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Japan Society
Proudly Announces
Performing Arts Season
Featuring Events in Theater, Dance, Music & More

Coming up in Fall 2021 and Winter/Spring 2022

THEATER:

The Story Box / Written & Performed by Suzi Takahashi; Directed by Kristin Marting / Co-presented by HERE & Japan Society; Produced by HERE / September 11 [Contemporary Theater]

The Nosebleed / Written & Directed by Aya Ogawa / Co-presented by Japan Society & the Chocolate Factory Theater / October 1 – 10 [Contemporary Theater]

SHEEP #1 / Conceived & Performed by Sachiyo Takahashi (Nekaa Lab) / November 4 – 7 [Contemporary Object Theater]

Cooking Up / **Play Reading Series: Contemporary Japanese Plays in English Translation** / Written by Shoko Matsumura; Directed by Jordana De La Cruz / December 6 [Contemporary Theater Reading]

DANCE:

Contemporary Dance Festival: Japan + East Asia / January 14 & 15 [Contemporary Dance]

Waves Across Time: Traditional Dance and Music of Okinawa / March 18 & 19 [Traditional Dance & Music]

MUSIC:

Shomyo: Buddhist Ritual Chant—Rasenmandarakaie / Co-presented by Japan Society & the Mid-Manhattan Performing Arts Foundation at St. Bartholomew's Church / February 11 [Traditional Music]

OKI: Music of the Ainu / May 2022 [Traditional & Contemporary Music]

New York, NY, June 29, 2021 – **Japan Society** continues a return to live, in-person performance at the Society with programs in the disciplines of theater, dance, music and more, slated for Fall 2021 and Winter/Spring 2022. In Fall 2021, Japan Society spotlights the local artistic community, kicking off with the timely and topical works of three NYC-based artists with deep ties to Japan and its culture – **Suzi Takahashi** (*The Story Box*), **Aya Ogawa** (*The Nosebleed*) and **Sachiyo Takahashi** (*SHEEP #1*). Additionally, in raising these distinct voices and showcasing their work, Japan Society proudly collaborates with fellow local arts institutions **HERE** (Suzi Takahashi's *The Story Box*) and the **Chocolate Factory Theater** (Aya Ogawa's *The Nosebleed*) to bring these pieces to New York audiences.

As **Japan Society** prepares to open its doors to live in-person on-site performance events, the Society's Artistic Director **Yoko Shioya** shares, "Each production is specially designed to be presented with a small audience capacity, creating a feeling of intimacy — a pertinent transition for those who have been unable to see live performances in theater for a very long time."

Looking ahead to Winter/Spring 2022, **Japan Society** welcomes back international artists including emerging Japanese playwright **Shoko Matsumura** with the play ***Cooking Up***; performers from Japan, Taiwan and Korea in the society's **19th Contemporary Dance Festival**; and **Shomyo no Kai**, a group of Buddhist priests performing a millennium-old chanting ritual at **St. Bartholomew's Church**. In Spring 2022, the Society's Performing Arts programming will highlight indigenous art forms from Japan's northernmost and southernmost prefectures, Hokkaido and Okinawa, with two distinct programs to complete the season: ***Waves Across Time: Traditional Dance and Music of Okinawa*** (March 2022) and ***OKI: Music of the Ainu*** (May 2022).

All events take place at **Japan Society (333 East 47th Street)**, with the exception of *Shomyo no Kai*, which takes place at **St. Bartholomew's Church (325 Park Avenue & 51st Street)**.

Tickets will be available as follows. For *The Story Box*, tickets will be available beginning Monday, June 21 at www.HERE.org. For additional Fall 2021 events, tickets will be available to Japan Society members beginning **Tuesday, August 10**; General tickets available beginning **Tuesday, August 17**. For tickets and further detail, please visit www.japansociety.org or call 212-715-1258.

JAPAN SOCIETY PERFORMING ARTS (SEPTEMBER 2021 – MAY 2022), SCHEDULE & FURTHER DETAILS:

THEATER: *The Story Box*, Co-presented by HERE and Japan Society; Produced by HERE (September 11, 2021)

Saturday, September 11 at 4:00pm & 7:00pm

Written and performed by **Suzi Takahashi** and directed by **Kristin Marting**, *The Story Box* explores the importance of safeguarding our civil rights through the lens of Japanese-American identity, using traditional Japanese storytelling elements, like *kamishibai*, along with Takahashi's own family history. Representing the relocation of Japanese Americans during WWII, the audience will receive a suitcase and a tag, inside of which is a wireless headset and a family photo album. Each unique family photo album documents an account of the problematic history of Asian people in the U.S., and more recently, the rise in anti-Asian violence during the pandemic. Inspired by the events of writer/performer Suzi Takahashi's own life and delivered through her own words performed live and transmitted via the headset, *The Story Box* asks audience members to reflect together on the stories in each suitcase, and they are invited to leave a story of their own behind for future audiences.

The Story Box will run from September 11—October 9, 2021 in outdoor spaces in each of the five boroughs of NYC, including local organizations such as Bronx Academy of Art and Dance, Brooklyn Economic Development Corporation, Snug Harbor Cultural Center and Staten Island Arts. Pay what you can; tickets available for FREE or up to \$50 per ticket.

THEATER: *The Nosebleed*, Co-presented with the Chocolate Factory Theater (October 1 – October 10, 2021)

Friday, October 1 – Sunday; October 3 at 7:30pm (Friday, October 1 performance is followed by a *MetLife Meet-the-Artists Reception*); **Thursday, October 7 – Saturday, October 9 at 7:30pm**; with matinee performances on **Saturday, October 9 & Sunday, October 10 at 3:00pm**

Following its critically-acclaimed earlier iteration as part of The Public Theater's *Under the Radar Festival* in 2019, Japanese-American playwright/director **Aya Ogawa** presents an intimate autobiographical piece that explores their fractured relationship with their long-deceased, enigmatic father. Through a series of turbulent, absurd and poignantly comic vignettes, Ogawa reveals the seemingly insurmountable cultural and generational gap between themselves and their father, who was a typical Japanese corporate businessman, and examines the questions faced by the writer/director in their own motherhood experience today. A theatrical memorial and healing ritual for the audience, this darkly humorous, tender and inventive play considers how we inherit and bequeath failure, and what it takes to forgive. Tickets: \$30/\$25 Japan Society members.

THEATER: *SHEEP #1* (November 4 – 7, 2021)

Thursday, November 4 – Saturday, November 6 at 7:30pm (Thursday, November 4 performance followed by a *MetLife Meet-the-Artists Reception*) and **Sunday, November 7 at 2:30pm**

Inspired by the writings of **Antoine De Saint-Exupery**, author of *The Little Prince*, *SHEEP #1* follows the adventures of a sheep in search of the meaning of life. In this inventive, minimalist performance, NYC-based Japanese artist **Sachiyo Takahashi** (Nekaa Lab) manipulates tiny figurines that in real-time are magnified with a video camera and projector to create the visuals seen by the audience, with the action set to live musical accompaniment. The recipient of grants awarded by The Jim Henson Foundation in 2017, 2018 and 2021 for her innovative work in the

field of puppetry, Takahashi explores the border between narrative and abstraction to generate dream-like fables for the subconscious. Tickets: \$23/\$18 Japan Society members.

THEATER: *Cooking Up*; Written by Shoko Matsumura; Directed by Jordana De La Cruz (December 6, 2021), representing the 15th Installment of Japan Society's Play Reading Series: Contemporary Japanese Plays in English Translation

Monday, December 6 at 7:30pm (followed by an artist Q&A)

The real and the surreal come together at a small French restaurant in Japan in **Shoko Matsumura's *Cooking Up***, in which the story takes an unusual turn when the wife of the restaurant's chef asks her husband's mistress to take the place of their missing house cat. **Jordana De La Cruz**, Co-Director of the OBIE Award-winning performance venue JACK in Brooklyn, directs this absurd sojourn into the private lives of the restaurant's employees. The play ***Cooking Up*** was a finalist for the prestigious Kishida Kunio Drama Award in 2018. Ascending playwright **Shoko Matsumura** joins in a post-performance Q&A with the audience and director of this reading, **Jordana De La Cruz**. Tickets: \$15/\$10 Japan Society members.

DANCE: *Contemporary Dance Festival: Japan + East Asia (January 14 & 15, 2022)*

Friday, January 14 (followed by a ***MetLife Meet-the-Artists Reception***) and **Saturday, January 15** (followed by an artist Q&A) at **7:30pm**

This year's **19th Contemporary Dance Festival** (formerly known as the *Contemporary Dance Showcase*) includes: from Japan, butoh artists **Kentaro Kujirai** and **Barabbas Okuyama** embodying the philosophy of yin and yang in their haunting duet entitled ***A HUM SAN SUI***; from Taiwan, mathematician-turned-choreographer **Hao "Demian" Cheng** using the stage as his chalkboard in a solo that explores quantum physics through repetitive circular motion; and duo **Choi Min-sun** and **Kang Jin** from Korea, who twitch and jerk like windup toys to the sound of a ticking clock in their comical and technical-daring piece ***Complement***. Tickets: \$30/\$25 Japan Society members.

MUSIC: *Shomyo: Buddhist Ritual Chant—Rasenmandarakaie*, Co-presented with the Mid-Manhattan Performing Arts Foundation at St. Bartholomew's Church (February 11, 2022)

Friday, February 11 (performance time to be announced).

Believed to have originated in India, *shomyo* is a ritual form of Buddhist chant that traveled along the Silk Road to China, eventually reaching Japan in the sixth century. The ethereal voices of **Shomyo no Kai—Voices of a Thousand Years**, a group of priests from two of Japan's major Buddhist sects (*Shingon* and *Tendai*), swell in powerful harmony, enrapturing the listener into a transcendent meditative state. Clad in brightly colored monastic robes, the choir alternates between monotone stillness and ecstatic polyphony. For this engagement, they will perform a contemporary work within the traditional style, via a new *shomyo* piece by young, female composer **Yu Kuwabara** entitled ***Rasenmandarakaie***.

DANCE: *Waves Across Time: Traditional Dance and Music of Okinawa*

Friday, March 18 (Followed by a ***MetLife Meet-the-Artists Reception***) and **Saturday, March 19** (Followed by an artist Q&A); performance times to be announced.

Commemorating the 50th anniversary of the 1971 Okinawa Reversion Agreement, in which Okinawa was returned to Japan by the U.S. government, a group of the islands' most exquisite dancers will perform a diverse repertoire of Okinawan traditional performing arts accompanied by live music. As specially selected by the artistic director of the National Theatre Okinawa **Michihiko Kakazu**, the versatile artists will perform *kumiodori*, developed during the period when the archipelago was an independent kingdom called Ryukyu (15th-19th centuries). The program also features popular fare, such as folk dances (*zo odori*) with traditional ensemble music. From

the brightly-dyed *bingata* costumes to the island music's iconic use of pentatonic scales, audiences are invited to relish the history and heritage of Japan's southernmost prefecture.

MUSIC: OKI: Music of the Ainu

May 2022 (Dates to be announced)

Oki Kano, known professionally as **OKI**, is the leading musician of Ainu music. Using pre-1970s recordings collected by ethnomusicologists as his only guides (since no masters of the instrument exist today), OKI has recovered and recreated traditional music on the *tonkori* — a stringed instrument of the Ainu people. The rich, reverberating twang of the *tonkori* strings, which are traditionally made from deer tendons, allowed Ainu shamans to communicate with spirits that control the wind, rain and other natural phenomena called *kamuy*. As the only active, commercial *tonkori* player in the world, OKI's music is featured in the film *Ainu Mosir* (2020), currently streaming on Netflix.

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 New York and around the world. At Japan Society, we are inspired by the Japanese concept of *kizuna* (絆)—forging deep connections to bind people together. We are committed to telling the story of Japan while strengthening connections within New York City and building new bridges beyond. 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. We strive to convene important conversations on topics that bind our two countries together, champion the next generation of innovative creators, promote mutual understanding, and serve as a trusted guide for people everywhere who seek to more fully appreciate the rich complexities and abundance of Japan. From our New York headquarters, a landmark building designed by architect Junzo Yoshimura that opened to the public in 1971, we look forward to the years ahead, which will be defined by our digital and ideational impact through the *kizuna* that we build. Our future can only be enhanced by learning from our peers and engaging with our audiences, both near and afar.

This year, Japan Society is celebrating its heritage through the 50th anniversary of the Society's landmark building with the launch of a new distinct modern logo and visual identity. The "JS" monogram is created via overlapping, interconnected lines and shapes, reinforcing the idea of *kizuna* and that Japan Society acts as a platform that connects across, cultures, people, and time.

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 2021-2022 Performing Arts Season:

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Program Support & Partners:

The Story Box is co-presented and produced by *HERE*, and has been developed with support from Alfred University, Bethany Arts Community, Bristol Valley Theatre and National Park of Women's Rights, and Venturous Theatre Fund. Additional support from Bronx Academy of Art and Dance, NYC Economic Development Corporation, Snug Harbor Cultural Center and Staten Island Arts.

The Nosebleed is co-presented with the *Chocolate Factory Theater*. *The Nosebleed* was developed in part through the Parent Artist Space Grant and AIR Program at Brooklyn Arts Exchange and The Public Theater's Devised Theater Working Group/Under the Radar Incoming! Series. Subsidized studio space provided by The Play Company through the A.R.T./New York Creative Space Grant, supported by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. Support for *The Nosebleed* was provided by a residency at Mount Tremper Arts and *The Made in NY Women's Film, TV & Theatre Fund* by the City of New York Mayor's Office of Media and Entertainment in association with The New York Foundation for the Arts.

SHEEP #1 is supported, in part, by Doug and Teresa Peterson. The U.S. premiere in 2018 was co-produced with *The Tank, NYC*, and supported, in part, by *The Jim Henson Foundation Presenter Grant*. The world premiere, in Vancouver, Canada, was presented in collaboration with *Blim*.

Cooking Up is supported, in part, by *The Saison Foundation*. Special thanks to publishing company *Hakusuisha*, presenter of the annual *Kishida Kunio Drama Award*, for assisting in research of scripts written by contemporary Japanese playwrights.

Contemporary Dance Festival: *Japan + East Asia* is supported, in part, by the *Taipei Cultural Center in New York*. *Complement* is made in collaboration with *Korea Dance Abroad*.

Shomyo: Buddhist Ritual Chant—Rasenmandarakaie is co-presented with the *Mid-Manhattan Performing Arts Foundation* at *St. Bartholomew's Church* and supported, in part, by the *Agency for Cultural Affairs, Government of Japan* through the *Japan Arts Council*, an award from the *National Endowment for the Arts*, and *Doug and Teresa Peterson*.

Waves Across Time: Traditional Dance and Music of Okinawa is supported, in part, by *The Japan Foundation* through the *Performing Arts JAPAN program*, *The JEC Fund*, and *The Asahi Shimbun Foundation*.

OKI: Music of the Ainu is supported, in part, by *Doug and Teresa Peterson*.