Japan Society presents
In association with PlayCo

Ludic Proxy: Fukushima
Written and Directed by Aya Ogawa

Sat., Mar. 6, 9:30 pm EST
Sun., Mar. 7, 4:30 pm EST
Thurs., Mar. 11, 8 pm EST—Followed by a Live Artist Q&A

Ludic Proxy was originally commissioned by PlayCo and premiered at Walker Space in April 2015 and was developed as part of Lower Manhattan Cultural Council’s Process Space, Swing Space and Workspace programs.

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† In memoriam.
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR'S NOTE

It's been 10 years since the earthquake and tsunami disaster happened in the Tohoku region in Japan. Many parts of Tohoku have been revived by now, but Fukushima is a different story. The nuclear reactors' meltdown changed the lives of the people who lived in the neighborhood forever. The incident has posed challenging questions: What is a sustainable system for human society? What are the most important things for humans in their everyday lives? The answers do not come easily, and so we keep revisiting these pivotal questions.

Aya Ogawa's Ludic Proxy premiered in 2015 at Walkerspace at Soho Rep in downtown Manhattan. The original play consisted of three sections. The first section started with a narrative scene depicting a warm memory of everyday life before the accident at Chernobyl's nuclear power plant in 1986. We, the audience, felt the narrator's acute pain because we knew that the sadness caused by the forced evacuation would never diminish—just like the radiation levels that have not declined over the past three decades. The second section was about Fukushima, which we experience in today's online program, Ludic Proxy: Fukushima. Watching this section now, I am surprised by how viscerally the pain I felt during the performance in 2015 returned to me. Is that because we know that the fear and uncertainty caused by the radiation levels will never go away in a mere 10 years? Or, is that because we in this COVID-rulled society are keenly sensitive to a similar enemy that cannot be seen or touched? Maybe both.

Great art always gives us a chance to ponder various kinds of human emotions: love, sadness, joy, grief, happiness and fear. It also encourages us to examine the meaning of each of these emotions. Ludic Proxy is that kind of art. After watching this program, you will revisit the eternal question: What is the most important thing for human life?

Yoko Shioya,
Artistic Director
DIRECTOR’S NOTE

In 2010, I was barely through my first year of being a mother when I received a commission from The Play Company to create a new play. Over the following two years, a terrible earthquake and nuclear accident took place in northeast Japan, I lost my own mother very suddenly, and had another child. Following the events of the Fukushima nuclear power plant accident naturally led me to research the events of the Chernobyl accident—and tangentially, the numerous video games and movies that were inspired by and set in the tragedy that unfolded in 1986. The collision of all of these experiences, both personal and global, was the foundation on which my play Ludic Proxy took root.

Ludic (which means “of or relating to play”) Proxy is a term coined by a game designer that refers to the phantom knowledge of something or somewhere real gained through gameplay. How does the human propensity for playfulness help us process catastrophes? How can we use play to imagine our future when our past is so stained with irrevocable toxicity?

While the original 2015 production of Ludic Proxy was constructed over three acts (The Past: Chernobyl, The Present: Fukushima and The Future: New York), I had been thinking of the resonance of the second act, the Fukushima section, during this pandemic. Not only does it lend itself well to a digital adaptation due to the game mechanics embedded in the script, but there is something newly potent about its premise in 2021. The set-up is simple: an intimate conversation between two sisters—trying to connect despite the vast rift that has been created by their differing belief systems. It seems like a poignant reflection of many American families today, torn apart by their political beliefs or by their opinions about an odorless, invisible and microscopic enemy. I'm deeply grateful that Japan Society has given me and my incredible team of collaborators the opportunity to reexamine and reimagine part of this play.

In the many choices the audience has through its avatar—some subtle and some blunt—I hope that this piece creates space in the minds of the audience to grapple with ideas about individual agency, collective responsibility and compassion.

—Aya Ogawa

ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT/DIRECTOR

Aya Ogawa is a Tokyo-born, Brooklyn-based playwright, director, performer and translator whose work reflects an international viewpoint and utilizes the stage as a space for exploring cultural identity and the immigrant experience. Cumulatively, all aspects of their artistic practice synthesize their work as an artistic and cultural ambassador, building bridges across cultures to create meaningful exchange amongst artists, theaters and audiences both in the U.S. and in Asia. Their original plays include The Nosebleed (Incoming! Under the Radar), Ludic Proxy (The Play Company), Journey to the Ocean (Foundry Theatre) and oph3lia (HERE Arts Center). Most recently they directed Haruna Lee’s Obie Award-winning Suicide Forest at The Bushwick Starr and its Off-BROADWAY remount for Ma-Yi Theater Company. Their translations of over a dozen plays by Toshiki Okada and numerous other contemporary Japanese playwrights into English have been published and produced in the U.S. and the UK. They are currently a resident playwright at New Dramatists, a Usual Suspect at NYTW and recipient of the President’s Award for Performing Arts from the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council. ayaogawa.com

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Yuki Kawahisa (Maki), a native of Japan, is an actor and performing artist. Credits include: Robert Wilson’s KOOL: Dancing in My Mind (Guggenheim Museum, Baryshnikov Arts Center, Akademie der Kunste Berlin), Temporary Distortion’s Americana Kamikaze (PS122, Creteil Maison des Arts, Paris, VIA Festival International, Brisbane Powerhouse), Andrew Ondrejcak’s FEAST (The Public Theater), ELIJAH GREEN (The Kitchen), Toshiki Okada’s Time’s Journey Through a Room (dir. Dan Rothenberg, The Play Company), Wang Chong’s Kiss Kiss Bang Bang 2.0 (Tokyo Metropolitan Theater), Haruna Lee’s Suicide Forest (dir. Aya Ogawa, The Bushwick Starr, Ma-Yi Theatre Company), Object Collection’s You Are Under Our Space Control (La Mama). She has written and toured her original solo The Kimono Loosened and received very positive reviews throughout Canada and in New York. Throughout the pandemic, Kawahisa has been continuing her practice as a theater creator through her own project called “HenSin-MetaMorPhosis” and making one silly little video every day for more than 11 months and still counting. yukikawahisa.com
Saori Tsukada (Maho) is a creator/performer who harnesses her ability in theater, dance and beyond. Born in America and raised in Japan, Tsukada began her theater career as a poster designer while studying Communication Art at Waseda University in Tokyo. Her “virtuoso” (TimeOut NY) performances with “startlingly precise movements” (The New York Times) have been seen at venues like BAM, Public Theatre, The Kitchen, Japan Society, La MaMa and more. Amongst her countless collaborators are choreographer Yoshiko Chuma, Catherine Galasso, playwright/director Aya Ogawa, Keishi Nagatsuka, composer Joe Diebes and video artist Katja Loher. Her acclaimed duet performance with composer/theater artist John Moran (nominated for Best Actress at Dublin Fringe Festival) has toured across the U.S. and Europe. Tsukada is an alumni of Devised Theater Working Group where she developed Club Diamond (premiered at The Public Theater as part of Under the Radar ’17) with co-creator Nikki Appino. Her most recent pre-pandemic stage appearances include Pig Iron Theater Company’s SUPERTERRANEAN (Philadelphia Fringe Festival) and Joseph Keckler’s LET ME DIE (Opera Philadelphia). Currently she is developing a stage adaptation of Kafka’s Metamorphoses (dir: Aya Ogawa, music: Philip Glass) as well as a new work directed by Luca Veggetti.

Jackie Katzman (Voiceover) worked extensively as an actor in theater and independent film before focusing more on writing/directing. Last year she was on the festival circuit with her multi-award-winning short film, The Strangeness You Feel. Her TV dramedy, Stone, is set up at Depth Of Field and Paramount Television with Chris Weitz (About a Boy, Rogue One) producing/directing. In addition, Katzman will be Executive Producing. Her TV dramedy, Sylvia, is being produced by Peter Dinklage’s company, Estuary Films, with Shari Berman and Robert Pulcini directing (American Splendor, Cinema Verite, Succession). Katzman is a 2020/2021 Sundance LAB Fellow, where she is developing her TV comedy, Loons. She looks forward to directing her semi-autobiographical feature comedy, Hummingbird. Katzman is thrilled to be a part of the brilliant Ludic Proxy team once again.

Mariko Takizawa (Stage Manager) is a New York City-based bilingual stage manager in Japanese and English for performing arts, live events, online performance and traditional Japanese performing arts. She is currently a resident stage manager at Japan Performing Arts, Inc. (JPA). Some of her credits include: Off-Broadway—Sleep No More (McKittrick Hotel), VOYEUR: THE WINDOWS OF TOULOUSE-LAUTREC (Bated Breath Theatre Company), Rakugo (Soho Playhouse), SONG (HERE Arts Center); Off-Off-Broadway—Speakeasy Magick (McKittrick Hotel), Suicide Forest (The Bushwick Starr/ Ma-Yi Theater; and Opera: La Traviata (Jazz at Lincoln Center), Don Giovanni (Theater im Delphi), Le Nozze DiFigaro (Theater im Delphi). Takizawa holds an AS degree in Theatre, BMCC.

Jeanette Oi-Suk Yew (Director of Photography/Lighting Designer) is an award-winning NYC-based lighting and projection designer. She has designed for theater, dance, opera, musical and music performances, installations and now, digital performances. As a designer she aims to create a visual environment that is organically integrated into the landscape and language of the production; as a result, her designs have been described as “clever” and “inventive” (The New York Times). Recent digital productions: White Snake Project’s Alice in the Pandemic, Electra with Javier González and an original audio and visual adaptation of Maurice Maeterlinck’s The Blind. She is excited to collaborate with Aya Ogawa again to adapt the second act of Ludic Proxy into this platform. Other: KPOP! (Henry Hewes Award, LIT Design Award, Lortel and Drama Desk Nominations), James & Jerome’s The Conversationalists, Haruna Lee’s Suicide Forest, Carla Ching’s Nomad Motel, Lauren Yee’s Song of Summer (Trinity Rep), Azia Barnes’ BLKS (Woolly Mammoth), Matthew Paul Olmos’ So Go the Ghosts of Mexico Part One (Best Lighting Design nomination), Emily Mann’s Gloria: A Life, Oneohtrix Point Never’s MYRIAD at the Park Avenue Armory and Erik Ehn’s Soulographie: Our Genocides. Yew is a recipient of the NEA/TCG Career Development Program and Assistant Arts Professor/Head of Lighting Design training with NYU Tisch Drama.

Takaaki Ando (Technical Director/Editor) is a sound, lighting and projection designer based in New York City. With over a decade of experience, Ando has worked in renowned spaces such as Lincoln Center, Carnegie Hall and MoMA as well as cultural institutions and independent venues. Not only a veteran designer, Ando is also an adept technical director, stage manager and production supervisor.
**Jian Jung** (Set Designer) is a New York-based set designer for theater and operas. Jung’s design works have been acclaimed as “innovative,” “inventive,” “genius” and “spectacular” by major press such as *The New York Times*, *LA Times*, *Time Out* and many others. Jung received a 2015 Edith Lutyens & Norman Bel Geddes Design Enhancement Award, and was nominated for the 2019 Henry Hewes Design Award. Her work was exhibited in Prague Quadrennial 2015, the world’s largest scenography exhibition. Jung’s theater works have been in many New York theaters including Classic Stage Company, The Kitchen, The Bushwick Starr, The Flea, Abrons Arts Center, Theater Row, ART/NY and Soho Rep, as well as outside of New York such as in Venezuela, Cuba, Puerto Rico, Korea and Los Angeles. Jung’s works for opera have been shown in Lincoln Center Juilliard School, Long Beach Opera (CA), Huntington Theater in Boston, Manhattan School of Music and Hofstra University, among many other venues. Jung received an MFA in Theater Design from New York University. She also received an MFA in Environmental Design and BA in Philosophy from Ewha Women’s University in Korea, where she grew up. She teaches at Sarah Lawrence College and NYU Tisch Design. [jianjung.com](http://jianjung.com)

**Michael Kiley** (Sound Designer) is a sound designer, composer, performer and educator based in Philadelphia. Past collaborations include Faye Driscoll, luciana achugar, The Play Company, Pig Iron Theatre, Nichole Canuso Dance Company and The Wilma Theatre. He makes original music under the name The Mural and The Mint, and recently released the full length recording *You Will Always Have Your Longing* on all streaming platforms. His work has been supported by The Pew Center for Arts and Heritage, The Independence Foundation, Wyncote Foundation and FringeArts.

**Loren Shaw** (Costume Designer) is a two-time Drama Desk-nominated costume designer based in New York City. She was also a founding member and the resident costume designer for Exit, Pursued by a Bear, a socially immersive New York theater collective. Some of her recent projects include *Peter Pan and Wendy* (Shakespeare Theatre Company, DC), *Sound of Music* (Asolo Repertory Theater, FL), *Last Days of Summer* (George Street Theater, NJ), *A Period of Animant Existence* (Pig Iron Theater Company, PA), *Sojourners and Her Portmanteau* (New York Theater Workshop, NY), *The Aristophanesathon* (The Hypocrates, IL), *Revival* (The GEVA Theater, NY) and *The Queen of Spades* (Glimmerglass Festival, NY). Instagram: @lorenshawcostumes [lorenshaw.myportfolio.com](http://lorenshaw.myportfolio.com)

**Brian Bernhard** (Props Master & Asst. Set Designer) is a New York-based set and props designer. Previous credits include: *Suicide Forest* (The Bushwick Starr; Ma-Yi Theater Company); *Eureka Day* (Colt Coeur); *Leap and the Net Will Appear* (New Georges); *Zoetrope, Octopus’ Garden* (Caborca); and *Electra* (Barnard). He would also like to acknowledge two productions currently on hold due to the ongoing public health crisis: *The Antelope Party* (Dutch Kills) and *Bees and Honey* (LAByrinth). He is thankful for the entire team’s dedication to creating this piece safely, and with deep integrity, during this trying time for the theater community.

**Christina Tang** (Lighting Associate) is a lighting designer based in NYC. She is a frequent collaborator on new works for theater and dance. [christinaftang.com](http://christinaftang.com)

**John Del Gaudio** (Line Producer) has previously worked with Aya Ogawa on Haruna Lee’s *Suicide Forest* at both The Bushwick Starr and the A.R.T./New York theaters, where it was presented by Ma-Yi Theater Company and the Starr. He has worked with many stellar artists over the years including William Burke, Jillian Walker, Clare Barron, Lee Sunday Evans, Kate Benson, Daaimah Mubashshir, Sarah Cameron Sunde, Jessica Almasy, Mei Ann Teo, Corinne Donly, Carolyn Mraz, Jeremy O. Harris, Machel Ross and Heather Christian. Del Gaudio has upcoming projects with Aya Ogawa and Whitney White. He is a Co-Curator with The Bushwick Starr Reading Series and Producer with The Mercury Store.
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