

Hybridity and interculturalism in Australia-Japan theatrical exchanges

As one of major programs of 2006 Australia-Japan Year of Exchange, *Dramatic Australia* is being held this year. This festival of performing arts consists of the productions of more than 20 Australian plays which are staged by Japanese and Australian theatre companies in Tokyo and other major cities in Japan. It also includes an exciting collaborative project in which an Aboriginal writer/director will direct a production of his play performed by Japanese actors.

Dramatic Australia is a fruit of consistently continued Australia-Japan theatrical exchanges. The presentations of Australian plays have occupied a major place in the theatrical exchanges between both countries. Many Australian plays have been presented in Japan since the middle of the 1990s. The Japanese production of John Romeril's *THE FLOATING WORLD* (Tokyo International Festival of Performing Arts and Melbourne International Arts Festival, 1995) is still recognised as a milestone in the theatrical exchanges between two countries. The Rakutendan Theatre Company's Series Productions of Australian Indigenous Drama from 2001 including *STOLEN* and *THE DREAMERS* have established a creative collaborations between Japanese and Aboriginal theatre practitioners.

In the meanwhile, staging translated texts of foreign plays in Japan has represented Japan's complex cultural context. The Japanese theatre gained the function of translated plays after long years of struggle. Since the latter half of the 19th century, Japanese theatre practitioners translated and presented Western plays to establish modern theatre in Japan. Due to their significance for modernisation in theatre, 'translated plays' was established as a genre. Japan's alternative theatre movement of the 60s and the 70s urged a drastic revision of the assimilationist tradition of 'translated plays'. However, it is still an important issue for Japanese contemporary theatre how cultural differences should be overcome in 'translated plays'. Also, it is true that many Australian plays have been translated and staged in Japan in this context of 'translated plays'.

This paper will explore both past and the latest productions including plays staged in *Dramatic Australia*, and discuss an impact which the hybridity and interculturalism in the productions has had on Japanese contemporary theatre, and possibilities which the Australia-Japan theatrical exchange will have.

References:

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