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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Japan Society **Proudly Announces** **2022-2023 Performing Arts Season**

Featuring Events in Opera, Theater, Dance & More

OPERA:

Exclusive Artist Conversation: Yukio Mishima's "Hanjo" / Opera Composed by Toshio Hosokawa / September 14, 2022 [Talk & Live Music]

"note to a friend" / Japan Society Commission / Composed by David Lang; Directed by Yoshi Oida / Presented as part of PROTOTYPE Festival 2023 / January 12 – 15, 2023 [Contemporary Opera]

PUPPET THEATER:

"9000 Paper Balloons" / Co-created by Maiko Kikuchi & Spencer Lott; Directed by Aya Ogawa / October 28 – 30, 2022 [Contemporary Puppet Theater]

"AKUTAGAWA" / Co-created by Koryu Nishikawa V & Tom Lee / February 23 – 25, 2023 [Contemporary & Traditional Puppet Theater]

THEATER:

Exclusive Artist Conversation: A Behind-the-Scenes Look at the Live Staging of "My Neighbour Totoro" / with Basil Twist / November 10, 2022 [Artist Conversation]

Traditional Noh: "Kotei" and "Makura Jido" / Performed by Kita Noh School / December 1 – 3, 2022 [Traditional Noh Theater]

Play Reading Series: Contemporary Japanese Plays in English Translation / "I'm Trying to Understand You, But..." / Written by Yuri Yamada; Directed by NJ Agwuna / March 13, 2023 [Contemporary Theater Reading]

DANCE:

"Extinction Rituals" / Created and performed by LEIMAY Ensemble / June 9 – 10, 2023 [Contemporary Dance | Work-in-Progress]

New York, NY, July 21, 2022 – **Japan Society** is proud to announce its upcoming season of live, in-person performances at the Society with programs spanning traditional to contemporary, across the disciplines of opera, theater, traditional noh, puppetry, dance and more, slated for Fall 2022 and Winter/Spring 2023. In Fall 2022, Japan Society kicks off the season with an exclusive artist conversation focused on the North American Premiere of Catapult Opera’s reimagining of Yukio Mishima’s modern noh play **Hanjo** (September 14). Next, with **9000 Paper Balloons** (October 28 – 30), local creative duo **Maiko Kikuchi** and **Spencer Lott** deploy their singular puppetry styles in a captivating look at a secret weapons program in Imperial Japan that floated across the Pacific during WWII. In November, Japan Society welcomes internationally-known and home-grown puppeteer **Basil Twist**, for a “behind the scenes” talk about his work on the Royal Shakespeare Company’s staging of the beloved Studio Ghibli animated film **My Neighbour Totoro** (November 10). To conclude 2022, **Kita Noh School** returns to NYC with two rarely performed noh plays from their traditional repertoire, **Kotei** and **Makura Jido** (December 1 – 3).

Launching Winter/Spring 2023, Japan Society presents the World Premiere of its opera commission **note to a friend** (January 12 – 15), composed by **David Lang** and directed by **Yoshi Oida**, based on some of the last writings of legendary author Ryunosuke Akutagawa, who is regarded as the “father of the Japanese short story.” Next up, traditional puppetry master **Koryu Nishikawa V** and New York/Chicago-based puppet artist **Tom Lee** approach esteemed writer Ryunosuke Akutagawa’s deteriorating psyche through some of his most famous tales in **AKUTAGAWA** (February 23 – 25). The season rounds out with the annual Play Reading Series, this year featuring feminism-focused **I’m Trying to Understand You, But...** (March 13), written by **Yuri Yamada** and directed by **NJ Agwuna** (March 13); and a work-in-progress dance piece titled **Extinction Rituals** by Brooklyn-based and butoh-inspired ensemble **LEIMAY** (June 9 – 10).

The Society’s Artistic Director **Yoko Shioya** shares, “We are proud to introduce this exceptional performing arts season, filled with magical works borne out of an amalgamation of Japanese and American imagination. Taking in source material from Japan — such as literature, history and rituals — as a starting point for creation, Japanese and non-Japanese artists teamed up and equally contributed their own originality to each show.”

All events take place at Japan Society, located at 333 East 47th Street in Manhattan. Tickets available to Japan Society members beginning **Thursday, July 21**; General tickets available beginning **Thursday, July 28**. For tickets and further detail, please visit www.japansociety.org or call 212-715-1258.

JAPAN SOCIETY PERFORMING ARTS (SEPTEMBER 2022 – JUNE 2023), SCHEDULE & FURTHER DETAILS:

EXCLUSIVE ARTIST CONVERSATION: TALK & LIVE MUSIC: Yukio Mishima’s *Hanjo*, Opera Composed by Toshio Hosokawa (September 14, 2022) **Wednesday, September 14 at 6:30pm**

Leading up to the North American premiere of the internationally-acclaimed contemporary opera **Hanjo** at NYU Skirball (September 30 & October 2), Japan Society hosts a talk and sneak preview of this haunting opera, written by prominent Japanese composer **Toshio Hosokawa**, based on one of Yukio Mishima’s *Modern Noh Plays*. New York’s Catapult Opera produces this new production, and its founder and conductor **Neal Goren** and director **Luca Veggetti** reveal their inspiration and challenges to materialize this hopeless mad-love story. The evening begins with an introduction to Mishima’s

original script by Prof. Satoko Naito and culminates with live singing of the opera's centerpiece aria. Tickets: \$15/\$12 Japan Society members.

CONTEMPORARY PUPPET THEATER: 9000 Paper Balloons, Co-created by Maiko Kikuchi & Spencer Lott, Directed by Aya Ogawa (October 28 – 30, 2022)

Friday, October 28 at 7:30pm (Followed by a *MetLife Meet-the-Artists Reception*)

Saturday, October 29 at 7:30pm (Followed by an artist Q&A)

Sunday, October 30 at 3:00pm

Inspired by Imperial Japan's stranger-than-fiction secret weapons that floated over America during World War II, **9000 Paper Balloons** is a poetic and eerie performance that examines distance – the distance between two friends, between two enemies, two cultures and two generations. New York-based Japanese artist **Maiko Kikuchi** and American puppeteer **Spencer Lott** employ puppetry, animation and masks as they weave their own family histories into a surreal and visually stunning collage that speaks to the past and the future. Tickets: \$30/\$24 Japan Society members.

EXCLUSIVE ARTIST CONVERSATION: A Behind-the-Scenes Look at the Live Staging of *My Neighbour Totoro*, with Basil Twist (November 10, 2022)

Thursday, November 10 at 6:30pm

Puppet artist extraordinaire **Basil Twist** sits down to talk about his creative role in the Royal Shakespeare Company's upcoming staging of the beloved Studio Ghibli animated feature film, ***My Neighbour Totoro*** in collaboration with Improbable and Nippon TV. Twist is known for surprising audiences with his infinite creativity, from 88 magical Japanese screen doors (*Dogugaeshi*) and dancing fabrics in an on-stage water tank (*Symphonie Fantastique*) to a gigantic rock creature in his most recent work (*Book of Mountains & Seas*). In this event, Twist will share backstage images and describe the process of creating real-life versions of the film's fantastical creatures for the live staging of ***My Neighbour Totoro*** set to premiere at London's Barbican this fall. Tickets: \$20/\$16 Japan Society members. Join us for a special 35mm screening of this beloved classic anime on **Nov. 4 at 7:00pm**, *in Japanese with English subtitles.*

TRADITIONAL NOH THEATER: *Kotei* | *Makura Jido*, Performed by Kita Noh School (December 1 – 3, 2022)

Thursday, December 1 at 7:30pm (Program A; Followed by a *MetLife Meet-the Artists Reception*)

Friday, December 2 at 7:30pm (Program B; Followed by an artist Q&A)

Saturday, December 3 at 7:30pm (Program A)

Prominent members from the **Kita Noh School**, including Living National Treasure Akiyo Tomoeda, perform two works from noh theater's classical repertoire: ***Kotei (The Emperor)*** and ***Makura Jido (Chrysanthemum Boy)***, two pieces meant to be a prayer to hasten the end of the current pandemic. Set in Tang Dynasty in China, *Kotei* tells the story of the ghost of the legendary demon slayer and protector against illness Shoki, who rescues the ailing Empress Yang Guifei and pledges his allegiance to the Emperor Xuanzong. Also set in China, *Makura Jido* is about a boy who has joyfully lived for 700 years by drinking an immortal elixir from the dew of a chrysanthemum leaf. The boy reveals that the dew has created a pool in the valley, which has become the headspring for medicinal water.

Performance + Soireé Tickets: \$95/\$76 Japan Society members.

Performance Only Tickets: \$72/\$58 Japan Society members.

Program A (December 1 & December 3 at 7:30pm): *Kotei*

Program B (December 2 at 7:30pm): *Makura Jido*

*Performed in Japanese with English surtitles.

>>A pre-performance lecture by Princeton University Professor Thomas Hare begins one hour prior to the start of each performance (FREE and open to all ticketholders).

>>Related Event: Workshop / *Noh Movement Workshop* / Saturday, December 3

World Premiere | CONTEMPORARY OPERA: *note to a friend*, commissioned by Japan Society, co-produced with Tokyo Bunka Kaikan (January 12, 14 & 15, 2023)

Thursday, January 12 at 7:30pm (Followed by a *MetLife Meet-the-Artist Reception*)

Saturday, January 14 at 7:30pm (Followed by an artist Q&A)

Sunday, January 15 at 3:00pm

In response to Japan Society's commission for a new chamber opera, Pulitzer Prize-winning composer **David Lang** combined and reimagined three texts by iconic Japanese novelist **Ryunosuke Akutagawa**, the author of *In a Grove* which was the basis of Akira Kurosawa's landmark 1950 film *Rashomon*. The result is this stunning and haunting monodrama, *note to a friend*, addressing our eternal human fascinations with death, love, family and suicide. Theater luminary **Yoshi Oida**, Paris-based opera director and longtime member of Peter Brook's international theater company, directs this world premiere for the legendary New York vocalist **Theo Bleckmann**. Tokyo Bunka Kaikan in Japan selects the featured string quartet members. This co-production from **Japan Society** and **Tokyo Bunka Kaikan**, commissioned and presented by Japan Society, makes its world premiere as part of **PROTOTYPE Festival 2023**. Tickets: \$60/\$48 Japan Society members.

CONTEMPORARY & TRADITIONAL PUPPET THEATER: AKUTAGAWA (February 23-25, 2023)

Thursday, February 23 at 7:30pm (Followed by a *MetLife Meet-the-Artists Reception*)

Friday, February 24 at 7:30pm (Followed by an artist Q&A)

Saturday, February 25 at 7:30pm

AKUTAGAWA is a stage portrait of the father of the modern Japanese short novel, **Ryunosuke Akutagawa**, who is best known through his original novel *In a Grove*, the basis of Akira Kurosawa's landmark 1950 film *Rashomon*. Told through the traditional puppetry style *kuruma ningyo* blended with dynamic video images, **AKUTAGAWA** is an amalgam of five of his famous short stories — including *Rashomon*, *Hell Screen (Jigokuhen)*, *The Dragon*, *Toshishun* and *Kappa*. The show explores the author's artistic insight and fragile emotional state. This new work is created through an international collaboration between puppeteers **Koryu Nishikawa V** (Tokyo) and **Tom Lee** (Chicago), with live music by **Yukio Tsuji** (New York). Tickets: \$30/\$24 Japan Society members.

>>Related Event: *Kuruma Ningyo Puppetry Masterclass* / Friday, February 24

>>Related Event: *Family Workshop on Kuruma Ningyo Puppetry* / Saturday, February 25

CONTEMPORARY THEATER: 16th Installment of Japan Society's Play Reading Series: Contemporary Japanese Plays in English Translation / *I'm Trying to Understand You, But...*: Written by Yuri Yamada; Directed by NJ Agwuna (March 13, 2023)

Monday, March 13 at 7:30pm (Followed by an artist Q&A)

NYC-based director **NJ Agwuna**, winner of the 2022 Barbara Whitman Award, tackles **Yuri Yamada's** timely play *I'm Trying to Understand You, But...* In this piece, Yamada portrays a dicey conversation between a young couple that starts as an unintended pregnancy reveal and ends in a gender-swapped discussion about how the incident came about. Two maids named Libby and Prudie give running commentary throughout the couple's heart-to-heart. Two-time Kishida Kunio Drama Award-nominee Yamada joins in a post-show Q&A with the audience and director. Tickets: \$15/\$12 Japan Society members.

Work-in-Progress Presentation | CONTEMPORARY DANCE: *Extinction Rituals* (June 9 – 10, 2023)

Friday, June 9 (Followed by a *MetLife Meet-the-Artists Reception*)

Saturday, June 10 (Followed by an artist Q&A)

Brooklyn-based multidisciplinary artist duo **Ximena Garnica & Shige Moriya's** latest project ***Extinction Rituals*** unfolds as poetic vignettes of movement, light, music and song. Directed, choreographed and designed by Garnica and Moriya, *Extinction Rituals* is inspired by acts of remembrance celebrating the life and loss of animals, plants and environments from the places they call home — Kyoto, Bogota and

NYC. The mesmerizing tableaux weaves together an original score by Oscar-nominated composer Kaoru Watanabe — artfully merging traditional styles with western and contemporary sounds—the powerful voice of Colombian singer Carolina Oliveros, and the butoh-rooted work of the LEIMAY Ensemble, including dancers Masanori Asahara and Krystal Copper. Following this work-in-progress showing, Garnica, Moriya, Watanabe and collaborators sit down for a Q&A with the audience to elaborate on the international exchanges behind this timely and profoundly collaborative piece. Tickets: \$20/\$16 Japan Society members.

About Japan Society Performing Arts Program

Since the inception of the **Performing Arts Program** in 1953, Japan Society has introduced nearly a 1,000 of Japan's finest performing arts to an extensive American audience. Programs range from the traditional arts of noh, kyogen, bunraku and kabuki to cutting-edge theater, dance and music. The Program also commissions new works to non-Japanese artists, produces national tours, organizes residency programs for American and Japanese artists and develops and distributes educational programs. "At once diverse and daring, the program stands toe to toe with some of the most comprehensive cultural exchange endeavors today." --*Back Stage*.

About Japan Society

Japan Society is the premier organization connecting Japanese arts, culture, business, and society with audiences in NYC and around the world. In over 100 years of work, we've inspired generations by establishing ourselves as pioneers in supporting international exchanges in arts and culture, business and policy, as well as education between Japan and the U.S. This year, Japan Society is celebrating our heritage through the 50th anniversary of our landmark building, designed by the late architect Junzo Yoshimura, with the launch of a new distinct modern logo and visual identity.

Since the inception of **Japan Society Performing Arts Program**, the Program has brought 1000+ productions of and inspired by Japan to audiences in NYC and beyond through North American tours organized by Japan Society. Programs range from the traditional arts to contemporary theater, dance and music. Since the establishment of the Performing Arts Endowment in 2005, the Society also commissions non-Japanese artists to create Japan-related new works through fostering cross-cultural collaboration that has become part of its important mission.

Connect with us!

Follow us on Facebook at facebook.com/japansociety; @japansociety and #japansociety on Instagram; and @japansociety on Twitter. For further information, please visit www.japansociety.org.

Tickets & Information: Tickets for performances and related events at Japan Society can be purchased by calling the Box Office at 212-715-1258 or in person at Japan Society (M-F 11:00am – 7:00pm and Sat-Sun 11:00am – 5:00pm). Japan Society is located at 333 East 47th Street, between First and Second Avenues (accessible by the 4/5/6 at 42nd Street-Grand Central Station or the E at Lexington Avenue and 53rd Street). For more information, call 212-832-1155 or visit <https://www.japansociety.org/>

Support for 2022-2023 Performing Arts Season:

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Program Support & Partners:

Yukio Mishima's Hanjo is supported by Doug and Teresa Peterson; presented in association with Catapult Opera and NYU Skirball.

9000 Paper Balloons is supported by a grant from the Association of Performing Arts Professionals, made possible through support from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation; and from The Jim Henson Foundation. This work was commissioned and developed through the HERE Artist Residency Program (HARP), 2017-2021, and premiered digitally in November 2021.

*Behind-the-scenes of My Neighbour Totoro is supported by Doug and Teresa Peterson.
Miranda Curtis CMG – Lead Production Supporter of My Neighbour Totoro Headline sponsor Loewe*

Kotei | Makura Jido is supported by The Japan Foundation and Arts Council Tokyo (Tokyo Metropolitan Foundation for History and Culture).

note to a friend is co-produced with Tokyo Bunka Kaikan and is supported by Doug and Teresa Peterson, with special cooperation from The Japan Foundation, New York. Additional support is provided by the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of the Office of the Governor and the New York State Legislature. This project is presented by Japan Society as part of PROTOTYPE Festival 2023.

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I'm Trying to Understand You, But... is supported by The Saison Foundation.