



Tsuyoshi Shirai's 2010 dance-theatre piece *still life* is staged at Festival/Tokyo.

COMPILED BY NICOLE ESTVANIK TAYLOR

Tokyo, Japan

FESTIVAL/TOKYO: It's a big festival month in Japan, with the 66th National Arts Festival running Oct. 2–Nov. 10 in areas in and around Osaka and Tokyo. But less traditional fare can also be found at Festival/Tokyo (known before 2009 as the Tokyo International Theatre Festival). Inventive auteurs Romeo Castellucci (Italy) and Norimizu Ameya (Japan) have created companion works based on the words of early 20th-century poet Kenji Miyazawa; the pieces will be performed outdoors on Tokyo's man-made island, Yumenoshima. German director René Pollesch presents his *Cinecittà Aperta* outdoors with, reportedly, the involvement of a moving car. French choreographer Jérôme Bel brings his celebration of regular folks and the power of pop music, *The Show Must Go On*—which charmed U.S. audiences at the 2008 Philly Live Arts Festival and won a Bessie Award in New York in 2005—to Japan, using a publicly recruited, local cast. “Just as a painter sketches a still life, so dance copies movement”—that's the concept behind contemporary dancer Tsuyoshi Shirai's *still life*. And Yudai Kamisato's Okazaki Art Theatre has created a piece about the fear of the unknown, *Hemispherical Red and Black*; the company was on F/T's Emerging Artist Program last year and has now graduated to the main program.

In terms of emerging art, there's a bright new crop to be seen in 2011, including such Japanese works as a new staging of *Angels in America* directed and designed by Kunio Sugihara, or the energetic Pure BANANA Girls Class with their exclamatory *BANAGAKU Super Spunky Sports Autumn Grand Tournament!!!!!!*. There's also new work from Korea, China and Singapore. (Thru Nov. 13; (81) 3-5961-5202; <http://festival-tokyo.jp/en>)

Maribor, Slovenia

BORŠNIK MEETING/MARIBOR THEATRE FESTIVAL: The Slovene National Theatre Maribor hosts this event, the center of which has traditionally been a competition among top Slovene theatre productions, though last year saw a reorganization and the addition of an international program. Still, the main focus is on who will win the competition, as well as

what actor will take home the prestigious Boršnik Ring for lifetime achievement on the Slovene stage.

The country's theatres will be competing for top honors with stagings of Strindberg, Shakespeare, Williams and Melville, along with German works by Martin Sperr, Karl Schönherr and Roland Schimmelpfennig. Of course there are a few key Slovenian-penned works: *Goga, A Wonderful Town*, for example, an adaptation of texts by Slavko Grum (1901–49), will be produced by the host theatre. Grum logged time working in a mental hospital, a disturbing experience that might explain his unsettling literary output. (The title of this piece sounds fairly benign, but the play descends into what the festival's website charmingly describes as “an even more horrible night that awaits in the ninth circle of hell engulfed in a cold, eternal winter, where every emotion becomes frozen and the blood ceases to flow.”)

Sebastijan Horvat has directed both that play and *Jakob Ruda*, by major Slovene writer Ivan Cankar (1876–1918). The latter is produced by Prešeren Theatre Kranj, a small theatre with a 60-plus-year history. *Jakob Ruda*'s title character is a desperate businessman who, unable to exit his problems by committing suicide, sacrifices his daughter's future instead. Director Vito Taufer also brings a Cankar production to the competition: *Scandal in the Valley of St. Florian*, produced by Mladinko Theatre (one of Ljubljana's two municipal theatres) is lighter in its satiric tone, if not in its criticism of hypocrisy in Slovenian society.

Another intriguing Slovenian work in the competition is *Life@anti*, produced by Theatre Glej, which has existed as an unorthodox and independent performing arts venue in Ljubljana since it was founded by a group of directors in 1970. (Since 2006 the theatre has run PreGlej na glas! Playwriting Festival, a new-play development program which in past years has included a U.S.-exchange component.) Glej's festival entry, *Life@anti* (English title: *The Pu@veyors*), draws on Slovenian theatre history and old newspaper articles, setting up a philosophical clash between two politically opinionated playwrights, Etbin Kristan and Fran Milcinski, who were active at the end of the 19th century. The production is highly stylized, the makeup exaggerated—but not so much as you might think upon first seeing the production shots. An old photo of the real Kristan proves that his magnificent beard and mustachios required no exaggeration whatsoever. (Oct. 14–23; (386) 2-250-62-27; www.borstnikovo.si/en)



Theatre Glej's *Life@anti*, at the Maribor Theatre Festival.



TOMMY GARDENMAN

A run-through in the costume shop for Stewart Laing's *The Salon Project*.

Various Cities, Russia

NEW AMERICAN PLAYS FOR RUSSIA: Thanks to a handshake between presidents Obama and Medvedev, audiences in Russia can now eavesdrop on the ramblings of Vermont loners in Annie Baker's *The Aliens*; hear Nilo Cruz's factory workers read aloud in *Anna in the Tropics*; and navigate the grief-saturated world of Adam Rapp's *Nocturne*. These scripts, plus four more, have been translated through the New American Plays for Russia project, a Center for International Theatre Development initiative supported by the U.S. Embassy in Moscow under the auspices of the U.S.-Russia Bilateral Presidential Commission. (Last year, translations flowed in the other direction and Russian plays came to the U.S.) A group of translators undertook the challenge—among them the project's director, Moscow-based American ex-pat John Freedman, who is working with Maksym Kurochkin on Rapp's anguished monologue.

Plays were nominated by staff at the Eugene O'Neill Theater Center, the Humana Festival, the Sundance Institute and New York Theatre Workshop, then narrowed down with the help of Russian theatre professionals. The list also includes Chuck Mee's *Big Love*, Deborah Zoe Lauffer's *End Days*, Suzan-Lori Parks's *The Book of Grace* and Eric Bogosian's *Talk Radio*. The scripts will get readings at the Festival of Young Theaters in Omsk late this month, and at the Playwright and Director Center in Moscow and On. Teatr in St. Petersburg late next month—the latter for a conference on U.S. drama hosted by the St. Petersburg Academy of Theater Arts.

More dates are in the works for Ekaterinburg, Tomsk, Saratov, Oryol and Krasnoyarsk. Many of the readings will occur from May to July 2012, a hot season for new-play festivals. According to Freedman, the famous Russian-

language Ilkhom Theater in Uzbekistan will also include at least two of the plays in a series of presentations of U.S. drama planned for the coming season.

Says Freedman, "The idea of this project is to give Russians a sense—even if it is only a small taste—of the thematic, stylistic and ethnic diversity that characterizes contemporary American drama. Diversity here is the key word, the fulcrum on which we have built and conducted the program." He

adds that recruiting major Russian writers to do the translations has already gained a foothold for their goals: "The received notion that American drama consists solely of Eugene O'Neill, Tennessee Williams, Edward Albee and a bit of Sam Shepard has cracked." (Thru 2012; www.johnfreedman.webs.com)

Edinburgh, Scotland

THE SALON PROJECT: This month Scotland's Traverse Theatre fulfills the dream of every theatregoer who has secretly coveted the lavish clothes in period plays. Traverse artist-in-residence Stewart Laing (director of Glasgow-based company Untitled Projects) has created a music-theatre piece called *The Salon Project*, inspired by Golden Age Parisian social gatherings and the writings of Proust. The performance begins in the dressing room, in which every audience member dons a full 19th-century costume. Interspersed cast members help usher the audience physically, and mentally, into a historical drawing-room setting in which 21st-century thought leaders discuss cutting-edge ideas to the accompaniment of chamber music. (Oct. 10–22; (44) 131-228-3223; www.traverse.co.uk)

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