

Foundation Modern Puppet Center

Foundation Modern Puppet Center was founded in 1968 by Puppet Theater Hitomiza.

The Center has been engaged with traditional puppetry as well as modern puppet performances;

it has introduced and invited puppet shows in Japan and other countries;

it has produced original puppet shows, workshops, and exhibitions.

The goal of the Center is; to publicize the art of puppetry and its extreme attractiveness;

to create puppet shows and to pursue deeper artistry in the genre; and, to establish the role of puppetry in the society.



Photo: 1. Hitomiza Otome Bunraku ©Hitoshi FURUYA

2. Jeo bong ©Hiroshi KUMASAKA

3. Deaf Puppet Theater Hitomi ©Hitoshi FURUYA

4. Karakuri Ningyo ©Foundation Modern Puppet Center

Hitomiza Otome Bunraku

Hitomiza Otome Bunraku is one of Japanese traditional puppet shows, Ningyo Joruri; the group has presented performances and workshops in Japan and other countries. While a bunraku puppet is manipulated by three male puppeteers, a otome-bunraku puppet is performed by solo female puppeteer. Its appearance is similar to a Bunraku puppet, but its mechanism had been restructured to fit solo puppeteer. The three-puppeteer style enables rich and delicate expression that is highly recognized worldwide today; on the other hand, Otome Bunraku is the method to do so with solo puppeteer.

[Past Performances Overseas]

Jim Henson Festival (New York, USA)

Ishara International Puppet Festival (New Delhi, INDIA)

Tolosa International Puppet Festival (Tolosa, SPAIN)

Lutkovno gledališče Maribor (Maribor, SLOVENIJA)

Taipei Arts Festival (Taipei, CHINESE TAIPEI)

International Puppet Festival Quanzhou (Quanzhou, CHINA)

Asia Europe Puppet Festival (Bangkok, THAILAND)

5 Performances in Russia (Moscow, Omsk, Yekaterinburg, Tyumen, RUSSIA)



International Exchange

The Center is linked to puppetry of the world in various ways.

From 1987 to 1997, the Center organized an international puppet festival in a number of cities in Japan, introducing puppet shows mainly from Western countries; as a result, there were total of 56 companies from 20 countries, including Italy, the Netherlands, France and the United States, etc.

Since 1993, the Center invites Asian puppet company every year; from traditional group to modern theater. So far, the invitees were 15 companies from 11 regions including India, Indonesia, Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia, China, etc.

Since 2007 in Japan, the Center has organized International Exchange Workshops among Asian puppet companies.

The goal of the project is; to encourage the puppeteers to learn unique culture and techniques among each other for their inheritance and creation, and to form humane network in future.

Three sessions of the project are completed.

In addition, the Center introduces Japanese puppet companies to other countries.

Whenever it receives a request from foreign organizations such as an international festival or a puppet theater in any nation, it sends Japanese puppet companies for performance.



Karakuri Ningyo

The Center has produced the exhibition of Japanese traditional Karakuri Ningyo.

Karakuri Ningyo are puppets with sophisticated mechanism, that could be recognized as robots in old days.

Their history could be traced back for 300 years, and even today they are performed in traditional festivals all over Japan.

The Center noticed this valuable tradition, and researched the art through field works in local venues.

The exhibits are qualified replicas; there are approximately 40 of them available.

Each of them will be exhibited any time, accompanied by performance and lecture by experts.

Recently, Karakuri Ningyo is evaluated as a root of Japanese scientific technology,

and the exhibition took place in various counties in Asia, Middle East and Europe.

[Past Exhibitions Overseas]

Robotics Japan [Japan Festival] (London, UK)

Festival Mondial des Théâtres de Marionnettes (Charleville-Mézières, FRANCE)

Japan Festival in Korea (Kwangju, KOREA)

Japan Today (Abu Dhabi, UAE)

Oman Japan Friendship Week (Muscat, OMAN)

Exhibition of Karakuri (Kaohsiung, Taipei, CHINESE TAIPEI)



Deaf Puppet Theater Hitomi

It was founded in 1980.

Deaf persons and listeners collaborate for the art of puppetry here.

With ability of deaf persons, who are not caught in phonetic language, the company was established to seek for new expression of puppetry.

The project has dual actions, that is, welfare and theater arts.

This is a rare puppet group in the world, and it was awarded a number of times.

The quality of their shows improved, and it has performed in Japan and other countries.

[Past Performances Overseas]

Tears of Joy Theatre (Oregon, USA)

Festival Mondial des Théâtres de Marionnettes (Charleville-Mézières, FRANCE)

Performances (Poznan, POLAND)

Suwon Hwaseong Fortress Theatre Festival (Suwon, KOREA)

Festival of Inclusive Arts (Phnom Penh, CAMBODIA)

Performances (EGYPT, YEMEN, BAHRAIN, UAE)



Puppet Construction and Repair

The Center is in charge of rebuilding, repairing and construction of Japanese traditional puppets.

Recently, modern artists and contemporary dancers requested puppets for their creation.

The Center meets various requests, and takes care of puppets through the methods gained after years of study.

Research and Publication

One of the main projects of the Center is research of puppetry in Japan and overseas.

Its outcome is open to public through performances, exhibitions and publications.

Tradition of puppetry is superb in Japan, and many of them are active in their local community.

The Center researches the status of Japanese traditional puppetry and how those cultural heritages are maintained.

In other 27 countries in Asia, Europe and America, the Center makes research on traditional and modern puppetry.

The Publication project has produced more than 44 publications

such as the translation of qualified books on foreign puppetry,

journals of traditional puppetry, research reports, etc.

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Photo: 1. Research on the Ohata Puppets ©Eimei KATAMI

2. Workshop of hairdressing for traditional puppets ©Foundation Modern Puppet Center