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Japan Society
Proudly Announces
Fall 2020/Winter 2021 Performing Arts Season
Featuring Ambitious Virtual &
On-Site Programs in Music, Theater & More :

MUSIC [online program]:

Reiko Yamada's Sound Installation on Silent Movies / October 2020 [Silent Films with Live Music]

THEATER [online programs]:

Underground Fairy / November 2020 [Play Reading Series: Contemporary Japanese Plays in English Translation]

Mansai Nomura's New Kyogen / December 2020 [Traditional Theater]

THEATER [on-site program]:

The Dark Master / January 2021 [Contemporary Theater]

New York, NY, July 29, 2020 – **Japan Society** proudly announces its **Fall 2020/Winter 2021 Performing Arts Season**, featuring four innovative programs brought by visionary artists in music, theater, and more in virtual and experimental spaces. Taking this time of physical distancing as an opportunity, the program is offering new ways of bringing people together worldwide to share moments and inspiration unhindered by traditional limitations of live performance and travel.

"This lineup focuses on bridging the past and present, defying geographical distance, and collapsing the border between the physical and illusions," says Yoko Shioya, Artistic Director. "Barcelona-based

Japanese composer and high-tech sound artist Reiko Yamada redefines 'pastime' through her avant-garde music, which she will use to accompany Japanese silent films of sumo matches, trains, and old animations. Star kyogen actor Mansai Nomura proves that the 650-year-old tradition is fertile soil for his production of new kyogen pieces. Kuro Tanino's experimental theater piece, *The Dark Master* - an innovative production utilizing VR headsets and live elements - is the perfect answer for a theater experience in a social-distancing-ruled society."

The on-site event in January will proceed at Japan Society in accordance with the updated health recommendations pertaining to COVID-19 – located at 333 East 47th Street in Manhattan. Tickets will be available to Japan Society members in late September. General tickets available in early October. For the most recent ticketing information and further details, please visit www.japansociety.org.

JAPAN SOCIETY PERFORMING ARTS SCHEDULE, SEPTEMBER 2020– JANUARY 2021, FOLLOWS.

MUSIC: Reiko Yamada's Sound Installation on Silent Movies

Online Video Event

October 2020

Composer and high-tech sound artist **Reiko Yamada** (2015-16 Fellow at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study at Harvard University and the 2016-17 artist-in-residence at IEM in Austria) uses the latest technologies in electronic and acoustic music "installation" to create an interdisciplinary collaboration that bridges the gap between time and space. Performing on period accordions, Yamada creates experimental and novel ways of presenting sound and visuals in a virtual landscape. She will redefine the definition of "pastimes" in her original, avant-garde scores to silent films of sumo matches, trains, and old animations from the early 20th century. The program is followed by a live Q&A with Reiko Yamada.

THEATER: Underground Fairy

15th Installment of Japan Society's Play Reading Series

Online Video Event

November 2020

Written by award-winning playwright/director **Satoko Ichihara**, *Underground Fairy* addresses themes of isolation, inclusiveness, and the meaning of "community" as the play follows Yurieria, a half-fairy-half-human living in a fairy's community. While Yurieria is accepted by the fairies, is their inclusiveness genuine if Yurieria is viewed as an outsider? Using a series of absurd vignettes, Ichihara questions societal norms and the feelings of isolation and segregation, as well as the meaning of female sexuality associated with fertilization. NY-based director **Tara Ahmadinejad**, who is known for her experimentation with new ways of theater presentation using elements of Virtual Reality, animation, videos, and online components, will lead American actors in creating an innovative online presentation. Elements of audience participation will be incorporated in this online production. There will be a live post-performance Q&A with Tara Ahmadinejad and Satoko Ichihara (in Tokyo.)

THEATER: Mansai Nomura's New Kyogen

Online Video Event

December 2020

Mansai Nomura, the beloved traditional kyogen actor, will **appear online to show his new kyogen creations** — *Kagami-kaja* (A Mirror Servant) and *Ayu* (Sweetfish) on two consecutive days. These pieces will be accompanied by a traditional kyogen piece. *Kagami-kaja* begins as a lighthearted exchange between a servant and his mirror image, but quickly takes a turn for the absurd when the servant finds himself trapped in the mirror. ***Ayu* ridicules the human ego and ambition through juxtaposition with open-mindedness.** **These performance videos** are

preceded by Mansai's introduction of each piece (with English subtitles), and will be followed by his "live" post-performance talk + Q&A (with an interpreter).

THEATER: *The Dark Master*
On-Site Virtual Reality Event
January 2021

Written and directed by psychiatrist-turned-director/playwright **Kuro Tanino**, *The Dark Master* is an immersive and humorously-dark experimental theater play addressing "self and other," dictatorship, and the process of total absorption in a new 'live performance' style. A young backpacker slowly becomes one with the 'Master' of a local eatery. Tanino explores unconventional presentations of theater by utilizing VR (Virtual Reality) headsets for a limited audience of 10-12 people and by combining special physical and sound effects, like the smell of a meal being cooked. The VR and physical isolation of each audience member heightens the effect of slipping into total mind control with the young backpacker and the blurred lines between self and the "Master."

Biographies of Artists

Reiko Yamada is a composer and sound artist, holding a PhD. in music composition from McGill University. Originally from Hiroshima, Japan, Yamada is currently working on a project in Barcelona, Spain. She composes concert works, creates sound art installations and works with interdisciplinary collaborators. Her work explores the aesthetic concept of imperfection in a variety of contexts. Her works have been presented in venues such as The Metropolitan Museum Breuer (New York), Boston Symphony Hall and Centre Pompidou (Paris). She is currently STARTS' (Science, Technology & the Arts) artist-in-residence, collaborating with medical and photonics researchers on a project about thyroid cancer.

Satoko Ichihara writes and directs plays that deal with human behavior, the physiology of the body, and the unease surrounding these themes using her unique sense of language and physical sensitivity. Other themes include sex, cross-mating, and breeding which are clinically portrayed through the viewpoint of women in Ichihara's works. The patriarchal and anthropocentric narrative of sexuality and reproductive behavior become invalidated, and the ethics and morals of the social majority are radically called into question. She is a 2020 recipient of the prestigious Kishida Kunio Drama Award.

Tara Ahmadinejad is a NY-based director and theater-maker, and co-founding member of live arts collective Piehole. Recent new play directing includes: *Lunch Bunch* (Clubbed Thumb's Summerworks, NY Times Critic's) and Chana Porter's *Leap and the Net Will Appear* (New Georges in NYC; Catastrophic Theater in Houston). With Piehole: *Disclaimer*, written by Ahmadinejad (The Public's Under the Radar 2020; Emruz 2019), *Tread on Me*, *Tread Softly* (audio-theater collaboration with writer Celine Song, in development), and collaborations in augmented reality and virtual reality with the LA-based Tender Claws, *Tendar* (Sundance 2018) and *The Under Presents* (Oculus, Sundance 2019). Ahmadinejad is a NYTW Usual Suspect, a New Georges Affiliated Artist, a Clubbed Thumb Directing Fellow, and holds a Master of Fine Arts from Columbia University.

Mansai Nomura II studied under his father Mansaku Nomura and his late grandfather Manzo VI Nomura (both Living National Treasures). Mansai Nomura made his stage debut at the age of three. His acclaimed stagings go far beyond those of traditional actors, playing the title roles of Oedipus, directed by Yukio Ninagawa; Hamlet, directed by Jonathan Kent; and starring in hit Japanese movies. Beyond acting, he is committed to directing plays that merge classic and contemporary, East and West. In addition to his own creations of "new" kyogen pieces including *The Kyogen of Errors*, based on Shakespeare's *The Comedy of Errors*, his directing credits include *Kuni-nusu-bito* (from Richard III) and *Atsushi* (from the late Atsushi Nakajima's Sangetsu-ki and

Meijinden). He has performed at international festivals and prestigious venues, including Lincoln Center, Kennedy Center, Guggenheim Museum, and Shakespeare's Globe, to name a few. He has received numerous awards and prizes, including the National Arts Festival New Artist Award and the Ministry of Education's Art Encouragement Prize for New Artists. Mansai is designated Chief Executive Creative Director for the opening and closing ceremonies of the 2020 Tokyo Olympics.

Kuro Tanino, born in 1976, is the founder/director/playwright of **Niwa Gekidan Penino**. After launching Niwa Gekidan Penino while still a medical student in 2000, he has since written and directed all the company's plays, which tour internationally regularly. Aside from his company work, he wrote and directed *Chekhov?! for Tokyo Metropolitan Theatre* in January 2011. In 2014, Niwa Gekidan Penino made their U.S. debut tour, produced by Japan Society, and performed in NYC (Under the Radar Festival), Walker Arts Center, Philadelphia FringeArts, Wexner Center for the Arts, and On the Boards. Other international appearances include Festival d'Automne à Paris, Aarhus Festival in Humberg, No Limit Festival in Hong Kong, OzAsia Festival in Adelaide, among many others. In 2015, Tanino was invited by Theatre Krefeld in Germany as a resident artist to write and direct a new piece, *Käfig aus Wasser* in March. His *Avidya—The Dark Inn* won the prestigious Kishida Kunio Drama Award in 2016.

ABOUT JAPAN SOCIETY PERFORMING ARTS

Since the inception of the **Performing Arts Program** in 1953, Japan Society has introduced nearly 700 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*.

Founded in 1907, Japan Society in New York City presents sophisticated, topical and accessible experiences of Japanese art and culture, and facilitates the exchange of ideas, knowledge and innovation between the U.S. and Japan. More than 200 events annually encompass world-class exhibitions, dynamic classical and cutting-edge contemporary performing arts, film premieres and retrospectives, workshops and demonstrations, tastings, family activities, language classes, and a range of high-profile talks and expert panels that present open, critical dialogue on issues of vital importance to the U.S., Japan and East Asia.

Tickets & Information: For more information and to purchase tickets for performances and related events at Japan Society, visit <https://www.japansociety.org/>. 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).

Support for 2020-2021 Performing Arts Season:

Lead Sponsor: MetLife Foundation. **Corporate Partner:** ORIX Stewardship Foundation. **Major Support:** Doug and Teresa Peterson, The Fan Fox and Leslie R. Samuels Foundation, Inc., the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew M. Cuomo and the New York State Legislature, and the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council. **Additional Support:** Dean Jeanette C. Takamura, Mr. Alan M. Suhonen, Sarah Billingham Solomon and Howard Solomon, Dr. and Mrs. Carl F. Tausch II, Hiroko Onoyama, Michael Romano, Mr. Norton Belknap, Dr. John K. Gillespie, Dr. Stephen and Mrs. Michiko Levine, Susan M. McCormac, and Pamela Perlman.

Endowment: Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Endowment Fund and the Endowment for the Performing Arts, established with a leadership gift from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation. **In-kind Support:** Transportation assistance is provided by All Nippon Airways Co., Ltd.

Program Support & Partners:

Reiko Yamada's Sound Installation on Silent Movies *is supported by Doug and Teresa Peterson.*

Underground Fairy *is supported by The Saison Foundation and Doug and Teresa Peterson.*

Mansai Nomura's New Kyogen *is supported by the Agency for Cultural Affairs, Government of Japan through the Arts Council.*

The Dark Master *is presented by Japan Society as part of The Public Theater's Under the Radar Festival 2021 and is supported by The Japan Foundation through the Performing Arts JAPAN program, Agency for Cultural Affairs, and Arts Council Tokyo (Tokyo Metropolitan Foundation for History and Culture).*