Overflowing Local Bodies in Global Age
– (Re)presentations of Japanese Bodies in Different Theatrical Forms Inside and Outside Japan During the Period of (Post-)Globalization –

Rina TANAKA, Mariko MIYAGAWA, Ken HAGIWARA, Hayato KOSUGE

Abstract

The subject of modern Japanese “overflowing bodies” obscures the demarcation of performance order by choosing not to distinguish between “universal” or “local.” On the one hand, if we believe in the universal value of artistic activities by human beings and adopt a perspective derived from the awareness to discover what the body is and how it is represented in the context of “universal culture,” bodies and performances could not be categorized according to ethnicity though we could still admit a site-specific imagination. On the other hand, the concept of the “locality” of bodies and performances is based on an artistic approach that finds style in endemic and indigenous bodies and body movements, favoring an eccentric, unsophisticated, and premodern, local, or “rural” location. In short, “overflowing-ness” creates a tension between local and universal, national and transnational, site-specific and ubiquitous—that is, between inside and outside.

This research note focuses on the permanency or transformation of bodies and performances, (ir-)respective of their Japanese contexts by taking three examples of various Japanese bodies in European locations in a global age.

After Kosuge Hayato’s introduction, (1) Tanaka Rina engages with the relationship between the body image of an actress Ichiro Maki and authenticity in the Japanese adaptation of an Austrian musical. Secondly, (2) Miyagawa Mariko works with the matter of inheritableness of Butoh by taking some examples from the dancers who intend to copy Ohno Kazuo’s movements. (3) Hagiwara Ken focuses finally on some Japanese artists who have recently presented their works in Germany and deals with Japanese bodies in performances in the historical and contemporary context on site.

This research note is based on the panel presentation “Overflowing Local Bodies in Global Age” on June 9th, 2017 (Chair: Kosuge Hayato, Presenters: Hagiwara Ken, Miyagawa Mariko, and Tanaka Rina) at the 23rd Performance Studies international Annual Conference (PSi #23) held in Hamburg, Germany, from June 8th to 11th, 2017. It was organized by the Centre for Performance Studies at the University of Hamburg and the Hamburger theater Kampnagel. As the conference theme “OverFlow” indicates, the focus was on “positive and negative phenomena and concepts of overabundance, excess and spillover” (Gabrielle Klein). Fittingly, about 700 participants and over 400 presenters from more than 40 countries participated in this conference (According to the PSI #23 conference program). The panel was the launch session of the Working Group “Japanese Bodies in a Global Age” which was established for an initial three-year term to hold discussions on (re)presentations of Japanese bodies in different theatrical forms inside and outside Japan during the period of (post-)globalization, through an analysis of individual examples.

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Employing the different approaches to the theme “Japanese bodies” in the various types of theater performance, interdisciplinary discussions from diverse viewpoints from philosophy, choreography, theater, and performance studies, are provided. They could not be viewed as a single, fixed concept, but rather as a transitive flow, reflecting the contemporary, historical, or site-specific context of each performance. “Japanese bodies” present as a complex hybrid that could be interpreted and created by and for each individual actor/actress as well as the audience. In this framework, the multi-dimensional transition will be tracked, and consequently, “Japanese bodies” will come to light as a result of transition and globalization.

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1. Overflowing Local Bodies in Global Age: Introduction (Kosuge Hayato²)

The subject of modern Japanese “overflowing bodies” obscures the demarcation of performance order by choosing not to distinguish between “universal” or “local.” On the one hand, if we believe in the universal value of artistic activities by human beings and adopt a perspective derived from the awareness to discover what the body is and how it is represented in the context of “universal culture,” bodies and performances could not be categorized according to ethnicity though we could still admit a site-specific imagination. Bodies are unconstrained by the parameters of specific races and cultures, to the extent that they share the universal essence of all human beings in a universal culture.

On the other hand, the concept of the “locality” of bodies and performances is based on an artistic approach that finds style in endemic and indigenous bodies and body movements, favoring an eccentric, unsophisticated, and premodern, local, or “rural” location. Performers or performance groups quite often find their artistic identities in a personal or separate consciousness that is based on a specific site or tradition. Metaphorically speaking, the performer’s body is the “locus” of a meeting point for the local climate, personal habits and the community based culture which the performer himself/herself has been involving in his/her own body.

Take, as one example, Butoh dance. Kasai Akira, one of the founders of Butoh who is still active, along with the late Hijikata Tatsumi and the late Ohno Kazuo, claims to have pioneered this form of dance and given it the name, “Butoh.” He notably stated in an interview that Butoh should not be categorized as dance, but rather as the attitude or spirit of one’s own body. He argued that, as Butoh was the “art of the spirit” as well as the art of the body, classical ballet and traditional Japanese dance could be regarded as variations of Butoh (Research Center for the Arts and Arts Administration 2004, pp. 60–62). Moreover, referring to Hijikata’s comments about “butoh-ness,” Rosa van Hensbergen aptly summarised the universality of Butoh as “[i]t promises a freedom unconstrained by the parameters of a specific world or world-view, and yet at the same time advances something suspiciously close to one” (Hensbergen 2014, p.

² Japanese names appear here in usual Japanese order, with the family name first.
One can go further and say that Butoh is not a modern dance genre, but rather a performance style based on philosophical and emotional associations, with an anti-establishment and anti-traditional aestheticism. Butoh, therefore, can be performed in any place for any reason at any time.

On the other hand, Butoh is based on an artistic approach that finds style in unordinary, unconventional, and unexploited bodies and body movements, favoring an eccentric, unsophisticated, and premodern or personal local or rural location; for Hijikata, this was especially Tohoku, Japan, where we held a gathering as one of the Fluid States projects in 2015. Hijikata set “domesticated” (kainarasareta) urban ordinary manners against rural everyday lives as he says: “the everyday has butoh-ness, you know. For example, when you’re a child, and you’re, subjected to a parent’s anger, flying from his/her chasing him to beat the child in front of neighbors as he has a conscious of playing for child actor” (Hijikata 1998, II, p. 16). Hijikata here found “butoh-ness” in habitual lives in Tohoku, as well as in personal and indigenous consciousness, as illustrated by the childhood memory he described in Yameru Maihime (La danseuse malade). Hijikata stated clearly that the cold climate of Tohoku was essentially connected with his own dance: “I have a strong desire to hide myself in this very cold place. Here we can create a Butoh from any movement, such as rubbing our own hands in the cold” (Hijikata 1998, II, p. 11).

Overflowing-ness creates a tension between local and universal, national and transnational, site-specific and ubiquitous—that is, between inside and outside.

Would overflowing bodies from a particular place still keep their remarkable uniqueness in another culture, or would they become assimilated into the new cultural climate? Does an overflow of bodies reflect an ambiguous combination of universal and local, emphasizing a ubiquitous, transnational, and nomadic nature detached from any cultural Urheimat? Is the concept of culture-based bodies only an illusion, reflecting conservative/liberal politics? Taking the examples of various Japanese bodies in European locations, the following series of discussions deal with an interest in the permanency or transformation of bodies and performances, irrespective of their original Japanese contexts.

2. Overflowing Images of the Body—in the Case of the German-Speaking Musical Elisabeth in Japan (Tanaka Rina)

When we look at the genre musical in the global age, we inevitably confront the issue of authenticity. Although musical productions and their style from Broadway, and later from the West End, have been regarded as mainstream ever since the genre was established and developed, it has attempted to get rid of this authenticity in non-English-speaking countries. For example, since the 1990s, Austrian musicals are gradually spreading around Europe and Asia. And in the first import, these opened up a new dimension of localization, creating multiple images of the body in the cultural-historical context on site.

3 The term “locality” naturally includes rural, suburban, and urban localities, but all of these are associated with “rurality” in the sense of unsophistication and lack of familiarity with the manners of “Yamanote-Bunka” (urbane high culture). In Japanese terminology, “inaka-mono” (country man) is sometimes used to refer to rustic people, even when they have been born in a big city.

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This paper focuses on how the body of an actor or actress functions in the local/global context, using as an example the case of the Japanese actress Ichiro Maki in the Austrian musical Elisabeth in Japan and Austria.

2-1. The Musical Elisabeth and its Anniversary Concert

Elisabeth is a musical about Empress Elisabeth of Austria, who lived at the end of the 19th century. It appeared first at the Theater an der Wien in 1992, produced by an Austrian musical production company, Vereinigte Bühnen Wien (United Stages Vienna), with financial support from the City of Vienna. Following and undermining the images of historical figures in literature, film, and other musical theater, Elisabeth is distinguished by the character Death, who is embodied by an actor and represents Elisabeth’s longing for death, as well as the fall of the Hapsburg Empire. Achieving a balance between a particular locality and the global musical standard enabled Elisabeth to reach an international audience. It has been performed in 21 countries and translated into 12 languages (as of 2017).

In response to its international success, the Elisabeth 10th Anniversary Concert was held at Wiener Konzerthaus in 2002. The concert version of Elisabeth was performed by leading actors and actresses from six countries4 where Elisabeth had been performed. Among all the actors and actresses, the Japanese actress, Ichiro Maki, was the only one who crossed the gender line, by playing the male protagonist, Death, in the first world’s first adaptation of Elisabeth, as well as the female protagonist, Elisabeth, in the second Japanese adaptation.

2-2. The Actress Ichiro Maki in the Musical Elisabeth

Ichiro Maki5 (1965–) belonged to the Japanese all-female musical theater troupe, the Takarazuka Revue Company (hereafter: Takarazuka), from 1982 to 1996. She trained as an actress specializing in male roles, and accepted a position as “Top Star” of the Snow Troupe6 (1993–1996). After she left Takarazuka in 1996, Ichiro began a career with Toho Entertainment (hereafter: Toho).

2-2-1. Takarazuka: Erizabeto—Ai to Shi no Rondo (1996–)

The first encounter between Ichiro and Elisabeth was in 1996. Elisabeth was adapted by and for Takarazuka and renamed Erizabeto (Elisabeth) with the subtitle “Ai to Shi no Rondo” (Rondo of Love and Death). Due to well-defined Takarazuka’s “Top-Star-centered” system, this version of the musical focused on the male protagonist, Death, instead of the title role, Elisabeth. Not just the protagonist, but most of the other elements were also changed, especially for Ichiro Maki, Snow Troupe’s Top Star at that time.

This “Top-Star-centered” approach created a special focus on one particular actress on stage. Sociologist Azuma Sonoko explained how the body of a Takarazuka actress is presented in performances.

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4 Austria, Japan, Hungary, Sweden, Holland, and Germany.
5 Ichiro Maki is her stage name; each Takarazuka actress must have her own.
6 Takarazuka has five different troupes. At the top of each troupe, there is a star actress called the “Top Star.” Generally, an actress with the charisma and professional training to play male roles can be a Top Star.
“Takarazuka” aims to achieve the opposite of other modern dramas. It is more important to show the fictional body through the character than to create a fictional body for the character (Azuma 2009, pp. 19–20).

Unlike a drama actor/actress who realizes the character in the play through his/her body, a Takarazuka actress principally creates and performs her idealized image which is associated with her stage name. In this approach, the character which she acts in a play is a tool to highlight her own persona.

As for Erizabeto, Ichiro’s body basically functioned as the character Death in Act 1 and Act 2. However, before the two acts, she greeted the audience as the troupe’s Top Star “Ichiro Maki.” Also, after the acts, there was a bonus scene, a so-called “finale,” in which Ichiro appeared as the Top Star, instead of as the character Death. Even during the two acts, the audience was made aware that she was the Top Star, not only through stage elements such as stage directing, lighting, choreography, and costume but also through Ichiro’s gestures, intonation, and poses. To sum up, Ichiro’s image as the Top Star was constantly and intensively emphasized by various stage elements, Ichiro herself, and the core audience.

While Takarazuka’s Erizabeto was repeatedly staged—actually, it was performed nine times by different troupes by 2017—the image of each character was drastically modified in order to fit each actress and differentiated from the past versions. These modifications were observed and compared by fans whose focus is especially on their favorite actress(es). In other words, every image since Ichiro’s Erizabeto is preserved not only by the actresses who play Erizabeto but also by fans. This can be seen as a Takarazuka’s strategy: you can buy the videos and CDs of each version and trace the history of Takarazuka’s Erizabeto, even if you missed the performances.

Ichiro and the other Takarazuka actresses embody multiple images on stage. The first layer is always the fictional body of the Top Star; then the character in the play forms a second layer. Finally, actress(es) who performed the same role in the past add additional layers.

2-2-2. Toho: Erizabeto (2000–)

While the Takarazuka version was repeatedly performed and became a great sensation, another adaptation, called Erizabeto with no subtitle, was produced by Toho in 2000. This version is distinguished from the Takarazuka version mainly by the casting—it is performed by both actors and actresses—and the fact that the character Elisabeth makes a comeback in the title role, as in the first version performed in

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7 Generally, musical stars are performing themselves, or at least that part of themselves that can be forged through performance (Knapp 2011, p. 413). However, Takarazuka actresses are distinguished from them by the clear separation between the actress herself which never become official while she belongs to Takarazuka, and her persona which is signified by her stage name.

8 Each troupe runs a month-long show first in Osaka, and then in Tokyo.

9 Miyamoto Naomi (2011, p. 64, pp. 109–110) explained that the Takarazuka fans don’t look at the whole stage but gaze solely at their favorite Star by the opera glasses.
Vienna. On the other hand, the Toho version clearly follows on Takarazuka’s successes through the work of the stage director Koike Shuichiro, who directed all of the Takarazuka versions, and Ichiro Maki, who performed the title role this time around.

In Toho’s Erizabeto, Ichiro embodied several images while performing Elisabeth. As Ichiro was an ex-Takarazuka Top Star, who had previously performed as the character Death in Erizabeto, this past image was layered over her actual body on the stage. Furthermore, as the role of Elisabeth was performed differently by each actress in the various Takarazuka versions, these ex-Elisabeths were also present in the layers.

2-3. Multi-layered Bodies in Japanese Theater

This layered body style is not uncommon to Japanese theater. Multi-layered bodies can be found in Kabuki theater since the 17th century, a private theatrical entertainment that included song, dance, and acting. Kabuki performances feature the layered body of a single Kabuki actor. Generally, Kabuki is a family business, so the technique of each Kabuki actor has passed down from generation to generation with his stage name. As the actor himself is clearly distinguished from what his stage name signifies, he first becomes the Kabuki actor with a stage name and then performs as each character on stage.

This system was inherited by Takarazuka and Toho. Both were established by the Japanese entrepreneur Kobayashi Ichizo in the 1920s and 30s as forms of “kokumin-geki” (folk theater), which combined a Kabuki theatrical style with Western music, and was constantly adapted for contemporary audiences.

To achieve Kobayashi’s vision of folk theater, the Takarazuka Revue Company launched adaptations of Parisian and Berliner revues, as well as Wiener operettas from their earliest performances. After World War II, Toho promoted Broadway and West End musicals in translation. As these musicals could not be adapted on site due to contract issues, Toho started differentiating each performance through the casting. In a departure from other musical performances, Toho displays the cast list for each day of performance day in advance, so that audience members can buy tickets to see their favorite actor/actress(es). In reality, the audience tends to focus more on favorite actor/actress(es) in Japanese entertainment theater. This phenomenon ought to be acknowledged when analyzing the convention of Japanese theater.

2-4. Authenticity—Authenticities?

When it comes back to the problem of authenticity, Elisabeth developed differently as the Broadway/West End productions do. Usually, the Broadway/West End productions are standardized not only for the long-run on site but also for the export. By the contract, the extent of the adaptation is limited.

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10 Mouri Mitsuya has argued that this focus on specific actor/actresses can be distinguished from realistic theater, and seen both in forms of Japanese traditional theater, such as Kabuki, Noh, and Bunraku, as well as in popular theater companies, such as Takarazuka (Mouri 2007, pp. 136–137).
On the contrary, flexible adaptations are guaranteed, and even encouraged, by Elisabeth’s exporter, United Stages Vienna. Peter Back-Vega, the chief dramaturg of United Stages Vienna, explained the regional versions of their productions comparing to the Broadway productions.

We do not have this strict pass-on of the production as in the United States. The productions should be able to adapt themselves to the circumstances of each performing place. [That is why] there are regional directors and costumes.\textsuperscript{11}

In fact, since the first export to Japan, the United Stages Vienna let the productions be adapted to each regional context such as the mentality, the audience, the uniqueness of the actor/actress by the local theater\textsuperscript{12}. In other words, Japanese adaptations of Elisabeth reflect the encounter between the exporting strategy of United Stages Vienna and the requirements of Japanese entertainment theater, reconstructing the work within the cultural-historical context of each performance destination.

An examination of the layers of Ichiro Maki in Erizabeto reveals that Ichiro is always on the first layer of Japanese adaptations. Even when the show’s “genuine” comes from Vienna, it must be juxtaposed onto Japanese actors. Máté Kamarás, who performed the character Death in the second long run in Vienna (2003–2005), was casted in Toho’s Erizabeto in 2012. He was one of three actors casted as Death, and the other two actors were Japanese. Indeed, Kamarás performed in Japanese. Although he was known for performing Death, even in Japan, because he appeared on the first DVD of the Viennese Elisabeth, he was incorporated into Japanese contexts on site\textsuperscript{13}.

2.5. Conclusion: Overflowing Images of the Body

This presentation provided an overview of the way in which Ichiro Maki embodied multiple images through specific contexts in her performances of Erizabeto. The contexts included Ichiro’s position as a Top Star and the history of Japanese entertainment theater. In other words, Japanese performances of Erizabeto were incorporated into their Japanese contexts. This approach was made possible by the fact that United Stages Vienna promote localization and drastic adaptations.

These images of the body keep being created and re-created by both performers and audiences, who are familiar with this type of theater and share its cultural-historical context. Even young audience members, who do not know the rules of reception, can learn them by observing the staging, marketing strategies, and the environment of each performance. Here, instead of globalization which maintain the authenticity or hegemony of the original production, the localization creates the playground where the cultural-historical context on site activates between the performers and audiences.

\textsuperscript{11} According to an interview with Back-Vega (Gruber 2010, S. 318).

\textsuperscript{12} Referred to Back-Vega’s statement on the playbill of Elisabeth in Vienna in 2003 and in 2012.

\textsuperscript{13} It should be also considered that Kamarás performed Death first in Hungarian in Budapest (1998–1999).
Given that performances of *Erizabeto* are so connected to on-site regional contexts in Japan, how did Ichiro’s body function in the performance in Vienna? Actually, audience members who understood the context could experience her layered body even in Vienna. Kotouda Chieko described Ichiro’s performance in Vienna in 1998 from the perspective of a Takarazuka fan.

Standing audiences sat down and started listening to Ichiro’s singing. Ah, I get it. This is the way the “talented singer Ichiro” is—I understand. Ichiro’s Death conquered Vienna. (Kotouda 1998, pp. 9–10)

On the other hand, in Vienna, Japanese productions and Ichiro’s performances were described as “foreign” and “a worldwide, unique approach that embodies both the male and female protagonist in a single work.” (Vereinigte Bühnen Wien 2003). Ichiro’s performance would have been hard to fully understand, and may have remained “exotic” for those who lacked the appropriate understanding of context.

In conclusion, Ichiro’s localized sense of the body was not delocalized in Vienna; rather, she kept her Japanese locality in her body, triggering part of her audience to read the code. In other words, her performance was overflowing with coded body images, which were (un)readable, depending on the audience.

3. Is it kitsch or...? Ohno Kazuo’s Body Overflowing in the Contemporary Dance Scene (Miyagawa Mariko)

From the beginning of the 20th century, many modern and contemporary dancers or choreographers interrogate their originality and create new performances. It is same as the case of Butoh dancers who think they must perform their own piece with each original body. But recently, if we focus on references or ‘copies’ of past dance pieces, there are many examples. In particular, from the 1990s onwards, as Ramsey Burt suggested in his article, “Memory, Repetition and Critical Intervention, the Politics of Historical Reference in Recent European Dance Performance” (Ramsey 2003), Jérôme Bel and Martin Nachbar consciously interrogated past dance performances. This approach represented one particular and conscious attitude to the past and their dance heritage.

During these years, some contemporary dancers ‘cited’ Butoh, not only becoming Butoh dancers, but also treating Butoh as their choreographic heritage. Looking over the world of contemporary dance, in Japan and especially in the West, one finds many projects that reference Butoh. Dancers who had never learned Butoh methods created performances, as did those who had taken lessons or attended workshops. For example, Hijikata Tatsumi’s *Hôsôtan* is cited by Julia Cima in her *Visitation*. If we take in a wider perspective, an enormous number of performances are inspired by Butoh. Boris Charmatz also created a piece using Hijikata’s text. Trajal Harrell recently performed *Return to La Argentina* as a work in progress, referring to Ohno’s *Admiring La Argentina*.
The artists mentioned above are almost all Western. That partly reflects my own ignorance of the other countries. However, these interesting examples show how Butoh has been accepted and appropriated by the Western or contemporary dance scene. In other words, Butoh became a part of the heritage of contemporary dance.

Some artists try to literar y ‘copy’ Butoh performance. Even though the one of founders of Butoh, Ohno Kazuo, treasured the soul rather than the form, they attempt to imitate Ohno’s movement. I would like to show the broadening situation of Butoh through following two examples that pursue to copy Ohno’s Butoh. Both two have not learned Butoh but they are interested in Ohno’s performance and copy it. From these examples, what can we see in the prospective Butoh, that is, the transmission and inherit of Butoh?

3-1. Xavier Le Roy

The first example is Product of Other Circumstances (2009) by Xavier Le Roy (this analysis is based on videos recorded in Seoul and Lisbon in 2011). Le Roy is a French choreographer and dancer, who has had a unique career. After received a doctorate in molecular biology from the University of Montpellier, he started working as a performer in 1991.

In 2009, he was asked by Charmatz, the director of Musée de la danse (the National Choreographic Centre in Rennes), to create Product of Other Circumstances. Charmatz wrote to Le Roy, “One day you told me [...] « to become a Butoh dancer, you need two hours ». I loved this sentence, even if you already forgot it (?). Since then [...] I fantasized a performance from you that would challenge your words, I imagined that you would work two hours and perform a Butoh dance.” (Charmatz 2017) This story was retold at Le Roy’s performance, which was created for an event called “Rebutoh,” which focused on Butoh. The title of the event came from the French verb “rebuter,” which means to “break someone’s drive,” and “make someone unpleasant.”

For this project, Le Roy refused to study under a “master” of Butoh or to attend Butoh workshops. He described some memories of Butoh. The first Butoh troupe he saw in New York was Sankai Juku and he watched it again in Montpellier in 1988. He had started studying dance by then, but never thought he would perform such a dance. In 1993, he saw Ohno’s performance and it was an impressive experience, which changed his ideas about dance. He shared these episodes with the audience.

One other important experience was his participation in a Tino Sehgal’s project, Twenty Minutes for the Twentieth Century in 2000. It included some scenes about Butoh in the 1950s and 1960s. Le Roy performed on stage the movements from this piece, as well as he could remember them. He folded his body and shaped his hands into claws, showing some kind of weakness through these gestures.

Those were Le Roy’s personal memories. To create Product of Other Circumstances, he undertook more research. He used the Internet and shared this investigation with his audience. Through Google search, he discovered shared knowledge and collective memories. He also looked for information about Butoh
workshops, the Wikipedia definition, and so on. Then, he found videos on Youtube, and watched the suggested performances.

While watching them, Le Roy noticed that impression made by live Butoh performances and video performances were really different from each other. He therefore decided to “activate” his memory, using it to learn steps. Then he got the idea of copying performances recorded on video: Kinkan Shonen by Sankai Juku and the dance in Beethoven’s Moonlight Sonata by Ohno. He didn’t intend to become Ohno, but to trace his movements, especially his eye movements, slow walk, and exposed old age.

But Le Roy gave up this idea when he realized that it would last for more than two hours. Also he thought it might be provocative for some people. He therefore changed his focus to books, including Ohno’s writings and scholarly book. He tried to do exercises, using the words of Hijikata’s Butoh-fu, a kind of notation that is filled with imaginary words, and he decided that the most important point was to focus on the transformation of the body. Then he continued to demonstrate his research process. He told that in Bangkok, some theatre group members said that they used Butoh for their performance, and for them Butoh is the way to go inside of their bodies. After this episode, Le Roy tried to improvise Butoh performance as a result of his research.

What do we learn from this project instigated by Le Roy? Is it just a kitsch version of Ohno’s mysterious Butoh? As Le Roy demonstrated in his performance, Butoh has spread all over the world as an image, and we have to admit the nature of Butoh has changed. Archiving shared images using the Internet or personal memory suggests a division from the tradition of transmitting a dance form from teacher to student. It is an overflowing image of Ohno and Butoh. But it seems interesting that, going through this process, Le Roy stopped copying Ohno and accessed to his words. The words are also significant objects of Butoh which carry the central idea of this dance and the way that someone get attached the master.

3-2. Kawaguchi Takao

The second example is About Ohno Kazuo by Kawaguchi Takao, a Japanese dancer/performer. In 1990, he formed ATA Dance before joining Dumb Type in 1996. Kawaguchi also directed the Tokyo International Lesbian and Gay Film Festival from 1996 to 1999 and independently participated in a number of collaborative projects. More recently, despite having never seen Hijikata or Ohno’s live performances, Kawaguchi created two pieces: The one, The Ailing Dance Mistress: two solo dances based on the text of Tatsumi Hijikata performed in 2012; the other was About Ohno Kazuo in 2013. In the latter performance, Kawaguchi attempted to copy Ohno’s dance, using movements from the video recording of early performances of Ohno’s three masterpieces. Only able to access these videos, he made an effort to trace all of Ohno’s movements and to copy their details as well as possible.

Kawaguchi chose following scenes to copy in this performance:

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14 FRALEIGH Sondra and NAKAMURA Tamah, Hijikata Tatsumi and Ohno Kazuo, New York: Routledge, 2006.
The first scene is designed as an improvisational performance with a huge number of objects or pieces of rubbish. Inspired by the film *The Portrait of Mr. O*, Kawaguchi plays with these objects, and tries to wear the pieces of rubbish as if they were costumes. Unlike in other scenes, here he doesn’t imitate Ohno’s movements. Rather, he adopts the idea of playing with these objects, which include blue tarpaulins, a helmet, flags, and tennis balls. Ohno himself used many objects in his film and interrogated surreal images beyond daily life. As Ohno achieved rebirth thanks to these experiments, Kawaguchi traces the same path, dancing to the same piece of Bach to embody Divine, that Ohno used in the first scene of *Admiring La Argentina*.

In the second scene, Kawaguchi copied the “Embryo’s Dream” from *My Mother*. Ohno’s original performance was choreographed by Hijikata. When comparing the two different performances in 1981 and 1982, one can observe the same movements, so seems clear that this scene was not freely improvised; it shows Ohno’s respect for Hijikata’s choreography. At first, Ohno bends his body a little, then he kicks his right leg and wags it. Ohno lowers his right arm gripping a flower, crouches down, and unfolds his body. As Kawaguchi copies these movements, we can say that he also incorporates Hijikata’s choreography.

Kawaguchi’s strategy is to copy Ohno so that he can become a second version of the dancer. Of course, this is impossible; this piece will be never completed. However, his ability to copy Ohno’s movements has significantly improved. Kawaguchi’s body in the “Tangos” section of *Admiring La Argentina* shows us that Ohno’s movements were complex and really difficult to reproduce because of the change of speed, the position of unstable and decomposed body parts, and the coexistence of fragility and strength.

It is one of the important aspects of Kawaguchi’s work that it has revealed the corporeality and technique for using the body in Ohno’s Butoh. A good example is Kawaguchi’s workshop in Indonesia, in which he explained and demonstrated how Ohno used his body in “Embryo’s Dream.” In this lecture, Kawaguchi explained the position of Ohno’s body and made the participants copy Ohno’s posture. It seems a new approach for Ohno’s Butoh to be transmitted in the form of postures and ways of using the body. Before Kawaguchi’s performance, many dancers came to study Butoh under Ohno, but there was always an aspect of spirituality. Kawaguchi does not focus on that aspect; he works only on Ohno’s movement. Through this strategy, he can expose the specific details of Ohno’s corporeality. Kawaguchi explains Ohno’s
specific posture, with the chest down and the shoulders slightly pulled back. In fact, this approach is in curious accord with Ohno’s own thoughts about the posture in his dance. In one of Ohno’s lessons, recorded in 1990, he described his ideal posture, and it is close to the version in Kawaguchi’s demonstration. When Ohno demonstrates the posture, “I love you,” he changes his stance intentionally. The specificity in Ohno’s standing posture is based on the position of his ribs. He retracts his lower ribs and the sternum to minimize his chest to the utmost. In 1960, Ohno also discussed the ideal posture for his Butoh. He wrote:

If my rib cage stands out, it might separate from my feelings. Is the condition in which we understand each other one in which we throw our chest out? We have to think about this point fundamentally. (Ohno 1960, pp. 2–3)

In this text, Ohno also cast doubts on the posture of throwing the chest out. It can be argued that Ohno was already searching for his ideal posture, focusing particularly on the position of his ribs. Nevertheless, swamped by the enormous influence of Ohno’s imaginary and philosophical language, this point has been hidden. Since Kawaguchi grasped this aspect by copying Ohno’s dance, we are now able to focus on the corporeality of Ohno; as Kawaguchi made participants copying Ohno’s posture, we can inherit his corporeality too.

3-3. Conclusion

The two artists use the same strategy of ‘copying’ Ohno’s movement, but their aims and results are totally different. In Le Roy’s case, to copy was one of the processes of learning Butoh, and Le Roy himself described his performance as a hobby piece or an amateur work. He never wished to become a professional (the concept of professionalism for Butoh must be doubted anyway) Butoh dancer. Rather, he tried to be Butoh dancer ‘in two hours.’ This clear and strong concept sustained his performance and thanks to the concept, Le Roy’s imperfect copy worked well in this piece. Also, it is interesting that his research process makes us enable to understand Butoh deeply through various ways such as memories, videos, images, books, meeting some Butoh practitioners. Outside of Japan, or other circumstances, Butoh spreads all over the world, and it is appropriated as a choreographic heritage.

Kawaguchi, on the one hand, continues to investigate copying Ohno, and his activity will never finish. He tries to incorporate Ohno’s complicated way of using body by tracing his movement in detail. It is sometimes almost impressive that Kawaguchi continues to copy to become Ohno beyond the difficulty and the difference of corporeality. It looks the impossible choreography. Kawaguchi also succeeds to reconsider the cliché of Butoh by the strategy of copying. For Butoh dancers or critics, to copy the master’s movement seems one of taboos (notably in the case of Ohno who denied the dance as a form). Kawaguchi cut in this taboo, in other words, the mystery or admiration for Ohno and clarified Ohno’s technique of dancing. He showed us how (complicated) Ohno had used his body.
Ohno’s movement attracts now different artists who then enrich Ohno’s heritage and renew Butoh’s past history vividly.

4. Overflowing “Japanese Bodies” in Recent Plays in Germany (Hagiwara Ken)

In Germany today, most plays are staged at municipal theaters which share particular characteristics. They work in a repertory system in which each theater offers around ten plays in a season and stages different performances every day. These plays are selected by the “Intendant,” the theater head and/or artistic director, who is often directs productions by herself/himself. The directors consult with dramaturges who research past productions, offer opinions during rehearsals, and edit programs. An in-house ensemble consists of 30 to 40 fulltime actors, in addition to some actors working on other types of contracts.

In this context, some Japanese artists have recently presented their works in unique ways. Can we say that they have added to the number of “Japanese bodies” that are now overflowing in contemporary German plays? Are these bodies different from the bodies that other Japanese artists had previously presented in Germany?

4-1. The Actress Hara Sachiko

One recent remarkable example is the work of Hara Sachiko (1965–), the only permanent and fulltime Japanese actress employed by the Deutsches Schauspielhaus Hamburg. She had developed her career in Japan in the 1980s and 1990s, especially in an Angura theatre company Engekisha Tohroh in which she had learned Butoh and in a theatre company Romantica, before she went to work in Europe in 1999. After joining some productions, she found employment with the Burgtheater in Vienna as its very first permanent and fulltime Japanese (or even East Asian) actress. She has subsequently worked in different municipal theaters in Germany, and is currently based in Hamburg.

The people who arranged Hara’s contact with the Austrian/German municipal theaters were the directors, Christoph Schlingensief and Nicolas Stemann. Hara worked with them continuously, as well as with other prominent directors, such as René Pollesch and Christoph Marthaler. All of these directors are well known for their productions, which are representative examples of “postdramatic theater” (Lehmann).

Hara’s unconventional appearance and movements often catch the attention of audiences. In a performance of Nibelungen (2011), she took the role of Brunhilde; according to the reviews, this casting was highly unusual. The reviewer pointed out that the wild Nordic figure was played by a tiny Japanese woman, and should have been borderline grotesque, but was not without charm (Barth 2011). In a performance of Hysteria (2016), Hara played the Japanese wife of a doctor. This play reveals the behavior of guests at a house warming party, showing how their interactions create chaos. A reviewer noted several odd scenes, including one, in which the Japanese wife’s gesture of greeting is misunderstood (Ullmann...
2016). Both directions used and stressed the unique characteristics of Hara’s body that German actors do not have. Hara’s body offers the directors special options like a joker card.

4-2. Playwrights/Directors Okada Toshiki and Tanino Kuro

In addition to Hara’s work, the recent activities of two Japanese playwrights/directors, Okada Toshiki (1973–) and Tanino Kuro (1976–), are also remarkable. They have worked with German actors and production teams on site in Germany in recent years.

Both Okada and Tanino often work outside Japan, especially since creating pieces at Festival/Tokyo, an international performing arts festival launched in 2009. The visitors to the festival include non-Japanese producers aiming to invite productions to their theaters/festivals. For Okada and Tanino, the key figure was German dramaturge Matthias Lilienthal. When Lilienthal became the Intendant of the HAU theater in Berlin and produced the Japan feature festival, Tokyo, Shibuya New Generation, Okada and Tanino got the chance to present their latest works. That was definitely one of the important springboards for their subsequent international careers.

Lilienthal became the Intendant of a renowned municipal theater in Munich, the Münchner Kammerspiele, and asked Okada to create three productions there, working alongside German actors and production teams. Okada has already produced two: Hot Pepper, Cooler, and Farewell Speech (2016, hereafter Hot Pepper) and No Theater (2017). In both cases, the setting is daily life in a contemporary Japanese city. Hot Pepper makes office workers its theme, while No Theater develops its stories in subway stations in Tokyo. Hot Pepper was a play that Okada originally wrote for his own company, and the Japanese character names were not changed for the performance in Munich. The figures in No Theater do not have personal names, as many traditional Japanese Noh plays.

One of the most remarkable characteristics of Okada’s direction is the way his actors move. As a review of the Munich performance of Hot Pepper points out, in Okada’s theater, movement and speech are two independent mediums, and the body tells a different content from the text. Actually, these lightweight, elastic and often over-relaxed movements of the actors’ bodies are the exaggeration of the movements of young Japanese in Japan today and create sometimes a grotesque impression through the gap to serious, social-critical content of the speech. According to the reviewer, the success of the performance is related to this aesthetic, which seems unusual to German audiences (Walser 2016). This aesthetic must also have been unusual for the actors. The same review quotes Okada as saying that it was a new challenge for German actors to learn his theatrical language (Id.).

At almost the same time, the other playwright/director Tanino Kuro was offered the chance to create a production for a municipal theater. For the Theater Krefeld Mönchengladbach in Western Germany, he wrote and directed Cage of Water (2015), working with a German stage designer and dramaturge. The play features only one elderly man, a role performed by the German actor Christopher Wintgens. His long grey hair, beard, and simple kimono-like gown give the impression that he is Japanese. He moves in a wide,
container-like set with some rooms, in which the front is made of glass. Sometimes he prepares green tea in one room and takes care of bonsai plants in the other, but in wrong and strange ways, so that the frame of each room reminds the one of a manga. His actions cause laughter. But it turns out that he is worried about the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant crisis. He knocks over a keyboard, loudly expressing his anger and fear. He seems to be making statements online. It finally turns out that he is a German scholar of Japanese Studies, disguising himself as a Japanese man to write comments online.

A review describes the final scene, in which Wintgens sits down after taking off his clothing, wig, and makeup, and speaks his last line: “This land, in which I live, is an insincere, cold, and dirty land.” The reviewer notes critically that it is unclear which land is meant, arguing that the play relativizes the real threat caused by the accident in Fukushima (Schmidt 2015). But the aim of the play does not seem to describe the real threat as the reviewer meant. The audience should rather ask which source of information is reliable in such a crisis. Like the elder man, some German could have influenced Japanese online at the time of the nuclear accident, perhaps unnecessarily, and created another crisis. In this sense, the fear was shared by both Japan and Germany, regardless of which land the accident happened in.

4.3. The “Japanese bodies” presented in contemporary German plays—a comparison with past examples

As shown above, the works of Hara, Okada, and Tanino in Germany offered various impressions of “Japanese bodies.” Are these bodies similar to the ones presented in Germany by other Japanese artists, or do they differ?

Theatergoers in Germany first encountered “Japanese bodies” more than a hundred years ago. The troupe of Kawakami Otojiro and Sadayakko presented various Kabuki plays in guest performances in 1900. Max Reinhardt directed an adaptation of the Kabuki play *Terakoya (The Village School)* with German actors at his Deutsches Theater Berlin in 1912. Around one generation later, in 1930, Tsutsui Tokujiro’s troupe toured Europe performing Kabuki plays. Soon after that, in Berlin, Senda Koreya established a company, *Truppe 1931 (Troupe 1931)*, with Gustav von Wangenheim and created the piece *Mausefalle (Mouse Trap, 1932)* the role of “a property man” which model was *Kurogo* of Kabuki theater. More than one generation later, in the 1960s and 1970s, Terayama Shuji, whose works refer strongly to the folklore tradition of rural Japan, visited Europe with his troupe and staged plays, which included *Inugami (Dog God)* at the international festival *Experimenta 3* in Frankfurt am Main in 1969.

It should be pointed out that all of these examples involve traditional Japanese bodies. It is also remarkable that these plays were often performed on special occasions, such as international festivals, as examples of the “interweaving of cultures in performance” (Fischer-Lichte)—in other words, they were temporal performances.

Recent works by Hara, Okada, and Tanino differ from the past examples mentioned above. They do not refer traditional bodies, but present contemporary ones. In addition, their bodies are shown in municipal theaters. They are not temporally present, but regular parts of the standard repertoire. As a result,
some German actors face a conflict. They are required to perform with Hara or to follow the directions of Okada or Tanino, and they have to use skills they never learned in drama school, which teach principles drawn from the Western theatrical tradition. Although Okada’s work should not necessarily be affected, some Münchner Kammerspiele actors did not agree with Intendant Lilienthal and actually left the ensemble.

The bodies presented by Hara, Okada, and Tanino are not Japanese in the earlier sense, but living and developing contemporary Japanese bodies which have been more or less Westernized. And all three cases are different and quite complicated: The bodies shown by Hara are obviously not traditional Japanese bodies, but contemporary, rather Westernized Japanese bodies; Okada shows contemporary Westernized Japanese bodies by using Western actors; Tanino presents a Western actor playing a contemporary Westerner who performs a stereotypical Japanese body which is often imagined outside Japan. Moreover, the bodies in all the three examples can be understood not only as Westernized Japanese bodies, but also as Japanized Western bodies.

On the other hand, icons of Westernized Japanese bodies and Japanized Western bodies are nowadays overflowing all over the world, through manga, anime, video games, and costume plays. In this sense, the “interweaving of cultures in performance” is practiced in our daily lives today. It can therefore be said that the bodies presented by Hara, Okada, and Tanino are both Westernized-Japanized and Japanized-Westernized hybrid bodies.

5. General Conclusion (Tanaka Rina)

As each section above took a different approach to the theme “Japanese bodies” in the various types of theater performance, the first step of the interdisciplinary discussion from diverse viewpoints in their individual fields, which included philosophy, choreography, theater, and performance studies, was provided. Taking the discussion one step further, a theoretical basis or clearer definitions of some specific terms, especially which have been changed their meaning by translation and adaptation into the other contexts, should be formed, considering their historical and practical usage.

According to the discussion, the concept of “Japanese bodies” has been carved by the interactions of cultures both inside and outside Japan throughout successive historical periods. It could not, therefore, be viewed as a single, fixed concept, but rather as a transitive flow, reflecting the contemporary, historical, or site-specific context of each performance. In other words, “Japanese bodies” present as a complex hybrid that can be interpreted and created by and for each individual actor/actress as well as the audience. In this framework, the multi-dimensional transition can be tracked, and therefore, “Japanese bodies” will come to light as a result of transition and globalization.

In our further discussions, we should pay careful attention to the space between Japanese and non-Japanese cultures, where the “Japanese bodies” can be problematized. As this paper focused on the representations in the Western countries in view of the place where the first discussion took place, the relationship between the “Japanese bodies” and Asian theatre must be treated. The other essential sub-
themes such as the problem of differentiation from or integration into Western theatre as well as performances with contexts on/off site are also explored in depth.

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