context of Korean culture and the socio-historical framework in which it is situated. By changing the setting of Athens in Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* to Seorabeol, the capital of Shilla, Hong who wrote the script of this production attempts to present some representative aspects of the lifestyle as well as the social and cultural contexts of ancient Korea. Audience members can explore their own imagination in respect of the old country through the performers' presences representing the youth of Shilla. Accordingly, Shakespeare's male characters, Lysander and Demetrius, are changed into the male youth of *hwarang* (also known as Flowering Knights), an elite group in Shilla. The members of *hwarang* gathered for all aspects of study, particularly arts and culture, and pursued an aesthetic sensibility about the body while seeking ways of improving their spiritual and mental

state. Therefore, Lee emphasises the performers' physical power as a means of reflecting their state of mind. In the first scene of the performance, the performers practise martial arts in unified physical motions that represent their united mindset pursuing the philosophies of *hwarangdo*, which were designed for the young men who would take significant roles in politics and military duties in the near future (Figure 21).

In this production, Hong emphasises the five rules of ethics which the young men need to follow as a *hwarang*: the importance of loyalty to their Lord; piety to their parents and teachers; trust and brotherhood among friends; courage never to retreat in the face of the enemy in battle; and justice never to take a life without a reason. According to the powerful music played by traditional Korean musical instruments such as *Daegeum*<sup>25</sup> and *Buk* (drum), the actors perform a sword dance and speak out loudly the five rules. In addition, it was important for *hwarang* to improve their physical ability as well as mental state, which could be possible through the training of seven qualities: concentration; patience and endurance; sincerity in practice; speed; conservation of energy; respect and obedience; and avoiding vanity. These are depicted one by one through the performers' physical motions in a group dance. They attempt to visualise these concepts with their precise and clear-cut actions which seem to represent the power of law and order of Shilla. By presenting the performers' movements within a restrained formation, Lee leads the audience to notice the social atmosphere of Shilla in which the rules and disciplines for both physical and mental states are crucial. This scene emphasises the male characters' physical strength, which implies that the society is under the control of male power and the patriarchal system.

The well-ordered social system of Shilla is a striking contrast from the chaotic condition of the *dokkaebi* world. In particular, the conflicts between the King and Queen in the *dokkaebi* world leads the human world to fall into uncontrollable confusion. From the conversations among the *dokkaebi*, the audience notices that the relationship between the Dokkaebi King and Queen is broken down as they are outraged at the scandal that they have each been cheating on each other. As the fairies' king and queen fight with equal powers, the order of the nature loses its

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<sup>25</sup> *Daegeum* is a wind instrument from seventh-century Shilla.

harmonious state which causes the chaos to become more intensified. Hong (2000) writes that he would focus on the disorder of the *dokkaebi* world, which is also linked to the problems between the four lovers since they are entangled by the power of the *dokkaebi* couple's dark magic in the forest. He states, "Shakespeare's descriptions of the chaos in the fairies' world is not powerful enough to explore human unconscious. Although Puck's mistake and the juice of the magical flower cause the conflicts between the four lovers, they cannot be considered a critical reason for the chaos" (Hong, 2000). Hong emphasises the forest as a place which reflects the inner condition of the human mind, particularly its primitive state full of desire. In Shakespeare's *Dream*, the forest is an important setting since it creates a dark, wild, and mysterious atmosphere where the fairies' magical power can be played out. Like the Elizabethans, Korean people used to believe that the fairies are living in the woods. For this reason, Hong sets the forest as a significant place in which each character is true to their desire which is the driving force to move themselves toward madness.

To emphasise the disorder of the forest, Hong changes some parts of Shakespeare's *Dream*. Instead of the power of a magical flower in Shakespeare's play, the Dokkaebi King and Queen place a spell on the pool in the forest: "Anyone who drinks this water will love as he sees at first / Even drinking a sip, his mind will be reversed / Even drinking a sip, his love will be changed!" (*Moon Night at Shilla*, 2000, 2.1). This shows that the target of the *dokkaebi* couple's anger is not specifically fixed, but it can be anyone who drinks the cursed water. As the male characters frequently change their minds due to the effect of the magical water, the range of their physical expressions that reveal their emotional state becomes broader and more dynamic. Their physical expressions are accompanied by songs describing their impetuous feelings. In particular, Munchang (Lysander) and Mihul (Demetrius) sing a song called 'What Happened to Me?' (2.1), which describes how they feel after they drink the water: "why my heart is ablaze / why my brain is burning with fire" (2.1). The male characters are preoccupied with the power of illusion, and they each see their beloved through the blurred lens of magic, which prevents them from seeing the truth of their love and distinguishing who their real lover is.

This change intensifies the dramatic effect of the production. Whenever the male characters drink the water, their attitude towards Sukyung (Hermia) and Ockhyang (Helena) is reversed, which makes the female characters feel disappointed and frustrated. After all, the female characters conclude that “our love is not real” (2.1) as they become doubtful about everything that Munchang and Mihul do and say. Their disturbed minds are conveyed through the fast and powerful music that also represents the complex situation with which the four lovers are faced. In particular, the Dokkaebi’s song ‘Do Not Believe Anything’ (2.1) conveys the message that anyone in that forest should not believe what they see or hear. In this way, Hong attempts to show the nature of love; it is not different from fantasy. He (2000) states that “the characters gradually realise that their love is not real but only an illusory phenomenon.” This chaotic condition allows the characters and audience to think of the true nature of their love and even themselves, who are captured by their own illusions which are vulnerable to external conditions.



Figure 22. Golchi and Mirang representing the role of Puck (*Moon Night at Shilla*, 2000)

Lee describes how the conflict between the *dokkaebi* couple affects not only the human world but also their own world. Golchi (Puck) and Mirang, a male and female *dokkaebi* representing the role of Puck, have to break up because their masters are fighting each other (Figure 22). As soon as the Dokkaebi King and Queen exit from the stage after singing their cursed song, Golchi and Mirang begin to sing ‘Finally, It Happens!’:

GOLCHI. Finally, it happens. Something to happen happens.

MIRANG. Sure enough, it happens.

A bolt, thunder, and lightening out of the blue sky.  
 GOLCHI. Struck blind in a hazy fog and drizzle.  
 TOGETHER. A war breaks out in the *dokkaebi*'s forest.  
 Everything is confusing in the *dokkaebi*'s forest.  
 A war breaks out in the *dokkaebi*'s forest.  
 Everything is confusing in the *dokkaebi*'s forest.  
 GOLCHI. I become you,  
 MIRANG. You become me.  
 GOLCHI. Men become women,  
 MIRANG. Women become men.  
 GOLCHI. He becomes she,  
 MIRANG. Does she become he?  
 If I am you,  
 GOLCHI. You become me?  
 MIRANG. If I am you,  
 GOLCHI. You become me?  
 TOGETHER. Oh, so confusing! I have a headache.  
 We are going crazy, insane, and dizzy – (2.1)

They are singing about the possibility that their gender might be changed from male to female and *vice versa* while they are confused. In fact, it is not strange that they get confused about their own identity since the role and position of each character is continuously changed, which prevents the *dokkaebi* from distinguishing between themselves. Observing the confusion among the four lovers, the Dokkaebi King commands Golchi to make pairs of them. As Golchi gets confused and asks him who should be whose partner, the King takes some time to think but says, “I have no idea. Just do it randomly” (2.1). From their perspective, it does not make any difference since the humans’ love as an act of illusion can be changeable depending on what they see and believe. In a similar vein, Munchang and Mihul have a same pattern of experiences throughout the performance. Comparing their linguistic expressions, the audience can notice that both characters have the same experiences. For instance, in Act 1, Scene 1, Mihul tries to escape from Munchang, who keeps saying the name of Ockhyang. Conversely, in Act 2, Scene 1, Munchang runs away from Mihul, who is chasing behind him to tease him with the name of Sukyung, which now becomes the hateful name to Munchang. By reusing the same pattern of expression in different

acts, Hong attempts to show that life goes on within similar frames; that is, people may face the same incidents that have already occurred to others in a different time and place. In this sense, the male characters' identities cannot be easily distinguished, and as a result, it can be meaningless for the *dokkaebi* to make proper pairs of the lovers, who see the world in their own illusions.

In addition, Lee shows the subverted relations among the characters – the *dokkaebi* and humans, the four lovers, and the female and male *dokkaebi* – which are different from the descriptions in Shakespeare's *Dream*. In his play, human beings, particularly the four lovers and mechanicals, are controlled by the power of the fairies' magic and tricks. E. M. W. Tillyard (1998) argues that the structure of order described in Shakespeare's plays can be understood by examining the Elizabethan culture with the idea of a hierarchical universe. According to him, the Renaissance structure can be seen as an interconnected web of greater and lesser links. For instance, spiritual beings such as God and angels have greater ability than man, and rule over and control human beings. Thus, since humans are passive subjects in relation to the fairies, their desire is always under the spirits' control. For this reason, the humans only feel something strange happening around them, and simply imagine the invisible presence in the forest at night. In *Moon Night at Shilla*, although the spiritual world and human beings are closely connected, unlike the characters in Shakespeare's *Dream* who are helplessly manipulated by the fairies, the Shilla people are fully aware of the presences of *dokkaebi* around them. In Act 2, scene 1, Munchang and Mihul, who are enchanted by the magic, are eager to wrestle with the *Dokkaebi* to prove who is more powerful rather than fight each other. In the next scene, the *Dokkarbi* are also challenged by the Players who insist they are real *dokkaebi* by wearing *dokkaebi* masks and imitate their gestures. These examples show that the hierarchy between the spiritual and human worlds turns upside down, and the position and identity of the *Dokkaebi* are threatened by the humans. Also, these scenes present the order in the forest is disrupted badly and every character is in a state of confusion.

Traditionally, the physical appearance of *dokkaebi* is often depicted as fearsome and awe-inspiring. As legendary creatures, they are known as spirits who possess extraordinary power and ability that are used to interact with humans by

playing tricks on them or helping them in Korean culture. However, Lee portrays the Dokkaebi as a sociable character who is close to human life, as if a member of the human community rather than an invisible figure. In Korean culture, it is well known that *dokkaebi* love to socialise with people by asking them to compete in sports. In particular, they like to play pranks on travellers by asking them to have a *ssireum* match (a traditional Korean sport of wrestling) for the right to pass. Based on this propensity, Lee inserts several scenes of a *ssireum* match between the Dokkaebi and humans. Unlike the *dokkaebi* depicted as a strong and powerful presence in folklore, in this production, the good-hearted Dokkaebi are always defeated by the humans, finally withdrawing themselves from their own territory. Watching the consecutive defeats of the Dokkaebi, the audience might feel pity for the supernatural figures who are incomplete and clumsy in all ways. Likewise, in this production, they are not scary presences, but rather they are close to humans as a part of this world. By depicting them as friendly presences who show great affection for humans and care about their role in relation to them, the director attempts to make the audience feel their presence close to them.

*Female dokkaebi who are the maidens of the Queen Dokkaebi appears from every direction both on the stage and in the auditorium.*

‘We Are Dokkaebi’ [*ensemble*]

FEMALE DOKKAEBI. We are mysterious fairies in the forest:

The maidens of the beautiful and attractive queen.

How’s that? Do you like our appearance?

We are born at sunset and disappear at dawn.

We can be seen only for a moment.

[...]

Don’t be afraid. Don’t we look pretty?

Though people are afraid of us,

We always love them.

MALE DOKKAEBI. We are the guards of the forest:

The servants of the brave and wise king.

How’s that? Do you like our appearance?

We appear briefly and then vanish like thunder.

We can be seen rarely by anyone else.

[...]  
Don't be afraid. Don't we look pretty?  
Though people are afraid of us,  
We always love them. (2.1)

While singing the song, the Dokkaebi appear from everywhere on the stage and even in the auditorium. They run and leap around the stage along with fast music mixed with the cacophonous sounds of thunder. One audience member explains this scene: "Rather than the story of the performance, I was surprised at the director's direction of the performers' position and moving line when they enter and exit. [...] It was impressive to see the director's ability to use the theatre space, which was creative and beyond the audience's expectation" (Chudong, 2001). Through the physical interactions between the performers and spectators, Lee tries to give a clear image of the Dokkaebi and their illusory world. The performers' physical presence can be the basis for the activity of audience's imagination. Their unexpected appearance and their improvised actions might cause the audience to imagine as if they are now experiencing a real *dokkaebi* world. Lee also emphasises the lighting effect to visualise the chaotic atmosphere, which prompts the audience to imagine the primitive aspects of nature filled with disorder and chaos. This description by an audience member sums up the visual effect, "by projecting the light on the vine trees around the stage, it makes great harmony with nature, which gives an impression of watching an abstractionist or expressionist painting" (Chudong, 2001). In other words, the performers' physical presence, along with the effective use of powerful music and lighting signifying the confusion, allows the audience to imagine that they are experiencing the chaotic universe like a real world.

Imagination in theatre can be achieved by means of various qualities of material forms, including not only the performers' bodies but also the audience's physical presence. Throughout the performance, Lee emphasises the performers' improvised movements that reflect their instinctive reaction to the audience's responses as well as the theatrical situations by adopting the acting styles of *Talchum* (Figure 23). *Talchum* originated as a part of shamanic rituals which had evolved to cleanse houses and villages. Also, the masked performers in *Talchum* appeal to the audience by "ridiculing apostate Buddhist monks, decadent upper classmen, and

shamans” (Eckersley, 2009, p. 46). Along with the critical function as rites in exorcism, the basic themes of *Talchum* is biting satire; a parody of human weakness; social evil; and the privileged classes. In addition, Lee induces the audience to participate in the production as co-creators along with the performers through the form of *Madangguk*. To describe the characters and theatrical situations, performers mainly rely on their physical expressions rather than speech. As Shin Sang-Mi (2007) notes, “the concept of dance in Korean culture does not simply mean the movements of physical bodies, but rather included the exploration of certain meanings created through such actions” (p. 15). Their exaggerated movements and improvised gestures focus on conveying the detailed information of the stories and characters’ personalities while communicating with the audience. In this sense, *Madangguk* needs to be understood not simply as a Korean theatre form but as a symbolic form representing the spirit of harmony and sharing between the performer and audience members. The performers’ physical expressions and the audience’s sensual experiences cannot be regarded as a subjective experience but rather a shared experience which is a basis for the collective imagination of the *dokkaebi*’s world.



Figure 23. The Players dancing *Talchum* in Act 2, Scene 2 (*Moon Night at Shilla*, 2000)

By combining different performance forms such as *Talchum* and *Madangguk*, Lee shows various dramatic scenes with the characters portraying humans and supernatural beings that are mainly dealt with in the traditional theatre forms and folktales. Based on these traditional acting forms, Lee attempts to heighten the spirit of *shinmyeong*, which can be shared by both the performers and audience who might experience a passionate feeling towards the ecstasy at the very moment they are

involved in the theatre. This powerful energy may lead spectators to freely express their emotions that are suppressed in their daily life. By crossing over the boundaries between the stage and auditorium, the performers and audience come to share a single space. There is no fixed role in this space; that is, everyone has the potential to become an actor or a viewer. As Jo Dong-II (1988) argues, “*Talchum* is the performance in which there is no distinction between the performer and the spectator [...] the performer has to be a viewer, and the viewer has to be also a performer, which is an ideal relation between them in *Talchum*” (pp. 143-144). In other words, the positions of the performer and audience need to be mixed up as the performance space and auditorium cannot be separated from each other. In this context, the stage functions as an open space where the performers and audience can create the meaning of the performance in a cooperative relationship.



Figure 24. The Dokkaebi King talking to the audience in Act 2, Scene 1 (*Moon Night at Shilla*, 2000)



Figure 25. The Dokkaebi Queen sitting on the laps of an audience in Act 2, Scene 1 (*Moon Night at Shilla*, 2000)

As one example, the performers who play the Dokkaebi King and Queen approach some of the audience members while lamenting their spouses’ betrayal. They are each in a bad mood when they enter the stage because of the news that their spouse has deceived them for years. Full of jealousy and anger, they begin to complain of their grievous situation in front of the audience to draw their attention and sympathy. The performer playing the Dokkaebi King sits next to a female audience member and says,

Oh lady, my wife has been cheating on me. She can’t imagine that I know what she has been doing. Every *dokkaebi* is whispering about that. I can’t stand it anymore – (*stroking the audience member’s hand*) You have

beautiful hands! – My authority has hit rock bottom for her corrupted act!  
(2.1)

In this scene, the Dokkaebi King praises the female audience member's hand while complaining about his wife's betrayal (Figure 24). The contradiction of his act and speech makes the audience laugh, and at the same time the audience member becomes naturally involved in the dramatic situation. The performers' physical contact with the audience is emphasised further in the case of the Dokkaebi Queen. Like her husband, she enters with feelings of despair:

I am done with him today! What? He would be lost in thought for a few days? He doesn't think that I know he has been cheating on me. I felt a blush rise to my face with embarrassment when I knew that *dokkaebi* were whispering about that. – (*approaching a male audience member and sitting on his lap*) What's wrong with my beauty? And my body? – If I see him again, I will make him a dead body! (2.1)

In the same pattern, the queen attempts to attract the male audience member while complaining about her husband. At first, the audience member seems surprised at her drastic action of sitting on his lap, but he soon joins the theatrical situation by responding to her (Figure 25).

At this moment, the presences of the *dokkaebi* are not limited to fictional or mythical figures as they are described in Korean folklore. As palpable presences, the *dokkaebi*'s bodies directly interact with the audience, who can see and even touch the performers next to them. Through direct contact with the performers' living bodies as physical matter, the audience would feel their theatrical experience to be real. This follows one of the main principles of *Madangguk* in which the boundary between theatre and reality is blurred, and the performers and audience break the fourth wall. In this liminal condition, the audience can switch their position from being viewers to performers and *vice versa*. Also, the performers who play the Dokkaebi are sitting in the audience not only as the performers in the production but also as viewers like the other audience members. This unique relation seems to symbolise that the fairy world and the human world are not separated from each other but always co-existing and respected as an independent space.

While Lee and Hong focus on depicting the disorder of the *dokkaebi*'s world in the first half of the production, they show how their world restores its order and returns to the previous state of a solid structure in the last half of the performance. Above all, Lee and Hong adopt the form of *Cheoyongmu*,<sup>26</sup> a court dance based on the story of '*Cheoyongga* (The Song of Cheoyong),'<sup>27</sup> a popular song in the Goryeo Dynasty (918-1392). *Cheoyongmu* was formerly performed "to dispel evil spirits and pray for tranquillity at royal banquets or during exorcism rites on New Year's Eve to promote good fortune" (Unesco, 2008) (Figure 26 and 27).



Figure 26. The mask of Cheoyong (UNESCO, 2008)



Figure 27. *Cheoyongmu* in court (UNESCO, 2008)

Unlike 'Pyramus and Thisbe,' which shows the noble love between the characters in Shakespeare's *Dream*, *Cheoyongga* is about the story of Cheoyong, who forgives an evil spirit that transformed itself into a man to sleep with Cheoyong's wife while he was out. When Cheoyong arrives at home to see there are four legs on his bed, he withdraws himself singing and dancing instead of getting angry. He sings:

Having caroused far into the night  
In the moonlit capital,  
I return home and in my bed,

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<sup>26</sup> *Cheoyongmu* is "performed by five men clad in white, blue, black, red, and yellow to represent the four cardinal directions and the centre. They wear the light wine-coloured mask of the man-god, with white teeth; tin earrings with a necklace of lead beads, and a black hat decorated with two peony blossoms and seven peaches to ward off evil and invite auspicious energy" (Unesco, 2008).

<sup>27</sup> Originally, *Cheoyongga* was composed as a poetic form known as *Hyangga* by Cheoyong in the period of King Hungang (875-886) in Shilla. The word *Hyangga* literally means 'native songs' and it sounds like folk songs, perhaps "popular among ordinary people and orally transmitted for a long period until they were written down in *Samguk yusa*" (Kim, 2016, p. 16).

Behold, four legs.

Two were mine,

Whose are the other two?

Formerly two were mine:

What shall be done now that they're taken? (Kim, 2016, p. 17)

The song consists of two stanzas: the first stanza presents the reality that Cheoyong faces; the second one shows his inner condition. Watching Cheoyong's response, the evil spirit reappears in its own shape, kneeling before him, and says, "Even though I've violated your wife in lust, you have not shown anger. I am impressed and find you admirable. I swear therefore to never violate henceforth any place where even your likeness is displayed" (Kim, 2016, p. 18). This shows that, as a half-god, Cheoyong possesses the power to drive out the demon of sickness with his song and its accompanying dance. Also, this story reflects the nature of Shilla people, who are generous and merciful, with broader perspectives on the world, rather than people who rely on joy and grief of personal emotion at every moment. From the structure of this poem, it is possible to perceive that this poetic song deals with the attitude of reconciliation and generosity as a main theme. The figure of Cheoyong thus emerges as a folk hero overcoming a common foe through the power of his magic. For this reason, it became a custom for people to ward off evil spirits with the likeness of Cheoyong on their gates. He thus became an exorcistic totem whose image was placed on the front doors of houses to prevent demons from entering. At the same time, it represents the country restoring its order and growing powerful again.

Lee adopts the poetic form of *Cheoyongga* while emphasising its incantatory nature through the performers' physical movements adapting the traditional dance. The musical effect of the performers' poetic language, like an incantation, is always associated with the rhythm of performers' movements in traditional Korean performances. Kim Ki-Chung (2016) insists that "there was a considerable body of vernacular Korean poetry composed during this period, since early chronicles, both Chinese and Korean, tell us that Koreans were a people fond of singing and dancing" (p. 11). In other words, the narrative enactment has been widely practised, along with the song itself and dance as the central piece. As a musical performance, *Moon Night*

*at Shilla* contains a total of twenty-five songs. Each song is designed to reveal the emotional state of each character and the situations of each scene. The performers execute various physical movements reflecting the content of the songs, which are written in a poetic form. By using the same sound for the last words of each line and repeating the same expressions or words, Hong emphasises the poetic structure of the songs, which is reminiscent of traditional Korean poetry as well as folk songs, including lullabies. Therefore, the rhythm and tempo of many songs in this performance are already familiar to the audience members since it might be common for them to sing and hear the folk songs in their childhood. For this reason, it is possible for the audience to respond to the performers' gestures as well as their songs by clapping and dancing together although they have never heard the melody of the music before. A theatre critic, Lee Tae-Ju (1999), insists that one of the reasons for the production's success is the director's use of various theatrical elements which draws the audience's attention to the actors' performance:

This performance could be successful as the director captivates a wide range of audiences with fun and easy songs and dance along with various witty talks which are expressed through the performers' comical motions. [...] It seems that the spectator totally understands the director's intention. (p. 37)

In Korean culture, the story of Cheoyong is clearly a kind of spirit legend, and the song is more than a simple narrative of an incident. The poem became to represent "a shaman rite of exorcism, combining song and dance, performed by Ch'oyong at the most critical juncture in the episode" (Kim, 2016, p. 19). With its accompanying dance, the main purpose of Cheoyong's song is to banish the spirit of sickness from individuals' private homes as well as from the nation. According to Lee Yun-Taek (2012), in traditional Korean theatre, the role of the performer is not different from a shaman who can enter into a trance during a ritual to protect or heal the people and the nation from malevolent spirits. He also insists that theatre itself is a ritual in which performers can explore their own imagination as a means of overcoming an absurd and chaotic world. In this context, the theatre space functions as a unique place where performers are playing, and their playing is another form of ritual since they can feel their own energy that also leads the audience to experience such an ecstatic state as *shinmyeong*.

The powerful energy of *shinmyeong* which is an intense feeling of excitement is further heightened by the performers' singing and dancing in a traditional style. The use of traditional Korean musical instruments often used in *samulnori*<sup>28</sup> heightens the spirit of *shinmyeong* since they have been generally played in traditional Korean culture, particularly in agricultural areas rooted in the natural environment. The sound of traditional instruments enables the performance to be characterised by "strong, accented rhythms, vibrant body movements, and an energetic spirit" (Korean Times, 2010). Throughout the production, the performers' movements are harmonised with the sound of these traditional instruments, creating an atmosphere of excitement and energy. In Act 1, Scene 2, when the Players appear on the stage, they are singing a song, 'We are Players,' which reveals their role in helping the ordinary people release themselves from their hard work every day. In some sense, the Players represent healers who are indispensable figures in people's lives whether their social position is high or low:

*Sangseu, Dumbo, Jangdoli, Bongjae, and Bakdae enter.*

'We Are Players' [*ensemble*]

Ppirilli – nuilliri – we are players.

We are indispensable people, the players of Seorabeol.

We please the King who has a headache from political affairs.

We please the people who are exhausted from farming.

Ppirilli – nuilliri – we are players.

We are indispensable people, the players of Seorabeol.

We sing songs in a melodious voice.

We make interesting stories.

Exciting dances and performances in *shinmyeong*.

We players – we – we – make! (1.2)

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<sup>28</sup> *Samulnori* is a genre of percussion music performed with four traditional Korean musical instruments: *Kkwaeggwari* (small gong), *Jing* (larger gong), *Jangu* (hourglass-shaped drum), and *Buk* (drum). *Samulnori* has its roots in "Pungmulnori (literally 'Korean traditional percussion instruments playing'), a Korean folk genre comprising music, acrobatics, folk dance, and rituals, which was traditionally performed in rice farming villages in order to ensure and to celebrate good harvests" ('Samul nori', 2017).

To maintain the heightened atmosphere and dynamic interaction with the audience, Lee does not follow the original form of *Cheoyongmu* as a court dance. He changes the style of the performance into a folk dance by using some basic gestures from *Talchum* to present the spirit of ordinary people such as the Players. Unlike the cheerful energy of folk performances with light movements, in *Cheoyongmu*, “the dancers move with stateliness and vigour through a variety of styles and tempos of music, punctuated by various lyrical song recitations” (Unesco, 2008). Its efficacy naturally increases interest in how it evokes the authority of the King and brings good fortune to the nation. On the other hand, folk performances emphasise the performers’ improvised movements and the audience’s reactions, reflecting a freedom of their physical and mental states far from the restricted control of the performers’ bodies in the court dance. By combining the story of Cheoyong and the form of folk performance for the scene with the wedding ceremony, Lee presents a space where the characters from the King to the Players – all with different social status – can get along together and harmonise, which leads the performers to heighten the mood to explore the spirit of *shinmyeong*. In this way, their performance is far from a solemn ceremony only for the noble class within the production, but rather it can be shared by the performers and audience as a collective experience.

To emphasise the function of the performance as a ritual in which the audience can also participate in the ceremony, Lee and Hong change the final scene of the *Cheoyongga* to be suitable for the form of folk performance. In fact, the mystery of this poetic song makes the readers continue to think about the meaning of the final scene. Although it is said that *Cheoyongga* is one of the easiest songs to decipher, it is one of the most puzzling in its conclusion. There have been many different interpretations of the relation between the evil spirit and Cheoyong. In particular, the ending of Cheoyong’s story has been differently interpreted by the scholars studying Korean literature, but it seems that they leave one critical question unanswered. Kim Ki-Chung (2016) questions: “Why does Ch’oyong resort to an exorcism that involves only a show of grace and superiority rather than violence or a threat of violence toward an evil spirit attacking his own wife – the one person he should be most anxious to safeguard?” (p. 20). He also asks, “What if the evil spirit had not been so yielding? And doesn’t it seem rather strange that an evil spirit should be so

yielding?” (p. 20). The exorcism succeeds only because the evil spirit voluntarily withdraws. Even in translation, it is true that most poems in the form of *Hyangga* possess this exquisite suggestiveness. It seems that they are poised between an apparent simplicity of language and an underlying sense of mystery. For this reason, Lee Do-Heum (1994) argues that “it is not desirable to see the theme of *Cheoyongga* within a limited perspective” (p. 51). There have been various interpretations and attempts to change the ending of the story rather than respecting Cheoyong’s generous and peaceful decision. Such ambiguous aspects of *Cheoyongga* leave readers to question and imagine the original meaning of the song.

Hong tries to see this song from a different perspective than the previous scholarly analyses, and change the final part of the story to emphasise his own interpretation. Above all, he deals with the relationship between husband and wife, particularly the subject of adultery through the story of Cheoyong and his wife, which is also linked to the case of the *dokkaebi* couple and the four lovers, who are already unfaithful to each other. Hong makes Cheoyong also betray his wife by having an affair with a prostitute while the evil spirit sleeps with his wife. Cheoyong is depicted as a disloyal husband who stays out several nights whilst his wife waits for him all night long. He is not generous as described in the old song, but simply an unfaithful and incomplete man. Later, when Cheoyong discovers the corrupted relation between the evil spirit and his wife, he is so furious that he attempts to take revenge on the evil spirit. Cheoyong’s lack of patience and his reaction make him more like a human, which might be more understandable for the modern audience. Also, the physical battle between the spirit and Cheoyong makes the scene more realistic, far from the descriptions of him as a mysterious and admirable man in the myth.

In the next scene, Cheoyong is beaten by the evil spirit in a couple of battles. Even though he was helped by a lion – a guardian spirit in Korean culture quite different from the image of a cruel animal killing Thisbe in Shakespeare’s *Dream* – he fails again and gets discouraged. Watching Cheoyong’s serial defeats, the King suddenly stands up from his seat and goes to the Players on the stage, saying that he will help him defeat his enemy. At first the Players look surprised at the King’s unexpected action, but soon they ask him to join in their performance as the lion by

wearing an animal mask and fighting with the evil spirit instead of Cheoyong. The Players begin to perform a cavalry battle and the King sits on their shoulders to attack the evil spirit (Figure 28). This scene emphasises the role of the King as a ruler who has to protect his people from the evil spirits by exorcising them and restoring the order of the society. In this context, the Players' *Cheoyongmu* is a sacred ritual performance to repair the damaged order, and it also functions as a symbolic activity that represents the wishes of the people regarding their own welfare and that their nation. Since the performance itself functions as a ceremony for the peace and stability of society, in *Moon Night at Shilla*, the King decides to participate in the performance to repair the damaged order by himself.



Figure 28. The King fighting with the evil spirit in Act 3, Scene 1 (*Moon Night at Shilla*, 2000)

The King, as the ruler of his nation, has a responsibility for bringing a new order and also conveying a didactic message that good always triumphs over evil. In addition, he disregards his position for a while to stress the importance of communal activity for the peace of the entire society. When the King wins over the spirit, everyone cheers and shouts for joy. Pleased with his own victory, he commands everyone – the performer perhaps inviting not only the characters on the stage but also the audience members – to enjoy the wedding ceremony by singing and dancing together:

*The people supporting the evil spirit finally fall down after the long and intense battle. Dumbo is so happy that he embraces the King. Meoksan and other people are looking at them fearfully, but the King also embraces Dumbo. Regardless of the differences between social classes, everyone hugs*

*and gives a shout of joy. The Dokkaebi King and Golchi also embrace each other, but soon separate.*

THE KING. I have thought the way you play is vulgar, but when I am playing together with you, it is so exciting! It is the first night of my marriage life, so I am extremely happy. You will be treated with lots of wine and food, so do not care of the differences of class, and everyone as one lights a torch, and enjoy tonight until tomorrow morning.

[...]

THE DOKKAEBI KING. I have never seen such a playful performance like this. I want to do something because I saw it for free. Let's join and have fun with them!

*Everyone dances to the exciting music. (3.1)*

In this scene, the characters from the highest social class throw themselves into the performance and get along with the other people of lower classes. While the King is dancing with the Players, the Queen and four lovers also join in the dance performance, which is watched by the Dokkaebi who have been sitting on the edge of the stage as the audience. While the performers are singing the final song, the Dokkaebi stand up and dance along with the other characters in unified physical movements. After Golchi and Mirang's final speech to ask the audience to praise their performance, all the characters enter the stage and begin to sing the same song and dance all together. This signifies that the order between the human beings and *dokkaebi* is now restored and their worlds which were in a chaotic state have now found the right path to follow.

When the King who was an audience member joins in the fictitious drama, the fourth wall between the stage and the audience is broken down, and the performance became no longer an illusory work. The boundary between the theatrical world and reality is blurred, and the theatrical space is open to the audience, who is invited to the playful atmosphere. There might be little distinction between the performers and spectator toward the end of the performance, as they join together in vigorous dance. One audience member states,

It was a fresh, new, and fabulous performance based on the traditional elements of our [Korean] culture such as *Talchum* and *Samulnori* which

remind me of a smell of soil. It was really great to see how Shakespeare's play can be harmonised with the elements of Korean culture. (Joeun, 2000)

Through the vigorous energy of *shinmyeong*, the illusory world of theatre is expanded to the space of reality, which means the performance itself becomes a part of life and everyone celebrates life as a communal activity. Within the shared experience, individuals' imaginations are actualised through their physical participation in the illusory work of theatre. At this moment, the sensuous expressions of the performers as well as the experiences of each member of the audience cannot be reduced to a subjective experience. The interaction between the performers and the audience is essential in order to develop individuals' imaginations on a broader level as a collective activity.

The final scene of the performance deals with the theme of imagination, which is also emphasised by Theseus in Shakespeare's play.<sup>29</sup> The play within a play expands on Shakespeare's theme of imagination and portrays the relationship between the audience and the performers on stage. The interjected play emphasises the importance of imagination and dreaming in the maintenance of loving relationships and in the creation of art. As Shakespeare describes, through the power of imagination, unknown and invisible things can be shown in embodied form that can be experienced through the audience's eyes and ears. In fact, theatre is a sensuous event, in which the sensuous presence of performers and audience comes before their psychological identification. In this context, the concept of imagination can be explored through the interaction with the living bodies of participants and the physical site of the stage, which prompts the audience to have a different theatrical experience. In other words, imagination can be understood as a means of focusing on the sensuous and material aspects of theatre, particularly the performers' bodies, which might prompt the audience to explore the eternal and the primitive of inner human nature as well as in the external manifestation of theatre. Thus, each performance is a unique experience including the presence of the spectators, which

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<sup>29</sup> "The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling, / Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven; / And as imagination bodies forth / The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen / Turns them to shapes, and gives to aery nothing / A local habitation and a name" (5.1.12-17).

implies that the theatrical event involves a communicative condition emerging from the simultaneous physical and sensuous bodies.

Lee and Hong use the elements of Korean folklore just as Shakespeare adapts characters from British fairy tales such as 'Robin Goodfellow.' As the *dokkaebi's* mythical world is explored in a musical form with traditional dance, the audience has a chance to appreciate the form and musical aspects of the old poetry written in the Shilla period. By translating the context of the Korean mythical stories for the modern stage, the director positions his production between traditional and modern conditions. This ambivalent condition offers a new experience for the audience, who can focus on the performers' physical presence as a medium of communication between the fictional and real worlds in and outside of theatre. The communal experience of the event is constituted by the performers' creation of the past through their bodies and memory. As Lee Yun-Taek (2012) writes,

Imagination is intangible like air. In this intangible imagination, experience, memory, perception, and reality are mixed up, which become a concrete form through performers' bodies. That can be called a theatrical art. Therefore, theatre creates something new through the process of imaginative work towards past memory and experience. (p. 65)

In other words, the images of performers' bodies function as a meeting point of past and present. After all, the theatrical event becomes a liminal experience between past and present that again creates something new, previously unavailable to the conscious mind.

In *Moon Night at Shilla*, Lee and Hong explore how the psychological structure in the stories of Korean myths and folklore can be embodied and experienced through the aesthetic of performers' corporeal presence. Based on the cultural memories inscribed in the form of traditional art, the audience can expand their vision and perspective on past memories described in folktales. At the same time, this performance reveals how Shakespeare's play can be used as a source to explore and revitalise the value of tradition, particularly its relation to the aesthetic of performers' physical expression, which has been forgotten and undiscovered in modern Korean society. For its symbolic function which reflects a cultural conscious in a condensed form, the performer's body can be read as a poetic image, and its

direct ontology in relation to the audience intensifies the dynamism of its own presence in the theatre space. In this way, performers and audience members can be co-creators of the production without the limitation of the boundary between the stage and auditorium, which shows how this performance can also function as a ritual ceremony, not only for the happiness of the characters within the play but also for the well-being of the audience members in the theatre space as a reflection of their life.

**Imagery, Body, and Dream: The Poetics of Cultural Bodies in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (2006) by Yang Jung-Ung**

The Yohangza Theatre Company is one of the best-known groups to experiment with Shakespeare's plays in a traditional Korean style. It was founded by Yang Jung-Ung in 1996, and now it has become the most famous theatre company in Korea and abroad. Literally meaning 'travellers' in Korean, Yohangza believes that "[l]ife is a journey and through the journey of life we meet a lot of people" (Yang, 2011), so they explore new perspectives and visions on life by travelling to many different countries. Yang is very popular and most of his productions are commercially successful in Korea and other countries. Previously, Yang worked as a playwright, director, and actor in Korea, then joined the Lasenkan International Theatre in Spain for two years (1994 - 1996) gaining an international approach to dance and theatre in a multi-cultural space. Through this experience, he explored how a play can be interpreted from different perspectives and described through other cultural visions. Distinctly Korean in flavour, Yohangza has presented an experimental collision of past and present theatrical modes by exploring traditional Korean styles and forms infused with elements of modern Western and Korean theatre. In this way, the company suggests a compelling and fresh mix of energetic dance, voice, and music interwoven with stories of not only Korean folklore and mythology, but also Western canonical playwrights such as Shakespeare and Ibsen, which is always combined with a characteristic of Korean theatrical *mise-en-scène*.

His many productions are combined with Korean traditional theatrical forms and acting styles along with highly stylised scenography influenced by the trend of

modern visual culture. These ideas sprang from his former experiences as an actor in the Lasenkan in which Yang explored how a play could be interpreted in different cultural conditions. As he performed in many different countries, he always desired to produce his own plays in the Korean language and in traditional styles like *Pansori* and *Talchum*. Yang has always been fascinated with many different modes of tradition for the influence of his parents and the historical place, Gyeongju, where he grew up in his early childhood. In an interview, he said that:

The sense of hybridity has been developed during my childhood. I was raised in Gyeongju.<sup>30</sup> My parents loved Western classical music and sometimes took me to painting exhibitions and movie theatres. My everyday life was influenced by Western culture, but my identity was highly Asian from the culture I have been raised in. Thanks to the hybrid experiences, I became interested in the fusion of Western styles and Korean traditional forms, which was inspired by the experiences in the Lasenkan. (Song, 2012)

Yang reveals that there are two main reasons to produce Shakespeare's plays in such ways: the first is to explore his own identity as a Korean artist; the second is to help the modern audience understand both Korean traditional culture and Shakespeare's works. According to him, "the essential theme of a play can be universal; it is not only a matter of Shakespearean or Western culture, but also a trendy issue that current Korean people are also experiencing. To explore this, I believe artists need to design a certain form for the modern audience to have critical views on the theme in present context" (Yang, 2011). Although there are big differences in each culture, he believes there is a universality in human nature that makes it possible to communicate between the audience and other cultures; therefore, understanding his own culture could be the first step to knowing different cultures and people. After he returned to Korea in 1996, Yang started his work in Hyehwadong, the performance space in Seoul for young artists who explore experimental forms and styles in theatres. During this period, he was fascinated with the primal nature of ritual performance and began to write and direct several productions such as *The Children on the Earth* (2001), *The Daughters on the Earth* (2001), and *Yeon-*

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<sup>30</sup> Gyeongju was the capital of the ancient kingdom of Shilla that includes a vast number of archaeological sites and extant cultural properties from this period.

*Karma* (2001). The concept of these productions is to create non-verbal theatrical language and explore the effect of images in experimental ways.

His unique style of combining traditional Korean theatre form with modern Korean and Western theatrical style can be also observed in his Shakespeare productions. Until now, the company has staged seven Shakespeare plays: *Romeo and Juliet* (1998, 2014), *King Lear* (1999), *Macbeth* (2003), *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (2002 - present), *Twelfth Night* (2008, 2011), *Hamlet* (2009 - 2015), and recently *Pericles* (2015).<sup>31</sup> Yang (2011) reveals that "Shakespeare offers great opportunities for performance; his plays always involve a relatively large cast and offer lots of dramatic scenes and complex ideas that make the stories more playful and dynamic to excite the modern audience." Among his productions, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* has been the most famous and frequently performed work since its first performance in 2002. Critics also stated that the production "opened a new paradigm of Shakespeare adaptation based on the aesthetic of Korean culture" (Jang, 2012, p. 363). Although the title and most of the plot are borrowed from the original play, the dialogue and the ways of communicating the story are reconstructed by Yang himself. Yang refuses to rely heavily on Shakespeare's texts, only choosing some key points and focusing on how to develop the theme of his plays in a modern style fused with traditional modes of practice. In the translation from Shakespeare's English into Korean, Yang studies a wide range of traditional theatre to find out the most appropriate form to make Shakespeare's plays understandable for Korean audiences.

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<sup>31</sup> Yang reveals that the history of Shakespeare adaptation by Yohangza can be explained in three stages: (1) At the end of 1990s, Yang adapted Shakespeare by cutting out some parts but tried to keep the main theme of the play, and then created choreographic movements and images which are combined with musical effect and dance in Western style. (2) In the early 2000s, Yang adapted Shakespeare's plays totally in his way: he freely uses the original text by changing characters' gender or cutting out the subplots to leave only the scenes that support the theme of his adapted version in Korean style. Shakespeare's plays are recreated according to Yang's perspectives based on traditional culture. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was produced in this period. (3) In the late 2000s, he particularly explored the form of Korean ritual ceremony called *Gut* to produce *Hamlet*. Yang reveals that "some critics insist this concept is far from the theme of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, but actually I think the concept of *Gut* is very close to the essential idea of the play because it is all about the death and life of human beings. In this way, the Korean audience is able to understand *Hamlet* very well because it is translated into the Korean version based on the traditional form which is available and familiar to the people" (Yang, 2011).

Above all, he has struggled to reuse the old practices and theatrical forms which have been forgotten or undervalued due to the dominant influence of Western modernisation in the late twentieth century. Yang's *Dream* shows his attitude towards Shakespeare, his ideas of using Korean traditions, and his anxiety as an Asian artist about adapting a Western play from a very different cultural and theatrical context. As Maria Shevtsova (2009) points out, Korean directors including Yang commonly try to recover and explore the value of the traditional culture of Korea for the modern spectator, and Shakespeare becomes a "source of local self-consciousness, self-exploration and self-affirmation of the kind associated with motions of cultural identity" (p. 167). In other words, the adaptation of Shakespeare sets the condition for "renewed cultural awareness and renewed concern with cultural identification" (p. 167). Through the performance, it is possible to discern how his cultural and social background has influenced the development of his directing style and acting method of the company. Regarding traditional theatrical forms, Yang states:

I think adopting Korean traditional forms into modern theatre forms does not mean just repeating the past work without change. More importantly, I am concerned about how these ancient forms can be changed and replaced with the images of performing bodies. In the process of collaborative works, the actors and I have transformed the images inside of our heads into a form of actual movement. Not only *Bongsan Talchum*, but we also perform other Asian folk dances or gestures, as many as we can think of. [...] In the same context, we did not just use traditional music in its original style, but fused it with modern styles of music. This production [*A Midsummer Night's Dream*] could be created by this eclectic process of fusing Western and Eastern elements along with Korean styles. (Yang, 2006a)

The lack of specific and concrete information of what Shakespeare intended in his plays allows Yang to explore the unanswerable questions by experimenting with various styles and forms. According to Jang Eun-Soo (2012), the characteristics of Yohangza's productions can be divided into two kinds: "one is the visual *mise-en-scène* of choreographic movements and set design harmonised with the musical effect; the other is the fusion of disparate elements from different cultures and genres through collaborative work with the designers and actors" (p. 361). By combining these two methods and making the visual images clear and easy to understand, Yang

has developed his own style. For Yohangza, one of the important functions of theatre is to make a dynamic communication with the audience to help them to discover pertinent meanings and values in the play and relate the ideas to their own lives. For this reason, their works have mainly focused on the effect of visual images because they appeal immediately to the audience's senses, which can be direct communication without the necessity of translating the language. As Yang (2003, p. 21) insists, the images induce the audience to use their own imaginations and senses to understand the meanings of the visual signs.

According to Hollindale (1992), Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* contains a great deal of imagery that "function[s] as a means of reinforcing dramatic method and a major aid to interpreting the theme of the play" (pp. 110-11). Likewise, Yohangza's *Dream* emphasises the effect of imagery which is mainly created through the pattern of the performers' bodily actions in dynamic combinations of dance and music. Also, the methods of speaking are so varied and idiosyncratic that it takes on the quality of music that enhances the aspect of physical theatricality. Yang's text, which is rewritten with his own imagination inspired by Shakespeare's play, contains many visual images parallel to poetic forms of symbolic and metaphoric expressions to make a concrete shape of the fairy world. These physical actions, inspired from his imagination based on Korean culture, can heighten the effect with dynamic movements of the body. In particular, the actors' physical expressions are significant in terms of their 'translatability' to appeal not only to Korean audiences but also to international audiences who are not familiar with Korean culture.

To concentrate on the forms of expression with the actors' physical bodies and their eccentric images to depict the fairies, Yang cuts the first and last acts; therefore, the number of characters is reduced to only eight, and the drama is set entirely in the forest outside Athens. He then adds some lines to the dialogue between the young lovers, explaining what happened to them before they arrived in the forest so that the audience understands the eliminated parts. In addition, he tries to keep the rhythmic effect of Shakespeare's language with careful consideration for the musical quality of the meter and syllables of Korean expressions. In addition, he prefers using *hangul* (the Korean alphabet) to emphasise its beauty and excellence to the audience. For

instance, the four lovers are named after “the four divisions of stars according to Korean astrology, which is based on the 28 days that it takes the moon to circle the sun” (Huang, 2010): the name Hang (Lysander) is an eastern star, Rue (Demetrius) a western star, Beok (Hermia) a northern star, and Ik (Helena) a southern star. Each star has its own position in the star map, and therefore the characters wear blue, green, yellow, and red, respectively, to signify their location in the sky (Figure 29). In the performance, Yang presents the idea that “the stars were believed to be intertwined with the mortal world and reflect or foretell events in the earthly realm” (Huang, 2010). When they enter the realm of *dokkaebi*, they all change their costumes into the colour white, reflecting how they are totally under the power of the spirit world. In this context, the trouble between the four lovers in the forest symbolises a disorder such that the stars leave their place in the constellation, and their union with a true lover allegorises the restoration of the order in which the stars return to their correct constellation. In this sense, each character becomes a symbolic figure representing cultural imagination inherent in Korean legend and myth.



Figure 29. The Dokgabi dancing in Scene 1 (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 2006)

In his production, Yang makes the fairies play as *dokkaebi*. He uses both ‘*dokkaebi*’ and ‘*dokgabi*’: the stage directions use the standard term, *dokkaebi*, whereas the dialogue refers to *dokgabi*. The small distinction seems to be between the magical beings of common folklore (*dokkaebi*) and the individual version of

them created in the world of this production (*dokgabi*). In Yohangza's production, Duduri, representing Puck, is played by two different male actors to emphasise the power of *dokgabi*' magic – aiming at a dramatic effect. The actors also play with the audience and vigorously encourage them to respond to their actions or even participate in the dramatic situation. They wear white make-up on their faces and have a traditional Korean wedding wearing rouge on their cheeks and lips. Their make-up seems to be inspired from the designs of *Talchum* masks whose shape and colour designate the personality and nature of each character in the traditional drama. The presence of the *dokgabi* themselves becomes a dramatic metaphor for the dream world: they basically wear white on their faces which evokes the mood of the illusory spiritual world, and their mischievous and exaggerated bodily actions and facial expressions enhance the comical and humorous atmosphere. At the same time, their face make-up makes *dokgabi* look rather gentle and friendly, which is far from the frightening and scary face of *dokkaebi* in Korean traditional culture. Latham (1972, p. 178-179) insists that Shakespeare ignores the details of the traditional fairies of his time to reinvent the fanciful beings for his concept of the poetic and imaginary fairyland of the play. In the same way, Yang invents his own fairyland and recreates the fairies with a delicate and graceful fancy in which they seem to have a more pleasant nature in highly picturesque images.



Figure 30. Dot and Gabi in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (The Haninherald, 2012)

In Yohangza's production, the Fairy Queen and King are named Dot<sup>32</sup> and

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<sup>32</sup> Dot (Titania) is a *bujikkengi dokgabi*, so she always carries with her a *bujikkengi* that has a big eye on the top. This eye sees the world instead of her and also talks with her. This is a different prop from

Gabi (Figure 30), derived from breaking down the word ‘*dok-kaebi*’ into ‘*dok*’ and ‘*kaebi*.’ In the original text, the fairy world is an allegory of the Athenian court where the characters are under the authority of the powerful ruler, Theseus, whose physical and political strength is also demonstrated in the relation with Hippolyta and Hermia. However, interestingly, Yang resets the position of Dot and Gabi within the fairy world where the order of fairies is opposite to the social structure of the mortals. In his *Dream*, the authority of the male-oriented sovereign is deconstructed; Dot (representing Titania) manipulates Gabi (representing Oberon) in the position of queen who is the representative of the fairy world as a ruler. This condition is totally different from not only the relation between Oberon and Titania, but also the depiction of gender roles in ancient Korean society. In the male-centred system in the Korean social structure of the past, husbands often betray their wives by running after women. This is also described in the production, with Gabi justifying his behaviour by saying, “there is a saying among the mortals: When a lady-killer moves, he moves like a tidal wave” (*A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, 2006, Scene 2) without the sense of shame, and even making Dot angry by criticising her jealousy. According to Shim Jung-Soon (1999), “an audience of Korean women could easily identify with this problem because traditionally the practice of concubinage was a privilege of Korean men” (p. 242). She insists that “[e]ver since the 1980s, during the country’s remarkable economic growth, the modern version of a husband’s infidelity has become prevalent among middle-class families” (p. 243). However, as the importance of women has increased in modern Korean society along with the influence of Western and Japanese feminist movements, infidelity is not acceptable anymore. It has been denounced as an illegal and immoral action that becomes one of the most common reasons for divorce. Yang (2003, p. 20) believes that Korean society becomes a kind of ‘new’ matricentric society and, accordingly, he reverses the relation of Gabi and Dot by setting Gabi as a philandering husband who is tested by his wife. In his production, Dot is more powerful than Gabi as he confesses, “I’m scared of my wife, scared of her nagging” (Scene 2). This proves that she has the leadership in the conjugal relation and makes him fall in love with an old female called Ajumi, who represents Bottom, to punish him for his improper behaviour.

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a normal stick since it symbolises vital power for life that makes a fictional atmosphere of the performance.

In the original play, the scene in the court of Athens is often considered to show the aspect of the ‘real’ world where the four lovers later return from the fairy world, which is thought of as a fantasy or dream world. In this scene, Hermia is forced to get married to Demetrius by Theseus and Egeus who threaten her with the power of the Athens law that defeats her will to marry Lysander. Although Yang does not include the court scenes in his adaptation, this does not mean the production ignores the importance of the power of law and order in the real world. When Beok enters with Hang in the first scene, the audience can learn from their conversation that they will soon escape, especially from the authority of Beok’s father who orders her to marry Rue instead of Hang:

HANG. I won’t let you marry him! Let’s run away.

BEOK. My father will have me killed.

HANG. Are you going to do what your father tells you to do?

BEOK. Give me some more time.

HANG. Tomorrow is your wedding. Will you marry someone without love?  
Heaven will help us ...

BEOK. (*Stares at Hang for a moment.*) At midnight. Under the totem pole! I swear on your star, the blue dragon. Heaven will help us. (Scene 1)

These lines show that the power of the patriarchal social system allows Beok’s father to even kill his own daughter for her disobedience and resistance. It is interesting that Yang presents a different reaction from Hermia, who gladly accepts Lysander’s suggestion to flee from the “sharp Athenian law” (1.1.162) and swears to Lysander “by Cupid’s strongest bow” (1.1.169) to meet him the next day. In comparison to Hermia’s quick and bold decision, Beok seems to be too much concerned about the power of the law and the consequences for the violation. This scene represents the female position in Korean society for a long period of time, particularly the Choson Dynasty (1392-1910), when they were often marginalised and controlled under the power of a patriarchal ideology under the influence of Confucianism from China. Though Yang eliminates the presence of Theseus and Hippolyta, he makes the power just as visible as in the court scene in Shakespeare’s play. Moreover, Yang emphasises the concept that the actual world (Athens), symbolising the presence of law and social norms, cannot be separated from the dream world of the fairies. When Gabi tries to seduce female mortals passing near the forest, Dot gets angry by saying

that “[w]e are only creatures of this wood, but there are governing laws in everything” (Scene 2). In other words, Yang does not separate the world into two different divisions; rather, he agrees there are different aspects which co-exist in a harmonious condition like the balance of *ying* and *yang*. Therefore, the forest does not only symbolise the dream world, but it is the place where many different forces and desires can be discovered and explored.



Figure 31. Rue mesmerised by the power of the magical flower in Scene 5  
(Lee, 2014)

In the production, the series of the contrasting states of reality and fantasy, waking and dreaming often occur at the same time. In particular, when Duduri and Dot use the power of “ticklish lilies” (whose smell is used by Gabi to attract female mortals) to make Gabi, Hang, and Rue fall in love with the wrong partners, they stimulate their olfactory sense with the smell of the “poisonous herb,” a different method than used in the original text in which Oberon and Puck drop the juice of the love-in-idleness into the eyes of Lysander and Demetrius. While sniffing the plant, the male characters sleepwalk to follow the smell of the magical flower (Figure 31). Yang changes the precise method by which the magic is executed to highlight the process in which the magical effect influences the action of Hang and Rue. Without any consciousness of their own actions, Hang and Rue walk with their eyes closed and follow the smell around the bare stage as if they are sleepwalking – their light footsteps and smiling faces showing their emotional state as being infatuated with the scent. This scene emphasises not only the dramatic effect by making the moment much longer with more elaborate, choreographed movements of the actors, but also the theme of the ambiguous relationship between reality and illusion, waking and sleeping states.

The theme of the ambiguous relationship between reality and illusion is also emphasised in the practice of double casting. Hang, Beok, Ik, Rue, and Ajumi perform as *dokgabi* singing and dancing all together in various scenes to enhance the festive mood. At these moments, they wear traditional masks of *Talchum* and put on vests and hair accessories made of straw to signify they are playing a *dokgabi*. As Shakespeare's *Dream* can be interpreted as implying that "life is a dream" (Kehler, 2001, p. 3) and "the memory of the dream is itself obscuring" (Garber, 2013, p. 63), Yohangza's *Dream* shows there are no strict boundaries between dreams and waking life. The characters are confused as to whether the magical happenings they have gone through are a dream or not,<sup>33</sup> and they fail to fathom what exactly happens to them during the night. The production depicts the characters as living in a world where dream and reality are jumbled up in a harmonious interaction as attested by the theme of the song "A Life is but a Dream" in the last scene that undermines the attempt to set boundaries or divide our living world into two. The juxtaposition of dream, love, imagination, and the supernatural, which are often linked, provides the condition for "the conflation of boundaries and the collapsing of distinctions of time, gender, genre, and social status" (Kehler, 2001, p. 17). In this sense, Yohangza's *Dream* provides a vision faithful to the theme of Shakespeare's play, yet renders it in the expressive language of traditional Korean theatre.

In Shakespeare's *Dream*, Nick Bottom is one of the characters who symbolises the collapse of the boundaries of the fairy world and human world by reversing the animal-mortal states. Hollindale (1992) insists that it is "one of the play's most delightful reversal-jokes that hackneyed images of ass-like stupidity are reinforced by the physical spectacle of Bottom's transformation" (p. 117). In this case, everyday animal imagery becomes hilarious and bizarre in its physical presence. In Yohangza's production, Yang creates a female character called Ajumi to represent Bottom. She is a poor and old herb collector whose behaviour and appearance are ugly and unattractive throughout the performance. In fact, Ajumi is slang for

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<sup>33</sup> In Scene 6, the four lovers say: "Am I awake or do I dream?"; "It seems to me that yet we sleep, we dream"; "Bewitched by love or by dream?"

Ajumma who is usually a middle-aged married woman with no sense of shame.<sup>34</sup> As a result of the magical power of the plant, Ajumi becomes a pig rather than an ass. In Korea, as one of the mythical animals, a pig has contradictory features in itself: it is synonymous with stupidity and fortune at the same time, which Yang (2006b) deems more plausible to a Korean audience. In the performance, the transformation of Ajumi into a pig provides a powerful concept of the image as a greedy and dirty animal that has been generally known to the people in Korean culture. Wearing a pig's head and making oinking sounds, Ajumi keeps eating and asking Gabi for more food; she even mimics urinating on the stage and applies her own urine to her face because she believes the smell can protect her from *dokgabi* (Figure 32). Undoubtedly, these gestures intend to show how horrible and unattractive she is. Therefore, it must be a (romantic) comedy when Gabi praises her beauty and confesses his love by comparing her with other fabulous animal creatures – “phoenix” and “cuckoo” – in his singing *Sarang-ga* (‘Love Song’), which is one of the *Pansori* songs based on the most famous love stories.



Figure 32. Duduri smelling Ajumi in Scene 4 (Kwon, 2011)



Figure 33. Ajumi wearing a pig mask and eating a watermelon in Scene 6 (Kwon, 2011)

As Bottom’s representation of the king in the fairy world mocks the authority of the social structure and conventions, Ajumi’s vulgar gestures such as eating greedily and urinating do not simply symbolise her stupidity but subvert the power of

<sup>34</sup> In the original text for Korean audience, Yang uses the Korean pronunciation for Chinese characters: “A” from 雅 (grace), “Ju” from 主 (master), and “Mi” from 美 (beauty); therefore, the meaning of her name becomes “more beautiful than all” of them put together. However, at the Globe theatre in 2012, to help the British audience understand the meaning of ‘Ajumi’ in English, Yang borrows the names of Shakespeare’s other characters who are known as light, beautiful, and attractive figures. When she reveals her name at first, Duduri immediately interprets her name as “A” as in Ariel, “Ju” as in Juliet, and “Mi” as in Miranda.

the ‘governing law’ in both the fairy and mortal worlds (Figure 33). As Kott (1974) argues that Bottom, with the head of an ass, parodies the authority of the high class and becomes a sexual potency, the relationship between Gabi and Ajumi “radically subverts the existent bias or general formula about sex: a love affair between power and beauty” (Lee, 2009, p. 295). The body of Ajumi functions as a manifestation of a grotesque nature which is close to a primitive condition faithful to her own desires. As Ajumi becomes the dearest lover of the fairy king, the two different worlds – mortals and fairies – stay in disorder and chaos where the authority of the upper class is violated and challenged. In particular, Shakespeare’s fools such as Bottom can be explored through the concept of Mikhail Bakhtin’s carnivalesque (1984) which is a mode that subverts the power of the dominant structure or authority through humour and laughter in a festive mood.<sup>35</sup> Interestingly, Bakhtin insists the act of urinating has two different meanings: it can be understood as a “traditional debasing gesture” (p. 148) and at the same time it means the power of “fertility in human life” (p. 149).

This gesture [the slinging of excrement and drenching in urine] ... [is] based on a literal debasement in terms of the topography of the body, that is, a reference to the bodily lower stratum, the zone of the genital organs. This signifies destruction, a grave for the one who is debased. But such debasing gestures and expressions are ambivalent, since the lower stratum is not only a bodily grave but also the area of genital organs, the fertilizing and generating stratum. Therefore, in the images of urine and excrement is preserved the essential link with birth, fertility, renewal, welfare. (p. 148)

At first glance, it seems that Ajumi, her lower body – especially her urine and grunting sounds – represents all those parts of the body and of life which well-mannered, middle-class people try to exclude. However, as Bakhtin (1984) argues, the act of urinating is also involved in “the magic power to increase the fertility of the earth, as does the urine of the gods” (p. 149). Thus, the existing perspective on her urinating gesture as dirty and vulgar becomes doubtful and can be reinterpreted as the positive element of renewal. By positioning the act of urinating in the same

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<sup>35</sup> According to Harold Bloom (2008), “Bakhtin identified ‘carnival’ as the basis of an autonomous and historically progressive popular culture.” For Bakhtin, the ‘carnavalesque’ is “a genre synonymous with ‘grotesque realism’” (p. 210). Michael Bristol (1985), Manfred Pfister (1987), and David Wiles (1998) also studied Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* in relation to Bakhtin’s theory of carnivalesque.

line with a sacred duty of fertility, the distinction between high and low values is challenged and confused. In a similar context, her presence with the pig's head succeeds in surpassing all the boundaries of not only the distinction of class, but also animal-mortal, dream-reality, and beauty-ugliness. Her potential to cross diverse areas intensifies the theme of *Dream* – the way of perceiving identity through a series of mistakes and confusions between appearance and reality, illusion and kinds of truth. After all, the value and power of the social class and norms become meaningless in the presence of her physical body. Throughout the performance, Ajumi shows that she is faithful to her desire – full of laughter, eating, urinating as well as singing and dancing along with the Dokkaebi – which invigorates the festive mood in the forest with carnivalesque spirit.

In his production, Yang emphasises the visual images shaped by the actors' physical body; above all, he includes various images of the natural landscape and the animal world. The importance of visual imagery and physical embodiment implied in Shakespeare's *Dream* has been pointed out by many scholars.<sup>36</sup> Among others, Hollindale focuses on the physical theatricality of the play. He claims that “[m]ost of Shakespeare's important groups and clusters of images have their physical parallels and analogues in the action” (Hollindale, 1992, p. 110). In particular, he insists that *A Midsummer Night's Dream* as “the most theatrically physical of all Shakespeare's plays” shows “a similar correspondence between the dominant images and the visual and active elements of the play,” and “all are directly linked to the drama's physical embodiment, those parts of its theatricality which no audience can miss” (p. 111). The empty space allows the actors to create various spatial configurations through different bodily forms. The core concept of stage setting might be ‘bare stage’ in which an audience can interpret and create various meanings depending on their social and cultural circumstances. Yang (2003) states, “The main stage in the centre is an empty space which is reminiscent of *madang*, a stage where Korean traditional performances take place.” Therefore, the space functions as an open text, not a closed one. This is very close to the work of *madang* in Korean traditional performance; in this place, the audience not only enjoys the representation of a play, but also realises the fictional world is actually an allegory of the real world through

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<sup>36</sup> See Spurgeon (1965), pp. 4-11, pp. 43-45, p. 67, pp. 259-263 and Hollindale (1992), pp. 110-120.

the dynamic interaction with the actors. They use the space as both an actual and imaginative area, which is recognisable enough by the shapes composed of specific bodily postures and gestures derived from a combination of Korean traditional dance and modern pantomime gestures.

Yang often emphasises that the production is the outcome of improvisational work with the group of actors and designers.<sup>37</sup> Yang (2011) states that the actors in Yohangza have regularly practised various types of movement for several years, from traditional Korean dance such as *Taekkyeon* (a traditional Korean martial art), *Subak* (a specific or generic ancient Korean martial art), and *Talchum* to modern styles like acrobatic dance and pantomime. Through these practices, the actors come to concentrate on their bodies and control their energy. It is important that each actor should be aware of his or her own body and its ability in movements. Also, their bodies have become familiar with different rhythms; consequently, this kind of training helps the actors make their bodies more flexible and suitable for any improvised actions to be created (Yang, 2014). In the creation of certain images, their abstract concepts are shared, discussed, and experimented with during rehearsal. Aside from traditional Korean acting styles, Yang (2014) reveals that he has been “influenced by Western theories and practitioners such as Grotowski, Artaud, and many others,” so the images of the grotesque nature-mortal form might be the result of the combination of various styles of Korean traditional acting forms and Western styles like modern dance and mime. These disparate elements seem well suited for the magical spirit world of the fairies. The clash of eclectic images is an effective strategy to accentuate the mysterious sense of the atmosphere. For example, as Hang and Beok are passing through the forest, a group of *dokgabi* act as if they are trees and branches, teasing the couple by blocking their way out. They also keep changing their posture with spontaneous and quick movements to make the characters confused so that they finally give up escaping from the forest. Their acrobatic gestures enhance the stage landscape of forest, rocks, and wind by using their fingers in detail, which look a bit grotesque (Figure 34). Regarding the landscape of the

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<sup>37</sup> This is not only the case with the Yohangza Theatre Company. According to Jang (2012), since the 1990s, the ways of revising performance in Korea have changed a great deal; rather than one director managing the whole process, other members of a theatre company freely participate in the process as collaborators (p. 373).

forest, Garber (2013) states that the nature of the landscape forms part of a spatial pattern of natural and supernatural transformation, and points out its importance through a psychological perspective:

We have touched upon the question of the landscape of the mind, the correlation between psychological and geographical description. This phenomenon might well be called “visionary landscape,” because it is a projection of the subconscious state of mind upon the external state of terrain and climate ... (p. 70)

In Yang’s production, according to the Dokkaebi’s gestural images, nature has various aspects: it has a dark side, occasionally manifesting mischievous, vicious, and jealous characteristics. It seems that the performers’ bodies as a visual code symbolise the emotional state of the characters. In this case, their bodily images signify that the dream is partly a nightmare. However, it also exhibits a gentle and friendly attitude to the characters. In this way, the audience can easily perceive each situation through the transformed imagery, which is associated with the familiar symbolic forms from their culture. In the same context, Yang rewrites some parts of Shakespeare’s lines for the sake of clarity. In the original text, Lysander insists that he should lie beside Hermia because they can make “one heart” in “a single troth.” But Hermia turns down his suggestion by claiming the importance of “courtesy” (2.2.54) and “human modesty” (2.2.55).

LYSANDER. Love takes the meaning in love’s conference:

I mean, that my heart unto yours [is] knit  
So that but one heart we can make of it;  
Two bosoms interchained with an oath;  
So then two bosoms and a single troth. (2.2.46-50)

In Yang’s *Dream*, Lysander’s lines are changed into a duet for Hang and Beok:

HANG and BEOK. (*singing together*) You are my love, your star is my star.  
You are my love, your star is my star.  
In the dead of night, across the Milky Way  
I lie here with you, you must be an angel in the sky.  
What should I do if this turns out to be a dream.  
Even in a dream, my love will never falter.

Our love will never alter till our sweet life ends. (Scene 2)



Figure 34. The Dokgabi playing as trees in Scene 2 (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 2006)



Figure 35. The Dokgabi and the couple (Hang and Beok) dancing together in Scene 2 (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 2006)

In Shakespeare's play, this part can be seen as a sexual flirtation that reveals how Lysander wants to sleep with Hermia. However, Yang emphasises the eternity of their love rather than sexual desire between the two lovers. Therefore, he changes "one heart we can make of it; / Two bosoms interchained with an oath" into "You are my love, your star is my star" to show their love pursues a pure and spiritual state rather than following sexual desire because their relationship has a more serious meaning that symbolises harmony between Hang and Beok as stars. They actually represent the order of the constellation as well as the mortal world. To emphasise this concept, Yang uses very specific words like "star" and "Milky Way" which give a clear concept of the images to the audience. While Hang and Beok are singing, the group of *dokgabi* is dancing together according to the lyrics of their song. Standing behind the couple, they display their hand gestures to signify numerous twinkling stars shining in the sky (Figure 35). Also, they form a "Milky Way" by standing in a line hand in hand. Since Hang and Beok symbolise eastern and northern stars, their singing of "stars" and "Milky Way" has a special meaning related to the cultural context of astrology. As Hang and Beok are lying down on the ground to sleep, the locations become the traces completing the "Milky Way." In this way, this visual love with the gentle duet gives a strong impression of their love in poetic terms. Ironically, this creates a powerful dramatic effect as Hang breaks his pledge later – "Even in a dream, my love will never falter. Our love will never alter till our sweet life ends" (Scene 3) – by falling in love with Ik for a while as a result of the magical

power of the herb.

The effect of these images not only helps the audience understand some parts of Shakespeare's *Dream*. They can also physically experience the story through the performers' visual bodies that construct the spectacle on the stage. To create the stage landscape, Yang (2011) uses his own imagination inspired by "the stories such as Korean folktales, myth, and traditional fairy tales that he first heard as a child." As it is often said that dreams can reveal the unconscious, Yang's *Dream* shows what parts of the old stories are left in his imagination and how he uses certain elements to replace some elements of Shakespeare's *Dream* with his own *Dream*. Garber (2013) argues that "the image of the poet's transforming power to make 'shapes' of the 'forms of things unknown' follows closely the processes of dream" (p. 86). In this sense, Shakespeare's words become the raw material that provokes Yang to explore his (sub)conscious to complete his poetic drama in a concrete visual form. Regarding the use of imagery in Shakespeare's play, Spurgeon (1965) argues that images "naturally surge up into his mind" (p. 5):

The imagery he instinctively uses is thus a revelation, largely unconscious, given at a moment of heightened feeling, of the furniture of his mind, the channels of his thought, the qualities of things, the objects and incidents he observes and remembers, and perhaps most significant of all, those which he does not observe or remember. (p. 4)

Likewise, Yang chooses a similar process of creating imagery in the space through 'the channels of his thought' in his own cultural experiences. The imagery on the stage illustrates his unconscious in a form of analogy. Moreover, he states that "many parts of the scenes in this production are actually constructed by the cast members" rather than himself alone (Yun, 2012, p. 36). In this sense, the images can be read as condensed and accumulated forms representing the history and psychology of the theatre community. Yang states that:

I have explained the general concept of the performance – background, time, and personality of each character – to the actors and work together with them. [...] In this way, they think of not only their own character, but also the theme of the whole play that leads them to participate in the work in very creative ways. I think this is a really fun and good way to go. (Yun, 2012, p.

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The adapted work becomes a locus of the artists' intuition and instinct. Based on their own interpretation on the characters and the play itself, the performers can freely explore the ways of expressing their ideas and perspectives through their bodily movements.

According to David Young (1966), Shakespeare uses lots of imagery through "picturization" (p. 75) that provides "perspective and distance, both in the geographic and aesthetic senses of those words" (p. 80) to create "a fully realized world" (p. 83). In particular, both Titania and Oberon's lines contain a great deal of visual imagery: Oberon describes the details of the place where the magic flower is located ("I know a bank where the wild thyme blows, / Where oxlips and the nodding violet grows, / Quite over-canopied with luscious woodbine, / With sweet musk-roses and with eglantine" 1.2.249–252), and then he becomes very excited with his own plan to fool his queen who would not obey his will by putting some "vile" (2.2.34) creatures beside her such as "ounce, or cat, or bear, / Pard, or boar with bristled hair" (2.2.30–31). Yohangza's text faithfully renders these visual images; it pictorialises the scene in speech. Yang condenses Shakespeare's lines to help the actors express how the poisonous herb affects Gabi as well as what sort of "vile" creatures will be seen at first:

DOT. Over the hill around the graves,  
There are abundant lilies.  
They are the cure for his infidelity.  
Come, mortals or *dokgabi*.  
With one sniff of them, their hearts swirl,  
And their minds twirl.  
They will dote on the first creature they see.  
I will put it under his nose when he's asleep.  
Upon waking, what will he see?  
Be it a mortal, corpse, flea, spider, centipede, bat, or earthworm.  
Be it something vile. (Scene 2)

Standing beside the Queen, Duduri comically describes the images of the animals and wild creatures by imitating their appearance or movement as if they are

holding a pose for a snap shot. These creatures are selected based on Yang's imagination that composes this somatic *Dream* in which the underlying meaning of the displacement is bound to his cultural unconscious. In several respects, this process is analogous to the work of dreams that is often explained with words such as image and symbol as common analytic terms for the psychoanalytic interpretations. In other words, Yang's work might be the process of searching for "subconscious and associative meanings which have been transformed or translated into the finished artefact, poem or dream" (Garber, 2013, p. 69). His production as a psychological metaphor represents the essential power of transformation from literal symbols into visual allegories reflecting the unconscious of the artists. Therefore, the process of creating the production becomes the main structure that reflects the theme of the *Dream* full of condensed forms of visual images and imagination from the real experience or real life.

According to Yang (2011), he was influenced by the media between 1970 and 2000 in which there were dynamic social and cultural changes in Korea. He agrees that the influence of television in these periods was extremely powerful in his youth. In fact, modern life has changed the mode of perception from a written culture to a visual culture in which images are circulated as a mixed form in many different kinds of genre and media. Especially in the 1990s, access to the Internet became available and so popular that many people have been exposed to an enormous stream of commercial images and iconic signs. Yang was one of those who experienced this visually dominated culture. A contemporary audience might be familiar with such visual codes from a wide range of media rather than experienced in interpreting a series of metaphors in the poetic language. Yang (2011) said that he "borrowed the ideas of gestural movements such as exaggerated body and facial expressions and unrealistic actions in slapstick comedies from visual media like films, cartoons, and various TV programmes." Therefore, such images in his production present not only his own ideas but also the social imagination of a specific popular culture that continuously prods the artist into composing the eclectic scenography based on the hybridity of a modern Korean culture.

Yohangza's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* reintroduces Korean culture not only for a Korean audience but also for a foreign audience. For almost two decades,

the production has been performed in many different countries, such as Japan, China, Poland, Colombia, and Ecuador; it was also seen at the London Barbican Centre in 2006 and the Globe Theatre in 2012. Some critics raised the question of the authenticity of Shakespeare's text since Yang cuts out many lines of Shakespeare's in his adaptation. Specifically, he eliminates the scenes of Theseus and Hippolyta in the court, the mechanicals' rehearsals in the forest, and the wedding ceremony, thereby reducing the running time to ninety minutes with only six scenes. For this reason, this production is often regarded as a new invention inspired by Shakespeare rather than an adaptation of Shakespeare.<sup>38</sup> Regarding the essence of Shakespeare, Gardner (2013), a critic for *The Guardian*, raised a dynamic discussion among the audience and critics on *The Guardian* website by asking "Should a playwright have the final say over a production?" in reference to Yohangza's *A Midsummer Night Dream* at the Globe. One commenter insisted the director should respect the playwright by keeping his or her original text since the play was "written in that way for a reason and each word and phrase are chosen deliberately" (LouLouMcStopout, 2013); otherwise, the production fails to deal with the essential theme of the play. The commenter's argument asserts that stage productions are bound to written texts and they should be faithful to their essential meaning. However, as Shevtsova (2009) points out, this means that "the productions can never be independent from texts or become a distinctive practice called a 'stage production' or 'performance'" (p. 175). Should Yohangza's production serve Shakespeare's text regardless of the cultural difference? It is well known that Shakespeare freely cut out, mixed up, and rearranged the plots from a number of different foreign sources in his own way.<sup>39</sup> In this sense, Shakespeare's works were never 'faithful' to his source material. He took his opportunities as a playwright, director, and actor to be creative and explore his

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<sup>38</sup> See 'Introduction' (pp. 9-10) for British critics' reviews on Yang's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in 2006.

<sup>39</sup> For *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Shakespeare takes some parts from Plutarch's *The Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans* for Theseus and Hippolyta, which are also found in Geoffrey Chaucer's 'The Knight's Tale.' Also, the love plot of Helena and Demetrius is taken from Seneca's *Medea and Hippolytus*. In addition, Ovid's *Metamorphoses* provides the story of Pyramus and Thisbe, and from Apuleius' *The Golden Ass* Shakespeare finds some ideas of Bottom's transformation into an ass-headed creature. Moreover, it is known that Shakespeare found the name Puck and some characteristics of Bottom in Reginald Scot's *The Discoverie of Witchcraft*. (Brooks, 2013, pp. lviii-lxxxviii)

own perception of tradition, folklore, and legend. The purpose of Yohangza's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is not to perform Shakespeare's play *per se*, but to share how the director and performers have struggled to understand his work from their own cultural perspective and explored the process through their new production.

There were many critics and audiences who found the "poetic" effect of Yang's production from the images of the actors' physical expressions. A critic of *The Theatre Times*, Dione Joseph (2010), pointed out the values of the linguistic features in the production: "While retaining the eloquence and rhetoric of Shakespeare, the translation offers a sample of the beauty of the Korean language with its rich intonations, cadences and rhythms." Adele Lee (2012), a critic for *Blogging Shakespeare*, stated that "the cast did a great job of overcoming the language barrier and forming an excellent rapport with the predominantly English speaking audience." One member of the audience commented that "[o]bviously the finer details were hard to grasp if you had no knowledge of Korean, but still, the universality, if that is a word, was amazing, it was not hard to follow at all!" (Kiwi, 2012). Another audience member made a more detailed analysis:

The purists will doubtless say that no translation of Shakespeare can ever possibly match the original, but this production played to a full house nonetheless. [...] And in Korean, this play – perhaps all too familiar to me in English – seemed suddenly like an entirely new work. [...] It was absolutely hilarious and although we were scared of not being able to understand the play, this Korean production is proof that Korean comedy surpasses all language and cultural barriers. (Liutkute, 2012)

Once the play leaves the playwright's hands, it can be freely read, understood, and reinvented based on the director's or audience's cultural bias. The point is to question *how* the production is related to the original text and *where* the liveness of the work (both the text and production) comes from. What might be the ways of exploring the relevance of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* which was written around 1595 to modern Korean culture? Certainly, performing Shakespeare without the local artists' imagination or the audience's perspective cannot be a satisfactory answer. As Shevtsova (2009) argues, the appreciation of the performance form "must surely have shaped Yang's sense of the relative importance of words," the production

shows “his sense of their relativity for the *specific* performance that he devised with his company” (p. 176, emphasis in original). Perhaps this is the part that the audience needs to seek out through the performance. The “poetry” is not only in the text, it is also in the quality of cultural imagination displayed with lots of synesthetic effects of visual and aural signals when it comes to performance. Yang’s *Dream* is the ensemble of his memories, experiences, and interpretations all combined into a symbolic form of ‘a poetic drama.’ In this sense, the effect of the imagery in the production, although its styles and forms look different, makes a parallel with that of Shakespeare’s poetry. Thus, the poetry of Shakespeare is not missing ‘entirely’ in Yohangza’s production. The performers’ bodies certainly compose a poem which is a valid verbal, visual, and emotional construction that explores their own *Dream*.

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Rather than focusing on the art of Shakespeare’s poetry, Lee and Yang deconstruct and readdress his text to emphasise the concept of *dokkaebi*, which is presented in the aesthetic of performers’ physical expressions based on traditional Korean performance forms. The performers depict the figures of *dokkaebi* with some gestures adopted from *Talchum* and *Madangguk* which emphasise performers’ improvisational and dynamic movements. Since the relationship between the actors and audience is stressed in such performance forms, the performers playing *dokkaebi* are often engaged with the spectators by crossing over the boundaries between the stage and auditorium. In fact, in most Korean folk performances, it is natural that both performers and audiences become co-creators who share the theatre space as a personal or communal place in which they explore their own imagination of the theatrical situation. In these theatrical forms, performers’ physical bodies can be experienced as a corporeal presence, prompting the audience to focus on the effect of the visual presentation of their bodies. In other words, the imagination of audience members is activated by the performers’ sensuous bodies in the process of theatrical experiences. In particular, *Talchum* and *Madangguk* are often defined as people’s theatre forms as well as unique expressions of the Korean spirit related to resistance against aristocracy. By adopting these forms, Lee and Yang attempt to show some

parts of indigenous culture and the lifestyle of people who consider social integration and harmony to be important values.

Although Lee and Yang commonly adopt the elements of traditional Korean theatre and folklore, the ways they utilise these sources in their productions are different. While Lee emphasises how the performers' corporeal bodies affect the imaginations of the audience members by adopting traditional Korean theatre forms, Yang's production attempts to modernise these forms by mixing various elements from modern Korean theatre and foreign performances to explore their hybrid effects as an unusual and unique quality of expression. In *Moon Night at Shilla*, Lee borrows the plot and characters from Shakespeare's *Dream*, but changes its genre into a musical in order to emphasise the musical aspect of the performers' bodily movements and the linguistic form of Korean poetry. As the performers' physical movements are changed according to the rhythm and pattern of the Korean language, the audience can sense the musical effect of linguistic expression by watching the performers' bodily movements. The synesthetic effect through the combination of the sound and the actors' presence as a visual physicality might lead the audience to perceive the theatrical experience as a real event.

Like in Lee's production, Yang was initially inspired by the principles of traditional Korean theatrical forms such as *Talchum* and *Madangguk*. However, he wants to offer a fresh look in his production by combining other expressions such as mime and acrobatic motions that highlight the flexibility of performers' bodies. With stage design inspired by the yard in *Madangguk*, the performers, coloured with white paint, show a play abundant in energy, rhythm, and humour. Their dynamic movements by running, leaping, and rolling throughout the performance surpass the descriptions of the characters in the original text. Their physical bodies can be understood as poetic imagery for the visual effect of their scenographic aspect. In fact, Yang rewrote the script for his own *Dream* to make Shakespeare's language fit into Korean-style poetic metre. For this reason, Kim Bang-Ock (2014) insists that "the performance is naturally filled with motions, rhythms, and sentiments unique to Korea, as well as Korean-style costumes and movements, on-stage color, and musical accompaniments" (p. 153). The method of the performers' physical training is particularly designed to express dramatic language with more powerful bodily

expressions. In this way, Yang's production, as a sensory and aesthetic venture, draws the audience toward fresh experiences while staying strongly connected to Korean identity and spirit.

Both Lee and Yang believe that the role of performers is to create a harmonious ensemble among various theatrical expressions such as their own bodies, sound, and stage landscape within the limited theatre space. Like poets, performers have to orchestrate all the different imagery to be conveyed as an embodied form to the audience. In this context, the audience can achieve a complete theatrical experience as participants of their performances rather than as passive spectators through dynamic communication with the performers. Above all, the performers' dynamic movements and their engagement with the audience heighten the atmosphere of theatre with the spirit of *shinmyeong*. As a result, the boundary between the auditorium and stage becomes blurred and at this moment everyone in the theatre can feel a sense of unity, enjoyment, and transcendence. Such experience is a unique and intense feeling distinguished from the emotional state experienced in everyday life as if the participants are in an illusory world in which there is no limitation for them to express their inner condition.

Whether the experience happens to an individual or a group, the feeling becomes a co-experience and is maximised through the process of mutual confirmation between the performer and audience. By using various sources and artistic forms from both past and modern theatres, the directors explore new ways of approaching the collective consciousness of Korean culture. In traditional Korean theatre, according to Lee Yun-Taek (2012, p. 99), performers are not different from poets who inspire the audience to explore their own imagination and memory toward the concrete images of the performers' bodies. In other words, actors express their ideas about a specific experience or event through their bodies as an embodied form of imagery that reflects the conditions of their inner world and vision for the outer world. In a similar vein, Lee and Yang emphasise the theatre space as a meeting place not only between performers and audience but also between the present experience and the imagination through the performers' physical presence. After all, the theatrical performance is always a creative process, referring to a shared

imagination in the making of the relation between theatre and our life, dream and reality.

## PART II.

### *TWELFTH NIGHT*

In Part II, I study the theme of gender and sexuality in Korean and Japanese theatre culture by examining four productions of *Twelfth Night*. As one of the most popular Shakespearean comedies, *Twelfth Night* focuses on gender fashioning, especially homoerotic representation, through the theatrical practice of disguising the identity of the female characters/male actors. The theme of gender identity can be most effectively explored through an examination of Viola/Cesario, whose gender role changes from female to male as she disguises herself as a page boy. In theatre, the convention of cross-dressing is not simply about wearing a different costume; it is always associated with questions of the established social order. It can be interpreted as a means of reproducing and affirming patriarchal ideologies in early modern English culture. According to Stephen Greenblatt (1988), Jean E. Howard (1988), and Lisa Jardine (1996), Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* has subversive implications against the patriarchal system, but the subversion is only temporally allowed by the social authority which does not admit the power of women in the Renaissance period.<sup>40</sup> However, other scholars such as Phyllis Rackin (1987) and Valerie Traub (1992) insist that the illusory world in the Globe radically subverts the existing

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<sup>40</sup> Greenblatt (1988) argues the cross-dressed disguise in comedy like *Twelfth Night* is that "men love women precisely as representations," and the secret of female identity is presented literally in the all-male cast, which "theorize a masculinist fantasy of a world without women" (p. 93). Also, Howard (1988, p. 432) points out that the object of Viola's desire is Orsino not Olivia at the end of the play. In other words, Viola does not use her disguise to challenge the patriarchal condition within the play, but only to secure her position as a dutiful wife without crossing over the boundaries of gender norms outwardly. Howard (1988) insists that: "Despite her masculine attire and the confusion it causes in Illyria, Viola's is a properly feminine subjectivity; and this fact countervails the threat posed by her clothes and removes any possibility that she might permanently aspire to masculine privilege and prerogatives" (p. 432). In addition, Jardine (1996) argues that "the spectacle of boy playing the women's part was an act for a male audience's appreciation," and "these figures are sexually enticing qua transvested boys" (p. 29). Jardine (1996, p. 94) highlights the possibility of Shakespeare to be read in feminist view: particularly, in the boy actor tradition, his role is obviously a representation of woman who is conceived and interpreted in social eyes and played by male performers. Therefore, she insists the eroticism in Elizabethan stage is associated with their maleness rather than femaleness, and the boy actor's femininity reconstitutes this interaction as implicitly heteroerotic.

gender system of early modern society.<sup>41</sup> These scholars agree that “*Twelfth Night* is centrally concerned with demonstrating the uncategorical temper of sexual attraction” (Charles, 1997, p. 121) and that the Elizabethan stage was a historical “site where there was considerable fluidity and multiplicity in the channeling of sexual energies” (Howard, 1994, p. 111). They focus on Viola’s ambiguous position that disrupts the validity of the heterosexual relation with Orsino; in particular, the depiction of the lesbian attraction in relation to Olivia, questions the system of gender hierarchy within a patriarchal society. After all, Viola/Cesario, who can broadly be defined as an androgynous subject having both male and female traits, makes the distinction between homo- and hetero-erotic desire difficult to define or distinguish as well as questioning the ideology of gender in Renaissance culture.

Studying the reception of audiences towards gender descriptions can reveal how the audience understands the work of cross-dressing and its effect and meaning in modern Shakespearean adaptations. Through the convention of cross-dressing, the audience can see at least three simultaneous selves in a single body: a male actor, his female character, and the male body with feminine gender attributes. This multiplicity of identity may create a special pleasure for the audience, which thrills at the actor’s versatility as it struggles to determine which is the real identity that the actor attempts to play between his own gender and the female character’s. In particular, the effect of theatricality in relation to the theme of gender might be an interesting subject to discuss, such as whether the audience can really concentrate on

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<sup>41</sup> Rackin (2005) studies instability of gender concept in Shakespearean period. She argues that in the Elizabethan theatre, the audience was not clearly conscious of gender boundaries while watching the boy actors playing female characters. They could easily accept the actors as female figures because of their immature and effeminate body structure. Rackin (2005) states, in Shakespeare’s time, “biologically grounded sex-gender system was only beginning to take shape and the use of boys to play women’s part seems to suggest that gender division were not yet fixed in the ground of differently sexed bodies” (p. 78). Since the concept of homoerotic desire in the Renaissance period was unstable and unfixed, there were contradictory meanings existing across diverse complexities of gender performance. Also, Traub (1992) focuses on the “slippages between ideological prescription and social practice, the ways individuals negotiate within ideological matrices to satisfy their complex needs and desire” (p. 10). She insists that the erotic practice in Elizabethan culture seems to be considerably open as its tensions and shifts by crossing gender represents sexuality as less determinant and less clear in gender status and structure than most critics assume. In this sense, the representation of homoerotic attraction in *Twelfth Night* could be considered to function as a means of dramatising social construction of sexuality which is determined by gender identity.

the situation on the stage by forgetting male actors' sex through the cross-dressing practice, or conversely whether they are aware of the performers' gender during the performance – or recognise the shift between them. The modern audience's understanding of gender identity and sexual desire is associated with the concept of gender in a complex and contradictory social field in which both traditional and modern values and perspectives on gender co-exist. By studying the audience's responses to the performances of *Twelfth Night*, it is possible to clarify how the concepts and practices of gender and sexuality have been constructed and naturalised in specific social and cultural backgrounds.

However, as James Bulman (2008) points out, scholars and critics tend to generalise audience's responses to cross-dressing without consideration of specific cultural conditions or histories. As he argues, most scholars “have neglected to consider the cultural significance of such performance with the same care they have brought to their speculations about the Elizabethan stage” (p. 13). Bulman also argues that scholars “invoke categorical assumptions which simplify the nuances and complexities of cross-gendered performance” and are not concerned about “whether audience members are sufficiently knowledgeable about Shakespeare to be aware when such regendering occurs” (p. 14). Indeed, gender acts arise from “culturally and historically specific prescriptions, which designate certain acts to belong to certain gender roles” (Mezur, 2005, p. 142). The multiplicity of sexual energies through the practice of cross-dressing would certainly not function in the same ways in each production. The notion of gender and the ways it is presented are socially constructed, and theatre translates the information into more concrete images through performers' bodies. Therefore, it is significant to study the nature of sexual desire in relation to the power of social hegemony and explore how the modern audience's perception of sexual desire can be complicated through cross-dressing practices in different theatrical cultures.

Since the 1990s, there have been a number of *Twelfth Night* performances in Korea<sup>42</sup> and Japan<sup>43</sup> that explore the theme of gender and sexuality in modern

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<sup>42</sup> In Korea, there was only one *Twelfth Night*, which was directed by Park Won-Kyung (1998) in the 1990s. Since then, *Twelfth Night* has been performed more frequently: Park Jae-Wan's *Twelfth Night* (2002); Oh Dong-Shik's *Trans-Twelfth Night* (2003); Park Jae-Wan's *Trans-Twelfth Night* (2004);

society. In their productions, the directors – Ninagawa Yukio, Kurata Jun, Yang Jung-Ung, and Oh Dong-Shik – attempt to deal with the subjects of gender identity and sexual desire by casting all-male performers or switching the gender roles of the characters/actors. The directors have created and developed their own theatrical strategies by combining the convention of cross-dressing inspired from the traditional theatre forms such as *Namsadangnori*, *Talchum*, and *Kabuki* with modern performance modes such as a realist acting style. By experimenting with traditional and modern theatre forms in eclectic ways, the directors attempt to show how the social perspectives and attitudes towards gender roles and images have been changed as society has modernised. Their performances of *Twelfth Night* reveal how a modern audience may appreciate the concepts and practices of gender and sexuality which were constructed in a historical patriarchal social system. By reimagining or challenging the existing concept of masculinity and femininity, each director tries to present their broadened perspectives on gender and sexuality as a response to the changes of social circumstance in which women’s social position becomes as important as men’s.

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Park Jae-Wan and Lee Mi-Kyung’s *Musical Twelfth Night* (2004); Sohn Ki-Ryong’s *Twelfth Night* (2006); Lee Seong-Gu’s *Twelfth Night* (2009); Kim Se-Hwan’s *Twelfth Night* (2009); Song Eun-Ju’s *Club Twelfth Night* (2010); Cho Min-Cheol’s *Twelfth Night* (2010); Yang Jung-Ung’s *Twelfth Night* (2011); Kim Gwan’s *Twelfth Night* (2011); Kim Jae-Yeup’s *Twelfth Night* (2011). This shows that the directors and audiences have become more interested in the subject of gender and cross-dressing practice since 2000.

<sup>43</sup> In Japan, the first production of *Twelfth Night* was directed by Ito Fumio in 1904 at New Theatre Company. The number of the production greatly increased in the 1990s. Every year, about four or five productions were performed; among these productions, most directors used the script translated by Odashima Yushi; other directors such as Izumi Motohide, Okuhara Katsuo, Anzai Tetsuo, and Hirota Hyo adapted and translated the play by themselves. In particular, Uyama Hitoshi directed *Twelfth Night by Women* (1993) to show how the play can be interpreted from feminist perspectives. Since 1999, Takarazka has performed *Twelfth Night* by casting female actors for the male role.

## Chapter 4.

### *Twelfth Night* in Japanese Theatre

In Japanese theatre history, there have been several recognisable shifts between female and male actors when performing female roles. In the traditional Japanese theatres such as *Kabuki*, women were officially prohibited from performing in the theatre between 1629 and 1891 because of the scandals and riots concerning “their sexual services through sensual and sensational dances” (Kano, 2001, p. 5). They were replaced by young men, called *onnagata*, who performed the female roles by cultivating acting styles that represented an idealised femininity through a set of somatic signs. In other words, female characters’ gender in Japanese traditional theatre have been formulated through particular prescriptions and aesthetic patterns that experiment with multiple signs of femininity on the male body. Also, an actor takes three or four different roles by crossing gender lines, which emphasises the effect of gender ambiguity in Japanese theatre culture. Carol Sorgenfrei (2014) examines Japanese actors portraying gender ambiguity and demonstrates how modern Japanese performing bodies can be understood in the context of Japanese culture and the long history of gender performance. She insists that “transformation is a crucial aspect of Japanese performance” since it exists in acting and staging, and “an alluring ambiguity appears to be the key to understanding what it means to be Japanese” (p. 351). The traditional acting form refers to “the simultaneous awareness of the self and the character” on the part of the actor as his body is utilised in several roles due to “the cultural preference for ambiguity and multiplicity” (Sorgenfrei, 2014, p. 341). By casting male actors to play female roles, which is one of the unique features emphasising the effect of ‘the third beauty,’ modern productions question the rigid boundary between feminine and masculine gender in Japanese culture and society.

The convention of cross-dressing still influences the construction of the characters/actors’ gender appearance and actions in modern performances in Japan. There have been several contemporary performances adapting Shakespeare’s plays by casting all-male or all-female players to explore the

subject of gender.<sup>44</sup> The convention of cross-dressing is practised in Ninagawa's *Kabuki Twelfth Night* (2009) in which all of the female roles are embodied particularly in the body of the *onnagata*, who changes his costumes several times to perform female and male characters. By casting *Kabuki* actors to play the *onnagata* role, Ninagawa's production displays an idealised feminine beauty through its stylised acting form, which traditionally provoked the audience to feel an erotic allure in old *Kabuki* theatres. Also, in *Twelfth Night: A Musical Drama* (2011), Kurata explores the ambiguous and unstable boundaries of gender roles by casting male actors to play female characters. Notably, Kurata chose Uno Akira, a manga illustrator whose works have influenced the drawing style of Japanese manga artists since the 1960s, for the designs of make-up, costume, and stage set. As a result, the visual effect of the production reflects the features of *shōjo* (literally "little girl") manga in which both female and male characters are depicted as fairly exotic figures with long flowing hair and big doe eyes that blur the distinction between femininity and masculinity. In these all-male productions, the portrait of Viola's cross-dressing as a male emphasises the gender confusion which might lead the audience to explore gender as a form of multiplicity.

However, as modern Japanese theatre culture has been influenced by Western realist theatre which emphasises binary gender roles, male performers' acting style for female roles tends to be limited to showing merely stereotyped images of femininity. As Japan opened to Western culture during the Meiji period, women could re-enter the theatre as a part of the government's new political regime, which involved following the practices of Western theatre. Consequently, the tradition of male performers playing female roles was marginalised and remained only as a part of traditional culture. Since the *Shingeki* movement started in 1906, the polymorphous possibilities explored in traditional theatre have been

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<sup>44</sup> Notably, the convention of cross-dressing is practised by the Takarazuka Revue, the renowned all-female musical theatre company. They are known for Broadway/Western-style musical theatre adaptations of the stories from *shōjo* manga or Japanese folktales. They performed *Twelfth Night* in 1999, which was as popular among teenage Japanese girls, as are their other Shakespeare production such as *Puck* (1992, 2014) for their androgynous figures who are neither man nor woman or are the combination of the sexes or genders. Such confusion may create a special pleasure for the audience, which gets thrills from the actor's versatility as it struggles to determine what the gender is that the actor is attempting to depict between masculinity and femininity.

excluded in the process of modernising Japanese theatre by adapting the principles of Western theatre. In this political and social circumstance, theatre was involved in a rigidly essentialist definition of gender according to the very stability of the boundary of 'woman' versus 'man.' In this context, Japanese modern performances tend to consolidate the norms of heterosexuality and the binary division between men and women according to the modern Western theatre influence.

As a result, although directors cast all-male performers inspired by traditional theatre conventions emphasising gender ambiguity, the performers' acting style re-emphasises the typical concept of femininity and masculinity as socially constructed and accepted. As Takakuwa Yoko (2000) points out, modern Japanese directors are still obsessed with the binary opposition of gender roles and gender stereotypes which are reflected in their performances. She insists that modern Japanese productions need to make clear in what sort of "spiritual illness a human being is trapped" (p. 37). Takakuwa thinks either "male" or "female" identity might be our "spiritual illness or another form of madness" and people tend to be "obsessed by the (internalised) 'truth' of what it means to be a man or a woman" (p. 37). She argues that performing culturally defined gender-roles on stage makes the audience members alienated from their alternative possible selves. For this reason, modern Japanese performances need to call into question the meaning of "beauty" as conventionally regarded as the attribute of "woman."

Perhaps the directors' ambivalent attitude towards practicing gender and sexuality might be the result of depicting Viola/Cesario's complex gender identities in Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*. As an autonomous and androgynous subject, Viola could subvert the social boundaries of gender roles by disguising her female gender with male attire. At the same time, the play ends with the wedding ceremony in which Viola is no longer androgynous but has only a single gender role as a wife within the male-dominated social system that advocates heterosexual relations. The female character's double aspects of gender role and identity in Shakespeare's play might be an appropriate source to describe the complex social conditions of modern Japan in which the traditional and modern concepts of gender coexist in an incongruent state. In particular, women's social

positions are paradoxical as women are often considered as passive subjects within a male-dominant social ideology but also as active subjects in the modernised Japanese social condition that promotes women's participation in their social activities. It seems that the productions of Ninagawa and Kurata reflect this contradictory aspect of modern Japanese society. They explore the concept of gender ambiguity by adopting the traditional convention of all-male casting, but the performers' acting style is combined with modern *Shingeki* style stressing stereotypical gender images and behaviours at some points.

In this chapter, by studying Ninagawa and Kurata's adaptations of *Twelfth Night*, I focus on how their productions are influenced by the traditions of gender ambiguity in Japanese theatre culture, yet are still trapped in the "spiritual illness" as their productions show stereotyped gender images by adopting the acting style of *Shingeki*. I will also explore how a modern audience understands the aesthetic of gender ambiguity as explored in the performances in relation to their contemporary social ideology which emphasises binary perspectives on gender roles.

### **"I Am Not What I Am": Reshaping Ideal Femininity in *Kabuki Twelfth Night* (2009) by Ninagawa Yukio**

Ninagawa Yukio is one of the most famous Japanese directors, and is particularly known for his performances with spectacular visual *mise-en-scène* by using unique images representing Japanese culture. Before he started his career as an actor in 1955, he wanted to become a painter and maintained his interest in visual art, which became one of the strengths in his performances. In the theatre company *Sakura-sha* (Cherry Blossom Company) which was established in 1972, Ninagawa produced a number of experimental performances, and in 1984 he founded Ninagawa Studio in which he focused on commercial theatre with great success, performing his works outside of Japan. His talent in visual art and experiences of producing a wide range of performance styles from experimental to commercial productions has led him to explore a new type of theatre work by mixing different methods of theatre forms. Regarding the combination of different theatre styles, Seiji Furuya (2013) states that,

“Ninagawa aims to exploit large commercial venues for popular stage entertainment whilst maintaining a uniqueness in the sense that he is deeply concerned with contemporary multicultural eclecticism alongside a more traditional Japonism” (p. 165). By blending the elements from traditional and modern Japanese culture with canonical Western plays such as Shakespeare, both translated into modern Japanese style, Ninagawa tries to make Shakespeare’s plays accessible to Japanese audiences and also give Western audiences the opportunity to experience Japanese culture.

Among others, his *Kabuki Twelfth Night* (2009) is worthy of attention since this play is his first production combining the elements of *Kabuki* as the main form. By casting professional *Kabuki* actors for *onnagata*, Ninagawa attempts to present unique features of Japanese theatre culture. One of the important points is that his production is not completely faithful to the convention of traditional *Kabuki* performance, but rather is intermingled with the modern Japanese theatre form such as *Shingeki* with respect to performers’ acting styles.<sup>45</sup> Alexa Huang (2014) places Ninagawa in the context of “Japan’s multiple theatrical techniques” in which “[t]he traditional *Kabuki* and *Noh* are heavily stylized, while the modern *shingeki* emphasized realism.” Huang (2014) sees that he “successfully combines older styles with Shakespeare.” Ninagawa’s eclectic method of using various theatre forms might have been inspired by his previous background, since he was exclusively trained in the *Shingeki* method early in his career. Like Ninagawa, in modern Japanese theatre, it is common to see many modern Japanese directors such as Kurita Yoshihiro and Nomura Mansai<sup>46</sup> use different theatre forms – traditional and modern performance modes – in their productions, which create a unique and distinctive aesthetic of

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<sup>45</sup> According to Minami (2010, pp. 928-929), the script for Ninagawa’s *Twelfth Night* is faithful to the original text of Shakespeare, although there are a few elements translated into Japanese modes such as characters’ names. Ninagawa asked Imai Yutaka, the script adapter of *Twelfth Night*, to make the dialogues between the characters closer to the style of contemporary language style. Yutaka also stated that Ninagawa wanted to make the *Kabuki* adaptation as faithful to the original in translation as possible.

<sup>46</sup> Kurita Yoshihiro mainly uses the elements from traditional *Noh* in *Macbeth* (2004), *King Lear/His Shadows* (2004-2005), *Othello* (2006), *Hamlet* (2007-2010) in which the performers’ acting style is based on *Shingeki* form. In his *The Thief of the Country* (2007), an adaptation of Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*, Nomura Mansai uses the element of *Noh* and *Kyogen* along with other modern Japanese and Western theatre forms such as *Enka* (a genre of popular Japanese music), *Commedia dell’arte*, and mime.

physical expressions. In their productions, the *Shingeki* form has functioned as a bridge between the ancient theatre, such as *Noh* and *Kyogen*, and the modern audience. In this case, the traditional Japanese theatre forms are modernised at a certain level as they are transformed into another form far from the historical and theatrical contexts of their origins. In this sense, in Ninagawa's production, the cultural values of *Kabuki* need to be reconsidered since its form is already modified through the practice of combination with *Shingeki*, whose original form is also transformed alongside the use of *Kabuki* performance mode. The intermingling of traditional and modern theatre forms allows the audience to consider the position of the traditional theatre form and the ways in which it is adapted according to contemporary social and cultural contexts. Also, this kind of directorial method might be useful to help each spectator find a new perspective on Shakespeare and the general trend of contemporary Japanese theatre culture.

However, it seems that the audience experiences difficulty in understanding Ninagawa's intention of using various theatre forms to deal with the theme of gender and sexuality in Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*. When his production was performed at the Barbican Centre in London in 2009, a number of British critics and audiences did not fully approve of Ninagawa's decision to perform Shakespeare in *Kabuki* style. Among others, John Morrison (2009) points out that Shakespeare does not fit into *Kabuki* style for several reasons: "Shakespeare was the product of an unstable, freewheeling and conflicted age, not one where social structures and values were fixed." Also, Lyn Gardner (2009) judged the productions harshly, stating: "I still got the impression that the evening doesn't liberate Shakespeare but embalms him in an already mummified aesthetic." Morrison (2009) notes that "Kabuki (about which I know no more than I learned from the programme) is a highly formal art," and he concludes with respect to the production that "[i]t's rather like putting Shakespeare into a Victorian drawing room, something which directors often like to do but I consider misguided." Along with Gardner, he thinks that the *Kabuki* in Ninagawa's production is just an old form of representing ancient Japanese culture. Although these critics fail to perceive that Ninagawa's performance is far from the authentic *Kabuki* form created in the seventeenth century but combined with a modern acting style, *Shingeki*, their reviews still provoke us to think of some important questions:

Why did Ninagawa choose *Kabuki* as a main form to perform Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*? Can this old form be an appropriate way to explore the general themes of the play – appearances and reality, uncertainty of gender, and the folly of ambition – from specific and broad perspectives?

One of the significant points in understanding the meaning and value of this production might be how the modern audience sees the use of *Kabuki* style in performing *Twelfth Night* in modern Japanese theatre, particularly how the aesthetic of *onnagata* functions and creates its meaning in contemporary Shakespeare. Ninagawa has revealed that he “was asked to direct Shakespeare's play by a young kabuki actor, Kikunosuke Onoe, who played Viola/Sebastian” (Minami, 2010, p. 929). As a professional *onnagata* actor, Kikunosuke, who has continued a family tradition that goes back to the 1840s, was concerned about the future of the *Kabuki* tradition in contemporary Japanese theatre: “in order for the Kabuki theatre to be able to develop in the future, we need also to create new works that people with no knowledge of the classics will be able to enjoy. This is how we'll be able to lay the groundwork for the classics of the future” (Cited in Hasebe, 2009). Kikunosuke believes that “Shakespeare[’s] play[s] would offer the most appropriate vehicle for highlighting [the] particular features of the kabuki theatre” (Cited in Hasebe, 2009). It was important for him that Ninagawa's “production should be rooted in the Kabuki theatre” by using “acting skills unique to the Kabuki theatre” (Cited in Hasebe, 2009).

However, fundamentally (and as the critics suggest), it is difficult to perform Shakespeare's characters in *Kabuki* style. *Kabuki* actors reveal their emotional state and the general plot through their body gestures, rhythms, and choreographed movement, rather than by linguistic expressions. According to Ozaki Yoseharu (2006, p. 5), originally, there were no scripts in *Kabuki* as the chief attraction was an actor's personal charisma and his dancing. Also, the vocabulary of expression of the *Kabuki* is essentially non-realistic: the actor's gestures do not mimic reality. In *Kabuki*, “the actor detaches his own personality from that of the character he is portraying, so that the audience finds its aesthetic satisfaction not in an illusionistic identification of actor and character, but rather in the technical skills of his performance” (Ernst, 1974, p. 193). Although this kind of alienation does not reduce

the emotional impact of the performance – in fact, the audience immediately reacts to the actors and their skills – this is a very different method compared to Shakespearean actors who try to create an illusion by provoking the audience’s imagination.

For these reasons, Ninagawa has an ambivalent attitude towards Shakespeare’s text and *Kabuki*’s theatrical language. He adapts *Twelfth Night* without radical changes, and makes an effort “neither to bring too much kabuki elements into Shakespeare nor to bring kabuki too close to Shakespeare” (Minami, 2010, p. 395). He only uses some parts from *Kabuki* by mixing it with Shakespeare’s text rather than showing the strict form of the traditional *Kabuki* through the performance. In the production programmes in London, Ninagawa stated the difficulties that he had faced in the process of making *Kabuki Twelfth Night*.

In this *Twelfth Night* I have endeavoured to use modern theatre methods within the traditional style of Kabuki in order to create a special effect. [...] On this occasion I bit the bullet and decided to direct in real Kabuki style. In doing so, I hope I have managed to bring some contemporary freshness to this world-famous theatrical form [...] Working with Kabuki actors presented different challenges for me as a director. I felt as if I were a foreign student who came to study in the kingdom of Kabuki. During the course of this journey, however, I hope I have managed to broker a happy marriage between Kabuki and William Shakespeare: ‘Let me not to the marriage of true minds admit impediments.’ (Ninagawa, 2009)

Ninagawa seemed to believe that bringing “modern theatre methods” into the traditional *Kabuki* form could create “a special effect” with “freshness.” His view also proves that the identity of the “real Kabuki” has become more unstable and even precarious in relation to the influence of a modern theatre and the audience in modern society. One of the main reasons Ninagawa decided to create a *Kabuki* version of *Twelfth Night* was the similarity between the conventions of *Kabuki* and those of the Shakespearean stage. In particular, he believes that “Kabuki’s preoccupation with gender roles, its cross-dressing, and its quick costume changes remind the audience of Shakespeare’s use of disguise and mistaken identities” (Seiji, 2013, p. 165). He thus revealed that “*Twelfth Night* therefore seemed to me to be the most appropriate play in the sense that it allowed for the possibility of bringing out

the intrinsic interest of the Kabuki theatre while at the same time remaining faithful to Shakespeare's original" (Cited in Hasebe, 2009). From his comment, it is possible to assume that he attempts to emphasise the techniques of "cross-dressing" and "its quick changes" through *onnagata* and *hayagawari*<sup>47</sup> to deal with the theme of mistaken gender identity.

From the beginning of the production, Ninagawa emphasises the historical relation between Europe and Japan by combining *Kabuki* tradition and modern Western codes for the scenic design, props, music, and performer's acting style. As the curtain (*hikimaku*) is drawn back from left to right, the audience can hear the sound of Japanese traditional music<sup>48</sup> played by the musicians who wear *kimonos* and sit on the ground upstage. As soon as the stage appears, only the percussive sound of *tsuke*<sup>49</sup> makes an ensemble with the melody of a harpsichord to which three young Japanese boys are singing a hymn in Latin.<sup>50</sup> According to Minami (2010, p. 930), this scene is reminiscent of the history that four young Japanese boys, as ambassadors, went to the Roman Curia in 1582 to meet Pope Gregory XIII and Philip II of Spain.<sup>51</sup> Perhaps the young boys singing in the first scene could symbolise the position of Ninagawa as similar to that of the boys introducing Japanese culture to foreign audiences when he performed the production in London.

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<sup>47</sup> *Hayagawari* is a unique feature of traditional *Kabuki* used when an actor plays more than one role in the same scene by making quick changes to his costume and make-up.

<sup>48</sup> Seiji Furuya (2013, pp. 163-64) states that the music in most *Kabuki* is played with several key instruments: *shamisen* (three-stringed instruments of the lute family); *fue* (flutes); *tsuzumi* (hand drums); and *taiko* (drums).

<sup>49</sup> *Tsuke* is "the sound effect produced by striking with clappers a wooden board called *tsukeita*, which is placed in the corner of *kamite* (stage left, audience's right)" and its sound is "synchronized with the actors' actions and have the effect of emphasizing movement and sound" (Kabuki, 2007).

<sup>50</sup> "Veni veni, Emmanuel / Captivum solve Israel, / Qui gemit in exilio, / Privatus Dei Filio. / Gaude! Gaude! Emmanuel, / Nascetur pro te Israel!" (O come, o come, Emmanuel, / And ransom captive Israel, / That mourns in lonely exile here / Until the Son of God appear. / Rejoice! Rejoice! O Israel, / To thee shall come Emmanuel!) (Ninagawa, 2009)

<sup>51</sup> According to Massarella (2013, p. 1), the young boys whose age was only fourteen years had two objects: first, they would raise awareness of Japan amongst the elites in Europe and demonstrate what the Jesuits had written about Japan in a book that published and circulated for about thirty years needs to be amended; second, their visit would impress the Japanese participants the glory and grandeur of the Christian religion as well as the richness and splendour of European kingdom and cities.

By setting this period of *Kabuki Twelfth Night* in the seventeenth century, Ninagawa creates an exotic atmosphere with the music played by traditional Japanese instruments and a Western harpsichord. Not only the musical combination, but also the visual effect of the stage filled with cherry blossom trees and a huge mirror, represents an attempt by Ninagawa to remind the audience of Japanese features that are blended with Western cultural codes.



Figure 36. The stage filled with a huge mirror (*Kabuki Twelfth Night*, 2009)

In particular, his spectacular stage *mise-en-scène* with a huge mirror that covers the entire back wall is one of the most impressive elements of the production (Figure 36). The mirror enhances the visual effect by creating stunning spectacles reflecting not only the actors on the stage but also the audience themselves throughout the performance. In other words, it doubles all the images on the stage as if the people were able to see another side of the reality they are watching. Ninagawa revealed the reason why he decided to utilise the mirror in an interview with Paul Sharma (2009): “Kabuki has a flat perspective, whereas the Barbican is a deep stage and I try to mix the two views. For that, I use mirrors to blend the two worlds together.” Interestingly, it seems that the effect of the mirror is even greater than Ninagawa intended. By using the mirror, Ninagawa stresses the “deceptive nature of the relationship between appearance and reality or between the mirroring images of the twins, as a conceptual frame” of this production (Minami, 2010, p. 930). The mirror also symbolises the theatre as a place where diverse gazes are intermingled at once: the foreign stage designed with *Kabuki* elements is seen by each spectator, who is also exposed to their own gaze, which leads them to recognise his/her own position not only as a member of an audience in reality but also as a part of the theatrical

illusion. The mirror leads the audience to consciously experience the intercultural crossover emphasised by the frame of the meta-theatre. They could be aware that the visual displays of the stage are not entirely real but double as illusion, which highlights the possibility of misperception and misconception. Ninagawa's *Twelfth Night* literally emphasises the contradiction between identity and appearance as all the characters and the audience are obliged to become conscious of the reflected doubles.

The concept of the mirror reflects the theme of Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, focusing on the illusion and the doubling of Viola and Sebastian. For Viola, her brother Sebastian is her mirror image: "He named Sebastian. I my brother know / Yet living in my *glass*; even such and so / In favour was my brother, and he went / Still in this fashion, colour, ornament, / For him I imitate" (3.4.378-379, emphasis added); "Be not amazed; right noble is his blood. / If this be so, as yet the *glass* seems true, / I shall have share in this most happy wreck" (5.1.263-265, emphasis added). Shakespeare uses the word "glass," which causes a misunderstanding of the identities of Viola, who disguises herself as a man. Since her disguise imitates her brother's appearance, Viola and Sebastian can be seen as the same person in the appearance reflected in the "glass." The people in Illyria rely on the appearance of a person, and do not recognise the gender identities of Viola and Cesario even though Viola insists "I am not what I am" (3.1.129). They do not notice the true meaning of appearances; that is, the proper relationship between the signifier and the signified. By using the equivocal nature of appearance, Viola could overcome the gap between her female nature as a woman and masculine identity as Cesario. In other words, her single identity can be extended through disguise, although it is only temporary and withdrawn at the end.

In *Kabuki* theatre, the value of illusion is created and maintained by the male figure of the *onnagata* as he plays female characters. The presence of *onnagata* emphasises the concept of gender ambiguity which has been practised since the Edo period (1603-1868) in Japanese history. *Onnagata* neither tries to be a woman nor tries to imitate her: its art is "the dramatization of gender identity as constructed and represented in a precarious balance between becoming the *onnagata* as 'fictitious' woman and revealing his 'real' identity as man" (Takakuwa, 1994, p. 157). Unlike

the beauty of women in reality, a different quality of femininity is portrayed on the *Kabuki* stage: “What really matters is not whether the actor *is* beautiful, but whether the player *looks* beautiful on the stage” (Ozaki, 2006, p. 10, emphasis added).

*Onnagata* is an idea, not a nature, and it “seeks nothing more than to combine the signs of Woman” (Barthes, 1982, p. 92). Roland Barthes (1982) also insists, “the Oriental transvestite [actor] does not copy Woman but signifies her” in a way that is “detached from its signified; Femininity is presented to read, not to see: translation, not transgression” (p. 53). In this context, *onnagata* can be considered solely as a matter of semiotics. It constructs, represents, and translates the concept of a fictitious identity of an eternal woman through the stylised representation of femininity. As Barthes argues, if the audience does not recognise its semiotic nature, the old man on stage can never become a miraculously beautiful being. Without understanding the detailed system of signification, the audience will end up viewing the *onnagata* only as a stylised figure with elaborately choreographed gestures. Thus, in the practice of the *onnagata* performance, the players become a “shadow” that is nothing but an illusion.

In Ninagawa’s *Kabuki Twelfth Night*, the gender ambiguity is emphasised by the male actor playing Oribuhime (Olivia) who shows the formalised style of acting that attributes to the “authentic” *Kabuki* convention in a few scenes (Figure 37). The male actor playing *onnagata* displays his versatility at playing male and female versions of the same character such as Viola/Cesario. Both Viola and Olivia are unmarried young women as noblewomen who are called *hime* (“princess”) in *Kabuki*. These maidens, who grew up in the most protected environments, are extremely delicate, gentle, and modest. In *Kabuki* theatre, such women use their sleeves and skirts to reveal their emotional states such as embarrassment, happiness, and sorrow. In particular, Oribuhime is wearing a red *kimono* that has the audience assume her role is *akahime* (“*aka*” means red colour). In *Kabuki*, the *kimono* as a stage costume has many different styles and patterns for male and female roles. *Onnagata* who takes the role of a princess or young maiden of noble birth always wears a beautifully embroidered *kimono* made of red silk with a long flowing hem. Using delicate gestures and wearing a red *kimono* can be read to indicate her sexual attractiveness according to the formalised styles of the role: “she keeps her head bent

and eyes lowered, and she must have a full emotional complement of sexuality” (Leiter, 2000, p. 501). The red-coloured *kimono* emphasises the beauty, purity, and youth of the noble lady who passionately loves Cesario. This proves that the function of *Kabuki* costume is not only to reveal the character’s psychological state as an individuality but also reflect its symbolic position within the play: there are certain images of women that should be kept as ideal figures. In *Kabuki Twelfth Night*, Oribuhime as an *onnagata* is the role of illusory women in some ways, not that of real women, representing the stylised beauty of femininity that Japanese society has pursued and maintained for several centuries. The male performer does not present ‘natural’ femininity but just a position somewhere in between the stylised beauty and the real-life figure.



Figure 37. Oribuhime talking to Shishimaru in Act 1, Scene 5 (*Kabuki Twelfth Night*, 2009)

Likewise, the beauty of *onnagata* is created by the ambiguity of the boundary between illusion and reality, the masculine and the feminine, man and woman. The mixed identities and sexualities from the interaction between the performer’s body, his fictional role, and the spectator’s sensual experience of the unique male/female presence is the crucial point of the aesthetic of the *onnagata* performance. According to Katherine Mezur (2005), the actor playing *onnagata* creates “a fictional image of female-likeness in a unified form,” or perhaps he may perform gender acts with “multiple and ambiguous variations that remind the audience of a fictional unity of a single gender and sexuality” (p. 137). The spectators can concentrate on the performer’s kinaesthetic expression from which they can freely imagine various gender possibilities. In this sense, they see an ideal image of femininity, which is

actually constructed by their own perception and idea of gender. Mezur (2005) argues that the “erotic allure may or may not be conditioned by heterosexual and binary gender system[s]” (p. 147). If the audience wants to imagine the male body under female clothes, their physical and psychological empathy can shift according to their reading of the performance. In this context, the audience and the actor share the meaning and concept of femininity as determined by their common cultural context. The representation of femininity through the male body might make the audience recognise ‘women.’ Therefore, the presence of *onnagata* can be variously understood and experienced because of the different attitudes to sexuality in each culture. In this process, what is important is how the audience understands and interprets the visual signs according to their own imagination of femininity.

In Shakespeare’s *Twelfth Night*, gender is an ambiguous and unstable concept, which was also manifested in the theatre convention that, instead of biological women, boy actors performed female roles. On the Elizabethan stage, a boy actor has to impersonate Viola, who also impersonates Cesario without apparently reverting to his own persona or losing Viola’s feminine charm. Shakespeare keeps reminding the audience of the boy, who is in fact a girl in disguise, by having other characters mention his femininity: “Diana’s lip / Is not more smooth and rubious; thy small pipe / Is as the maiden’s organ, shrill and sound, / And all is semblative a woman’s part” (1.4.31–33). Although Viola’s plan is to present herself as an “eunuch” to Orsino (1.2.56), which might be another way of reconciling the masculine appearance with the feminine voice, Orsino feels a kind of erotic allure from Cesario’s characteristics reminding the audience of Viola’s femininity. He discovers both man and woman in Cesario, who is a man for his age who is not old enough to be a man, but a male at any rate, and also a woman since Cesario is a woman (Viola) impersonated by a boy. Malvolio gives more specific ideas of the ambiguous or liminal nature of Cesario’s gender. When Cesario arrives as Orsino’s messenger, Malvolio reports:

Not yet old enough for a man, nor young enough for  
A boy; as a squash is before ‘tis a peascod, or a  
Cooling when ‘tis almost an apple. ‘Tis with him  
In standing water, between boy and man. He is very  
Well-favoured, and he speaks very shrewishly; one

Would think his mother's milk were scarce out of him. (1.5.156–162)

It seems that Shakespeare is aware of the effect of gender ambiguity from the boy actor convention in stage practice, and these lines remind the audience of the boy in their sight being a girl in disguise. It must be not easy for the actor to play a girl's part and then disguise himself as a boy, without revealing his male gender, but still retaining some femininity of the girl in disguise as a boy. Therefore, Shakespeare seems to have helped his male actor with these lines, implying a gender ambiguity that is also emphasised by their appearance with female attire.



Figure 38. Shishimaru dancing in front of Sadaijin in Act 2, Scene 1  
(*Kabuki Twelfth Night*, 2009)

In Ningawa's performance, the concept of gender ambiguity is intensified in the scene in which Shishimaru (Cesario) performs as a dancer *wakashu* (a young man) in front of Sadaijin (Orsino) in the first scene of Act 2 (Figure 38). His dance performance is inspired by *Musume-Doujouji* ("The Maiden Doujou-Temple"), a popular *Kabuki* dance.<sup>52</sup> Shishimaru's dance is, "accompanied by traditional instruments and chanting [that are] typical of *Kabuki*, a form of drama inherently musical with a beauty of style well contrasted with the Western drama of words, such as that of Shakespeare" (Seiji, 2013, p. 167). His solo performance replaces Feste's song in the original Shakespeare play (Act 2, Scene 4) in order to focus more on the

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<sup>52</sup> This kind of dance is known as "*kudoki*" in which a female character depicts her feelings in choreographic terms" (Minami, 2010, p. 931). *Kudoki* is used only to display the art of the *onnagata*, or female impersonator. It depicts "the innermost feelings of a woman and the love kept secret in her mind" (Scott, 1955, p. 112). During the dance, a female character "expresses her deepest feelings choreographically" (Leiter 2000, p. 503). At this moment, the actor's actions are controlled by music and match the descriptions of the narration.

theme of gender ambiguity. According to Minami (2010), this dance is composed of three parts: “in the first part, Shishimaru dances as a man in love, in the second part as a woman in love, and the last part as him/herself or an androgynous dancer that concludes the sequence” (p. 931). Shishimaru’s dance seems to be inspired by the tradition of *wakashu*, which refers to “the actors who are specializing in adolescent male roles and interestingly these ‘beautiful boys’ often performed as *onnagata* in Kabuki theatre” (Leupp, 1997, p. 90). Mezur (2005) also insists that “*onnagata*’s erotic attraction and erotic aesthetics may have originated in the *wakashu* system of erotic codes with its own boy/man erotic points and gender ambiguity” (p. 147). Gary Leupp (1997) states that the concept of “*wakashu* has several partially overlapping meanings such as the social role of a pre-adult or adolescent boy and the idea of the ‘beautiful youth’ which is a suitable target for homosexual desire” (p. 34). In this context, it is important to emphasise that the *wakashu* art was foremost a dance seduction in which the dancer’s gestures, posture, costume, vocal expression, and props are all part of an erotic act.

As the curtain is drawn back, the audience sees Shishimaru is standing at the centre of the stage to dance alone. He is wearing a *kimono* whose colours vary from navy to white to signify the male and female natures of the character. The left half of the *kimono* is navy, symbolising the masculinity, while the right half is a white colour embroidered with flower patterns to indicate Viola’s femininity. When the actor dances the first part with a fan, his gestures and movements are slow at first but become faster, and the range of his movements is broad with dynamic gestures using the fan. This represents Shishimaru’s masculinity, which is also described visually in the lyrics the musicians are singing: “My love is not reciprocated as I wish, / I swear that my love to her is as constant / As an evergreen retains green leaves” (Minami, 2010, p. 931). The “drum sound and low-pitched singing voices” of the males add a “masculine nature” to his performance (Minami, 2010, p. 931). Then, as the tune changes, the chorus becomes a solo and the actor slowly puts down his fan and dances as a woman whose movements are very slow, small, and static, giving an impression of watching a picture. Rather than creating various movements, the actor focuses on making some static postures which are elegant and delicate by bending his upper body backward in a standing and sitting position. At this moment, the lyric

expresses the feeling of a woman in love: “Even the lover’s vow could not assuage my anxiety. / I have tried never to get jealous, but in vain. / How could I believe he is true when he says nothing of his love?” (Minami, 2010, p. 931). In the final part of the dance, the performer with his fan begins to move slightly faster and shows the static poses again, but this time he does both simultaneously. Meanwhile, the chorus is harmonised with the solo voice singing the last stanza of the lyrics: “However firm the pledge of love may be, /It will be as transient as the cherry blossoms in the wind” (Minami, 2010, p. 931). With respect to this moment, Minami (2010) states, the actor “stops acting a lover or being obviously masculine or feminine” (p. 931).

This scene is full of erotic patterns of *iroke* (erotic allure) within the context of his song, lyrics, and movements, which may present a provocative image. In the *onnagata* aesthetic, *iroke* arises from the patterns of stylised movements and postures executed in a unified image of fictional femininity. Through several moments of *iroke*, *onnagata* designates certain gender acts as erotic and uses these to make the audience imagine an ideal image of femaleness. The audience’s response to the erotic allure from the gender acts of *onnagata* performance, generating the ambiguity that gives confusion, is related to their cultural context. Mezur (2005) argues that “[e]roticism is a culturally specific and learned perception involving our kinaesthetic, aural, and visual sensory receptors” and “each culture has certain object, sounds, and senses that arouses one’s erotic feelings” (p. 146). Shishimaru’s dance movements in back poses and low kneeling poses, accompanied by music and song can be seen as a way of highlighting the sensual attraction to the spectator. Through the association of the musical and physical overlay, Biwahime (Viola)/Shishimaru’s complex feelings may be intensified and the direction of her/his sensual attraction is obscure and abstract. Rather than a direct one-to-one meaning, the layers of gesture, vocal expression, and visual sequences imply several meaning and emotions of the character in a very symbolic way. Not only is the bodily performance of the character along with instrumental and vocal sound a source of *iroke*, but so is the performer’s relation to physical elements like costume (including the wig), make-up, and props (particularly small hand props). All of these elements serve to make *onnagata*’s performance beautiful since these objects are enriched with particular gestures and postured for their historical and erotic association. The objects as “a kind of

mysterious or assumed sensuality” (Mezur, 2005, p. 152) and their relation to the gestures become a pattern of *iroke* in the performance of *onnagata*. In this scene, Ninagawa is able to present the traditional *Kabuki* performance and also the specific moment at which Sadaijin may feel an erotic allure toward Shishimaru, which might not be condoned by a strictly heterosexual gender system.

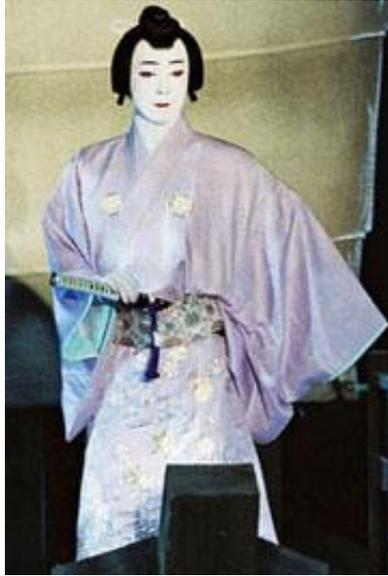


Figure 39. Kikunosuke Onoe playing Shishimaru in Act 1, Scene 1 (*Kabuki Twelfth Night*, 2009)



Figure 40. Kikunosuke Onoe playing Biwahime in Act 1, Scene 1 (*Kabuki Twelfth Night*, 2009)

Prior to this scene, Kikunosuke has already shown a few unique performance modes of traditional *Kabuki* that are suggestive of gender ambiguity by crossing over different gender roles between Biwahime and Shuzennosuke (Sebastian), Biwahime’s twin brother, in double casting (Figure 39 and 40). Although *Kabuki* does not have as many disguised heroines as Shakespeare, the production employs what is called *hayagawari*. It is not unusual to see “an actor taking two or more parts” at the same time so that the performer can show “his versatility” (Ozaki, 2006, p. 12). This reveals that the actor is in a more complicated position in changing gender roles between female and male. At the beginning of the performance (Act 1, Scene 2), Kikunosuke enters as Shuzennosuke on a ship to speak a few words, and then goes inside the ship for a quick change of his attire and voice to play Biwahime. The actor impresses the audience with his ability to change costume and act differently within a short span of time.

SHUZENNOSUKE. Hie, Biwa! Biwa, I call you! (*Shuzennosuke goes inside the cabin, and in less than ten seconds Biwa's voice is heard in the cabin.*)

BIWA. Isoemon (Captain), please lend me your hand. (*Within two seconds, she appears at the head of the ship.*) (*Kabuki Twelfth Night*, 2009, 1.2)

At this moment, Biwahime receives a great welcome from the audience, who notices the contrast between the young man in simple costume and traditional hairstyle and this female figure in a beautiful *kimono* and splendidly decorated wig, presented by the same actor just a few seconds earlier. The actor emphasises the different acting styles to perform Viola and Sebastian by changing the pitch of his voice and body movements to make the audience recognise the difference in gender between the twins. While the actor's acting in portraying Viola is highly artificial with a high-pitched voice tone and stylised body actions to emphasise the femininity of the character, his portrayal of Sebastian relies on stressing a masculine voice and form of behaviour in traditional *Kabuki* style. He changes his gender role several times more in Act 1, Scene 2 during the process that the boat is sinking in the storm. Through such a quick-change technique, the actor is able to pull off rapid changes in gender, which emphasises the multiplicity and transformativity between the different characters' genders. By foregrounding the simultaneous performance of one actor in multiple roles, Ninagawa tries to show the gender-blurring nature of *Kabuki* theatre. This ability to portray both an ideal Japanese masculine archetype and an ideal feminine figure through the same actor's physical body is representative of the fluidity of identity and gender, which is one of the main characteristics in *Kabuki* theatre.

However, as mentioned before, this production is not entirely performed in traditional *Kabuki* style, but combined with a realist acting style and modern language, which is distinguished from the anti-realist expressions by *onnagata*. The difference between the two theatrical modes are emphasised with several scenes which present the distinction between gender with clear signs of masculine and feminine features in Biwahime/Shishimaru's performance. In Act 1, Scene 5, when Biwahime re-enters the stage as Cesario, Kikunosuke implicitly reveals the distinction between gender with clear signs of masculinity and femininity with her/his physical expressions which are mixed with *Kabuki* and *Shingeki* acting styles.

Kikunosuke attempts to make the audience believe that he is portraying masculinity by sitting in a strict posture of a man, reminiscent of a samurai manner, stretching out his hands side by side on his lap, wearing a male costume and wig, and producing a deep masculine voice (Figure 41). Sadaijin asks Shishimaru to meet Oribuhime instead of himself since Shishimaru is young and beautiful like a woman. Shishimaru hears his order in a masculine pose and replies with a very low voice to hide his real gender behind his disguising mask. Yet, as soon as Sadaijin exits to the backstage door, Shishimaru, watching the mirror for a moment, suddenly changes his physical performance – gestures, voice, facial expression – to reveal femininity (Figure 42). His abrupt change causes the audience to laugh because his appearance, with a costume designating a masculine frame, does not match his feminine gestures and voice at all. The comical switching back and forth between the genders by Shishimaru in these exchanges emphasises the theatricality of *Kabuki*'s male and female impersonation. In these scenes, the audience can recognise that the actor deliberately uses the stereotyped gender images of masculinity and femininity to emphasise the fact that Viola is actually portraying a different gender position from hers. The performer changes his acting style to portray masculinity and femininity, which occurs so suddenly and abruptly that the distinctive points between the techniques of performing different genders looks conspicuous.



Figure 41. Kikunosuke Onoe playing Shishimaru in Act 1, Scene 5 (*Kabuki Twelfth Night*, 2009)



Figure 42. Kikunosuke Onoe playing Biwahime in Act 1, Scene 5 (*Kabuki Twelfth Night*, 2009)

In this scene, the actor's bodily gestures are based on a traditional *Kabuki* acting style, but his emotional expressions are different from *Kabuki* theatre form. In this performance, the aesthetic of *Kabuki*, particularly the techniques of male actors performing female characters, is also modified in modern Japanese realist acting.

This proves that Ninagawa's intention is not to faithfully follow the conventions of the traditional *Kabuki* form, but rather to discover a new aesthetic through which to present Shakespeare's plays effectively to the modern audience – through an experimental attempt at interweaving different theatre forms. According to Minami (2010),

[w]ith his *Kabuki Twelfth Night*, Ninagawa not only joined the recent movements to modernize/update kabuki as a contemporary theatre, but also attempted to remove, from Japanese Shakespeare performance, the *Shingeki*'s replicational performative mode that has putatively gone but still haunts the Japanese stage. (p. 928)

Minami admits there can be traces of modern Western and Japanese theatre aesthetics in Ninagawa's production in which various different theatre forms, such as stage design, props, music, and even the performers' acting style, are influenced by the modern theatre forms. This kind of combination is also used in his *Macbeth* (1985) in which Ninagawa also showed an inconsistent and eclectic style of acting for the male performers. According to Nouryeh (1993), by using an incongruent acting style:

Ninagawa wanted his Japanese audience to be uncomfortable, to be shaken out of complacency, to question their wholesale acceptance of western values at the expense of those which had been upheld for centuries. By asking his traditionally trained actors to work toward psychological realism in their performances and, conversely, those trained in psychological realism to work for stylization in their performances he created a hybrid way of playing that seemed to overthrow the pre-eminence of either style, to upset his audience's preference for uniformity, and to highlight his message about the need for Japanese people to recover their lost traditions. (p. 264)

In this sense, Ninagawa's eclectic use of theatre forms might lead the modern audience to notice the uniqueness of each theatre form and also provide some ideas of creating and developing new theatre forms emphasising the values of both traditional and modern theatre conventions. Like Ninagawa, many modern Japanese Shakespearean productions are a combination of his text and Japanese traditions based on their personal and unique vision of the Japanese theatrical forms whose value and meaning can be rediscovered, reinterpreted, and redefined through the

directors' individual aesthetic sensibility. Anzai (2010) points out that if there is one common point shared among the directors, it might be their attitude towards Shakespeare "as an archetype of the theatre, in which they expect to re-discover and explore what is quintessential to the theatre" (p. 19) and this kind of attitude may be related to the awareness of their history. He insists that since there is the whole range of the theatrical history from ancient folk ritual to postmodern theatres existing in today's Japan, it is natural that the audience and directors are exposed to such traditional atmospheres. Therefore, they only focus on creating something new that can rival the traditional theatres in intensity, depth, and universal appeal and proving their artistic identities.

However, some scholars such as Kishi (2005), Minami (2010) and Sorgenfrei (2014) are concerned by the tendency that modern Japanese directors borrow traditional elements simply to emphasise Japonesque images. They believe that the directors' strategy does not lead the audience to broaden their ideas about Japanese culture and tradition with critical insights. Regarding the directors' passion for combining different theatrical traditions, Kishi (2005) argues, "such cross-cultural combinations need to be sustainable in some dramatically meaningful way. If their effect is merely local, visually clever or exotic, they trivialize the different traditions in question" (pp. 76-77). In fact, Ninagawa's use of two different styles of acting disturbs the value of the illusion created by the male actors as *onnagata*, and consequently the audience are limited in seeing the 'intrinsic' nature of *Kabuki*. His method is rather interruptive, as the audience cannot figure out the director's intention of using the aesthetic of *onnagata* throughout the performance. According to Yamamoto Kichinosuke (2005), a Japanese theatre critic, who comments on Ninagawa's production: "[t]he performer playing both Viola and Sebastian shows strong distinction between female and male gender by changing his voice tone from high pitch to low, which seems unnecessary and even interrupts the audience's imagination of gender ambiguity." If Ninagawa focuses on adopting the traditional *Kabuki* form to revive the tradition of *onnagata*, the modern audience might have an opportunity to see the male actors' gender performance as an aesthetic form. But as the director combines a realistic acting style, *onnagata*'s anti-realistic expressions presenting ideal femininity cannot be properly appreciated by the spectator. They

might understand the traditional expressions from the perspective of realist acting as a standard form because of its familiarity. Also, the audience may distinguish the differences between these two performance modes and begin to compare how each gender presentation is acceptable or not. After all, the experiments in gender ambiguity by the male actors can no longer be seen as a feminine identity to the modern audience.



Figure 43. Ichikawa Kamejiro playing Ma (*Kabuki Twelfth Night*, 2009)

This can also be observed from the performance of Kamejiro Ichikawa playing Ma (Maria) (Figure 43), whose acting style is close to realist acting. Most of the critics and audience sense that his feminine performance is more natural and plausible for a female character compared to the presence of Oribuhime and Biwahime whose rigid acting style presents an artificial image of femininity. Unlike these two female characters, Kamejiro expresses Ma's emotional state from anger to delight as the character puts Maruo Bodayu (Malvolio) in trouble by crafting a fake letter and making her plan successful. The critics easily notice her psychological state through the tone of her speech and her actions as Philip Fisher (2009) states that the performer has "remarkable skill and an ability to convey emotions with the tiniest of hand or facial movements." Also, throughout the performance, Ma has more chance to get along with the male characters such as Toin Kanemichi (Sir Toby Belch), Andô Enchiku (Sir Andrew Aguecheek), and Sutesuke (Feste), whose acting

styles seem to be influenced by Western naturalism rather than traditional *Kabuki*. Although they are all *Kabuki* actors, they focus on speaking their given lines adapted from Shakespeare's text, rather than practicing the aesthetic of physical movements in *Kabuki* style. The pitch of Kamejiro's vocal tone is far from the conventional high and low voice, and his gender acting is also not entirely formalised or stylised in its performance like Oribuhime or Biwahime, who stick to the convention of *onnagata* with an exaggerated high-pitched voice tone and delicate manner, emphasising femininity in idiomatic ways. Some British critics such as Ian Shuttleworth (2009) have observed that Kamejiro's feminine acting is seemingly 'natural': "it is not Onoe, nor the acclaimed *onnagata* Nakamura Tokizo V as Olivia, who impresses most. Rather the combination of Ichikawa Kamejiro II's wonderfully warm and playful performance [...] has made the usually minor character of Maria a comic delight." One member of the audience stated that "Kamejiro who acted Maria was really good. His original face is not feminine at all, but somehow he looks so sexy while he is acting a woman" (Maytone, 2009). It seems that the critics and audiences who are already familiar with the performer's modern acting styles tend to find the code of femininity from Kamejiro's acting more easily rather than the traditional figure of *onnagata*.

According to Kano Ayako (2001, p. 204), in modern Japanese society, the audience has become familiar with the concept of gender binarism as a result of the influence of gender ideology from Western culture. In this condition, "a certain essence of womanhood was thought to reside in the physical body, and this was thought to be expressed outwardly in appearance and behaviour" based on scientific discourse about biological sexual difference (Kano, 2001, p. 204). The physical basis for the difference between men and women has been emphasised along with educational and political discourses in modern society. According to Jennifer Robertson (1991), before the modern period, "sex was perceived as subordinate to gender; females were to approximate – or bring their innermost temperaments in accord with – female-likeness" whereas the modern definition of woman is shaped under the concept in which "gender is perceived as subordinate to sex, the former derived from the latter" (p. 90). For this reason, in past Japanese theatre culture, the female gender was thought to be achieved by training the body to accord with the

ideal of femininity. But now the male actors' thick white make-up and high-pitched tone of voice, which are meant to signify femininity, look unnatural to the modern spectators, whether they are Japanese or non-Japanese audiences, who are not aware of the meaning of their visual code of physical expressions. Consequently, it becomes difficult for the audience to imagine a beautiful woman through male actors' patterned gestures and artificial make-up, aimed at representing the concept of an ideal femininity. As the ways of appreciating femininity and masculinity changed in accordance with the modernisation of Japanese society, the gender acting in *Kabuki* style has become an historical art form using different physical language from that which is found in the modern theatre.

Ninagawa revealed that the production was designed initially for Japanese people to help them understand famous Western plays by positioning them in the familiar context of Japanese culture. However, unlike Ninagawa's intention, many Japanese people feel alienated from *Kabuki*'s old conventions. The importance of re-defining the relationship between Shakespeare and Japan's local performative modes has been constantly raised and discussed by current Japanese theatre scholars and practitioners. Minami (2010) insists that the modern audience finds the place of *Kabuki* more foreign and exotic than Shakespeare plays due to the influence of modern Western plays and theatre culture over the last decades. He points out, "For *shingeki* artists Shakespeare is less 'foreign' than *kabuki* and other Japanese indigenous or traditional theatre forms" (p. 937). As previously mentioned, Ninagawa started his theatrical career as a *Shingeki* artist and his attitude towards play scripts is close to Western directors. Also, Senda Koreya (1980), who is a leading *Shingeki* director and actor, admits that Shakespeare "feels closer to us in our own work than the great men of our own tradition" (p. 230). In other words, Shakespeare productions using traditional *Kabuki* form do not domesticate Shakespeare but rather "familiarize *kabuki* to general Japanese theatregoers by defamiliarizing Shakespeare" (Minami, 2010, p. 937). The performers and audience have become more comfortable with Shakespeare as a result of the enormous popularity of his plays in Japan over the last several decades. The binary – Shakespeare as foreign and *Kabuki* as familiar – already seems to have been subverted during this period, implying that it is no longer valid.

The aesthetic of gender through the male actors' physical movements presents basic social notions and a vision of the position of women. Samuel Leiter (2000) states that "women in all-male theatres undeniably offer a gender depiction denying real women representation in favour of a fictional construct favouring patriarchal values" (p. 496). The female identity shown through *onnagata* as constituted by what it means to be 'female-like' reflects the totalising narrative of patriarchy in the past cultural contexts of Japan. In *Kabuki*, all gestures and body movements are restricted and small, and the performer must control his energy to suppress the range of his expression in order to look 'beautiful.' The process of controlling body actions within the small costume and the small area that is permitted for the female character provides some hints about how *Kabuki* theatre reforms the fantasy and fear of performing femininity. Takakuwa (1994) insists that *onnagata* played a "beautiful, good woman in conformity with the Confucian ethics required of real women: she is split between two ideals of woman – a chaste woman as ethical ideal and the *keisei* (courtesan) as ideal of feminine beauty" (p. 153). In addition, according to Sorgenfrei (2014), it was believed that female bodies were "polluted and incapable of enlightenment," so a "female could only reach Buddhist *henshin* after being cleansed of her sex – that is, after several reincarnations in physically male bodies" (p. 348). She insists that this kind of misogynistic perspective might have influenced the tradition of *onnagata* in the process of its development. A woman must be "beautiful, good, and chaste but not so strong as a man," and thus the *onnagata*'s female roles were "to inscribe the idea(l) of woman as a model for a real woman" (Takakuwa, 1994, p. 154) who is faithful to the social system or man. After all, the tradition of *onnagata* demonstrates how the repetitious gender acts can be reconstituted into a female gender identity and then renaturalised by the system.

The performance of *onnagata* might be understood as an aesthetic form that reflects a part of Japanese culture and theatrical history. However, when this acting style is reused within modern productions such as Ninagawa's *Twelfth Night*, it is important that they need to show how the aesthetic of *onnagata*'s gender acts and male actors' realist acting for femininity serves to help us to inquire about their relation to the gender identity of women in contemporary Japanese theatre and social conditions. *Kabuki* performers have been concerned about the precarious position of

*Kabuki* in modern Japanese theatre. It has begun to be ignored by young Japanese audiences who see its incongruence with current social conditions that have been modernised and globalised by the impact of Western systems and culture. For Kikunosuke, it is important to incorporate contemporary values in order to communicate with the modern audience through *Kabuki* productions. As many young *Kabuki* actors are seriously concerned about *Kabuki* being in “a fundamental crisis” (Kyodo, 2006), they seem to be forced to prove *Kabuki*’s importance in the twenty-first century. In this context, simply emphasising the similarities between Shakespearean theatre and *Kabuki* should not be the ultimate purpose of adapting Shakespeare in the modern theatre. Rather, it is more important to focus on how these similarities can be ‘differently’ interpreted and presented in contemporary Japan and how such a unique vision and experience of gender can be used to deepen the discourse of gender in Japanese theatre culture. With lack of concern about how the traditional gender act can be refashioned to deal with such controversial issues of gender in modern Japanese society, this production can only be considered as “a pretty picture” (Cavendish, 2009) that would make “a worthy exhibition” (Fisher, 2009) for both Japanese and non-Japanese audiences.

**Alluring Ambiguity: Reconstructing the Third Beauty in *Twelfth Night* (2011)  
by Kurata Jun**

Shakespeare has been adapted in Japan not only as a performing art, but also in many other generic forms such as comics, manga, and animation for the last 150 years. Manga, especially, has been one of the most popular entertainments for a wide range of generations over several decades.<sup>53</sup> *Shōjo* manga covers various subjects, often

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<sup>53</sup> There are many different types of Japanese manga, such as *shōnen*, *shōjo*, *seinen*, and *josei* manga, which also deal with “a broad range of subjects: action-adventure, romance, sports and games, historical drama, comedy, science fiction and fantasy, mystery, horror, sexuality, and business/commerce, among others” (Gravett, 2004, p. 8). Deeply influenced by American comics and popular culture since the pre-war period, Japanese manga localised the convention that developed into their own drawing style by the Second World War. With globalisation, Japanese manga was greatly popular in the 1970s in East Asian countries, mostly Korea, Taiwan, and Hong Kong (Wong 2010, pp. 339-341). Based on Japanese manga style, many local artists in these countries began to develop their

focusing on romantic relations and particularly the representation of gender in a fictional locale. It is usually set in an exotic and ill-defined ‘other’ place (often European or American countries) in another historical period, and the boys and girls are often aristocrats. For these reasons, the genre of *shōjo* manga is often characterised by its anti-realism. In *shōjo* manga, it is typical that the protagonists are young girls or boys, and the appearance of the boys is so feminine that they look like girls: no matter what gender type the characters are, they have a slender body with big exquisite colourful eyes, impossibly long arms and legs, and their “hair is long and flowing, their waist narrow, their legs long and their eyes big” (Prough 2010, p. 95). These images emphasise gender ambiguity and fluidity that become important features in *shōjo* manga. According to Tomoko Aoyama (1988), “none of the residents of the idealized world feels guilty about his being a homosexual, or has to seek his identity” (p. 196). The physical appearance of the female and male characters in *shōjo* manga is fairly exotic and unrealistic, which gives an impression of their gender identity as undecided and unstable.



Figure 44. Viola/Cesario and Orsino in Morikawa Kumi’s *Twelfth Night* (Morikawa, 2003)



Figure 45. Viola/Cesario and Olivia in Li Nana’s *Twelfth Night* (Li, 2010)

own styles, which became the basis for adapting various stories, including Shakespeare’s, into manga versions.

These features can be observed in a few manga versions of *Twelfth Night*: one of them was created by Morikawa Kumi in 1978 (Figure 44), and the other is Li Nana's *Manga Shakespeare Twelfth Night* published in 2009 (Figure 45). In both versions, one of the main characteristics is gender ambiguity, which is highlighted with the outer appearance of female and male characters. In particular, Morikawa's version portrays Viola/Cesario as an adolescent girl in boy's costume while Orsino is depicted as a beautiful youth who cannot be defined as female or male.

The images of gender ambiguity are important in order to understand how this genre interprets the concept of gender depiction in Shakespeare's play. The story of Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* begins in an unknown place called Illyria as Viola has no clue as to the location: "What country, friends, is this?" (1.2.1). In this new world, gender is performed and manipulated to explore Viola's adolescent sexuality since she disguises as a boy to continue her journey safely, which allows her to transgress gender boundaries between male and female. Her exploration in Illyria of her coming of age implies the transition from childhood to adulthood as Malvolio depicts Viola/Cesario's identity as a fellow whose age is between a man and a boy. Also, Orsino describes her/his appearance like a maiden: "Diana's lip / Is not more smooth and rubious; thy small pipe / Is as the maiden's organ, shrill and sound, / And all is semblative a woman's part" (1.4.31–33). These lines call for two different sides of Cesario's gender, which seems to suit playing a page boy who attracts a woman and who is also attracted to a man. It is very complex for a male actor to play out a female character who is disguising herself as a man, because the actor needs to show different degrees of gender performance between masculinity and femininity in each scene. For this reason, through the male performer's body, the audience can explore multiple layers of gender identity belonging to the actor, heroine, and disguised persona with the images and actions implying particular genders in the hetero- or homosexual relation with other characters.

It seems that there are some common points between the tradition of boy actor in the Shakespearean period and the depiction of male characters in Japanese *shōjo* manga in terms of the description of gender which is subtle and uncertain. In particular, the story of Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* seems quite compatible with the requirements for *shōjo* manga, in which adolescent girls often disguise themselves as

boys by wearing boy's clothing while other male characters are depicted as beautiful youths who cannot be defined as female or male. Among others, Studio Life Company's *Twelfth Night: A Music Drama* (2011) directed by Kurata Jun provides the audience with the opportunity to explore ambiguous gender and sexuality through the practice of all-male casting.<sup>54</sup> As Abe Nozomi (2014b), who is an assistant director, revealed, "manga dramatisation is one of the styles that Studio Life has pursued." Since 1987, the theatre company has become famous for all-male casts who perform several adaptations of Western novels and plays. Along with the history of dramatising manga such as *The Heart of Thomas* by Hagio Moto in the 1990s, Studio Life's recent Shakespeare productions show many similarities with manga image and form, particularly in their male actors' appearance and acting style.<sup>55</sup> Since 2006, the theatre company has produced Shakespeare's plays after their version of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was staged with great success. They have subsequently performed *Romeo and Juliet* (2007), *The Taming of the Shrew* (2008), and *Twelfth Night* (2011). In particular, their all-male casting effectively reflects complex perspectives on gender and sexuality as a main theme in Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* and also as one of the meaningful traditions of all-male practice in traditional Japanese theatre, which is associated with the Japanese social context regarding gender identity and practice.

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<sup>54</sup> According to Abe (2014b), since the company was founded by Kawauchi Kiichiro and Kurata Jun in 1985, they have established three major pillars: Kurata's original works, dramatisation of foreign novels, and manga dramatisation. As they perform Kurata's work for smaller productions with their younger actors, the adaptations of novel and manga dramatisation are performed as the main work. One of their performances, *The Heart of Thomas* (1995), a manga by Hagio Moto can be considered the biggest turning point that allowed the company to concentrate on manga dramatisation.

<sup>55</sup> According to Kurata (2015), the male performers' acting style has been changed and developed through several productions. When they perform *The Heart of Thomas* (1974) in a theatrical version, *Heart of Toma* (1996, 2005, 2016), the general acting style was more focused on sending out the messages by speaking the dialogues inside the balloons in the comic book. Then, the rest of the words outside balloons, which mostly show the emotional state of the character, are projected on the stage wall allowing the audience to read them and understand the inner feelings of each character. According to Koji Ishitobi, who plays Feste in the Studio's *Twelfth Night*, there are some similarities between Shakespeare's text and the grammar of manga structure: "Shakespeare monologues might be the equivalent of the words outside of balloons in manga: each character delivers the different types of message such as monologue, aside, and conversational dialogue, and these may be similar to the different types of speech styles" (Kurata 2015).

In their *Twelfth Night*, the depictions of gender do not suggest specific concepts or definitions of masculinity or femininity. Thus, the all-male practice allows audiences to experience different gender positions by identifying themselves with different characters. As Viola disguises her identity as a boy, her relationship with Orsino reflects the implication of homosexual love between two men, but at the same time, their outer style with long hair and female costume might look feminine like two girls who feel attracted to each other. In addition, Olivia's passionate wooing of Viola/Cesario can be seen as lesbianism and simultaneously shown as the love between two male actors in female clothing. As the male actors playing female roles provoke the audience's homoerotic desire, they can be considered as a figure of resistance to the concept of gender roles as biologically and socially fixed in modern Japanese society. In the performance, the gender boundaries are rather obscure and ambiguous, which might be a significant point to show how the modern performers act out the female characters on stage. Another crucial point might be how the production deals with the concept of gender and gender images as a cultural representation that has been shared and circulated in modern Japanese theatre.

The general designs of Studio Life's *Twelfth Night*, such as characters' costume, make-up, and stage set, are reminiscent of some representative characteristics of *shōjo* manga due to the collaboration with Uno Akira (also known as Uno Aquirax). He was prominently involved with the Japanese underground art of the 1960s-70s and is particularly "notable for his illustration which influenced many Japanese manga artists" (Kurata, 2015). As a graphic artist, illustrator, and painter, Uno is famous for his unique styles of drawing and his illustrations, which are often characterised by "fantastic visuals, capricious and sensuous line flow, flamboyant eroticism" ('Aquirax Uno', 2017). Sinn Tara (2011) states,

Uno was at the forefront of a group of Japanese avant-garde artists and designers like Tadanori Yokoo, Keiichi Tanaami, and Tsunao Harada, as well as renowned manga artists like Sanpei Shirato, Seiichi Hayashi, and Katsuhiro Otomo, all of whom emerged from *angura*, the subversive underground theatre movement that began in the '60s in Tokyo. [...] Many of the graphics created for the *angura* drew from diverse artistic movements, mixing Edo-period iconography and Art Nouveau lettering with collaged photos and calligraphy.

According to Sinn (2011), Uno’s drawings express “the chaotic mood of the times with wild colors and bold – sometimes shocking – imagery.” In his works, Uno particularly emphasises large eyes, thinness of the neck, and delicate bodyline that reflect a character’s subjective feelings rather than an objective representation in girls’ comics. Uno (1986) has also discussed the symbolisation and the encoding of the images of big eyes and small mouth in his works: “the big eyes become a mirror of their desires to become beautiful heroines. For the acceptance of the girl’s image, it is important for readers to self-identify and see themselves in the two-dimensional image” (p. 122). The female characters who have big eyes have represented a new standard of beauty that has been shared among Japanese girls as one of preferences influenced by Western culture.

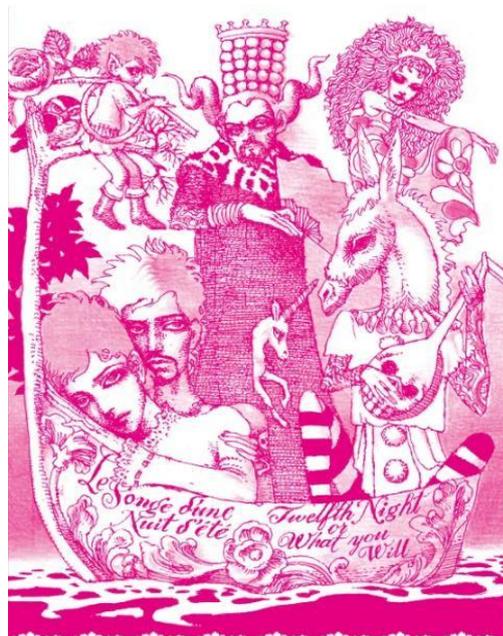


Figure 46. The poster of Studio Life’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* and *Twelfth Night* by Uno Akira (Studio Life, 2007)

In Studio Life’s *Twelfth Night*, it seems natural that the male actors’ appearance reminds the audience of some of the features of manga characters, whose gender is ambiguous on account of their exotic beauty (Figure 46). For his own aesthetic of exotic beauty, the male actors’ eyes are emphasised with heavy make-up that makes them look much bigger. Also, every character – both male and female – is represented as a fantasy figure wearing long and colourful wigs and flamboyant clothes that reflect they are living in an exotic country. They are all depicted as young and beautiful youths, which is similar to the figures in *shōjo* manga. Kurata

believes that the designs by Uno help the audience to believe in the fantasy: “the design by Akira Uno is more than fantasy. It gives the audience a space which seems to be so realistic, perhaps they may think such places exists in reality, and they might lose themselves in the world” (Kurata, 2011). The visualisation of the female characters by Uno cannot be separated from the theme of gender ambiguity in the play because it actually functions for the audience to see them as a symbolic figure who allows the spectator to perceive the instability of the visual signs of gender identity. Through the visual effect of creating artificial beauty and the male performers’ masculine body, it is possible for the audience to notice different gender images: “he [Matsumoto] was prettier than a woman; his face looks smooth and beautiful that I could fall in love with the character, but he has solid muscular arms that make me sure the actor is a man” (Hara, 2011). Since the two different gender roles are fused in a single body, their gender is malleable and negotiable so that the audience might accept this form as ‘the third gender.’ In this sense, the practice of cross-dressing always contains the possibility of presenting ‘the third beauty’ in its embodiment. Therefore, a man disguised as a woman in the theatrical *simulation* can be seen as a hybrid form of feminine and masculine features, and this creates a different kind of beauty that is far from the typical categories of gender based on a biological or social standard.

In an interview, Kurata (2015) revealed that she had no intention of imitating any specific images or scenes from the manga versions such as Morikawa and Lee’s *Twelfth Night* to create the figures of the female and male characters in this production. Yet, in the process of designing each scene, she drew some pictures in her mind as if she fills in story boards. Basically, in manga, characters’ psychology and emotional states are conveyed by using various shapes of panels and speech balloons. In particular, she imagined the pictures of characters’ physical movements such as “their postures and walking directions,” and then tried to portray the conceptual images on the stage in concrete forms” (Kurata, 2015). This process seems to be similar to the ways of devising the structure of manga, which consists of several story panels where each panel includes specific information and depictions of each scene. She also revealed that “if the spectators capture any images from the performers’ actions or stage ensembles, the images might be the pictures that I

previously designed in my mind” (Kurata, 2015). Kurata (2015) states that she has been “influenced by manga culture since the 1960s,” it might be possible that the audience can observe some familiar images in this production, and these images may have been unconsciously remembered for a long time. Likewise, since the director and the audience have a shared history of Japanese manga of the last fifty years, manga, as a connecting point, can be a core element that helps the communication between the production and the audience.

For *Twelfth Night*, the first phase in the playmaking process was the translation of Shakespeare’s language into Japanese, which was done by the prominent theatre scholar and translator Matsuoka Kazuko. The director, Jun Kurata, edited Matsuoka’s translation slightly to make the words fit the theatrical conditions.<sup>56</sup> In an interview, Kurata (2015) revealed the reason why she chose Matsuoka’s translations among the other many translation works. She states that “as a female translator Matsuoka’s works are friendlier to the female characters so that the audience can focus on the delicacy of their emotional state than that of male characters’ inner state.” Also, the director wants to help the audience understand the text by listening only once, so if the dialogue is long, she breaks them up with a song between scenes. She believes that the song increases the dramatic effect of the performance so that the audience does not lose interest in the characters’ lines. It is also highlighted by the form of this performance as a musical: as the production’s full title is *Twelfth Night: A Music Drama*, various songs address the main theme of the production. There are thirteen songs which present the emotional state of the characters musically rather than through their speeches. For example, as Olivia falls in love with Viola, she does not show her inner feelings through speech, but rather expresses them by singing and dancing. For the director, the speech act seems to have a limitation to express her delightful happiness which cannot be hidden inside. This is the same for the other characters as well: whenever they feel joyful, sad, or triumphant, they express their emotion sincerely by singing a song with

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<sup>56</sup> Matsuoka is likely to be the third Japanese (and the first woman) to translate all of Shakespeare. Her translation is much closer to colloquial Japanese, and the differentiation according to gender, age, or social class is less conspicuous than the other translators’ works. In her production, Kurata chose the translation by Matsuoka since her work is famous for making the female characters’ speech sounds “more natural to the ears of the audiences and to the actors and actresses.” (Harris, 2002)

choreographic movements like a musical in which the audience can comprehend not only their inner state but also the characters' traits. The musical form can be an effective way to make the audience understand the characters' true feelings. By singing a song, the characters directly express their inner state and the audience might immediately recognise and respond to their emotions; after all, the show creates the mood for them to feel sympathy towards the fictitious people portrayed.

Kurata's emphasis on emotional aspects of the characters might be linked to the reasons why the depictions of gender in *shōjo* manga style most appeals to a female audience, which indicates some important aspects of Japanese culture in relation to the female gender. Studio Life's productions have been "very popular, especially among female audience members between ages 20 and 40" (Kurata, 2011). Because the depiction of gender as ambiguous in *shōjo* manga style is mostly addressed to female readers, a romantic love story between a man and woman is the most common subject. As Kurata (2015) points out, "female audiences often lead lonely and solitary lives, so they want to emancipate from the reality through the heroines who explore their own life free from the restricted society." This is one of the reasons that Kurata, as a female director, tries to describe the inner world of the female characters in a delicate and complex manner. Because of the ambiguity of each character's gender identity in this production, the female spectators can more easily identify themselves with both the female and male characters in the theatrical illusion. Absorbed in a theatre production dramatising *shōjo* manga, the female spectators can project themselves as the characters depicted as beautiful girls and boys in the fantasy world. In this case, "beautiful boys' love (*bishōnen ai*) is often described and this has been considered a subgenre that certainly offers an imaginary playground for the Japanese girls who wish to escape from reality" (Shamoon, 2012, p. 111). The production allows the female audience to feel a kind of homoerotic *frisson* from the relationship between the two beautiful male characters while emphasising the heterosexual relation between the male and female characters to comply with gender ideology in modern patriarchal society.

In Studio Life's performance, Malvolio's yellow stockings might be one of the examples that shows how the production targets female audience members. By keeping his black and grey dress suit for the top, Malvolio changes below from

formal pants to short pants with yellow stockings to demonstrate his love for Olivia. Interestingly, the combination of his formal suit and the childish short pants has a special meaning of sexuality called *shōtacon* in Japanese culture. *Shōtacon*, often shortened to *shōta*, is a reference to *Shōtarō* who is the young male character in *Tetsujin 28-go* (reworked in English as *Gigantor*) (Figure 47). As a Japanese slang portmanteau of the phrase “*shōtarō* complex,” *shōtacon* generally means an attraction to young boys. It refers to a genre of manga and anime in which (pre)pubescent male characters are depicted in an erotic manner. When the young character is paired with a male, it is usually in a homoerotic manner, but with a female, it is generally considered a ‘straight *shōta*’ whose gender orientation is heterosexual. It can also apply to “postpubescent (adolescent or adult) characters with youthful neotenic features that would make them appear to be younger than they are” (‘Shotacon’, 2017). Importantly, *shōtacon* is related to “the concepts of *kawaii* (cuteness) and *moe* (in which characters are presented as young, cute or helpless in order to increase reader identification and inspire protective feelings)” (‘Shotacon’, 2017). In the performance, Olivia is a noble lady who is much higher than him in terms of social class; therefore, Malvolio needs to appeal as both masculine and effeminate man to make Olivia have protective feelings. This is reminiscent of the practice of a boy actor in Shakespearean theatre in which the boy actor wore female dress to show his effeminate features in order to play a female character.

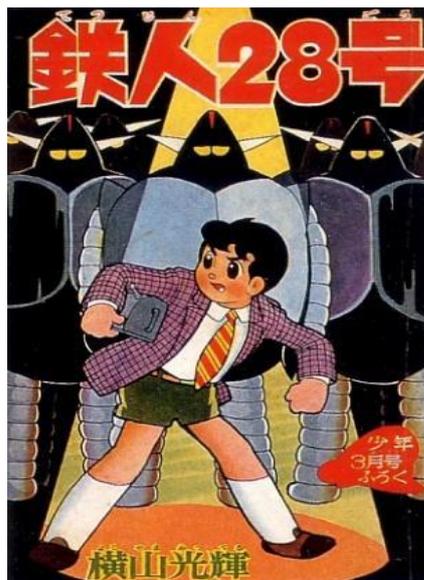


Figure 47. *Tetsujin 28* manga cover in 1961 (Pinktentacle, 2010)

Gender ambiguity based on the aesthetic of ‘the third beauty’ was also explored in Shakespearean theatre through the convention of all-male performance. The boy actors who play female roles are idealised figures as a hybrid form that may provoke the sexual desire of not only male audiences but also female audiences. Jean E. Howard (1994) insists that in a theatre “where men and women alike were both spectacles and spectators, desired and desiring” (p. 91), the women “could become desiring subjects” (p. 79). Also, Phyllis Rackin (2005) argues that Shakespeare’s texts, particularly “the prologues and epilogues [...] explicitly mark the players’ awareness that they needed to please female playgoers” (p. 76).<sup>57</sup> From these perspectives, it is possible to think that the female spectators would fantasise that the men on stage were making love with them or imagine themselves as the character whose gender is not clear because of his/her beautiful appearance to achieve a heterosexual, homosexual, or bisexual love within the theatre. In a similar vein, Randolph Trumbach (2013, p. 128) points out that the boy actors wore wigs and put on make-up to look like women, and it was often noted that they excited men’s desire for them as sexual objects and supposedly that of the female audience too. Likewise, the *shōtacon* style reflects boy actors’ immaturity – one of the central themes of the all-male cast in Elizabethan theatre – which attracts homosexual and heterosexual responses to particularly female audience members in Japan. It is notable that the theatre company actually understands the scene with the yellow stockings and translates it into their own social context – making the scene very interesting and meaningful since Malvolio’s *shōtacon* style reflects one of the important cultural aspects of Japanese society in the matter of gender and sexuality.

The emergence of ‘the third beauty’ in *shōjo* manga and Japanese theatre culture is closely related to the social condition of Japan. As Japanese society has developed, gender roles have been rigidly fixed by social regulations, and the society has maintained a strict standard regarding the sexual expression of men and women. Since the 1970s, Japanese women have won greater economic and social rights, which has led them to engage in sexual self-expression outside of marriage. Their

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<sup>57</sup> Rackin (2005) states: “The Epilogue to *As Like It* is a good case in point. Spoken by the actor who played Rosalind, it addresses female and male playgoers separately, beginning with the women, who it charges ‘to like as much of this play as please you,’ thus suggesting that the ‘you’ in the play’s title refers primarily to them.” (pp. 46-47)

sexuality has become a site of considerable anxiety for men who have continually tried to degrade women's sexuality by associating it with negative values. According to Mark McLelland (2005), the representations of female sexuality are often marginalised in Japanese media that reduces the argument about sexuality and regards "female activists as overly emotional and hysterical, referring to their arguments as 'red ranting' (red being associated with Communism but also being the colour associated with the feminism in Japan" (p. 63). He also states that "[i]t is difficult to find any images in popular culture which show women as sexually independent of men, or sexually in control (or at least equal) in their relations with men" (pp. 64-65). Moreover, Sandra Buckley (1994) points out that "Japanese women don't have a sense of freedom of expression, don't even have the words to express their experience, their desires, regardless of whether they are in a doctor's surgery, a lawyer's office or their marriage bed" (p. 178). Ultimately, Japanese girls want to be sexless since they are aware that living as an adult woman means playing a subservient role in life. In a sexless state, it can be possible for them to "constitute their own gender, neither male nor female but something importantly detached from the productive economy of heterosexual production" (Treat, 1995, p. 281). Although their arguments cannot pertain to every aspect of Japanese society, both McLelland and Buckley maintain that representations of female sexuality are still marginalised in Japanese culture and media. In this sense, *shōjo* manga aims to provide women with a safe space in which the female readers can identify with the heroes or heroines as ideal figures who are free from the sexist roles assigned by the social system.

In the production, the stage design of Illyria reflects the ideal world of which the female audience dreams. Such exotic environments have been adopted as backgrounds in many *shōjo* manga, which reflects the aspiration and curiosity of the younger generation towards Western culture and trends. As Abe (2014a) revealed in an interview, "Japanese girls have considered Western countries to be ideal places where they can dream of love and get freedom far from the oppressive reality for women in Japanese society." To build up Illyria, Uno uses several cubic blocks to be stacked on both sides of the stage while the centre is left open to the actors for an entrance or exit. The biggest advantage of using the blocks might be the possibility of infinite transformability and mobility as visual signs. The blocks can be placed

anywhere and stand for anything – a ship, mansion, prison – and also stacked or arranged to make any type of stage as scenes are changed.<sup>58</sup> By using some stage blocks to build different structural shapes, the stage space is not fixed as a specific place, but is always changeable into unfamiliar or unexpected locations to describe human life in modern society. The bare stage with only a few cubes can make an ideal condition in which each scene depicts the characters' state at each stage of their lives. The location in space and time of Studio Life's *Twelfth Night* is described as "someday, but not on a specific date" and "somewhere, but at no specific location" (Sohn, 2012, p. 259). In this indefinable and imaginative place, none of the female characters (or female audience) feels guilty about her being a homosexual, or have to seek her identity. In this dream-like world, by disguising her gender identity, Viola seems to challenge the conventional perception of gender roles and explore an ambiguous gender position by crossing over the boundary between femininity and masculinity, which allows her/him to display both hetero- or homosexual love for Orsino.

However, far from the production's exploration of gender ambiguity through the visual aesthetic by Uno for the performers' appearance and stage set, the performers' acting style is bound to presenting gender division by emphasising femininity and masculinity through a series of stereotyped actions for a particular gender. According to Mezur (1999, pp. 283-284), as male performers developed the aesthetics and techniques for representing both genders over three hundred years, they set a standard for the performance of gender roles. Even in Japanese modern theatre, the aesthetic for female representation still remains though there were several attempts to liberate acting from the aesthetic of ideal beauty by new experimental theatre movements between the 1960s and the 1970s. Mezur (1999) also argues that "the strength of kabuki *onnagata*'s female-like performance codes were so deeply imbedded," and they have "remained the performance codes for the ideal Woman in all visual and performing arts" in Japan (p. 284). In this context, it is difficult for

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<sup>58</sup> The structure of the blocks serves as the residence of the three aristocratic characters, Orsino, Viola, and Olivia. The structure has a large window in the centre and a balcony at the top, so the audience may guess that it is part of a castle or a mansion. After the first scene with a group dance is over, the structure of the blocks is suddenly transformed into a ship, with the big window functioning as the porthole through which is seen the surge of sea waters. A couple of curve-shaped objects are heaved in turn behind the porthole to represent the wild sea waters during the storm scene.

actors and audience to be free of the conventional iconography of femininity. In addition, the performers' acting seems to be influenced by the modern Japanese theatre form such as *Shingeki* which often presents stereotyped images of masculinity and femininity. For Kurata, it is an important and difficult challenge for her performers to discover how to present the female characters' emotional condition through their body and linguistic expressions. Kurata asserts that she asked the actor not to show the meaning of the words by using their bodily gestures, but simply imagine how the characters would feel in certain situations and try to translate the feeling as if they become the character themselves. By focusing on the inner state of the characters, she intends to help the actors to share the emotional experience of the characters with the audience. This shows that the director wants the actors to develop more modern techniques of presenting the characters' psychological aspects without exaggerated physical expressions, thus distinguishing the acting from the stereotyped gender performance in the conventional *Shingeki* theatre. Kurata asked her actors to avoid appearing overly masculine or feminine; rather they tend to perform much less theatrical gestures to indicate the different layers of gender behaviour between the female and the male disguised as the female character. This acting style might help the audience to freely imagine the characters as androgynous figures whose ambiguous features exhibit 'the third beauty.'

Yet, the influence of *Shingeki* is still powerful in modern Japanese performers and productions, including the productions of Studio Life. Even though the actors attempt to concentrate on the emotional aspects of the characters, their acting style is clearly associated with the concept of gender binarism. The male performers' actions for the characters are supposed to reflect their interpretation of female and male genders, and what sort of gestures can be used for asserting their gender identity to make the audience believe in their characterisation. As Kurata (2015) admits in an interview, "the performers seemed to have certain ideas of how females or males are supposed to behave according to their own ideas of femininity and masculinity." In other words, the performers' gender acting, particularly for the female characters, is limited to presenting certain gestures signifying femininity in quite simple ways. For instance, Matsumoto Shinya (Viola/Cesario) strives to make a clear distinction between feminine and masculine features particularly when he highlights the process

of transformation from Viola to Cesario. He expresses more femininity in his actions while he is playing Viola; in the same way when he plays Cesario, he adds more masculine features to his gestures. In the scene when Viola meets Orsino, Matsumoto tries to emphasise feminine features by changing the tone of his voice, making it much softer, and relying on some detailed gestures of his hands and legs. On most occasions, he lifts up his hands to touch his own lips and chest to emphasise the character's feminine charm (Figure 48). As Viola falls in love while Orsino is singing, the actor presents a series of feminine gestures – raising both his arms and folding his two hands back to expose the white skin inside his wrists to appeal to the female character's feminine charm. White skin is usually regarded as an appealing feminine attribute because of its softness. Also, when Viola hugs the Captain to express her thanks for his help in Illyria, the actor lifts one of his legs to emphasise Viola's femininity. This kind of gesture can be easily observed from female characters in films or TV as a gesture associated with appealing femininity.



Figure 48. Matsumoto playing Viola in Act 1, Scene 5 (*Twelfth Night*, 2011)

Figure 49. Matsumoto acting as Cesario in Act 1, Scene 5 (*Twelfth Night*, 2011)

Conversely, when Viola disguises herself as Cesario, Matsumoto begins to show a series of typical masculine behaviours instead of feminine gestures. The actor shows the character's awkward feeling towards her new hairstyle and male attire as Cesario. As Viola tries to adjust her new clothes, she intentionally touches her breast area to demonstrate she is physically a woman but now pretending to be a man. Also, the actor changes his voice, speaking with a very deep voice, puffs up his chest, and clenches his fists to show that the size of his body and strength is now much bigger and stronger than before (Figure 49). These gestures are considered traditional signs

of masculinity, and the actor seems to use these actions deliberately to reassure the audience that he is playing a male role through a series of masculine gestures.

Rather than exploring the gender ambiguity as an all-male theatre company, Studio Life seems to follow a conservative way of showing gender categories by reinforcing the traditional concept of gender and gender behaviour that have been socially known as feminine or masculine. Of course, the gestures they show do not represent the general idea of gender in modern Japanese culture, but their depictions comply with the social attitude and mentality towards gender and sexuality in a succinct form. Regarding Matsumoto's gender actions, most audiences seem to agree that the male performer looks like a pretty woman. A person from the Japanese audience made this comment: "The heroine, Shinya Matsumoto as Viola was just like a real girl and pretty. Matsumoto is petite but his (her) emotion is strong and endless. This is probably why I am always fascinated by his acting whatever his role is" (Shinobu, 2009). Another audience member commented: "Matsumoto's appearance was so pretty when he performs a female character, but his acting was different as he performs a male role, which was really nice" (Kurara, 2011). Another member of the audience comments: "Oikawa Ken's feminine acting is really good. His every gesture – hands, body movements, and the way of looking – are extremely feminine. I feel like [I am] watching a pretty girl from his acting" (Bmjeon, 2011). Their reviews imply that the male actors' feminine acting seems to be convincing enough for them to believe in them as women. As the performers' binary depictions are consistent with common sense attitudes towards gender in modern Japanese society, their performance simply follows the story of the play with its limited perspective on gender and sexuality, rather than exploring questions of gender more critically.

Certainly, this production seems to follow a conservative way of representing gender categories by reinforcing the heterosexual relationship between the characters. In this production, there are several instances of physical touching between Cesario and Orsino throughout the play. In Act 1, Scene 4, it seems that Orsino leads the relation with Cesario no matter what Cesario's gender position within the relationship: Orsino puts his arms around Viola/Cesario, touches her/his face, and even embraces her/him tightly (Figure 50). Orsino even holds Cesario's

jaw and speaks in Japanese “your glossy and ruby-like lips can’t be compared with anything, even diamonds; the words coming from those lips are so kind like a sweet lady” (*Twelfth Night*, 2011). At this moment, their posture is similar to the very moment in which a couple is about to kiss (Figure 51).



Figure 50. Orsino hugging Cesario in Act 1, Scene 4 (*Twelfth Night*, 2011)

Figure 51. Orsino talking to Cesario in Act 1, Scene 4 (*Twelfth Night*, 2011)

Whether the relation between Orsino and Cesario is hetero- or homosexual love, Viola/Cesario’s behaviour is always depicted as playing a passive role in developing the relationship with Orsino rather than leading it to what she/he wants. In this context, even though both the male or female characters’ appearance is depicted as ‘the third beauty,’ their gender behaviour is still bound to the stereotyped gender ideology of masculinity and femininity, simultaneously emphasising male power and patriarchal authority. In the relation between Orsino and Viola/Cesario, the actor who plays a male character takes the lead in initiating their relationship and the other one playing a female role naturally performs the stereotype of femininity in the relation. The different gender roles within a homosexual love again imitate the heterosexual relationship. Although the female audience imagines the love between Orsino and Viola/Cesario in different combinations of genders, they would accept the typical depictions of gender roles in which female characters are more passive and delicate than male characters in their romance. After all, the character’s third beauty with respect to their appearance allows the female spectators to imagine themselves in various gender positions, but their adventure is always concluded in reassuring the heterosexual love under the power of androcentric society.

The physical contact between the two men heightens the sense of tension not only between the characters, but also among the audience who want to find the traces

of *shōjo* manga. In homoerotic relations in *shōjo* manga, according to McLelland (2010), a love between two girls (*shōjo ai*) “would seem a little strange as it would be unclear who should ‘take the lead’ (*riido wo shite*) in initiating a sexual encounter” (p. 84) because of the male-dominant social atmosphere of Japan. Likewise, in Studio Life’s production, though Olivia expresses her passionate love for Viola/Cesario, she never has any physical contact with her/him, which is in contrast to the several physical touches between Orsino and Viola/Cesario as a heterosexual couple. This shows that even in homoerotic implications between the two male actors, the masculine and feminine roles are clearly fixed, but the same-sex love between women is not really marked in this performance. In Japan, women’s interest in love between boys has been greater than that of love between girls. As Buckley (1994) points out, “tolerance of male homosexuality is greater than lesbians” in Japanese society (p. 174). One of the reasons of this phenomenon is that manga artists such as Hagio Moto who is one of the first writers to depict male homosexual themes in her work, avoids depicting same-sex love between girls. She revealed in an interview that “I found the plan about the girls’ school to be gloomy and disgusting ... Take a kissing scene, for instance ... as sticky as fermented soybeans” (Hagio, 1981, cited in McLelland, 2010, p. 83). She might want to “avoid homophobic reactions from her female readers who might have found the idea of girls kissing disgusting” (McLelland, 2010, p. 83) and consider boys’ kissing is somehow safer in Japanese society. Likewise, the representation of female sexuality in both manga and media has been often marginalised, and lesbianism is no exception. Thus, Japanese comic books began to deal with male homosexuality, and the feminine body of the boys often becomes the surrogate self of the girls.

As the audience recalls their own experiences with *shōjo* manga, the moments of theatricalised intimacy between Orsino and Cesario allow them to identify themselves with the characters through an enactment of fantasy. Michael Shapiro (1996) insists that “spectators respond to theatrical representations of intimacy as primal fantasies” (p. 144), so this kind of scene provides the audience with a strong feeling of anxiety. He states that the scenes of kissing and embracing between male performers or female characters can evoke sexual desire, which leads the audience to experience desire, pleasure, jealousy, embarrassment, and even fear. The female

audience would interpolate themselves in the relationship between the beautiful men, and accept their relation based on the male-dominated ideology as natural. In this case, the male figures' love can be used as a substitute for females' sexual desire in the repressed Japanese social condition. This seems to be contrary to the initial expectation that female audiences can freely identify with the androgynous figures as their ideal selves which can lead them to separate themselves from the sexist roles assigned by the patriarchal system.

In this production, the concept of gender ambiguity conveyed through the male bodies takes on an allegorical form, evoking the ironic condition of the gender position of Japanese women in patriarchal Japanese society. In modern Japan, it is true that gender roles have been rigidly fixed and women's sexuality is seriously restrained by the popular imagination in which women's gender and sexuality are always positioned in passive roles. But at the same time, women aspire to enjoy freedom from a rigid social system which maintains male power as Viola's male disguise breaks the rules of a patriarchal system to act as an independent woman in *Twelfth Night*. Unlike the conclusions of Shakespeare's other comedies, such as *As You Like It*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Twelfth Night* does not show any anticipation of reproduction. There is only the mention of marriage,<sup>59</sup> but this seems not enough to re-establish the conventional erotic pairings or gender hierarchies. Instead, the lack of projection of a social order allows the "circuits of desire" (Neely, 2004, p. 120) to remain open at the ending. The ambiguities of gender are re-emphasised at the conclusion by the "large residue of bi-gendered and bisexual subjectivity" (Neely, 2004, p. 120). Viola's cross-dressing as Cesario makes her appearance that of a beautiful boy, and her relationship with Orsino betrays heterosexual attraction and perhaps even homosexual love with Olivia because she never reveals her female identity in front of Orsino and Olivia. Therefore, Viola's love for Orsino and her position as a beloved one by Olivia could be safely achieved without revealing her real identity. For this reason, the female audience would prefer to put themselves in the position of Viola, whose gender can

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<sup>59</sup> Olivia suggests to Orsino, "My lord so please you, these things further thought on, / To think me as well a sister as a wife, / One day shall crown th' alliance on't, so please you, / Here at my house and at my proper cost" (5.1.316-319).

be both female and male and simultaneously neither female nor male as she experiences various gender positions in the performance.

However, in the Kurata's production, it seems clear that the director simply tries to encompass the story of the play in a direct way rather than examining or expanding the questions of gender and sexuality to the real Japanese social circumstance. The production does not ultimately challenge the Japanese perception of gender roles. The female characters simply accept the reality of heteronormative marriage as Shakespeare describes, and in this way they re-establish their position within the male-dominated system of society. Through the course of the narrative in the performance, Viola is depicted as a woman who dreams of becoming the wife of Orsino in a heterosexual marriage, which seems to be a much safer and more acceptable option. Also, Olivia loves a woman disguised as a man, yet makes a contract of marriage with a man who is the twin of the disguised woman she loved. At this final moment, Viola is no longer undermining the conventional role of women. Rather than pursuing limitless possibilities of gender through the aesthetic of 'the third gender,' the production reveals its conservative political position by suggesting that the female should return to her conventional social role thereby rejecting the theatrical fantasy of homosexual love. Although there are numerous implications of gender beyond the fixed position, the production suggests a safe place, a conservative conclusion that the female should return to her previous position in both theatrical illusion and reality.

In an interview, Kurata (2015) revealed that she was "not really interested in developing the concept of gender ambiguity through the all-male practice, as the main purpose of this production is not to explore the theme of gender." She stated that if the audience perceives any homoerotic implications between the characters or male actors, that is not what she intended, but just the audience's fantasy (Kurata 2015). Rather than the concept of gender ambiguity, Kurata insisted that Studio Life attempts to deal with the idea of "*raison d'être*" through their theatre works (Kurata, 2015). It means that each character has a certain reason to survive and continue their life even though it is tough. In her *Twelfth Night*, Kurata tries to describe bright and dark sides of human life by focusing on how each character overcomes the

difficulties in their life.<sup>60</sup> In particular, Kurata wants to deal with “the process of how the female characters carve out their own fortunes by reading Shakespeare’s play from a female perspective” (Kurata, 2011). In particular, she tries to “focus on the psychological aspect of the female characters, and this is one of the reasons why this production is popular mostly among female audiences” (Hwang, 2011). Kurata also reveals that as a director, she does “not want to manipulate the audience’s interpretation or lead them in any specific direction” (Kurata, 2015). Her statement demonstrates that the director did not have conscious intentions with respect to the effect of theatrical illusion and its impact on the audience in representing social reality.

However, how can this production help female audiences to find the *raison d’être* of their own life without discussing the concept of gender and sexuality in relation to the social condition of modern Japan? The concept of *raison d’être* implies the ambiguities presented by the peculiar representation of gender, and its theme can be developed in this particular space in which the power of illusion is challenged and the secret of the representation is unveiled by Viola’s disguise. The audience needs to think about the meaning of her deception in relation to the circumstances she is experiencing. Viola knows the danger of disguise as “a wicked” art that leads Olivia to construct a fantasy from her appearance, not the truth underneath it. In this way, the female audience members might broaden their perspective on gender performance by exploring the meaning beneath the aesthetic of gender ambiguity in relation to the Japanese social and cultural circumstances that they are currently faced with. Although Kurata does not take the notion of gender seriously, the concept of gender is clearly reflected in the process of imitating particular gestures and images to make the theatrical illusion more substantial. The illusion actually functions for the audience to see the female character as a symbolic figure who allows them to perceive the instability of visual signs of gender identity.

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<sup>60</sup> According to Kurata (2015), Feste has hard times more than the other characters because she thinks if Feste has to know the dark side of the life that becomes his ability to make other characters laugh. In her production, Feste seems to have no decent job, but has to eat something after disappearing for a few days in Act 1. To emphasise his dark aspect, Kurata made him a handicapped character: he does not walk properly because of the injury on his leg. At the end of the play, although everyone is happy, Feste is the only one who cannot laugh, maintaining the consistency of the character. His hard life is described in his song, ‘Life is Rain and Storm,’ at the beginning and end of the performance.

The presence of male actors as female characters also supports this mechanism. The implications of homoerotic desire between female or male characters in their visual appearance based on the strange beauty of gender provide profound meanings regarding the subject of gender and sexuality, another important aspect of this production aside from the psychological aspect of the characters.

According to the official website of the theatre company, it is expected that “the audience can concentrate on the story of *Twelfth Night*, which will highlight a sense of theatricality as the result.” It also insists that the performance focuses on displaying the “psychological state of female characters” and “pioneering their own fate in avoidance of exaggerated gestures for emphasizing artificial femininity” (Studio Life, 2007). This shows that they are actually more concerned with the inner sensibilities of the female characters than with the aesthetics of the masculine or feminine body. However, their statements are contradictory in many ways. According to Tracy Davis and Postlewait (2004), theatricality is “a way of describing what performers and what spectators do together in the making of ‘the theatrical event’” (p. 23). Basically, it focuses on any conventions related to theatrical communication, including the audience’s self-conscious, self-reflexive perception of what is happening on stage. More importantly, it is the concept used “to describe the gap between reality and its representation” (Davis and Postlewait, 2004, p. 6). Willmar Sauter (2000) argues that “theatricality is meant to represent the essential or possible characteristics of theatre as an art form and as a cultural phenomenon” (p. 50). In this context, it is doubtful that the audience’s concentration on the story of the play and understanding of the characters’ inner states can evoke “a sense of theatricality” without expanding the theme of the production to the social circumstance of Japan. It seems that the audience needs to view not just the psychology of the characters within their fictional reality but also a number of overt cultural and aesthetic conventions. The reason for this is that solely concentrating on the plot and the characters’ psychological state might lead them to experience the mimetic illusion of the fictional world rather than perceive the production as a consciously artistic expression of social identities in relation to the theme of the play.

In Studio Life’s *Twelfth Night*, the result and effect of the all-male casting are not challenging enough to function as social critiques of contemporary Japanese

gender stratification or to bring about new ideas on gender, especially its relation to social consciousness and hegemony within the male-dominated system. The production displays a series of social images of gender and rehashes them in the process of translating the text of the play, which eventually ends with heterosexual love. In this sense, the theme of this performance might be looked on simply as confirming constructed gender images without presenting any critical vision of the pre-existing perspectives on gender roles. The aesthetic of gender ambiguity from the visual effect of ‘the third beauty’ by Uno is used as a temporary form of entertainment which is, after all, accepted by the audience as a natural form through the performers’ realist acting that emphasises gender binaries based on a heteronormative social discourse. In this condition, the culture of *shōjo* manga – a complex form reflecting the desire to escape from the fixed position of women in Japanese society and dramatising its form in a theatrical way – always remains in the passive state within the pre-existing social structure. For these reasons, the function of the production needs to be more active and progressive to make the audience realise the true face of the ‘beauty’ in order to recognise their own need to escape from the previously passive subject. In this context, the study of gender – whether heterosexual, homosexual, or queer relationships – is important not just for understanding the characters in the play or the practice of cross-dressing itself, but for the female audience members to get some answers to the questions of their own *raison d’être* in their everyday lives. This attitude might be the crucial step for them to reconsider the concept of gender and sexuality in both the theatre and reality, and achieve their own reality, which is different from the conventional conclusion of a happy marriage but no freedom in *Twelfth Night*.

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Ninagawa and Kurata’s adaptations of Shakespeare’s *Twelfth Night* provide the modern audience with an opportunity to explore the cultural meaning of gender performance through their complex synthesis of theatre practices. While exploring the concept of gender ambiguity through the convention of cross-dressing, they present the stereotyped gender roles and images by adapting the *Shingeki* style of

acting, which involves the concept of gender binarism with a series of typical actions emphasising femininity and masculinity. The directors' use of various performance modes in a production describes the unique and complicated features of representing gender and sexuality in Japanese theatre culture. At the same time, it reflects the directors' problematic position in integrating the contradictory perspectives on female gender in traditional and modern Japanese society.

On the surface, pursuing two disparate directions on gender and sexuality in a performance might be incongruous: Ninagawa and Kurata emphasise the ambiguity of the female characters' gender by casting male actors whereas the performers' acting style is based on *Shingeki* form to create a representational illusion. Yet, in this complex theatrical condition, both directors explore various degrees of acting style between the traditional and modern theatre conventions in order to expand the range of practicing gender performances. For instance, the *Shingeki* acting style is already different from the original forms of *Shingeki* practised in the early twentieth century, which was influenced by stereotypical gender images from *Kabuki*. It has been modified into a different form with contemporary vernacular and naturalist acting forms with which contemporary audiences are familiar. Modernised *Shingeki* and *Kabuki* performances have resituated their position in Japanese theatre culture as a bridge between the traditional performance forms and Western realism, rather than disconnecting from the principles of traditional Japanese theatre. In this context, the cultural value of the combination of the traditional and modern theatre forms might be elevated through such intra-cultural reworking. The collective use of various performance forms in Ninagawa and Kurata reveals the hybridism that arose from the traditional and modern performative modes of Japanese theatre and also provides an opportunity to broaden the discourse of gender and sexuality in Japanese culture.

As previously mentioned, the Shakespearean convention of male actors' performance for female roles can be interpreted as a means of reproducing and affirming the patriarchal ideologies of the early modern English culture. Regarding the transvestite disguises in Shakespeare's comedies such as *Twelfth Night*, Greenblatt (1988) argues that "men love women precisely as *representations*," and

that the secret of feminine identity is presented literally in the all-male performances, which “theorize a masculinist fantasy of a world without women” (p. 93). In this context, it might be important to question how the aesthetic of imaginary femininity can deepen the discourse of Japanese feminine gender, which has been marginalised and suppressed in patriarchal social conditions. However, it seems that Ninagawa’s and Kurata’s adaptations of *Twelfth Night* do not lead the audience to think of the meaning of gender ambiguity and its representation in relation to Japanese social conditions. In their productions, the depiction of the female characters’ nature does not seem to be radical enough to subvert the existing patriarchal system promoting an ideal femininity, but merely provide fantasies controlled by the hegemonic social structure within the theatre.

The male actor in the traditional Japanese theatre embodies the ‘essence’ of the gender image in accordance with the social preference rather than challenging the existing norms by suggesting other perspectives outside the rigid social system. The female characters performed by male actors can be the surrogate selves of female spectators who attempt to escape from the repressed discourse of female sexuality through the homosexual love between the female characters. As Naomi Tonooka (1999) points out, “within a Japanese context, [...] women rarely are supposed to have ‘active’ desire and women’s sexuality is not a topic often seen in the theatre” (p. 254). In this sense, it seems that the directors are obliged to present a critical view on the theatrical techniques based on gender discrimination if they attempt to deal with the subject of gender identity through *Twelfth Night*. Without any criticism, the aesthetic of ‘the third beauty’ can only be used to enhance the theatrical effect by casting all-male performers as women, which follows the traditional forms that reinforce the patriarchy.

## Chapter 5.

### *Twelfth Night* in Korean Theatre

In Korean culture, the concept of gender and sexuality has evolved and developed for the last few centuries. Male supremacist social institutions and ideology were deeply rooted in the foundations of traditional Korean culture which is a mixture of Confucian, Taoist, Buddhist, and Shamanistic traditions influenced by Chinese philosophies.<sup>61</sup> According to Shim Jung-Soon (1999), they were “strictly established and practised in the patriarchal institution of the family within the so-called ‘natural law of the universe’” (p. 241). This traditional perspective has been translated into “an oppressive patriarchal ideology of predominance of male over female” and “respect for male and disrespect for female” (Shim, 1999, p. 241). In some senses, the general concept of the female position and role in pre-modern Korean society can be seen to be very similar to the social conditions during the Shakespearean period. In both cultures, women’s lives were controlled by their father or brother before they got married, and their husband would be their master after the marriage. The gender images of women were usually passive under the ideology advocating the power of men, and their pivotal role in any social position.

In this ideology, woman’s social place was commensurate with the ideal beauty of femininity. It has been often “represented by the stereotype of the moral/virtuous woman at home within the institution of a patriarchal family” (Shim, 1999, p. 241), which is still deeply embedded even in contemporary Korean mentality. This can still be observed in many modern Korean plays in

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<sup>61</sup> According to Jeffrey Richey (2017), Confucianism influenced women’s lives during the last several hundred years in East Asia. According to the traditional Confucian view, women were at the bottom and men were top in the social hierarchy and even domestic life. Exemplary behaviour and uncomplaining obedience were expected from them. He insists that “[i]t was not until the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, when contact with modern Western social values became widespread across East Asia, that people in these traditionally Confucian societies began to adopt systematic prejudices” toward women. It is easy to see how such tradition “has endorsed essentialized gender dichotomies that privilege stereotypically ‘male’ qualities and activities over stereotypically ‘female’ qualities and activities.”

which the subjects of women's solidarity, mother-daughter relationships, or lesbianism have been reflecting and reinforcing the well-being of the patriarchal family system. Since the beginning of the 1980s, there have been a number of activities and efforts to break down the earlier perspectives on gender and sexuality due to the impact of globalisation and the democratisation of Korea. Korean society has achieved great changes towards understanding diverse representations of gender identity and people with different sexual and gender orientations. The manifestation of the social change in Korean theatre can be seen in the development of feminist theatre along with the activity of featuring major female characters as new women who explore diverse layers of female subjectivities rather than a singular and fixed collective female identity. As the social position of women has become as important as a man's position, the issue of gender is also evolving and regarded as a crucial subject in Korean theatre.<sup>62</sup> In many modern Shakespeare performances in Korea, the position of female characters is reconsidered and reformulated to emphasise the importance of female characters within the productions.

In these circumstances, it is noticeable that the number of productions of *Twelfth Night* has increased in Korea: while there was only one Korean production of *Twelfth Night* before 2000, more than twelve productions were produced between 2000 and 2011. Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* overtly deals with the politics of gender identity; particularly, the practice of cross-gender casting creates a radical effect by revealing that the theatre itself is an experimental space exploring the different gender compositions in (theatrical) reality. In this way, it broadens the theme of "transvestism into the cultural mainstream, indicating an evolution in the public's sensitivity to gender issues and receptivity to same-sex relationships" (Bulman, 2008, p. 237). According to Lee Hyun-U (2009), "the issue of femininity is one of the consistent keys to approaching Shakespearean productions in contemporary Korean theatre, because the femininity shown

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<sup>62</sup> In the late twentieth century, as Western drama became popular in Korea, the gender roles and social positions of female and male characters have been depicted in realist acting form. Some female characters such as Nora in *A Doll's House* (1879) and Eliza in *Pygmalion* (1913) were described by the playwrights as radical figures disrupting the patriarchal social system, which allowed the modern audience to discern the social position of women from a different perspective.

through those Shakespeare productions seem to have been influencing each other” (pp. 46-47). He particularly focuses on ways of portraying the appearance and physical movements of female characters to have a general idea of how the concept of femininity has changed and developed in modern Korean theatre. He insists that the female character begins to take a central role, and their physical appearance is depicted as powerful and masculine to emphasise the importance of their role as an active woman.<sup>63</sup> In this sense, Shakespearean productions need to be understood in the context of contemporary social conditions, which will lead the modern audience to comprehend how the performances can open new perspectives on human desire and its embodiment in relation to the cultural context.

Among many other productions, Yang Jung-Ung’s *Twelfth Night* (2011) and Oh Dong-Shik’s *Trans-Twelfth Night* (2014) hold greater interest for the audience today as the male actors playing female roles (or female actors performing male characters) have experimented with the volatility of gender that disrupts and disturbs the audience by making them rethink existing concepts of masculinity and femininity. Also, these productions are unique for their experimental practices along with radical approaches to Shakespeare’s *Twelfth Night*, which are different from other previous performances in which directors are usually faithful to the descriptions of gender based on the convention of realism. In this chapter, I explore how the multiplicity of gender positions described in *Twelfth Night* is working within the male/female actors while performing female/male characters in both the physical and psychological senses, and how their cross-gender acting affects the theme of the play and reflects the changes of women’s position in modern Korean society.

### **The Theatricality of Transformation: Performing Gender by All-Male Actors in *Twelfth Night* (2011) by Yang Jung-Ung**

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<sup>63</sup> The female characters are depicted as strong and powerful women in modern Shakespeare productions in Korea: Lady Macbeth in Han Tae-Sook’s *Lady Macbeth* (1998-2016); Titania in Yang Jung-Ung’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (2002-2016); Juliet in Oh Tae-Suk’s *Romeo & Juliet* (1995-2016); Lady Macbeth in Koh Sun-Ung’s *Killbeth* (2010-2015).

In *Twelfth Night*, Yang adopts various theatrical elements from traditional and modern Korean theatre and uses them in eclectic ways. In particular, he mixes diverse performance modes of traditional Korean folk drama including *Talchum*, *Deotboegi* (Korean mask play), and *Kokdugakshinorum* (Korean puppet drama) to create a unique form of physical expression. Above all, Yang's performance is played by all-male actors, which was inspired by Korean traditional theatre known as *Namsadangnori*. 'Namsadang' is an itinerant troupe of male actors presenting various performing arts such as singing, dancing, and acrobatics, and playing like a circus. The combination of traditional music and performers' acrobatic movements enhances the festive atmosphere in which there exists close intimacy between actors and audience. In these traditional performances, the actors spontaneously performed for the poor farmers and other low-class and middle-class people, and gained high popularity among the general populace. This is different from other styles of traditional performance such as *Dodeuri* (Korean traditional music) and *Gummu* (a sword dance), which were meant for the noble class.

The significance of these traditional folk performances can be found in their common touch. The audience surrounded the entertainers whose acts were followed with great empathy and enthusiasm. According to Sim (1970, p. 9-10), Korean folk dramas reveal the long history of suffering, and struggle for survival of the common people. During the performance, the actors directly revealed their critical points of view on social problems such as the corruption of aristocratic class and sexual discrimination. In particular, the players dealt largely with the conflict between nobility called 'yangban'<sup>64</sup> and peasants from the viewpoint of the latter in the form of conscious resistance. Thus, the performers' actions are clear and succinct to make the audience easily understand the intention of their movements, which look unrealistic and different from everyday behaviour. By showing exaggerated and imitative gestures with satiric quips, they make fun of the people from a higher social status. In this way, the folk drama gave legitimate opportunity to the audience

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<sup>64</sup> *Yangban* is a ruling class of male Confucian intellectuals between the sixteenth and nineteenth century Korea.

members to express their desires and feelings which had been suppressed within the rigid social atmosphere.

The effect of juxtaposing traditional and modernised theatre conventions in Korea provides some intriguing ideas by displaying gender in the Korean cultural and social context. Yang's intention of adopting traditional acting styles is "to show how conventional theatre modes, particularly the practice of all-male casting, can be reused to explore the theme of gender and sexuality in *Twelfth Night* from different cultural perspectives" (2014). Since the femininity portrayed by the male actors seems to be obvious to the modern audience, who is aware of the performers' enactment of female character, they would observe the production with a distance from the dramatic illusion. Unlike traditional *Kabuki*, the performers' role in *Talchum* and *Deotboegi* is not reconstructing an ideal femininity, but rather depicting both male and female characters as ridiculous and silly with stereotyped actions that satirise traditional social ideas of masculinity and femininity.

Throughout the production, the audience expects to see how particular signs of femininity can be performed and constructed by the male actors. Since performing femininity and masculinity can never be separated from social structure or ideology, it is a signified form reflecting our social (un)consciousness of human identity in relation to gender and sexuality. In this sense, it is possible to discuss how cultural background has influenced the concept of gender and the ways of its portrayal in theatre. According to Bulman (2008), "no other modern *Twelfth Night* has so explicitly questioned the play's heterosexual affirmations or so pervasively queered the audience, educating them to appreciate the comic value of gender as performance and to delight in the sexually transgressive unions toward which the play's confusions move" (p. 241). Therefore, the work of analysing gender images in Yang's *Twelfth Night* might be a way of understanding the work of social forces and mechanisms in developing a gender discourse in Korean theatre culture.

The spontaneous and improvising movement of the performers is one of the important features in Yang's *Twelfth Night*. According to the director, most Korean traditional theatres highlight the effect of physical movements, a mixed form of Korean traditional dance and martial arts. Yang and his actors have invented various physical expressions, often "inspired in the process of establishing certain gestures

through improvisational practice” (Yang, 2014), which look like very stylised movements. To emphasise the function of performers’ improvising actions for strong dramatic impact, Yang cut out many parts of the original text and only kept the main plots and characters. Although the title and the main plot of this production were borrowed from Shakespeare’s play, the dialogue between the characters and the structure of the new production were reconstructed by Yang and his actors. As a result, the story becomes simpler and concise; therefore, the audience can concentrate on the performers’ portrayal of their own characters, particularly their acting style and appearance from their own cultural perspectives, rather than reconsidering the value of Shakespeare’s language as a poetic form.

Yang’s use of an all-male cast renews the audience’s speculation upon how male actors have performed female roles through traditional theatre conventions in Korea. He sees the value of the traditional convention for the modern audience and plays with the alienation caused by historicising the theatrical techniques. The audience might understand the historical differences between the conventions of Shakespearean and traditional Korean theatres without effacing them, and there are the ways in which these differences can be emphasised to question the audience’s previous assumptions of gender and sexuality. When gender is alienated or foregrounded, the people can see the multiple layers of different signs, which makes them become independent to not only break the imaginary identification but also revise the meanings of the specific condition more thoroughly.



Figure 52. One of scenes in *Deotboegi* (Ryu, 2012)

In particular, Yang emphasises the concept of gender by emphasising the concept of theatricality, which can also be observed in many different types of Korean traditional and modern theatre. As Bulman (2008) insists, “performances that celebrate the theatricality of cross-gendering becomes potent tools for exploring the politics of gender and sexuality” (p. 17). In an interview, Yang (2014) revealed that he wanted to stress “the effect of theatricality to show the difference between the gender of the male actors and their gender performance.” For him, it is significant that the spectator recognises the difference between the artistic form of feminine gender as a theatrical practice and the performers’ gender identity as a male. According to Davis and Postlewait (2003), theatricality suggests that theatre work imitates human life, and is also “often associated with the acts and practices of role-playing, illusion, false appearance, masquerade, façade, and impersonation” (p. 4). It seems that the concept of theatricality is akin to what traditional Korean theatres attempt to practise through the performers’ bodies. Among the six different performance parts in *Namsadangnori*, Yang greatly relies on the form of the fifth play, *Deotboegi* (Figure 52). The term ‘*Deotboegi*’ comes from the verb, *deotboeda* (or *Deotboida*), which means “to be seen or to appear doubled,” referring to the masks worn in performance (Sim, 1970, p. 24). Using the *Deotboegi* form thus emphasises the performative duality of the performer both as an actor and a character who can freely move between the boundaries of reality and the theatrical. Yang uses the performers’ double roles to prompt the audience to question how the ideal images of femininity and masculinity are constructed as performance. The male performers’ exaggerated actions urge audiences to be conscious of the actor’s own gender identity and their “false appearance” as female characters. In this way, two different gender signs are made to co-exist on the actors’ single body.

In this way, Yang prods the audience into identifying the complicated mechanism of formulating a particular gender image. He makes a character’s gender identity recognised from the performers’ physical movements rather than their outer appearance since gender is not only represented through costumes and make-up, but through the performer’s embodied actions. That is, the audience needs to explore not only the visual form of the characters’ appearance, but the ways of constructing their physical actions influenced by a social and cultural ideology of feminine gender and

sexuality. In an interview, Yang (2014) states that “the concept of the characters’ appearance was inspired by wooden puppets called *kokdu*, which were used to decorate a funeral bier in Korean traditional culture” (Figure 53). People believed that the *kokdu* puppets become a companion of the soul of a dead person who travels from this life to the spirit world.<sup>65</sup> Since the puppets symbolise a transcendental power, there are not distinctive features to be called femininity or masculinity.



Figure 53. Korean traditional *kokdu* puppets (Lee, 2015)

In this production, the concept of theatricality is particularly stressed through the role of Feste. Yang maximises the importance of this role as a main character who can connect the two different worlds – theatrical illusion and reality – by freely crossing over the boundary between the stage and the auditorium. Yang changes his name into Kokdusuni, inspired by a Korean wild flower whose phonetic sound is similar to ‘Kokduseh,’ which is a name given to a leader in a *Namsadang* group. Kokdusuni acts inside and outside of the play as a *raisonneur* explaining each scene and character to help the audience clearly understand the whole situation of the performance. When the performance begins, Kokdusuni enters and introduces himself and the play to the audience. He emphasises the fact that “[they are] playing *Twelfth Night*, which was written by a British playwright, William Shakespeare,” and “the performance will be played by all-male actors, even for the female roles”

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<sup>65</sup> The roles of *kokdu* are varied; they do an acrobatic movement and play musical instruments to console their *han* (deep resentment or sorrow of the deceased), and also they protect the dead from any evil spirits in order to help them safely reach the other world without losing their way. Yang (2014) reveals that the performers’ role in *Yohangza*, which means a traveller, is similar to the roles of the *kokdu* puppets: the performers in *kokdu* dress attempt to make the audience feel comfort and pleasure with their talent – performing funny gestures or playing musical instruments – in order to encourage the spectator to continue their life journey.

(*Twelfth Night*, 2011, Scene 1). He continues, “the actors playing female roles do not look like women, and also the twins do not resemble each other, but the audience can imagine them as if the male actors are pretty enough to play female roles and the twins are looking alike because ‘this is a play’” (Scene 1). This implies that the director greatly takes account of the importance of the imagination of the audience, who would see the performance from a distance due to the role of Kokdusuni emphasising the effect of theatricality.

Most audiences seem to agree that the Kokdusuni’s role is unique and significant throughout the production. One of the audience members considers the character as a pivotal role, who can “act in both inside and outside of the performance,” and “therefore he helps the audience feel a distance from the theatrical reality so that they can control their position as an observer and also participant within the performance” (licht0404, 2012). In traditional Korean theatre, the concept of theatricality is one of the basic principles which encourages the spectators to join the performance through which the performers and audiences share the positive energy of *shinmyeong* through direct interactions. In Yang’s *Twelfth Night*, the main stage is covered with a wide orange coloured board – which is reminiscent of the *madang* (yard) where traditional folk performances are practised – but very stylish and polished. In this space, communication between the performers and audience can be achieved through their reciprocal participation in the process of their theatrical interactions. According to Lee Hyun-U (2007), in *madang*, “the players are surrounded by the audience, and the players can, and often do interact with the audience, speaking to the audience, or treating them as players, or acting as if they were some of the audience” (p. 519). By adopting the principles of *Madangguk*, which used to be performed in *madang*, Yang tries to erase the boundary between performers and audience members by providing the audience with a few chances to participate in the performance as a minor character, for instance, Officers who arrest Haeguk (Antonio). In Act 3, Scene 4, Kokdusuni says since the theatre company does not have enough actors, he needs the audience’s help to play the role of Officers. He teaches them how to speak their lines (“Freeze! Haeguk, I will arrest you!” “Catch him!” and “Gosh!”) to Haeguk who then acts as if he is arrested by the Officers. In this way, the audience can recognise that their position is not only

limited to that of a spectator but a performer who can make the meaning of the production with the actors on stage.

Throughout the performance, the performers intentionally reveal the artificiality of femininity by emphasising the effect of theatricality: in the beginning of the performance, Kokdusuni talks to the audience, “Let’s say the female characters are beautiful in this performance” (1.1); also, Sumchorong (Olivia) is often called “lady” and “madam” by Bisuri (Maria), Mcmunajaebi (Sir Toby), and Kokdusuni; moreover, Sanjago (Orsino) keeps talking to Dolgashi (Cesario), “you look like a woman” (2.4), and even Mcmunajaebi describes Dolgashi as “a man like a woman” (3.1). In addition, Yang adds a scene in which Ssukbujaengi insults Bisuri, “Are you a man or a woman? I think you are a man wearing female clothes because you are always drinking and hanging around with other men” (2.3). The continuous emphasis of the male performers’ ‘ladyship’ as female characters leads the audience to recognise the gap between an idealised female figure called “beautiful lady” in the performance text and the male presence beneath the female costume. At this moment, the comical effect can be heightened, particularly when the performer pretends to ignore the real gender of the male actor playing a female role, which makes the audience recognise the incongruence between the signs of two different genders.

In addition, this production provides the audience with an opportunity to observe how the traditional practice of cross-dressing brings about other possible interpretations of gender construction in a particular social condition, and how it helps the spectator to think of the concept of masculinity and femininity. Yang had several discussions with the performers on how men and women behave in our ordinary life and which points of their actions might be understood as masculine or feminine by the audience. By adding a few more scenes, which contain their perspectives on gender, the director shows some stereotyped gestures to make the audience recognise the differences between the acting styles for each gender. For instance, in Act 1, Scene 2, when Honggashi (Viola) puts on male clothes to become a page of Sanjago, she asks the male sailors, who rescued her from drowning in the sea, to teach her how to act like a man. At first, they laugh at her as a meaning of impossibility and refusal. However, when she suggests paying for their lessons, they

change their mind and agree to teach her (Figure 54). For the lesson, the sailors begin to show several motions in a powerful and cheerful manner: they wave their arms back and forth, and then show a few basic footsteps which are a part of Korean traditional dance. At first, Honggashi does not follow their gestures, but only dances with some stereotyped feminine motions based on the movements of a female character in *Deotboegi*. After her first try fails, the sailors show another movement with more strong and energetic motions. Vigorously jumping on the stage, all of the male characters stretch out and sway their arms as if they are flying like a crane with cheerful shouts to make the mood lively and amusing. Their second gesture clearly looks much stronger and dynamic enough to express their powerful strength compared to their previous movement. Finally, Honggashi successfully follows their masculine gestures, and they leave the stage together, repeating the same motions as a group (Figure 55).



Figure 54. Honggashi paying for the sailors' lesson in Act 1, Scene 2 (*Twelfth Night*, 2011)

Figure 55. Honggashi and the sailors dancing together in Act 1, Scene 2 (*Twelfth Night*, 2011)

According to Kim Ji-Won (2009, pp. 62-63), a theorist of Korean traditional dance, there is no absolute distinction between masculine and feminine gestures in Korean traditional dance. She asserts that performers' motions are an embodied form reflecting natural states of human emotion rather than presenting a particular gender or sexuality. If we only focus on the performers' gestures far from the practice of cross-gender casting, as Kim insists, it is hard to decide which motions are particularly designed for presenting masculinity or femininity. Yet, modern audience members may accept the sailors dance as masculine movements because such powerful gestures with a wide range of motion have been normally considered as a masculine feature in Korean society. Ultimately, this scene suggests two ideas:

gender is not fixed to the performers' bodies but only believed through some actions considered as feminine or masculine, which have been constituted and naturalised in particular cultures and societies; and such actions can be formulated by a series of training and practice through a process which is already socially confirmed and accepted. In this scene, Honggashi is allowed to enter male society only after she proves her ability to imitate the sailors' movements through a few steps of education provided by the male group.

Clearly, gender is a performative act that needs to be understood as a social phenomenon. As Erving Goffman (1976) argues that gender expression is "socially learnt and socially patterned" (p. 75), it is a result of continuous practices and education that has influenced our sense of gender and its activity. It seems that Yang attempts to show how this mechanism is working through the scene that Honggashi learns the patterned gender expressions from the sailors. Honggashi's transformation suggests that gender can be performed based on repetitious learning, imitation, and practicing certain modes of action and style. Judith Butler (2007) also sees "gender as the disciplinary production of the figures of fantasy," which is instituted and embodied by "a social request" (p. 184). That is, gender is a being constructed through a set of acts which are said to be in compliance with dominant social norms out of an individual's control. In realist theatre, characters' gender tends to be constructed through repetitious stylised acts, which create a fantasy of ideal femininity and masculinity. However, in his performance, Yang tries to show that gender identity and gender performance are not always concurrent, but rather, their relationship is unstable and temporary, and can be shifted according to individuals' needs.

Along with the scene of gender construction, Yang also presents how gender representation is continuously deconstructed and reshaped as occasion demands. This idea can be explored through a series of gender actions of Honggashi/Dolgashi and Ssukbujaengi (Malvolio), who shift their acting styles several times for presenting femininity or masculinity depending on the situation. In particular, Kim Sang-Bo, who plays Honggashi/Dolgashi, shows a wide range of gender actions by emphasising some features considered as feminine and masculine according to the conditions. When Dolgashi is talking to Sanjago, Kim tends to stress femininity

through a series of typical feminine gestures, facial expressions, and speech behaviours. He sweeps his hair up, blinks his eyes, and puts his hands on his chest gently to show that Honggashi is now falling in love with Sanjago, and therefore attempts to emphasise her femininity (Figure 56). These actions have been considered stereotypical behaviour portraying femininity in modern Korean culture. Honggashi's feminine behaviour heighten a contrast effect with Sanjago's masculinity, which makes the audience imagine their relationship as heterosexual love.



Figure 56. Dolgashi showing feminine gestures in Act 1, Scene 4 (*Twelfth Night*, 2011)



Figure 57. Dolgashi calling out people in Sumchorong's house in Act 1, Scene 5 (*Twelfth Night*, 2011)

However, when Dolgashi, as a boy messenger, meets Sumchorong, Kim attempts to look more like a man by changing the tone of his voice to become deep and stentorian. Dolgashi enters the house of Sumchorong in an assertive and confident manner, and says “How come the people in this house are unkind to their guest? As an old saying goes, ‘people always regret for their attitude after their guest leave.’ Come! Anybody there?” (1.5) (Figure 57). Throughout the performance, Kim shows several transgressive movements between different gender positions and sexualities through the cross-dressing practice. Kim's acting styles are clearly different from the styles of contemporary Korean theatre in which a realist acting style has been dominant. The actors in realist theatre show that gender roles are clearly distinguished, but in Korean folk performance, performers are versatile at performing different genders by playing various roles. The character continuously renegotiates his/her gender position according to the changed situations, and thus the performer's gender performance cannot be presented through a single form of

expression. Many audience members commonly pointed out that the performance of the male actor (Kim Sang-Bo) as Honggashi was convincing enough to make them believe he is like a real woman. However, they were clearly aware of the difference between the performer's gender as a male and his character as a female. An audience commented that "I thought that Honggashi was almost like a real woman. Kim's performance for his female character was really good" (The Hickey, 2012). The audience's review shows that she could distinguish the illusionary aspect of femininity from his feminine acting, which is not congruent with the idea that gender is bound to the performer's biological body.

Like Honggashi, Kokdusuni also plays different gender roles while performing various characters such as a sailor, spy, servant, and even a female character called *kisaeng* (Figure 58).<sup>66</sup> The performer's gender roles open to recontextualisation depending on the situation he is involved in. In Act 2, Scene 1, Kokdusuni tells the audience that he is now playing the role of *kisaeng* "whose beauty is irresistible," and tries to portray her feminine beauty with a few stylised gestures and high-pitched voice tone. However, these feminine signs are immediately denied by the masculinity of his virile physique and beard. As Juliet Dusinberre (2016, p. 273) points out, the male actors' beard was used as a signifier of masculinity and maturity in Elizabethan theatre. By wearing a beard, the actors could heighten the comical effect of their performances since the audience could recognise the incongruence between the male performers' beard as a sign of masculinity and their feminine markers for appearance and gestures as a female character. In Yang's performance, the disclosure of the actor's biological maleness helps the audience to understand the fundamental performativity of his female roles. According to Judith Rose (2008), "female subjectivity might manifest itself more forcefully when a man plays a woman, but this, too, unmask[s] our gender expectations and their inherent absurdities" (p. 224). In this sense, the presence of Kokdusuni in a female costume, *hanbok* (traditional Korean dress), allows the audience to notice that the performer attempts to make a parody of ideal femininity by emphasising the contrast effect in a comical way. The

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<sup>66</sup> As an artist, a *kisaeng* worked to entertain male audiences, such as the *yangbans* and kings between 935 and 1945. They were "trained and accomplished in the fine arts, poetry, and prose, but their talents were often ignored due to their inferior social status" ('Kisaeng' 2018).

artificiality of gender presented by Honggashi and Kokdusuni turns the idea of ‘natural’ femininity into a joke.

In the next scene, the presence of Kokdusuni as *kisaeng* is entirely ignored and uncared by the male characters, Haeguk and Cheonggashi (Sebastian), who are busy playing tag like a loving couple. *Kisaeng* is not concerned by these male characters as a figure for a heterosexual love but only used to emphasise their homosexual love. Although it is not absolutely certain whether Shakespeare intended to describe their relationship as a gay couple in his text, Antonio’s excessive kindness and his “love” (2.1.35) for Sebastian has often been interpreted as the play’s most obvious locus of homosexual longing. Likewise, in Yang’s production, the relationship between Haeguk and Cheonggashi is much closer to homosexual love rather than a friendship (Figure 59). They hug each other in excitement while they are playing a game, and soon they begin to show their feelings for each other: they look at each other gently and soon turn away in embarrassed confusion. The two male actors certainly create an awkward atmosphere where the tension between them becomes intensified, which can be noticed by the audience as they laugh at this moment. In an interview, Yang (2014) revealed that he “intended to depict their relationship as a gay couple; otherwise, there is no other way to explain their relationship.”



Figure 58. Kokdusuni playing *kisaeng* in Act 2, Scene 1 (*Twelfth Night*, 2011)



Figure 59. Haeguk and Cheonggashi laughing together in Act 2, Scene 1 (*Twelfth Night*, 2011)

Aside from the homoerotic scene of Haeguk and Cheonggashi, Yang presents homosexual fantasies by emphasising the relationships between four male actors playing Bisuri, Memunajaebi, Sumchorong and Dolgashi. Unlike the previous scene in which the two male characters show a few gestures implying their homoerotic love, Yang inserts a couple of kiss scenes between the male actors to emphasise the

comical effect of their performances for heterosexual relationships. The performers' physical contact reveals its own theatricality as the slippage between the signs of the male body and the female markers happens more intensively. For instance, when Mmunajaebi kisses Bisuri on her lips, the dramatic illusion of heterosexual desire is broken down, and the audience might recognise the fact that the two male actors are kissing each other to present a scene of heterosexual love as a part of the performance (Figure 60). The audience members' consciousness of the performers' male bodies under the female garment become certain as their presence is emphasised by the physical contact. At this moment, the comical effect is not only caused by the male actors' performance in their disguise, but the theatrical condition of their ignorance (or pretence of ignorance) of the truth of their own gender identity. During the performance, the spectator's laughter at this moment demonstrates that they are aware of the male actors' intention of playing with the audience's awareness of the signs of masculinity and femininity.



Figure 60. The kiss scene of Bisuri and Mmunajaebi in Act 2, Scene 5  
(*Twelfth Night*, 2011)

The theatricality of performers' gender acting can also be explored by observing the changes of Ssukbujaengi's acting styles according to his emotional state throughout the performance. In particular, his acting modes are extremely different before and after he reads the fake letter by Bisuri. When he first enters in Act 1, Scene 5, his appearance and attitude imply his rude and authoritarian personality: for example, his facial expressions look fierce and angry, thus allowing the audience to instantly notice his unkind and hasty temper (Figure 61). When he tries to drive out Kokdusuni, who is not serious at a time when Sumchorong is in

mourning for her dead brother, Ssukbujaengi's attitude towards him is quite aggressive and violent. As he tries to subdue the clown, he grasps his right arm and collar to tug him out from the stage. However, the clown is so crafty that he can successfully slip out of Ssukbujaengi's control by taking off his top clothes. At last, Ssukbujaengi cannot suppress his anger, so he harshly throws the clothes back to the clown and begins to criticise his laziness. In addition, he always carries a wooden stick as a symbol of revealing his sense of entitlement and authority, which are often presented in a form of violence as he uses it to make other people feel insulted by beating or poking them. This shows that Ssukbujaengi tries to put other people under his control by using his physical and social power.



Figure 61. Ssukbujaengi trying to drive Kokdusuni out in Act 1, Scene 5 (*Twelfth Night*, 2011)

Figure 62. Ssukbujaengi captivated by his own fantasy in Act 2, Scene 5 (*Twelfth Night*, 2011)

However, after Ssukbujaengi reads the fake letter, his tough and violent demeanour is strikingly changed. In particular, his acting style shifts from powerful and stiff motions to soft and flexible movements as he misunderstands that Sumchorong is in love with him (Figure 62). In an interview, Yang (2014) stated: “as Ssukbujaengi's inner state becomes tender as he falls in love, his gestures are also changed into soft motions.” Accordingly, his costume is also changed from male to female clothes. In Act 1, he was wearing typical Korean traditional clothes for men, but later he enters in a female dress: the top is a Korean traditional female jacket called ‘*jeogori*’ with sleeves of multi-coloured stripes, and the bottom is loose drawers with white dots on red cloth. His trousers are a popular design among old women in Korea since they are comfortable and convenient for household chores or farming in outside fields. Interestingly, the design concept of his female clothes

seems to adopt the dress of a *kokdu* puppet using the same colours and design (Figure 63). Yet, in this production, the size of *jeogori* is so small that Ssukbujaengi later discloses the ribbon and exposes his muscular belly as bare skin, which reveals his sexual desire for Sumchorong. Unlike the original play in which Malvolio wears yellow stockings which Olivia dislikes the most, Ssukbujaengi wears the yellow *jeogori* with numerous dot patterns and a pair of yellow socks with red rubber shoes, which is in contrast to his former male costume and masculine physique (Figure 64). Such unbalanced combinations cause a comical effect that implies Ssukbujaengi's dignity within the house is seriously damaged and ridiculed by other members. Ultimately, his female look and pliable motions reveal the different aspects of his nature, and the incongruence between his gender identity as a man and his female costume heightens the comical effect of the character.



Figure 63. A traditional *kokdu* puppet (Dongsoongart, 2016)

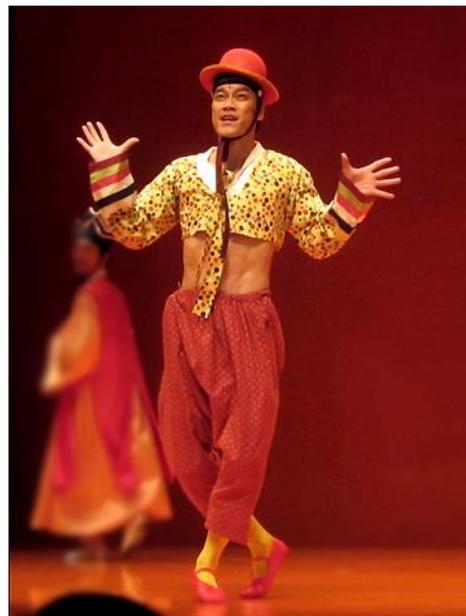


Figure 64. Ssuckbujaengi wearing female clothes in Act 3, Scene 4 (*Twelfth Night*, 2011)

Besides this, Ssukbujaengi imitates a typical walking style of a *yangban*: while wearing female costume he folds his hands behind his back and slowly takes steps lifting each leg alternately, which used to be performed by a character called *sennim* (a narrow-minded person who representing the *yangban* class) in *Deotboegi*. Since the performance of *yangban*'s walking steps contains keen satire on society, particularly the noble class of Joseon Dynasty, it was used to gain high popularity amongst audiences in pre-modern Korea. In *Deotboegi*, the performers criticise the

intellectuals of this upper-middle class for their empty formalities and vanity by portraying their gestures in exaggerated and comical ways. This scene reveals that a particular social position can be depicted through a few actions in a symbolic way. This scene also shows how Ssukbujaengi is captured by his own illusion of attaining a higher class. This obvious contrast between his female costume and the social code of his walking actions signifying the power of men in patriarchal society evokes laughter among the audience.

Along with the practice of cross-dressing by Kokdusuni and Ssukbujaengi, which emphasises the theatricality of gender action, Yang also attempts to subvert the traditional concept of gender influenced by Confucianism. In particular, he parodies some behaviours of “traditional” women in humorous ways. In traditional Korean society, women had to keep an ornamental silver knife in their pocket not only for decorative purposes but also for self-defence or even killing themselves to keep their chastity. In Yang’s *Twelfth Night*, although the female characters are wearing Korean traditional costume, they are portrayed as radical and adventurous figures, who seek out their own destiny. For instance, Sumchorong tries to give her silver knife to Dolgashi as a token of her love for him. When Dolgashi refuses to receive her gift, Sumchorong puts the knife on her own neck and tries to kill herself for being refused. After all, Dolgashi reluctantly receives the knife to protect Sumchorong from committing suicide. In this scene, Sumchorong uses the silver knife not to protect her chastity, but to force Dolgashi to accept her love. By positioning the silver knife in a different context, Yang makes the audience compare the different attitudes between the women who had to follow the customs of the conservative society in the past Korea and the females who have a relatively greater degree of freedom as active subjects who can play a prominent role in their own lives in modern Korean society. In this way, the audience realises that the traditional gender role of women as passive subjects is no longer in accordance with the demands of modern women.

The production insists that the audience must not be limited to appreciating the surface of the actors’ bodies and expressions in theatre. Of course, appearance has been considered as a significant criterion on which we can judge one’s gender identity. However, it does not totally represent human identity or the whole picture of

social ideology related to gender and sexuality. In this performance, for instance, Sanjago, Sumchorong, Ssukbujaengi, and Paeraengi (Aguecheek) fail to figure out the real nature of other people, and easily believe the information based on their exterior/appearance; therefore, they are all strongly captured by their own fantasy. In particular, Sumchorong fails to realise the true identity of Dolgashi even though she loves him so dearly. Unlike a woman in traditional Korean society, her love is quite assertive and even physical: she promises Dolgashi that she will make him live in a respectable social position, and then kisses him without hesitation. Refusing her excessive love, Dolgashi tries to make her understand that appearance can be deceptive: “the things you are seeing are not the all. Although a star is not shining, you cannot say it isn’t a star. Similarly, a shining star might be not a real star unlike your belief. Don’t just trust the things only you can see. You have to see the truth which is invisible” (1.3). These lines suggest the key idea of appearance as an illusion, which is ultimately an idealised form fabricated and reiterated to consolidate the existing concept of gender, not as a way for exploring the true nature of a person.

The audience’s responses might be affected by the male actors’ performance of femininity and finds itself to be often complicit in the ambiguities caused by the cross-gender acting. As Yang (2014) revealed that “the concept of gender is still an ambiguous and undefined idea,” certainly it is quite contradictory within Korean society for its unique cultural backgrounds in which various cultural aspects influenced by traditional and modern values are mixed up. The discourse of gender is one of the significant issues in contemporary Korea. Although the society has been modernised for the last several decades, it’s attitude towards gender and sexuality is still conservative due to the influence of Chinese Confucianism even today. By focusing on this unique condition, Yang tries to lead the audience to see how the production reveals the mechanism of acting *like* women, not acting *as* a woman while challenging the existing social ideology of gender in Korean society. In this way, the audience can think of the director’s perspectives on gender performance in theatre and its relation to their life in reality.

In this production, the meaning of the final scene can be varied. There is an announcement of the three couples’ marriages, and the audience might perceive this as a formal procedure of reaffirming patriarchal social hegemony. At the final

moment, Kokdusuni makes the whole situation stop and then summarises the rest of the story as a typical happy ending, a theatrical device used in all Shakespearean comedies. Yet, due to the effect of theatricality through the performance, it is possible for the audience to think of the relationship between the characters not only as a heterosexual love but also as various combinations of different gender identities as the production explores multi-layered practices between actor and character, character and gender, gender and gender performance, theatre and reality.

Through his performance, Yang shows how the gender boundaries can be renegotiated through the politics of the body in certain cultures, and how the different physical nature of male and female bodies interacts with cultural assumptions to produce the ways we experience our being in the world. In fact, the subject of gender is very complicated as the director posits, “it is true that gender boundaries seem actually existing in our society even though the boundaries are questionable and ambiguous” (Yang, 2014). In *Appearance and Identity*, Llewellyn Negrin (2008, pp. 155-157) insists that although the notion of gender as performance is celebrated as a liberation from a fixed form, gender distinctions have not totally disappeared but continuously re-emerge in slight new forms. In this sense, the result of cross-gender casting is not to undermine or erase the categories of femininity and masculinity, but rather, to make the audience think of their reconfiguration.

To help the audience’s understanding, Yang uses various aesthetics of traditional performance forms for the performers’ acting style. According to Lee Yong-Eun (2014, pp. 211-212), this production particularly emphasises the presence of the male actors and their bodies, which is presented in various forms of expression such as dance, music, and speech in poetic style. Thus, the audience has several opportunities to recognise the gap between the theatrical illusion and reality through these different genres of expression. At the same time, they can change their position more actively when interpreting the meaning of the performers’ actions in these forms. As such, the audience can participate in the process of generating the meaning of gender in this performance, and their experiences are unavoidably mediated through the physical presence of bodies. Notably, *Namsadangnori* and *Madangguk* contain various acts of dance, musical performance, stories and jokes for the

audience's *shinmyeong*, which are adopted by Yang and his performers in order to heighten the general mood of the performance with delight and pleasant energy.

The main purpose of these traditional performances is to deliver important social messages with critical perspectives. In particular, *Talchum* and *Kokdugakshinorum* deal with the oppressed life of females under the control of the male-oriented social system as well as the people of a lower social class. The function of these performances is to represent the difficult life of these people in a theatrical form. In traditional performances, the actors parodied and satirised social corruption and injustice. As such, these performances attempt to disrupt the obsolete ways of thinking about gender and social class, in a humorous way. Thus, the audience's laughter and *shinmyeong* does not simply come from the performers' comical gestures such as slapstick or jokes. They are based on the performers' keen insights into the problematic social conditions as serious subjects that need to be addressed and discussed. For this reason, directors need to show their clear ideas of this subject with unique theatrical methods to present their interpretation of gender in relation to current social context. Without any critical vision or direction towards the concept of gender, the performers' exaggerated gestures might be understood as a tool for simply emphasising the comical effect, which does not present any relevant ideas to the theme of the play.

In this respect, Yang's *Twelfth Night* seems to be successful in leading the audience to discern how the acting styles from the traditional performance modes can intensify the idea of gender as a performance in relation to the current social circumstance in modern Korea. In an online review, an audience member commented that "the male performers' exaggerated gestures along with parodic actions and satire enhanced the comical aspects of this performance, which helped me to understand the theme of gender in Shakespeare's play as well as the values of traditional theatre form to explore the subject of gender" (Jiinim, 2012). She also notes: "this performance allowed me to think of the stereotyped actions that have been naturally accepted as feminine or masculine in Korean society" (Jiinim, 2012). Another spectator wrote that "the female characters portrayed by the male performers are honest about their feelings and desires, which is reminiscent of today's Korean women who are active and self-assertive in their lives compare to the females in the

old Korean society” (yellua, 2012). These reviews illustrate how the production is able to shift preconceived notions of women and their positions in contemporary Korean society through the diverse portrayals of femininity.

So far, Yang has explored the subject of gender and sexuality through several Shakespeare productions such as *Hwan* (an adaptation of *Macbeth*) (2003), *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (2001 - Present), and recently produced *Romeo & Juliet* (2014). In these productions, Yang also changed the gender role of the characters by cross-gender casting, which makes the audience excited to explore various gender relations between the characters, from homoeroticism to queer. These examples show that Yang has been interested in the subject and consistently developed his ideas and methods to deal with the subject since the 2000s. In *Twelfth Night*, Yang similarly deals with the subject of gender by adopting the convention of cross-dressing in Korean traditional performance. Whereas in the first version of the play in 2008 in which according to an audience member, “the actors showed a series of comical gesture such as slapstick and mime without no critical point” (Amelie, 2009), in the second version in 2011, Yang presented more a radical vision on gender by experimenting with the convention of all-male casting. He played with the seemingly dichotomous concept of male/female gender identity, so as to place emphasis on the instability of gender representation. In this revised version, both the actors and spectators had an opportunity to reassess their understanding of socially defined notions of sexuality, gender identity and ideology through a shared process of watching and making performance. Notably, a number of audience members agreed that the dynamic interaction between the performers and themselves was powerful and also effective in developing the meaning of the performance. As one spectator states,

Yang's *Twelfth Night* contains many theatrical elements from *Madangnori*; therefore, the performers appeared here and there, come down to the auditorium to encourage the audience's participation, which breaks down the boundaries between stage and audience. In this way, the performers and audiences are involved in the process of creating the performance together. (Hwangto, 2012)

Throughout the performance, the actors relinquish the dominant position as the performance's sole creators; instead, they agree to share their authority with the audience. According to Fischer-Lichte (2004), the reversal of roles "[reveal] that the performance's aesthetic process is set in motion by a self-generating and ever-changing autopoietic feedback loop," and this loop "in turn generates the performance itself" (p. 50). The performance, therefore, cannot be understood as expressing fixed and predetermined meanings or intentions; rather, it relies on "the involvement of all participants, in order to create a reciprocal relationship of influence" (Fischer-Lichte, 2004, p. 50). The interaction between the actor and the spectator allows a performance to remain unpredictable and spontaneous. Yang emphasises his performance as a place for shared experiences with energetic impulses such as *shinmyeong*, which is one of the principles of the traditional Korean theatre. Along with the community spirit, the performers and audiences make the performance more meaningful as a project in social awareness. Through this production, the audience has an opportunity to see how gender relates to and reacts against the force of current social ideology.

### **The Depiction of Transgender Experience: Cross-Gender Acting in *Trans-Twelfth Night* (2014) by Oh Dong-Shik**

In *Trans-Twelfth Night* (2014), the director Oh Dong-Shik deals with the subject of gender and sexuality that reflects his understanding of social concepts and attitudes towards femininity and masculinity in modern Korean society. For the last two decades, Korean people slowly became familiar with the concept of homosexuality as it has been increasingly dealt with in various mass media programmes as well as film and theatre arts. Oh had observed various gender portrayals in Korean theatre productions and also popular TV dramas. In an interview with Oh (2014), he stated: "it seems that Koreans' conservative attitude towards gay, lesbian, and transgender has been changed in Korea particularly since 2001 when some famous TV entertainers like Hong Suk-Cheon and Ha Ri-Su came out their gender identity as a gay or transgender." Their coming-out was sensational, which could hardly be imagined at that time as Korean people were quite conservative in relation to gender

due to the influence of Confucianism although they have been influenced by modern Western culture for their life style. Though there were many people who expressed their strong aversion to these minority groups such as gay/lesbian and transgender, this incident led most people to express an interest in the issues related to gender and people who have different sexual orientations.

According to Oh (2014), the mass media in Korea does not deal with issues of gender from a critical perspective, but only provides a limited vision with examples of superficial gender images. As he points out, it seems true that many Korean directors have concentrated on the visual effect of performers' bodily gestures and appearance when they portray a particular gender. In particular, Oh mentioned stereotyped gender acting in one of the popular Korean TV dramas, *The 1<sup>st</sup> Shop of Coffee Prince* (2007),<sup>67</sup> in which a female character needs to disguise her gender as a young man within the drama. In an interview, the female actor, Yun Eun-Hye, reveals that she deliberately tries to "make a husky voice" and "show some tough gesture to look like a boy" (Chosun Ilbo, 2007). However, Oh (2014) insists that "her low voice and gestures only reveal the fake aspect of her acting" because he believes that masculinity is not always associated with "husky voices" or "tough gestures." He also criticises "their lack of imagination and deep concerns about the concept and practice of gender, ultimately result[ing] in the productions' poor quality regardless of its commercial success" (Oh, 2014). He argues that such gestures considered as masculinity may narrow down the range of gender expression into only a few types of acting form, which interrupts in-depth discussions on gender.

In Korean theatre, developing performers' physical expression and sensibility has been considered as an important way of depicting the gender of a fictional persona rather than their own idea of gender and sexuality. In this circumstance, most

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<sup>67</sup> Based on the novel by Lee Sun-mi, "the drama is an unlikely romance between a tomboyish woman, who dresses like a man in order to get work, and a young plutocrat managing a food empire mogul" ('The 1st Shop of Coffee Prince', 2017). It contains homoerotic elements since the man does not initially recognise the true gender of the woman. A female actor, who was previously a singer in a girl group, revealed that she had studied how men act to play the role. To get that husky voice, she's said to have sung at the top of her lungs at a karaoke hall. "After I got the part, I keenly observed how men act and talk, and then tried to practice by mimicking them. I thought it would be more effective on screen to portray more of a tough kind of fellow. On set, the crew just considered me a guy" (Chosun Ilbo, 2007).

actors do not have many chances to think of other possibilities of performing gender, but usually repeat the previously formulated gender images as examples to construct their acting style without a critical view. In *Trans-Twelfth Night* (2014), however, Oh tries to prod the audience into thinking of the meaning behind the construction of gestures for femininity and masculinity in relation to their own social context through cross-gender casting while exploring the theme of the play. Oh tries to focus on how each performer has a different idea of gender and how they deal with their own gender identity in constructing a certain image of gender which is different from their own. For the director, “masculine or feminine gender cannot be simply presented by changing voice or clothing” (Oh, 2014). Rather, it requires the process of the performers’ understanding of their characters’ gender and its relation to their own gender identity. This will provide the audience with an opportunity to consider not only the characters’ identity in the play but also the performers’ analysis of their character.

To explore this idea more thoroughly, Oh changed the characters’ gender role from male to female and *vice versa* (Table 1). For instance, he transforms the female character, Viola, into a male character, Vike; in the same way, the male character, Orsino, becomes a female character, Osia. However, he tries to maintain the plot and linguistic expressions in Shakespeare’s play as much as possible while switching “he” with “she” according to the change of the characters’ gender. Since Shakespeare’s language contains explicit ideas of the characters’ gender identity, Oh asked his actors to study the characters’ lines in the original play at first rather than entirely relying on his new adaptation. He believes that the performers’ acting should be the result of their interpretation of Shakespeare’s characters and the negotiation with the new characters who have a different gender to the original characters in the adapted version. By studying the sense of each word in Shakespeare’s play, the players can get crucial clues for constructing their acting style for a particular gender. The performers need to understand the ideas of gender and sexuality described in the original characters’ lines which might be bound to the concept of femininity and masculinity in the social context of Shakespearean times. Then, they are asked to think of how to translate the Shakespearean psychology into their own acting style in relation to the social ideology of gender in modern Korea. In other words, the male

actors need to negotiate between their own gender identity as a male actor and their female characters to find an appropriate gender expression. In this case, an actor's body becomes an experimental place in which the gender actions inspired from the two different texts are explored and embodied in an actual form.

<i>Twelfth Night</i> (1601-2)		<i>Trans-Twelfth Night</i> (2014)	
Character	Gender	Character	Gender
Viola / Cesario	Female / Male	Vike / Cesa	Male / Female
Olivia	Female	Oli	Male
Maria	Female	Ark	Male
Duke Orsino	Male	Osia	Female
Sir. Toby Belch	Male	Sonia	Female
Malvolio	Male	Maris	Female
Sir Andrew Aguecheek	Male	Entia	Female
Sebastian	Male	Sebas	Female
Sea Captain	Male	Ann	Female
Valentine, Feste	Male	Bunny Girl	Female

Table 1. The gender of the characters in Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* and Oh's *Trans-Twelfth Night*

The practice of cross-gender acting might enrich the quality of the production with various possible interpretations of gender performance by presenting heterosexual or homoerotic relations through the combinations between female-male, male-male, or female-female actors/characters regardless of the characters' gender in Shakespeare's text. In fact, Oh was interested in Shakespearean theatre convention, particularly all-male actors taking the female roles. He revealed that "the practice of boy actors was a strong motive for my decision to perform *Twelfth Night*" (Oh, 2014), which might draw out the audience's attention to the concept of gender and sexuality in relation to the current social context in Korea. By adopting the traditional practice, the director intended to focus on how a Shakespearean cultural perspective on gender can be understood and practised in different ways in modern theatre. Since the social status of women has significantly improved over the last three decades as Korean society was socially and politically modernised, it has become practically equal to men's status in various social sectors such as legal rights and education. For this reason, one of the audience members, Ha Hong-Jun (2014b) sees, "now feminism becomes an old-fashioned discourse in Korea, so if the

performance tries to be faithful to the Shakespearean theatre practice in which male performers take the female roles, it might be difficult to draw the attention of the contemporary Korean audience.” He also points out that “performing female roles by male actors has been used in a comedy show or farce in Korea while the opposite case has appeared in romantic love stories in a TV drama or film” (Ha, 2014a). The audience has been familiar with female actors playing male roles, which is not new or interesting anymore. For this reason, in Korean popular culture, it might be more powerful to show a male actor in female attire because it may heighten more comical effects for the unbalanced visual codes between the male body and feminine markers. Jun Joon-Taek (2003) also insists that “the androcentric original play can be subverted non-violently by the topsy-turvy mood of the *Twelfth Night* festival, and the audience can be newly presented with the idea that a man in a woman’s dress, or male homosexuality, can be more subversive, at least visually, than a woman in man’s clothes” (p. 397). The spectator, who is already familiar with the female actors’ performing male characters, expects to see how male performers interpret the concept of femininity and present it through their male physique. After all, Oh adapts the form and main concept of cross-gender acting in Shakespearean theatre in compliance with the trend in the current public discourse on gender in Korea.

Rather than performing obvious actions signifying a particular gender, the director attempts to explore the ambiguity of gender by presenting itself as a ceremony for the liminal state of the actors performing their character, whose gender is different from their own. Oh mentioned, particularly for the actor playing Vike/Cesa,

I don’t expect the male actor can play the female role to look like a *real* woman, which is in fact impossible and meaningless. One of the important points is that the audience can see the process of how the performer negotiates the difference between the gender of his own and his character’s in order to reveal his interpretation of the play. (Oh, 2014)

For him, it is not a problem that the performers’ uncomfortable feeling is exposed through their facial expression or bodily actions while performing a different gender role. Perhaps their unstable and uncomfortable state might be an honest and natural response to the practice of cross-gender acting, which challenges the existing social

ideology of gender. As Butler (2007, p. 68) insists in *Gender Trouble*, gender is never solid or universal but only constituted through the practice of performance, the work of performing gender is constantly reshaped depending on situations. It means that gender cannot be understood in the view of binary conception since the experience of ambiguity is unavoidable when the performers play a different gender from their own. In this way, the performers can cross the boundaries of gender constructs and expand their experience of gender into another aspect through the dynamic relations between their own identity and the previous gender images that have been socially constructed as ideal femininity and masculinity.

To emphasise the effect of ambiguity through cross-gender acting, Oh cast actors who are not professional; he believes that many performers, who have been particularly trained for realist acting, tend to portray femininity or masculinity with some typical acting styles which have been developed through their previous experiences in theatre. He argues that “if the performers had many chances to perform modern Western plays, it might be more difficult for them to dismantle the fixed idea of gender based on realism conventions” (Oh, 2014). Oh wants the performers to explore various ways of expressing gender identity far from the stereotyped concept and gestures. His attempt might be similar to the concept of performing female characters by male actors in Shakespearean theatre. As Joseph (1964) emphasises, the Shakespearean actors avoided “stereotyped” gestures for playing female roles and their external action were used “to communicate an inner experience” (p. 51). He also insists that the Elizabethan actors were able to express their thoughts, emotions, and purpose of their acting in “natural” and “unaffected” styles, not just as a part of conventionalised stage practices (p. 51). Therefore, even though the audience was aware of the theatre as an illusory world created by all male performers, their acting was enough to make the audience feel sympathy with the emotional state of the characters and concentrate on the situations they were faced with. Likewise, in *Trans-Twelfth Night*, the actors and audience can experience different styles of gender performance from the previous concept of femininity and masculinity through the practice of cross-gender casting while exploring the performers’ acting in a “natural” style for the aesthetic of theatrical representation. In this way, Oh emphasises the effect of theatricality by cross-gender casting for

developing the discussion of gender and at the same time the condition of theatrical reality.

In this context, Oh pursues the avoidance of any unnatural or exaggerated gestures for the performers' gender acting because he does not want the audience to feel their acting as fake. The performers need to be faithful to their own feeling from their lines before they draw certain images of gender action in their mind. Since as Oh argued, gender is presented not as an imitated form of stereotyped gestures signifying femininity or masculinity, but as a practice of the performers' own interpretation of the gender described in the adapted version by the director. For this reason, though Shakespeare's lines are translated into modern Korean language, Shakespeare's poetic form, which was a ground for performers' 'art of speech,' can still be experienced. In Elizabethan theatre, an actor was considered "an excellent orator" (Joseph, 1964, p. 5) who could animate his words to move the heart of the audience through their "trained voice, facial expression, and movement" (Joseph, 1964, p. 22). Similarly, in *Trans-Twelfth Night*, it is important that performers' acting has to be natural in order to make the audience accept their performance as realistic. For gender acting, Oh (2014) insists that "as Hamlet said: 'Suit the action to the word, / the word to the action' (3.2.17-18), performers' actions have to be natural to mirror the intrinsic nature and personality of the characters according to their words." He argued that it is significant for the performers to recognise how their own idea of gender is different from the typical construction of gender in the mainstream of Korean society. In other words, they need to redefine and express the concept of femininity or masculinity based on their own nature and identity rather than imitating typical gestures. From their acting, it might be possible for the audience to observe how each performer interprets the gender identity of themselves as well as the character they are performing.

Above all, having the audience recognise the gap between the original text and his adaptation is one of Oh's strategies for using cross-gender casting. Most audiences noted that the practice of cross-gender acting could help them see other aspects of the characters, which were not apparent when they read the original play. If the audience already knows the story of Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, they can compare both texts and recognise the differences between those two more clearly.

Even if the audience members do not know it, it is possible for them to imagine how the character might be described in the original text since they are aware of the cross-gender acting as the main concept of the production. One of the audience members, Byeon Ja-Un (2014), noted that, “the practice of cross-gender casting helps the audience to imagine both characters in the original and new plays simultaneously, which is a great advantage of this performance because in this way the people are able to think of the relation between the two different cultures in the matter of gender.” Another audience member stated that “it was interesting to see how the male-dominant hegemony could be challenged by subverting the previous gender roles and positions” (Scenemania, 2014). As these audience members point out, in this performance, it is important to observe how the male characters’ social position in the original text can be explored through the female actors’ performance within the same verbal frame. In Shakespeare’s *Twelfth Night*, there are lots of lines written in verse form which deal with the subject of love, one of the main themes of the play, and these are mostly spoken by male characters. In Oh’s performance, as the female actors need to focus on how the sense of the words which were originally written for the male characters is translated into the vocabulary of female gender, it is significant to study the relation between their own gender identity and their character in Shakespeare’s text.



Figure 65. Osia and Vike/Cesa in *Trans-Twelfth Night* in 2014 (Mulimtaepung, 2014)

To illustrate, the first lines of the play are uttered by Duke Orsino, who is suffering from his unrequited love for Olivia. Orsino says the depth of man’s love is far superior to that of woman’s: “There is no *woman*’s sides / Can bide the beating of

so strong a passion / As love doth give my heart; no *woman's* heart / So big, to hold so much; they lack retention” (Shakespeare, 1997, 2.4.93-96, emphasis added). But in *Trans-Twelfth Night*, these lines are spoken by the female character, Duchess Osia (Figure 65). While reciting a long monologue, she walks with slow pace implying her elegant and dignified nature, which seems well suited to her poetic speech. Listening to low soft music, Osia is drinking a glass of wine in the middle of her speech, which helps the audience notice her emotional state, particularly her longing for Oli.

There is no *man's* sides  
Can bide the beating of so strong a passion  
As love doth give my heart; no *man's* heart  
So big, to hold so much; they lack retention.  
Alas, their love may be call'd appetite,  
No motion of the liver, but the palate,  
That suffer surfeit, cloyment, and revolt,  
But mine is all as hungry as the sea,  
And can digest as much. Make no compare  
Between that love a *man* can bear me  
And That I owe *Oli*. (*Trans-Twelfth Night*, 2014, 1.1, emphasis added)

These lines show that the linguistic form is not fixed but it can be continuously changed through the act of cross-gender representation. By switching the gender of the speaking subject from Orsino into Osia, while maintaining the basic form of the poetic structure, Oh reinstalls and recaptures the concept of gender in his performance. In this way, the director emphasises that women's capacity for love can be much greater than *men's* since their hearts are too small and their desire for love easily disappears. Oh (2014) states, “through the practice of cross-gender casting, the gender depictions in this production challenge and subvert the previous gender role and images described in Shakespeare's play.” In *Trans-Twelfth Night*, as the language structure and words originally designed for male characters such as Orsino and Sir Toby Belch are used by the female characters like Osia and Sonia, the audience sees how the language that used to support the patriarchal social structure can be repeated in a different context to enforce the power of a matrilineal system. In this female-dominated society, women's social power is described as much stronger

than men's, which implies that the male characters in Shakespeare's play take the lead in the Illyrian world while the female characters are excluded from the centre of society. In this way, Shakespeare's text, which has been considered as part of the canon, now becomes a "transversal" (Reynolds, 2003, pp. 10-11)<sup>68</sup> place in which the authority of his language can be belied or deconstructed within its own system and can be reused for exploring other interpretations from different perspectives.

In this context, a feminist perspective can be applied to this production since the female characters are described as central figures who have the power of the phallus within the structure of language that symbolises the power of the Law. They take the role of the phallus as a masculine subject and repeat the language and actions designed for the male characters as they try to solidify their position by adopting the modes of social behaviour endorsed by the patriarchal system. Their imitation of the masculine subject ultimately belies the illusion of the phallus. In other words, the female characters in the male position keep the power of the phallus by maintaining the previous social structure to expose the absurdity of the patriarchal illusion. According to Butler (2007), in order to be the phallus, "women must be what men are not and establish the essential function of men in their very lack" (p. 61). After all, having or being the phallus is always pursuing the position of the masculine subject who seeks to reconfirm its identity through the recognition of itself desiring the powerful position. The production clearly shows that the phallus does not represent male power. The position of the phallus is not defined by male anatomy and does not unequivocally belong to the male body. Rather, the phallic position, as an insecure place, can be substituted and is transferable and challenged; therefore, any number of other things might come to stand in the position.

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<sup>68</sup> Brian Reynolds introduces transversal theory in his book, *Performing Transversally: Reimagining Shakespeare and the Critical Future*, in which he explains "transversal territory" as "a mysterious, challenging, and transformative space through which people journey when they defy or surpass the conceptual and/or emotional boundaries of their prescribed subjective addresses, in effect subverting the hierarchalizing and homogenizing state machinery of the governing organizational structure" (p. 5). Reynolds insists that Shakespeare-influenced spaces ("Shakespace") becomes "a socially and historically contingent playground on which class differentiation and class conflict sometimes slip *transversally* into an ambiguous space that makes possible, and in fact encourages, alternative opportunities for thought, expression, and development" (p. 11, emphasis added).

Shakespeare's women are generally described as adventurous and progressive in his many works such as *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *Merchant of Venice*, and *As You Like It*. Shapiro insists that Julia, Portia, and Rosalind are "self-assertive" and "arrange their disguisings", which emphasises their "boyshiness" (1996, p. 155). However, Viola is quite different from other heroines as she is described as passive for carving out her own destiny in a strange place. As Shapiro (1996, p. 155) points out, Viola seems to take control of her life at first, but as the play progresses she realises herself to be trapped by events that she cannot resolve by herself, and after all takes a passive attitude for changing her destiny. That is, Viola's disguise accentuates her relative helplessness. She depends on the cooperation of the captain by asking him to "present me as an eunuch" (1.2.56), which is not needed for other heroines. Obviously, she seems less self-assertive than Shakespeare's other female characters such as Julia, Portia, and Rosalind who use male disguise to parody male folly and return to their initial appearance as a woman at last. Shapiro (1996) concludes that "[s]he [Viola] may take over the play, but she cannot control the plot" (p. 156). In *Trans-Twelfth Night*, however, such passive attitudes and delicate natures of the female characters such as Viola and Olivia belong to their male version, Vike and Oli (Figure 66). In particular, Oli is described as a wealthy handsome man who

... till seven years' heat,  
 Shall not behold *his* face at ample view;  
 But, like a cloistress, *he* will veiled walk  
 And water once a day *his* chamber round  
 With eye-offending brine: all this to season  
 A *sister's* dead love, which *he* would keep fresh  
 And lasting in *his* sad remembrance. (1.1, emphasis added)

These lines show that Oli is now in a fragile state: he is weeping for his sister's death without seeing anymore, not to mention his indifference to Osia's love. His heart is soft and weak, which is far from the ideal male image in Korea. Traditionally, men are always asked to "act like a man" who should not cry or reveal their weakness because they have to be strong enough to keep their own social position and family safe. However, as Korean society becomes modernised, it becomes natural for men to reveal their true feelings as a delicate man like Oli, who often expresses his tender

heart and emotional state. Perhaps the Korean audience may think it is natural that Osia admires him by saying “O, *he* that hath a heart of that fine frame / To pay this debt of love but to a *sister*” (2.1, emphasis added). In *Trans-Twelfth Night*, Oli looks like a mother’s boy who relies on the support and care of the women in his house rather than leading the whole situation around him as a main character. His role in this performance is bound to the lines initially written for a female character, Olivia, which reveals that Shakespeare’s language reflects his perspective on female gender within the social ideology of the Elizabethan age. For this reason, the more the actors faithfully deliver the meaning of their lines, the more the production ironically becomes subversive, exposing/challenging the previous descriptions of gender roles and sexuality portrayed in Shakespeare’s original play.



Figure 66. Oli and Sebas in *Trans-Twelfth Night* in 2014  
(Mulimtaepung, 2014)

Consequently, the power of the female characters becomes more obvious in Oh’s production. They take central roles while the male characters’ nature becomes feminised as they occupy a relatively low social position. In this sense, Osia’s lovesickness refers to her luxurious and idle lifestyle as well as her passionate desire for a man. According to Carol Neely (2004), lovesickness is usually characterised as “a disease of upper-class heterosexual men” (p. 103). It is considered to refer to the love of noble men “who, on account of riches and the softness of their lives, are more likely to suffer this disease” (Neely, 2004, p. 103) in a male-centred tradition. Conversely, in *Trans-Twelfth Night*, it seems that Osia is suffering from the “disease” for her idle life without any exciting news from Oli. She spends her days admiring “his [Oli’s] sweet perfections” and imagines his love in her own poetic

fantasies while enjoying music and wine every day. Also, Sonia is depicted as a tough woman who drinks cognac daily and enjoys a physical love affair with the young servant, Ark, throughout the play. She spends a lot of money shopping so that Entia, who is a daughter of the wealthiest man in Illyria, becomes a victim of her dissipated lifestyle. In this production, the female characters freely express their desires and become the subject of their own destiny with enough power and wealth. By switching the whole structure of Illyrian society, from male to female, from a patriarchal system to a matriarchal one, Oh reconstructs the concept of gender and provides alternative readings of Shakespeare's text, which can be explored in different social conditions that draw out further ideas of gender and sexuality.



Figure 67. Sonia (Left), Bunny Girl (Middle), and Entia (Right) in *Trans-Twelfth Night* in 2014 (Mulimtaepung, 2014)

Although *Trans-Twelfth Night* was commercially successful as the tickets were all sold out in 2004, it was poorly received by theatre critics. Among others, Choi Young-Joo (2003) insists that the subject of gender and sexuality was not seriously dealt with in this production because of the director's emphasis on the comical and entertaining effect for a festive mood. For instance, due to the performance's energetic and delightful atmosphere with dance and music, the importance of the female characters – Sonia, Entia, Maris, Ann, and Bunny Girl – does not stand out throughout the production (Figure 67). Choi (2003) states that “the production takes advantage of the social atmosphere in which people became interested in the discourse of transgender and gay/lesbian for the consecutive coming-out of a couple of celebrities in the early 2000s, but eventually fails to develop the topic more in depth” (p. 100). Choi argues that the female figures in this production are a result of

androcentric perspectives, far from the female subject who is independent and assertive in contemporary society.

Osia sighs away her days in lovesickness and Sonia gets along with Entia and Bunny Girl to make the house fall into a chaos and goes morning shopping in every day. Entia is depicted as a silly girl who is sucked in by others, and Cesa, a disguised persona of Vike, is presented with ridiculous feminine gestures which are mostly distorted or exaggerated ones different from the female actions in reality. (Choi, 2003, p. 101)

According to Choi (2003), “because of the negative depictions of the female figures, the importance of the male characters such as Vike and Oli is emphasised even though they are depicted as men who have a delicate and sensitive nature” (p. 102). Due to the problematic aspects of the female characters, Choi concludes that the performance simply emphasises the comical effect with exaggerated gestures rather than broadening the discussion of gender and sexuality to the perspectives of feminism. Another critic, Sohn Jeong-U (2003) also claims that the production does not offer a different perspective on the subject of gender from the previous studies of Shakespeare’s *Twelfth Night* and its relation to the current social context of Korea. He insists that, “the performance only changes the characters’ gender without deep concerns about the way of translating the original text – particularly the peculiar place called Illyria and Shakespeare’s lines – into the new context of adaptation” (Sohn, 2003, p. 98). Both critics agree that the production aimed for commercial popularity rather than thinking about ways of studying gender and sexuality as the main focus in the context of contemporary social conditions. They suggest that the politics of gender, in particular the discourse of homosexuality, is removed from the central point of the production even though the director experiments with the concept of cross-gender performance in a different style from the Shakespearean stage.

However, the jocular scenes of the female characters and the subversion of their gender status need to be understood in a more general context, particularly in relation to the historical meaning of twelfth night as a festival. Traditionally, the ‘twelfth night’ was a time of entertainment for the close of the Christmas season in the Elizabethan period. The ambiguous nature of the twelfth night celebration is significant since it was “a time of revelry, a carnival time at which the world might

be turned upside-down, a celebration presided over by the Lord of Misrule and the ‘King of the Bean (a mock king whoever found it in his portion was elected ‘king’)’” (Mangan, 1996, p. 237). According to François Laroque (1991, p. 153), the play was regarded as preserving this festive and traditional atmosphere where licensed disorder could be allowed temporally during the season. Therefore, the festive mood as a social spirit that imposes a change of attitude on the characters causes them to lose their own identity and acquire another. This leads to “the general inversion of the order of things, most notably gender roles” (Laroque, 1991, p. 227). Sir Toby and his drinking companions comprise a carnivalesque world as an alternative society to the ‘official’ world of Olivia and Orsino. Their traditional hierarchies and class boundaries have become virtually irrelevant. Mangan (1996) notes that “Sir Toby breaks all the rules of Elizabethan decorum by marrying his sister’s ‘waiting-gentlewoman’” (p. 237) and his alternative world exists within the same household as the official one. This shows not only that social hierarchies were subverted by the world of carnival, but the concept of decorum can also be challenged.

Moreover, the female characters’ “negative” qualities are the result of respecting Shakespeare’s portrayals of the male characters in the original text. As the director adopts the nature of Shakespeare’s characters by maintaining their lines, the critics’ perspectives on the female characters in *Trans-Twelfth Night* might be equally applied to the male characters in Shakespeare’s play. A theatre reviewer, Kim Hyuon-Jung (2015) points out that the comical scenes of the female characters might be understood in relation to the effect of using Shakespeare’s language” which is spoken by the females who take the phallic position as a substitute for the power of masculinity. According to Kim, the subversion of gender status in this scene can be one of the strategies of the director who attempts to discuss the subject of gender in both the original text and current social context of Korea.

If the play has too much of jocular scenes, it might downgrade the value and seriousness of the performance as well as the original play. To assure that the play is actually based on the classical work of Shakespeare, many of the actors’ dialogues included lines that can be seen in the classical piece of literature. When Osia proposes to Oli, she says “I will yield my soul to you” which is quite different from the dialogue used in contemporary society to propose to someone. With the appropriate blend of humour and literary

expressions, the performance *Trans Twelfth Night* successfully reflects the unique characteristics of Shakespeare's original work.

By changing the gender of the main characters, the performance seems to suit the taste of the public in contemporary society. It is more common these days to see a man dressed up like a woman than a woman disguised as a man in theatre and TV. People seem to increasingly enjoy seeing a man in make-up. Especially in comedy dramas or entertaining TV programs, mostly it is the men who are dressed up like women to make people laugh. *Trans Twelfth Night*, therefore, twisted the original work in order to fit the gag code of modern people by making a man look like a woman. (Kim, 2015)

It is true that Shakespeare's male characters are described humorously and sometimes mischievously, which belies their own dignity and authority in patriarchal society. Through the performance of the female characters in Oh's performance, the audience can imagine Shakespeare's male figures who get confused and deceived by the female characters such as Viola who symbolises the ambiguity of gender identity as well as disrupts the legitimacy of the patriarchal system. Since the social position of women has been elevated in modern Korea, the audience might think Shakespeare's lines initially written for the male characters quite nicely fit the female characters. One of the audience members reviewed, "it seems that the production deals with romantic love stories in outward, but it actually reveals the hypocrisy of the male leadership by imitating or satirising its power through the female performers' humorous acting style" (Culub, 2014). This shows that unlike the critics' perspectives, the audience found the meaning of the female characters' humorous behaviours and linguistic expressions as a way of satirising the existing social system affirming patriarchal power and authority.

Choi and Sohn insist that *Trans-Twelfth Night* tends to emphasise comical effects for the purpose of entertaining the spectator rather than exploring the theme of the play with a serious attitude. However, one of the values of the comedy genre is to imitate common errors of our life through humorous ways. The female characters show ridiculous acts that make the audience laugh throughout the performance. However, while laughing at the female characters' ridiculous behaviours, the audience members see how each character learns a lesson from their own mistakes: Maris (Malvolio) experiences the worst case by being put to shame and losing her

dignity before the whole company, but despite this sings a song cheering herself up for another chance of love; Entia is finally aware of her own ignorance and naivety and wastes her time in drinking and spending money which cannot buy the heart of Oli. From these scenes, the director attempts to show how each character achieves progression from their wrong decisions and restores themselves from the experiences of failure to continue the rest of their life.

As gender performance cannot be read or interpreted in only one way (since everyone has a different personal experiences and cultural context), the reasons why the audience laughed at the performers' gender action can be various. To understand the meaning of the audience's laughter, it is necessary to consider when and why the audience laughs, and what makes the audience laugh. According to some audiences and my observation of the productions in 2003 and 2014, the audience did not just laugh at the male performers' feminine gestures. Rather, they mostly reacted to the context of the situations in which two contradictory facts coexist: for instance, as Vike enters with female clothing, the audience recognises the incongruence between the signs of masculinity for the male actor's strong physique and femininity for his coquettish body actions with a colourful chiffon dress (Figure 68). On his single body, these two different qualities are not harmonised at all but rather contradictory, which makes the audience get confused and express their unexplainable feeling with nervous laughter. An audience member, who reveals that he observed the responses of other members of the audience during the performance, wrote a review in his personal blog:

The thick make-up and chiffon dress emphasise the male actor's masculinity even greater. It is obvious that Cesa is not a woman, but the other characters never recognise the truth within the production, which makes the audience laugh. [...] Moreover, the contrast between his masculine physique and his sky-blue dress was very impressive, which remains in my memory. (Yoni, 2014)

For the audience, it is hilarious to see the characters, who are totally ignorant of themselves. Throughout the performance, Maris, Osia, and Oli do not realise the truth of what is happening around them until the end of the story though it is so clear to all of the other characters and the audience. For instance, Maris does not know she

is ridiculed by Ark, Sonia, and Entia, and Osia never doubts his/her gender while hugging Cesa from the back, but only says to him/her: “You are just like, first and last, a man” (Figure 69). It seems that unlike Choi and Sohn’s concern about the comical effect, most audience members are aware of the meaning of the confusions caused by the gender disguise and its importance in relation to the genre of comedy. One of the audience members points out that “*Trans-Twelfth Night* plays with disguising gender and confused identity which seems to be some of the important features in a comedy” (Hyunny, 2014). Vike’s playing Cesa is not simply to arouse laughter among the audience, but to lead them to notice the contradiction between the codes of femininity and masculinity, which might prod them into focusing on the performers’ gender acting from different perspectives.



Figure 68. Vike wearing a female clothing in *Trans-Twelfth Night* 2003 (*Trans-Twelfth Night*, 2003)

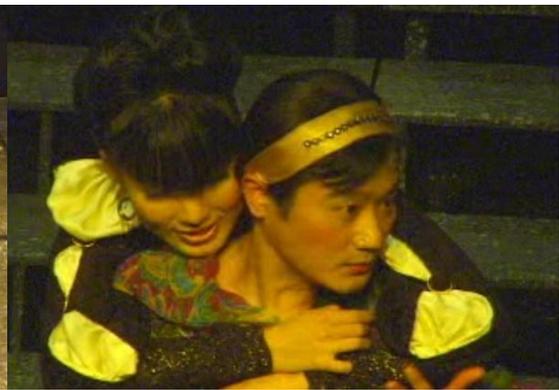


Figure 69. Vike disguising his gender as a female figure, Cesa, in *Trans-Twelfth Night* 2003 (*Trans-Twelfth Night*, 2003)

In this performance, the audience laughs at not only the characters’ ludicrous and eccentric behaviours, but also something unfamiliar or absurd that cannot be explained with the established norms of social standards. As Mangan (1996, p. 23) argues, although the status and function of laughter differ from one age and culture to another, its repeated function provides a way of dealing with issues that individuals and societies find threatening, embarrassing, or disturbing. Therefore, the phenomenon of nervous laughter occurs at inappropriate times, at moments of anxiety that ultimately illustrates the current social conscious of unstable gender positions. After all, the act of laughter, as a collective activity of a group or a society, reflects the point of social and moral standards enforcing people to restrain themselves in the logic of morality and reason. In this sense, analysing the audience’s laughter deepens the theme of gender transgression and subversion along with the

aspect of social psychology. If the audience laughs at some points related to the characters' gender identity, it means that the subject is the source of their anxiety. Also, Mangan (1996) insists that "people usually laugh at the matter which concerns or disturbs them the most" (p. 23). They can find themselves by examining the points of laughter that ultimately reflects the anxieties and tension within society. It is notable that the extent of Elizabethan anxieties concerning the maintenance of gender roles and patriarchal authority is expressed in Shakespeare's comedies and also in the literature of the time.<sup>69</sup> These anxieties relate to a more general fear of a breakdown of the social order including patriarchal systems, which was an integral part of larger societal fears. From this perspective, the audience's laughter in this production can be understood as a signal to express social conflict about the subversion of gender roles in modern Korean society.

As Henri Bergson (2005, pp. 11-14) insists, the fundamental source of comedy is the presence of rigidity in life. He also argues that a situation is laughable when the attention and the imagination are focused on the resistance and rigidity of the body. In this sense, any characters disguising their identity to deceive other characters can be seen as comical since they are wearing a different mask from themselves, which encourages the audience to focus on their resistance against social standards and its rigidity. Without the mask, they cannot achieve their desires, which are impossible to be pursued within the strict atmosphere of social structures. In *Trans-Twelfth Night*, the audience's laughter is specifically associated with the practice of parodying the gender identity of the characters described in Shakespeare's play through cross-gender acting. The production attempts to explore the similar anxieties the modern Korean audience experiences as it *transfers* the frame of Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* to focus on the subject of gender in modern Korean society. Therefore, every character can be considered as a figure who disguises him/herself by wearing a different gender mask from Shakespeare's characters in order to reveal the differences between the past and present social mechanisms. In this way, the theatre becomes the outline of our reality and the characters whom the audience is laughing at are in fact caricatures of themselves.

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<sup>69</sup> For example, in John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi* (1612-13) and Elizabeth Cary's *The Tragedy of Mariam* (1613), the female characters – Annabella and Mariam – are victimised by the male figures who abuse their power.

Since Hong and Ha came out their gender identities in 2001, Korean society has slowly accepted homosexuality and a number of productions have been released around the issues. Accordingly, critics and audiences may have expected to see how Oh's perspective has been changed and developed in the recent version of *Trans-Twelfth Night* in 2014 since there has been a ten-year interval since its first version in 2003. He maintains the concept of the production without changing many parts except casting. Thus, these productions provide an opportunity to observe how audience members react differently to each performance in 2003 and 2014, which helps us to assume the changes in social atmosphere and attitude towards cross-gender acting as well as the spectator's anxiety about the presentation of homosexual relations. In other words, this performance becomes a criterion to compare the meaning of the audience's different reactions to the director's concept in relation to social contexts in the past and present. From observing audience's responses, it seems that the audience's perspectives on gender have shifted; the spectator does not really respond to or laugh at the male performer's feminine gestures in 2014 compared with the audience's fervent responses in the past. Perhaps there might be various reasons for their less enthusiastic reactions; one of the reasons may be that this kind of scene is not sensational or interesting anymore from the perspective of the audience as they are already familiar with such cross-gender codes disseminated through TV, film, and other theatre productions.

Although social trends have been changing for the last few decades, it is true that Korean society still maintains conservative attitudes towards the matter of gender and sexuality. Women are not quite free from the previous patriarchal perspectives and social regulations forcing them to take relatively passive roles compared to men. Consequently, the gender discourse, particularly in regard to homosexuality and transgender, are considered marginal topics in Korea. In a similar vein, many Korean actors have a limited perspective on performing gender as they have specific images of masculinity and femininity. The male actor, Kim Hong-Geun, who plays Vike/Cesa, reveals that playing Cesa was never easy; at first, he thought that performing a female character could be done with "female-like voice tone and some feminine gestures" based on his previous observations of other male actors playing a female role in other productions" (2014). Thus, he showed typical

feminine behaviour: speaking with a slightly high-pitched voice tone; walking with light steps; acting cautiously in any condition. Also, after several rehearsals, Kim (2014) said that it was hard for him to wear female clothing with a long wig and thick make-up since he had “a feeling that he is doing something wrong to his parents for dressing up like a woman.” His uncomfortable feeling reveals that his identity as a heterosexual man does not fit into what he is doing – wearing a female costume and performing feminine gestures – which might disrupt his belief in gender binarism.

According to Kim Su-Gi (2007), most Korean actors do not freely explore the subject of gender through their acting. In many cases, their acting style is limited to playing or simply copying particular gender images and actions that are socially and culturally pursued and constructed. She states that many Korean actors have been influenced by various acting theories for a realist acting style, especially Konstantin Stanislavski, which has led them to imagine themselves ‘as if’ they are the character rather than think of their role from a critical perspective. Kim insists, “the plays for realist theatre often describe female characters as passive and dependent figures whereas male characters are portrayed as confident and independent figures” (p. 130). As a result, performers’ acting style becomes “fixed to the typical gender images according to the biased descriptions of femininity and masculinity in the text” (Kim, 2007, p. 130). Without critical interpretations of these descriptions, the performers tend to present their binary perspective on gender roles, which becomes a standard for the concept of their gender expressions. In this case, their acting might not be a way to explore the relation between themselves and their characters, but just “a systematic tool for justifying and reinforcing the previous concept of femininity and masculinity” (Kim, 2007, p. 131). Kim asserts that the actors need to question whether they simply reproduce the stereotyped gender images as they have been trained without suggesting their own interpretation on the character’s gender identity.

It seems that Kim’s argument is congruent with Oh’s idea that actors need to develop their own acting style and form to portray a particular gender rather than presenting the singular concept of masculinity and femininity uncritically. Based on the performers’ critical attitude towards their own concept of gender and gender acting, they might broaden the discourse of gender for themselves and the audience

as well. Since the concept of gender is always sensitive and greatly influenced by social and cultural circumstances, histories, and even personal orientations, the audience members also need to pay careful attention to the subject in order to make progress in their understanding of not only Shakespeare's play and his society, but also their own view of gender identity in relation to current social ideology and practice in Korea.

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As Korean society has become more tolerant of minorities who have a different sexual orientation from heterosexuality comparing to the past social atmosphere, the subject of gender has been more frequently explored in theatres and public media such as film and TV dramas. In this transitional condition, Yang and Oh attempt to show their own interpretation and understanding of gender and sexuality through their unique performance methods by adopting traditional theatre forms, particularly the convention of cross-gender casting. Their performances lead the modern audience to have different perspectives on gender and sexuality from the conservative attitude influenced by Chinese Confucianism. Also, their productions allow the audience to understand the theme of Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* as well as the changes of females' social position in modern Korean society.

Yang adopts the traditional acting style of *Deotboegi* to emphasise the effect of theatricality as a fundamental device of his performance to make the audience reconsider the existing concepts of gender and sexuality in contemporary Korean society. By observing the process of the male actors' *becoming* a woman, the audience would be able to notice how an illusion of femininity or masculinity can be created through the actors' physical movements. Unlike the ambiguous gender position of *onnagata* in *Kabuki* in which the male actors attempt to create an illusory femininity with sophisticated and detailed actions, traditional Korean performances avoid such ambiguity but emphasise certain gestures defined as feminine or masculine with exaggerated physical and vocal expressions. This method encourages the audience to recognise the theatrical aspect of their actions and focus on the processes of embodying an idealised form to be considered as feminine and

masculine.

In *Trans-Twelfth Night*, Oh takes further steps to deal with the instability of gender by switching the characters' gender roles from male to female and *vice versa* while maintaining Shakespeare's lines. In this way, he attempts to show how Shakespeare's idea of gender roles can be re practised in the milieu of modern Korean society, which reveals the different perspectives and attitudes towards femininity and masculinity from the original text. In Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, the characters' gender identity is bound to the condition of the male-dominated social system in which male characters such as Orsino and Sir Toby can express their love without any barrier or difficulties while the female character, Viola, needs to disguise herself as a man to pursue her desire. In Oh's performance, however, as the male-centred society is changed into a matriarchal society, the audience can clearly see the gap between the social perspective on gender roles in the Elizabethan era and the director's view on the gender position in contemporary Korean society in which women's social position has become as important as men's.

The productions by Yang and Oh open dynamic debates over how the sexually transgressive condition of cross-dressing can influence an audience's recognition of gender in current social context. However, since Korean society is still familiar with conservative perspectives on gender and sexuality, it is necessary for both Yang and Oh to keep thinking of the ways to show their updated criticism on gender and sexuality, which might help the audience to participate in more in-depth discussions on gender issues. They need to provide the audience with opportunities to develop their conception of gender by considering the subject from different points of view. This may allow the audience to see current social issues related to gender identity and gender role with more open and critical attitudes.

As Yang has always revised his productions, perhaps his *Twelfth Night* might not be his final version; rather, it is still in progress and can be changed into a different form. Since the concept of gender is sensitive to the changes of social conditions, it is necessary for the director and performers to develop their ways of presenting their own perspective on the concept of gender in relation to the condition of contemporary Korean society. In particular, as long as they maintain the present form inspired by the traditional theatre form, which was designed to explore the

spirit of social changes and revolution in the past Korean society, his *Twelfth Night* needs to be more radical and critical than it is now. For similar reasons, Oh needs to present his recent idea of gender since he has been using the same script which he wrote more than ten years ago without changing any words and also maintained the acting style as they were presented in his previous version in 2003. Thus, it seems that his production is limited to his previous perspectives rather than showing how his previous concept of gender has been changed and developed according to the switches of social attitudes towards homosexuality and females' changed position in recent years.

## **Conclusion:**

### **Reinventing / Resisting Traditions Through the Body**

Modern Shakespearean productions in Korea and Japan reflect how the directors understand and interpret not only Shakespeare's texts, but also their own indigenous social conditions in the contemporary environment. Shakespeare's plays cannot be explored only in respect of cultural values rooted in the past, but should be understood in relation to the contemporary in historical, cultural, and political contexts and experiences. As suggested in Chapter One, the history of modern Korean and Japanese theatre reflects the confluence of Western culture with traditional Asian theatre conventions throughout the twentieth century. For modern directors, Shakespeare is the paramount Western canon which can be a prime source to explore the position of Asian traditions in modern theatre culture. Since the 1990s, directors have had greater opportunities to showcase Shakespearean productions on international stages due to the growth of globalisation. In this condition, the concept and practice of traditional theatre forms become important subjects that modern directors need to study and explore to find a way to show their understanding of Shakespeare's plays in creative ways which excite the audience in abroad as well as in their own country. As I have illustrated throughout the thesis, it is common to see the intermingling of traditional Asian and Western theatre forms in modern Shakespearean performances in Japan and Korea, though in ways that are unique and diverse.

In this hybrid cultural and creative environment, the directors attempt to invent their own aesthetic of theatrical expressions based on the principles of traditional theatre forms in order to deal with the contemporary social and cultural conditions. By negotiating various theatrical elements from traditional and modern theatre cultures, the Korean and Japanese directors I have discussed in each chapter present their own interpretation of how traditional conventions and theatre forms can make meaning today. In their productions, performers' bodies can function as active entities reinventing the aesthetic of traditional form, challenging traditional concepts, or often balancing between the different ideas of traditional and modern values. As I

have highlighted, performers' bodies function as a tool that allows the audience to understand the characters' inner conditions which are related to other characters and outer world in which each character tries to find his/her own social identity as an active subject. Thus, their productions reflect not only their perspectives on past society and theatrical conventions of Korea or Japan; they also present each director's vision and attitude towards the present social structure and ideology as well as theatre culture as a whole.

Although adaptations of Shakespeare in Japan and Korea are different, the productions studied in this thesis draw our attention to two major approaches to adapting traditional theatre and cultural traditions through Shakespearean performance: first, Shakespeare is recreated through the selective incorporation of aesthetic elements from traditional theatre form; and second, the reimagining of Shakespeare in performance engages more directly with the ways of understanding the cultural and social ideology in pre-modern Korea and Japan as well as the contemporary social context.

As explored in Chapter Three and Four, Lee, Yang, Kurata, and Ninagawa's adoption of traditional theatre forms such as *Noh*, *Kabuki*, and *Madangnori* emphasise performers' physical sensibilities and expressions. They attempt to create their own methods of acting aesthetics by combining traditional theatre forms with modern performance modes based on Western realist theatre. The performers' hybrid form of bodily images and movements inspired from both past and modern theatre forms can provoke the audience to imagine how the different elements can be harmonised in a single body and a single production in a creative way. These newly designed theatre forms lead the directors to re-examine the value of traditional concepts and practice as well as exploring new ways of performing Shakespeare which are appropriate to the current taste of the audience. In this case, the body as a corporeal form becomes a mediator connecting different elements of traditional and modern performance modes.

In their productions of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Lee and Yang show how traditional ideas and beliefs in the supernatural in the past can be used to revive the community spirit through which the performers and audience can interact within the energy of *shinmyeong*. The fairies' invisible world is embodied through the actors'

corporeal presence and dynamic movements inspired from *Madangnori*. The directors and performers' imagination of the invisible presence is expressed as a palpable form through the actor's body which leads the audience to experience the presence of the fairies as corporeal entities. Also, as studied in Chapter Four, Ninagawa, in his *Twelfth Night*, relies on traditional performance forms, such as *Kabuki*, by casting all male actors, which emphasises the theme of gender ambiguity. Accordingly, the actors' bodies imply multiple layers of gender codes that represent the complexity of gender representation in traditional Japanese society. The stereotyped visions and attitude towards femininity and masculinity constructed in the past still influence how acting styles in modern performances are formed, as we have seen in Kurata's *Twelfth Night*. While watching the old theatrical forms, the audience members can think of the value of traditional forms not just as a theatrical aesthetic of the past, but as a mirror to show how such a traditional mindset and structure have been influential in our modern life. By adopting the traditional theatre forms, the actors' bodies reveal the structure of cultural psychology in pre-modern times of Korea and Japan, and show how such conventional practice can be applied to modern performances and acting styles.

It seems that Japanese productions show the inner condition of characters through the performers' physical expressions as visual aesthetic while Korean performances emphasise the performers body as corporeal presence with dynamic movements and gestures which prods the audience into feeling *shinmyeong* to interact with the performers. Ninagawa tends to be faithful to the plot and characters in Shakespeare's plays as well as the traditional performance form with less changes to make the audience imagine the original forms. While maintaining the storyline of Shakespeare's texts, he attempts to use the aesthetic of traditional theatre forms to deal with the themes of the original play. Like Ninagawa, many Japanese directors including Yasuda and Kurata have a conservative attitude towards changing Shakespeare's text. They attempt to balance between traditional and new interpretations in the process of finding a new meaning and value from the work. In these cases, the performers' bodies function as a bridge connecting different cultural contexts, theatrical expressions, and the aesthetic points of view in past and present social conditions. Also, the body broadens its own possibility as a form of embodied

expression that suits the purpose of performances which emphasises the aesthetic of physical images.

In contrast to the Japanese directors studied in this thesis, many Korean directors often deconstruct the structure and characters in Shakespeare's work by cutting out and changing some scenes according to their experimental interpretations. By following the principles of traditional Korean theatre emphasising the communication with the audience members, they attempt to devise ways of encouraging the audience to participate in the events on stage as active spectators. Korean directors radically change and restructure Shakespeare's plays in order to focus on the performers' physical movements as a way of communicating with audience members. They try to invent appropriate theatre conventions in which the traditional Korean performance form can be fully explored and practised by interacting with the modern audience. By enhancing the spirit of *shinmyeong* which helps the performers and audience share the feeling of excitement and grief, the actors and audience members are able to sing and dance together during the performance, which is reminiscent of ritual ceremonies from pre-modern times. In Lee and Yang's *Dreams*, the directors create the condition in which everyone can share their cultural imagination rooted in their unconscious by borrowing some elements from the traditional theatre form. The performers' bodies become a key place where the harmony between themselves and the audience can be achieved through collective communication in theatre. In this case, Shakespeare's text is used to revive and reinvent traditional Korean culture and performance forms that can still lead the audience to feel and experience a sense of community spirit.

Another approach to adapting Shakespeare sees Korean and Japanese directors attempt to deal with traditional concepts and conventions and show how these old ideas have been reinvented, altered and often challenged in theatre as well as contemporary social life. As explored in Chapter Two and Three, Miyagi, Yasuda, and Yang deal with the ambiguous state between reality and dream by focusing on the liminal aspect of human psychology in their productions of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. They reuse and reinvent traditional concepts and cultural beliefs in folktales and myth in the process of designing the fairies' appearance and their world, which reflects their cultural imagination of the invisible aspects of nature. In other words,

they reposition and reframe some traditional concepts from folk culture to explore how these old beliefs and conventions have an influence on human relationships and behaviours even now. In their performances, the actors' bodies as a visual and/or corporeal entity is associated with the commonly shared sense of cultural belief that creates such a unique figure in a symbolic way. For them, tradition is not just a cultural inheritance rooted in the past, but it is a cultural power working in the present perspective. Adopting or learning traditional views is an active process of understanding current cultural ideology since it can be present in the interaction with the social and cultural mechanism.

In their adaptations of *Twelfth Night*, Kurata and Oh deal with the subject of gender and sexuality in Japan and Korea by reusing and/or resisting traditional concepts of femininity and masculinity through all-male or cross-gender casting. In Kurata's production, the gender ambiguity seems to be related to the practice of traditional Japanese theatre forms in which male performers play female characters. Since Kurata combines the traditional theatre conventions exploring gender ambiguity with the realist acting style emphasising gender binarism, her ideas of gender and sexuality are not clearly presented. However, Oh's production attempts to challenge typical ideas of masculinity and femininity by changing the gender role of Shakespeare's characters without changing the lines designed to maintain the male-centred system. As studied in Chapter Five, Oh's characters are the result of the actors' interpretation of the characters' gender roles in Shakespeare's play. In his production, acting is the process by which the performers negotiate their own gender with their understanding of the characters gender in both the original text and revised script by Oh. In Kurata and Oh's productions, actors' bodies show how the traditional perspectives on gender and performance conventions still have an influence on performing particular gender in modern theatre. Also, their presence as the third gender, which is neither female or male, places into question existing notions of gender, and provoke the audience to imagine various possible interpretations of gender positions in either heterosexual or homosexual relationship, or both.

As Korea and Japan have been influenced by Western culture and theatre forms throughout the twentieth century, Shakespeare's plays have been useful

sources for modern directors to deal with the subjects related to the complex cultural conditions in which both Western and traditional concepts and values co-exist. By translating Shakespeare's plays in their own cultural and social context, modern directors attempt to have a clear insight of their cultural position and identity in multicultural circumstances in which various cultural influences – from other Asian and Western countries – are intermingled in experimental ways. Their performances, as an intercultural practice, provide the opportunity to develop new models for cultural exchanges and translations in a globalised world. The directors explore their aesthetics in a state between different cultures from the past to present, between traditional and modern theatrical disciplines with recognition that there are many issues related to gender and identity within their societies and cultures. In this condition, actors' bodies represent the aesthetic of physical expressions whose value and meaning are involved with contemporary social structures and ideology. Through performers' bodies, the audience can see how the different cultural elements from the past and present can be negotiated into a single performance or displayed as an incongruent state in which various layers of cultural beliefs and concepts can be observed.

The study of modern productions of Shakespeare by focusing on the actor's body can be useful to understand the relation between traditional and modern theatre forms and conventions in other Asian countries, such as China, Hong Kong, Singapore, and Malaysia. Like Korea and Japan, in these countries many directors have translated and performed Shakespeare's plays in their own cultural context and explored their own ways of physical expressions inspired from traditional theatre forms which are often combined with some elements of modern performance modes in eclectic ways. In particular, Wu Hsing-Kuo is one of the famous directors who reinvent traditional Chinese theatre forms in his productions such as *Kingdom of Desire* (1986-2010), *Lear is Here* (2001 - ), and *The Tempest* (2004 - ). Also, Tang Shu-Wing's performances such as *Titus Andronicus* (2008 - ), *Titus Andronicus 2.0* (2009 - ) and *Macbeth* (2015) might be considered as groundbreaking works for the performers' radical and unique style of physical expressions based on various modern performance modes such as dance and mime combined in experimental ways. In addition, a Singaporean director, Mohammed Najib Soiman's *Ma'Ma Yong*:

*About Nothing Much to Do* (2008) and a Malaysian artist, Norzizi Zulkifli's *Mak Yong Titis Sakti* [Mak Yong Drops of Magic] (2009) can be explored by studying the role of actor as a central entity connecting different performance modes from classical to folk, traditional to modern theatrical expressions. These examples show that there are a number of directors who are striving to create their own contexts in which disparate traditions, values, and people can communicate and coexist, which leads themselves to explore new aesthetics to present an insightful vision towards their own culture.

Furthermore, this research can be broadened into the study of intercultural Shakespeare performances. There have been many intercultural or cross-cultural exchanges in theatre searching for alternative modes of theatre. This kind of autonomous creative method becomes a natural process in contemporary theatre culture. Rather than insisting on their personal perspective or method, many Asian directors have created productions by exchanging their ideas with other theatre artists through several discussions and practices. Through collaborative work, they share their thoughts and impressions on Shakespeare's texts, and discuss how to visualise their interpretations as an embodied form on stage. Each member has different experiences and cultural points of view, which may inspire other members to think of new modes of presentation. For instance, Lee Yun-Taek who is one of the leading Korean directors and Miyagi Satoshi worked together to produce *Othello* (2008) in which the elements of Japanese *Mugen Noh* style and the elements of Korean Shamanistic ritual and dance are incorporated to present a new reading of Shakespeare's play. By combining *Noh* style with *Gut* in their production, Lee and Miyagi attempt to depict an imaginary world in which the dead and deities are connected to the people in this world by emphasising the presence of the performers' bodies. In this way, Shakespearean drama, Japanese tradition, and Korean shamanism are intermingled in this production to provide the audience with a new perspective as well as creative ways of performing Shakespeare's play. In this kind of collaborative work, as a group of actors contact with other actors from other cultures, each actor has an opportunity to learn and experience one another's differences. In this way, completely new elements might emerge which are not clearly recognisable as part of either tradition. The performers' bodies are

interacting, exchanging, and then extending their boundaries to more broadened area by representing the ideology of other cultural contexts. This example shows that tradition functions as an agent for change by fostering innovation through constantly colliding with other traditions through the actors' bodies.

In modern Asian theatre culture, Shakespeare functions as a cultural catalyst to refashion (inter)cultural representation, and traditional forms and conventions are a vital part of generating something original. The combined theatre forms become a way to explore Shakespeare's plays in creative ways as well as the directors' own cultural position and artistic approaches to Western and Asian, traditional and modern cultures in a global era. As T. S. Eliot (1950) insists, tradition involves the historical sense which is related to "a perception, not only the pastness of the past, but of its presence" (p. 4). In other words, the historical sense makes an artist "acutely conscious of his place in time, of his contemporaneity" (p. 4). Likewise, by performing Shakespeare, Korean and Japanese directors explore the value and meaning of traditions and present their unique vision towards their own cultural and social circumstances. Traditional theatre forms which assert their functions to develop physical sensibilities allow the performers and audience to find a way of exploring the meaning of their bodies as the most valuable entity symbolising historical, cultural, and social values. Traditions through continuously interacting with other cultural elements in a multi- and intercultural environment provide modern directors with a springboard for new creation. In this respect, traditional art is not for the past, but it has its durability within the individuals living in the present, and should not be afraid of the form and spirit of the future.

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