

RESEARCH
TRIPS
JAPAN

JAPAN: CIRCUS AND STREET ARTS PANORAMA



Circostrada organised in December 2016 a one-week research trip to Japan to meet professionals, discover artists and get an insight into the Japanese contemporary scene for circus and street arts. This publication aims to share the knowledge acquired by the network, providing practical tips and contact information for all professional eager to better understand the local context for circus and street arts and forge long-term collaborations with Japanese peers.

ARTCENA

ARTCENA is the French National Centre for Circus Arts, Street Arts and Theatre. It works towards its missions in three main areas: the sharing of knowledge through a digital platform and activities of documentation, the support to professionals via mentoring and training, the development of these three artistic fields by providing funding to authors and carrying out international development. It coordinates the Circostrada network and has a permanent seat on its steering committee.

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European Network
Circus and Street ArtS

This report
was edited by
Circostrada

Since 2003, Circostrada Network has been working to develop and structure the fields of circus and street arts in Europe and beyond. With more than 100 members from over 30 countries, it helps building a sustainable future for these sectors by empowering cultural players through activities in observation and research, professional exchanges, advocacy, capacity-building and information.

FOREWORD

This short publication and first of its kind was designed to benefit to all members of the Circostrada network, and more broadly to all cultural professionals eager to learn about the Japanese contemporary context of circus and street arts. It provides practical tips and contact information to foster professional opportunities and new collaborations between Japanese and European organisations.

This guide will provide you with contacts, it will give you a quick insight into the recent history and current scene of two emerging sectors and it will help you understand better the local context. This is not a scientific and exhaustive article on circus and street arts panorama in Japan but rather an attempt to deliver an accurate report of the knowledge acquired by the network during a one-week research trip, and share an analysis built on the discussions and testimonies gathered on the spot with local people.

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THE SUN RISES IN THE EAST

Tale of a one-week journey to Japan
By Stéphane Segreto-Aguilar

In December 2016, Circostrada gave its members¹ the opportunity to take a research trip to Japan, travelling from Tokyo to Takamatsu via Kyoto. The aim was to better understand the issues around the development of circus and street arts, to exchange and share insights with other professionals, to meet and discover new artists and to forge long-term bonds with Japanese peers. This is the story of our Euro-Japanese week.



Taking the temperature. The first day of the trip was spent at Tokyo's Owlspot Theatre for a meeting between the

Circostrada members and professionals from the cultural sector, organised by Gekionkyo, Japan's network of public theatres and performance halls. This was organised in partnership with the *Institut français* in Japan, whose essential support and expertise were to ensure the trip's success. Network president and director of the Owlspot Theatre, Masato Kishi, explained that there are currently over 2,000 public theatres and performance halls in Japan, financed² mainly by local councils and prefectures³. Most of these theatres rent out their facilities to production agencies and external performers, rather than organising their own productions. Only around one hundred venues - all members of Gekionkyo - produce their own artistic programme, particularly with projects which involve local communities.

Around fifty professionals took up the invitation, including theatre and festival directors, artists, journalists and intrigued professionals. After the traditional introductions, the discussions took off. Dance critic Tatsuro Ishii outlined the historical context of circus and street arts in Japan⁴, pointing out a number of stereotypes that remain entrenched in the minds of audiences and institutions. He also highlighted the lack of organisational structure in these sectors on a national level. Before long, other points of view were expressed, with everyone

agreeing that the default tendency is for mimes, acrobats, jugglers and circus professionals to start their career in the street, often through urban competitions⁵. Very few are given the opportunity to perform in theatres. But why? Primarily because of the almost complete lack of professional artists' training⁶, low funding and the difficulty of putting on productions that will be accepted by venues.

2020 Olympics. In 2020, the capital will host the Summer Olympics and Paralympics. This is "a unique opportunity for developing international partnerships," underlines Mariko Konno from the Arts Council Tokyo⁷. Though the national budget for cultural operations has not yet been determined, the Tokyo 2020 planning committee has been sponsoring a large number of cultural events across Japan since October 2016.

Networking. Questions continued to fly as jetlag slowly settled in. Nevertheless, it was a fruitful experience-sharing session: Japanese participants suggested meeting more regularly to create an informal network for the circus arts and street art professional community.

A stroll through the heart of Tokyo. On the following day, we visited three theatres in Tokyo which regularly host contemporary dance performances and have demonstrated a growing interest in creative circus productions (Tokyo Metropolitan Theatre, Koenji Theatre and Setagaya Public Theatre⁸). All three locations had brand new and beautifully maintained facilities, large technical teams, production directors who speak fluent English and French, several modular stages and performance rooms to seat 250 to 800 people, rehearsal rooms, production workshop spaces and around thirty shows scheduled throughout the year⁹. A third of their revenue comes from council subsidies, another third from ticket sales and the rest from private sponsors. The three people we met



¹ The delegation included CiRCa (FR), Festival Mirabilia (IT), Le Prato (FR), Le Plus Petit Cirque du Monde (FR), Les Halles de Schaerbeek (BE), Festival Circolo (NL), La Brèche (FR), La Cascade (FR) and Circus Tree Festival (EE).

² The State's budget for culture in 2016 represented 0.1% of national GDP.

³ Japan contains 47 prefectures - administrative and territorial divisions established in 1871.

⁴ Article "Circus and street arts in Japan: a few historical landmarks" by Tatsuro Ishii (page 7)

⁵ For more details on urban competitions and street festivals, see page 16.

⁶ The Ecole Internationale de Cirque de Sori and International Circus Village are two of the rare circus schools in Japan.

⁷ Article "Overview of the arts and cultural situation towards and beyond Tokyo 2020" by Mariko Konno (page 9)

⁸ For more details on Japanese venues and festivals, see page 10.

⁹ This represents 30% of their activity. The other 70% focuses on renting out venues for other cultural and private projects and events.

¹⁰ Quote from *In Praise of Shadows*, an essay on Japanese aesthetics written by Junichirō Tanizaki in 1933.

¹¹ For more information on the Setouchi Triennale and the Benesse Foundation art projects, see page 14

¹² The figures speak for themselves. Approx. one million visitors attended in 2016, 14% of whom came from outside Japan.

¹³ One of them is the Chichu Art Museum, which was founded by Tadao Andō in Naoshima and showcases a number of *in situ* works, including James Turrell's light installation by James Turrell, sculptures by Walter De Maria and a collection of Claude Monet's "Water Lilies".

¹⁴ Built in 1835.

¹⁵ FRESH CIRCUS, the Circostrada network's flagship event, is an international seminar dedicated to promoting the circus arts. It is organised in collaboration with a member of the network and takes place every two years. The next event is scheduled for March 2018 in Brussels, in collaboration with Espace Catastrophe and Wallonie-Bruxelles Théâtre / Danse.

showed real interest in contemporary circus and wanted to include it in their programme more regularly. They were eager to develop new artistic exchanges, and asked what artistic proposals we could make. It is worthwhile bearing in mind two facts about Japan before launching any discussions. Firstly, the Japanese tax year starts in April, so theatres finalise their annual programme between summer and autumn (proposals are therefore still welcome for the season between April 2018 and March 2019). Secondly, the Japan Foundation offers grants to help promote European shows in Japan, through tours and collaborations with Japanese collectives.

After two hours twenty minutes on the Shinkansen train. The tour continued in Kyoto with a visit to the Kyoto Art Centre (KAC). KAC is located in an old school building, which has been converted into an arts and residency centre, with three rehearsal studios, two performance rooms (seating around 200 people each), a bookshop, café and two exhibition rooms. It offers an up-to-date contemporary programme including dance, visual and performance arts and hosts at least two international artist residencies each year, including circus artists.

Japanese decentralisation. Takamatsu on the coast of the Seto Inland Sea was the third stop on our southbound trip. With a population of 400,000, this is the capital of the Kagawa prefecture on the island of Shikoku. Here we met two artistic directors at a seminar organised by Setouchi Circus Factory: Makoto Nakashima from the BIRD Theatre in Tottori, and Naoyoshi Fujita from the Museum of Art, Kōchi. These two venues have very different stories. The BIRD Theatre was founded in 2006 through an individual initiative and is developing a socially engaged artistic project in close contact with the local community in an old primary-school gymnasium building. The Museum of Art was created in 1993 by the city of Kōchi as a high-level cultural promotion tool with an international reach. But they both share

the desire to develop international artistic collaborations and a clear interest in contemporary circus and street arts.

We find beauty not in the thing itself ¹⁰. The Seto Inland Sea has hosted the Setouchi Triennale ¹¹ every three

years since 2009. This international contemporary art festival was last held in 2016 ¹². It is held on twelve islands, of which Naoshima and Teshima are the best well-known. Naoshima is home to several contemporary art museums ¹³ and outdoor art installations, including in the village centre, as part of the *Art House Project* by the Benesse foundation, which uses art to refurbish abandoned traditional Japanese houses. The beauty of these places is breath-taking and the relevance of these *in situ* pieces is powerful. A former Triennale official talked about the growing interest in the performing arts at the festival, as well as the important role that contemporary circus - and art in public space in general - might play in the 2019 event. Could visual arts replace contemporary dance as the best entry door in Japan for contemporary circus and artistic creation in public space?



New horizons. Just one hour from Takamatsu, in the same prefecture, is the small town of Kotohira (population: 10,000). It is renowned throughout the country for the Konpira Grand Theatre, also known as *Kanamaru-za*, the oldest Kabuki theatre in Japan ¹⁴. For the past two years, Kotohira and Takamatsu have been at the centre of the *Seto La Piste* festival. The festival is directed by Michiko Tanaka and organised by Setouchi Circus Factory, which has recently become a member of Circostrada. It is Japan's first festival solely dedicated to contemporary circus. We had met its founding director once before in April 2016 during the third edition of FRESH CIRCUS ¹⁵ at La Villette, Paris, during a panel discussion on "New projects changing the artistic landscape in Asia". This time, she set out her project, which aims to establish an independent organisation for freely creating artistic projects, develop partnerships with local authorities, host residencies and shows, breathe life into a scarcely populated province marked by years of agricultural and livestock farming, decentralise contemporary culture, which is deeply rooted in Tokyo and other cities, structure the circus arts in Japan and forge international partnerships. Setouchi Circus Factory also serves as a resource centre for contemporary circus arts.



¹⁶ Literally: "something coming", "incarnation", "entity which is coming", "possession".

¹⁷ Traditional form of theatre in which characters are played by large puppets moved by three puppeteers in full view of the audience. This art form has been listed by UNESCO as intangible human cultural heritage since 2008.

¹⁸ CircusNext is a European cooperation project, coordinated by "Jeunes talents cirque Europe" with the support of the European Commission (Culture Programme).

¹⁹ For more information on companies and artists contact information, see page 16

²⁰ Nagamekurasitsu is the first circus company to play a theatre building in Japan (see more details on page 20)

The creators. The artistic projects developed and welcomed by Michiko Tanaka include Yori Kuru Mono ¹⁶, an artistic residency featuring French collective GdRA and master Bunraku ¹⁷ puppeteer Yoshida Kanroku. This was initiated by the Usine - National centre for street arts and art in public space in Tournefeuille / Toulouse Métropole (France) and involves a play which questions the way traditional practices are passed down from generation to generation. It lies somewhere between disenchantment and pragmatism, featuring a blend of French and Japanese texts, Bunraku, acrobatics, video footage and music. We also witnessed an audience's enthusiastic reaction to *L'instinct du déséquilibre* by another French circus company - léto - also programmed at Seto La Piste as part of the Circus-Next ¹⁸ European season of circus arts, supported by the *Institut français* (Paris).

Back in Tokyo, our artistic encounters continued ¹⁹. Japanese company Nagamekurasitsu ²⁰ presented its new production, *Leave the heart behind*, which was being performed at Setagaya Public Theatre. This poetic fresco is choreographed and directed by juggler Yosuke Meguro and features a mix of dancers, jugglers, musicians and acrobats. Keisuke Kanai, from the 13th class to graduate from the National Centre for Circus Arts in Châlons-en-Champagne (France) told us about his latest project,

Do Kendama (Le chemin du bilboquet). This is a performance-lecture for all ages that tells the story of the Japanese cup-and-ball game and subverts the country's taboos and cultural stereotypes. Atypical juggler Hisashi Watanabe is exploring new possibilities through a technique dubbed "floor juggling" and explained how he relates to the body and movement. And last but not least, we discovered the mime company Sivouplait, the eccentric R mansion and Cru Cru Cirque DX collectives and the clowns Fukuro Kouji and Sakunoki.

What now? What have we taken away from our week-long research trip to Japan? The need to go back, of course! But we also want to extend the experience by ensuring that these meetings and encounters bear fruit. We want to give professional circus and street artists the opportunity to build lasting international partnerships, contribute to the growing breadth and diversity of artistic offerings, and finally, strengthen the existing bonds between Europe and Japan. Circostrada network's next research trip is to Ethiopia in February 2018!



Focus on two Japanese organizations

Gekionkyo - National Association of Public Theatres and Music Halls in Japan

Gekionkyo is the Japanese name of the national network organization composed by 40 public theatres and music halls throughout the country, offering various projects ranging from self-produced performances, national and international programme as well as projects dedicated to the local community.

How does it work? In Japan, there are over 2000 public theatres and concert halls built by prefectural and local municipal governments, but only a few of these venues produce original performances on their own. Each venue differs in size and operates individually to meet local or regional purposes. In general, facilities plan their own performance programme. The budget is composed as follows: one-third comes from public funds, another from ticket sales and the remaining third comes from private sponsors. The Japanese financial year begins in April and ends in March. Programme planning is made during the summer and the budget forecasted by fall. Along with the budget, public fund applications for the following year are also submitted in the fall, including the Cultural Affairs Agency of the Japanese Government and the Japan Foundation: in case of international co-production projects, the budget approval process will begin earlier.

International collaborations

Therefore, not all Gekionkyo members are capable of producing or co-producing international performances, but most of them have an interest in international cooperation, notably regarding circus and street arts proposals. In the context of Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games ahead, a wide variety of cultural projects are currently being explored. Many of the Gekionkyo members will be offering special programmes and they are looking for international partnerships!

Contact information: Mr. Masato Kishi – Executive Director of Toshima Performing Arts Center Owlspot Theater (kishi@owlspot.jp)

Find the full Gekionkyo members list:
<https://www.gekionkyo.org/english>

Japan Art Foundation - Performing Art Japan (PAJ)

PAJ provides financial assistance to Japan-related performing arts projects in the US and Canada (PAJ North-America) or Europe (PAJ Europe) that aim to introduce Japanese performing arts to local audiences in these areas or to facilitate exchange between leading artists in Japan and North America or Europe.

Japan Arts Foundation aims to support the promotion of Japanese arts and culture overseas. It subsidises tours and productions in foreign territories through grants, as well as publishing a range of educational materials and media.

https://www.jpf.go.jp/e/project/culture/perform/supportlist_perform/paj/PAJ.html

HISTORICAL LANDMARKS AND CURRENT CHALLENGES

Circus & Street arts in Japan: a few historical landmarks

By Tatsuhiro Ishii

Since the beginning of the 1990s, I have been witnessing an upheaval of what could be categorized as “nouveau cirque”, especially in France. At the end of the 80s, I had the chance to see *Le Cirque du Soleil* in New York City, and the performance had quite an impact on me. However, I was more intrigued by a specific phenomenon taking place over the same period in Europe, namely, I am referring to the emergence of independent, artistic and smaller-scale circuses. I had the opportunity to encounter some of them, such as Cirque Baroque, Cirque Ici, etc.

While listening to the presentation on the European panorama for circus and street arts given by the Circostrada members, I realized that the situation in Japan was nothing alike. Above all, I was envious of the fact that in Europe, performances delivered by new circus companies are regarded as “art”, the same way people value and enjoy dance, music, or rock concerts. Lastly, I was surprised to find out that a network such as Circostrada, connecting European countries through circus and street arts, even existed. We only have one or two traditional big circus companies in Japan and no small, artistic, individual-oriented ones.

“Misemono”

However, in Japan we have a very long history of street jugglers, acrobats and magicians. We could probably trace their presence back to the 8th century, when certain acrobatic acts, magic or shamanistic rituals were handed down to Japan by China. Those performers usually belonged to the lowest social ladder of the feudal society, and used to wander about the different districts of the country, performing on the streets, within Buddhist temples or Shinto shrines. This performance style was called “misemono” in the Edo Period (1603-1868), at the height of Japan’s prosperity. The word “misemono” has different meanings and can be at times translated as “show tent”, “side

show”, “street performance”, “tricky magic show” or “freak show”. It has a connotation of being “indecipherable”, “shady” or “questionable”.

*Kabuki*²¹ is now known internationally for being the representative of traditional Japanese performing arts. The latter are also famous for their stylized, all-male productions, along with their long tradition of female impersonators. But it is generally admitted that the very originator of *Kabuki* is Izumono-no-Okuni, a woman who used to roam about the different areas of Japan at the end of the 16th century, performing dance and drama for the common people on the street.

“Misemono” was very popular during rituals and festivities of Buddhist temples, Shinto shrines, and the number of performances assumedly reached over hundreds at its peak. However, due to the modernization of society, the number decreased rapidly.

A historical perspective

In the second half of the 19th century, a few Japanese acrobats began to cross the ocean in order to perform. The most famous legendary figure is Kosankichi Torigata (1842-1909), who stood out - among others - as an acrobat, not only in Japan but also in Europe. He stayed there for a long time and became very successful. Around this time, European and American acrobats also began to visit Japan. Therefore, we can say that mutual exchanges of artists between Japan and Western countries got underway in the late 19th century. From the end of the 19th century until the beginning of the 20th century, big circus companies from Europe and the US visited Japan and gained wide popularity. We used to have a long tradition of ritualistic horse riding related to martial arts. In some areas of Japan, it is still part of annual festivals. There are several documents referring to “umashibai”, a theatrical performance played on horsebacks in the feudal age. Yet, almost 100 years have passed since it disappeared, and we know little about it.

²¹ Kabuki, originally defined as ‘to slant’, or ‘to tilt’, is a dynamic theatre form that emerged around 1600 during a period of rigorous social control and conformism. Although strongly imprinted with the aristocratic Noh, Kabuki developed as a popular entertainment for the masses. Kabuki presents swash-buckling tales of intrigue, revenge, supernatural events, high adventure, and complicated love affairs.



22 Kinoshita Circus is one of the oldest and most popular traditional circuses in Japan.

While Japan has a long tradition of enjoying acrobatics, juggling, magic on the street or in tents, the emergence of Western-style circus at the end of the 19th century was completely new and therefore quite astounding. It was a chain of complex shows including trapeze, acrobatics, magic, crowns and animals. As a result of Western influence, Japanese circus companies came up and travelled around Japan during the first part of the 20th century probably until sometime during the first part of the 1960s. After that, circus in Japan followed a course of decline, and the *Kinoshita Circus* counts among the few that has survived up until today.

Over the past thirty years, many Japanese have enjoyed *Bolshoi Circus*, *Cirque du Soleil*, *Kinoshita Circus*²³, and a few other Japanese circus companies, which may have closed by now. The Japanese fans, who were not that many but however eager to attend new French circus performances, smaller in scale than before but also more artful and creative, might have experienced some “nouveau cirque” groups. Some of those groups began to visit Japan and performed in small tents or theatres. *Cirque Baroque* was a precursor in this field, performing small-scale shows in a small tent. *Cirque Ici*, known for being Johann Le Guillerm’s own company, was invited to perform along with some musicians and made quite an impressive performance.

Many new artists from Europe and Canada, specialized either in acrobatics, magic or juggling, continue to visit Japan every year, and the Japanese from all generations enjoy their work. Although it does not happen very often, some unique European contemporary circus companies, like *Cirk VOST* from France and *Animal Religion* from Spain, visited Japan in 2016.

What about now?

What is the current situation of Japanese performers? Even in our time, I regret that when compared to some European countries, we do not have any innovative, creative, and artistic circus companies, let alone small ones. However, the situation regarding acrobatics, juggling and circus acts has been changing over the past twenty years. Some Japanese acrobats or jugglers of the younger generation have trained in Europe, as well

as others who are trained in Japan. They continue to work internationally at a very high level, like for instance Hisashi Watanabe (juggler), Keisuke Kanai (juggler, acrobat, mime and performer of other circus acts) and Shoichi Kasuo (skipping rope), to name a few.

Moreover, there are also groups and companies specialized in acrobatics, juggling, and circus acts: *Han Mime Kobo* (a company founded in 1976 and devoted to mime and crown act); *Jidai* (a mime group based on Polish Stefan Niedzialkowski technique); *To R Mansion* (a theatrical company of comical act and acrobatics); *Nagametsu-Kurashitsu* (juggling and acrobatics in a theatrical style); *CAVA* (a mime group), etc.

We should also mention the *International Circus Village*, founded in 2001 by Keiichi Nishida, which became the first independent circus school established in Japan, specialized in training for acrobatics, juggling and crowing.

Contemporary dance and theatre are surprisingly active in Japan, whereas unfortunately the contemporary circus scene is not very present. However, there are many street performers in juggling, magic and acrobatics, and big street arts festivals are being held annually in some cities. As we have seen, we have a few artists and groups working independently in the field of circus and beyond. In order to have more artful and creative circus performances in Japan, it is necessary that public and private foundations provide them with subsidies, just as they do for other contemporary art forms. I am sure that change is about to come, it might even be just around the corner, despite rather slow progress. That being said, there is a constant exchange of artists from the new generation in this field between Japan, Europe and Canada.



Tatsuro Ishii

Japanese Society for Dance Research, International Association of Theater Critics, Japan Contemporary Dance Network Art Centre, Keio University

Want to know more?

Glossary of Japanese Modern and Contemporary Theatre

<https://tokyostages.wordpress.com/glossary-of-japanese-modern-contemporary-theatre/>

Making the “whole town a stage” - The man behind Japan’s street performance festivals. Interview of Takao Hashimoto

http://www.performingarts.jp/E/pre_interview/1006/1.html

Overview of the arts and cultural situation towards and beyond TOKYO 2020

By Mariko Konno

Since Tokyo has won a bid of the host city for the Olympics and Paralympic games in 2020, the Japanese cultural sector has become highly motivated to design the framework and strategy for the Cultural Olympiad. The Tokyo 2020 Organising Committee has formulated an Action & Legacy plan including Culture and Education, promoting actions such as the support of unseen-ever art and cultural expressions from traditional to contemporary, from local to international, as well as collaborations with artists worldwide and region-wide. The international programme is one of the major pillars of the Cultural Olympiad, together with specific projects involving disabled people and young artists.

However, the budget for the Cultural Olympiad is not yet secured enough at the national level. Therefore, generating an extra budget from the regular national sources and restructuring the funding system and improving its diffusion are the urgent tasks ahead. Meanwhile, each local government is also managing its own regular funding for use of Cultural Olympiad.

Since October 2016, the 2020 Committee has officially started to authorise the cultural programmes initiated by public cultural sectors throughout Japan, by stamping the official logo marks of TOKYO2020 to promote the Cultural Olympiad. Engaging with the 2020 Committee, as the hosting city, Tokyo Metropolitan Government is also pursuing its own cultural programme by initiating leading projects and providing bigger scale grants for artistic and cultural projects. Also, Tokyo Festival, the

International annual festival for arts and culture, has been launched in autumn 2016 and aims at implementing not only the Cultural Olympiad vision, but also at reflecting Tokyo Vision for Arts and Culture issued in 2015. Other regional governments are also very positive about boosting up the community potential by taking part in the Cultural Olympiad.

In order to implement the above-mentioned plans effectively towards 2020, and to form up a more sustainable world beyond then, there is a significant need to develop more sustainable infrastructures in the cultural sector in Japan. Even though Japan inherited a wealth of culture from the past, the percentage of national budget dedicated to culture was estimated around 0.1% in 2016. There are approximately 3,300 public funded halls and theatres (venues with more than 300 seats) but their structure is mainly used for hire. Since 1990's, the nomination of an artistic director for halls and theatres has been implemented nationwide, but its percentage is still at around 7.2% in total number of halls and theatres (as of 2015). The lack of space for creation for individual artists and companies as well as fundraising are other concerning issues to deal with in the future.

Interacting with the private and commercial sectors, which also activate arts and culture, 2020 will be a milestone for Japan as a member of the international community, to develop a better world through art and culture.

Mariko Konno

Senior Program Officer, Arts Council Tokyo

CIRCOSTRADA TOP-10 VENUES AND FESTIVALS ACROSS JAPAN FOR CIRCUS AND STREET ARTS

Short descriptions, tips and contact information

Japan is a very centralized country in terms of cultural policies. Most art institutions are based in Tokyo, which gathers the essential of the cultural offer. However, it is important to underline that an increasing range of initiatives are emerging all around Japan, as an attempt to decentralize the cultural offer, to put forward high quality art works in regions and to revitalize territories suffering from depopulation through culture.

The following section reviews not-to-be-missed organisations; art institutions, festivals and cultural organisations, ranging from national major institutions in Tokyo to local and regional-wide organisations with a strong focus on community work.

They all contribute to making circus and street arts grow in Japan, looking for new collaborations, artistic exchanges and proposals!

Keep in mind that...

The Japanese tax year starts in April, which means that every venue and festival finalise its annual programme between summer and fall. As an example, the programme for the period April 2017 - March 2018 is already closed but most of them are already looking for proposals for 2018-2019!

Tokyo Metropolitan Theatre

📍 Tokyo

Tokyo Metropolitan Theatre is Tokyo's largest public theatre complex dedicated to performing arts (music, theatre, opera, dance). Inaugurated in 1990 in the neighbourhood of Ikebukuro by the Tokyo Metropolitan Government - as part of the national program for new public cultural facilities around Japan - it is operated by Tokyo Metropolitan Foundation for

History and Culture. It has four performance spaces and hosts opera, concerts, international productions, festivals...

Some of Tokyo Metropolitan programmers demonstrate a growing interest in programming circus performances (for example "L'homme de Hus" by Camille Boitel in 2016...)

Equipment: Concert hall (1999 seats), a playhouse (834 seats), Theatre East (272-324 seats), Theatre West (195-270 seats), exhibition and gallery spaces, 6 rehearsal rooms...

Contact Info: Keiko Miyamura, Program Director
(She speaks English)

Email: keiko-miyamura@tokyo-geigeki.jp

Phone: +81 (0)3-5391-2115

Website: www.geigeki.jp



Za-Koenji Theatre

📍 Tokyo

ZA-KOENJI Public Theatre is a non-profit organisation funded by the district of Sugunami (Tokyo) and renovated in 2009. It is dedicated to contemporary performing arts. The theatre produces, programmes and supports a wide range of cultural activities for the community of Sugunami, with a strong focus on community projects and international collaborations, notably in circus arts (Phia Ménard, Cirque inachevé, Jörg Müller etc). Koenji Theater runs an

important festival for young audiences in July and produces each year a production that they run during one month for all the children living in the neighbourhood.

Koenji Theatre also produces the “Koenji Bikkuri Street Performance Festival” - a street arts festival happening every year at the end of April in the district of Koenji (600.000 inhabitants).



Equipment: Za-Koenji Main Auditorium, flexible flat space allowing different stage and seating configurations with a capacity of 230 seats, Za-Koenji Civil Hall a 300-seater conventional theatre space, rehearsal studios, sets and props construction workshop, costume design workshop, a coffee house, contemporary Japanese theatre archives...

Contact Info: Megumi Ishii, Executive Producer (She speaks English and French)

Email: m.ishii@theatre-koenji.jp

Phone: +81(0)3-3223-7500

Website: www.za-koenji.jp

Setagaya Public Theatre

📍 Tokyo

Built in 1997, the Setagaya Public Theatre is dedicated to contemporary performing arts and participatory programmes. Like many other theatres in Japan, Setagaya Public Theater is located in the bizarrely named “Carrot Tower” in west Tokyo’s Sangenchaya district, on the third floor of a 26-floor skyscraper!

Setagaya regularly programs indoor circus performances (i-e Nagamekurashitsu, Enra juggling company...) and organises “Sancha de Diadogeï” - a two-day street performance festival held each fall in the Setagaya district.

Equipment: 600-seat Setagaya Public Theatre, 225-seat Theatre Tram, rehearsal studios, sound studio.

Contact Info: Atsumi Sakai, Executive Producer (She speaks English)

Email: a-sakai@setagaya-ac.net

Phone: +81-(0)3-5432-1520

Website: www.setagaya-pt.jp/



Kyoto Art Center

📍 Kyoto

Kyoto Art Center (KAC) is a public theatre, which belongs to the City of Kyoto. Held in a former elementary school renovated in 2000, the wood building of KAC is registered as a Tangible Cultural Property by the Japanese government. Kyoto Art Center has three main missions: 1) to support young artists in their projects regardless of genre, 2) to collect and disseminate information on arts and culture, 3) to promote communication between artists and citizens. KAC activities include visual art exhibitions,

tea ceremonies, traditional stage performances, innovative workshops, concerts and dance performances.

KAC Artist-in-Residence Program also offers support to emerging artists and researchers wishing to create in Kyoto, providing opportunities and means of staying in the city and interacting with the community (production fees, travel & accommodation for a period of maximum 3 months)



Equipment: Auditorium multi-purpose hall (performances, exhibitions, tea ceremonies, workshops), 2 performance rooms (200-seats), 12 studios for rehearsal (former classrooms), 2 exhibition rooms, a library-coffee “Coffee Meirin” including books, visual and audio resources available to the public.

Contact Info: Mami Katsuya, Program Director (She speaks English)

Email: katsuya@kac.or.jp

Phone: +81-75-213-1000

Website: <http://www.kac.or.jp/eng/>

Kōchi Museum of Art

📍 Kōchi

Established in 1993 by the City of Kōchi, the Kōchi Museum of Art hosts a permanent collection showcasing works performed by local artists from Kōchi Prefecture, but also international expressionist artists (Paul Klee, Georg Baselitz, Julian Schnabel) as well as a major collection of Marc Chagall – the largest such collection of Chagall’s work in Japan. Surrounded by two rivers, this impressive building was designed around the concept of a space to nurture a greater appreciation of water. The particularity of Kōchi Museum of Art is to co-produce (including international co-productions), provide

artistic residencies and programs traditional (Noh plays) but also very contemporary performing arts performances. The Museum Hall programs approximately 15 shows a year, including circus and street arts.

Examples of past international co-productions: Berlin Kinder-Circus “Taborka” (1998), Pina Bausch (1993), Gemma Brockis & Silvia Mercuriali “Pinocchio” (2008), Strange Fruit “Swoon” (2010), Jaco Van Dormael & Michèle Anne De Mey “Kriss and Cry” (2016), XY Company « Il n’est pas encore minuit... » in the frame of Kōchi Performing Arts Festival (2017).



Equipment: Museum Hall (399 seats) for dance performances, noh theatre, concerts, cultural and community activities and a set within a large garden surrounded by water.

Contact Info: Naoyoshi Fujita, Director

Chizuru Matsumoto, Programmer (Both speak English)

Email: naoyoshi_fujita@kochi-bunkazaidan.or.jp

chizuru_matsumoto@kochi-bunkazaidan.or.jp

Phone: +81-88-866-8000

Website: <http://www.kochi-bunkazaidan.or.jp/~museum/>

Bird Theater

📍 Tottori

Founded in 2006 by Nakashima Makoto, BIRD Theater company is both a theatre company and a venue located in a refurbished kindergarten and a school-gymnasium in the town of Shikano (part of Tottori-City and Tottori Prefecture in southwest Japan). Much work is put not only into performances but also into establishing the theatre as the cultural centre of the local community, and into educational

and participatory programmes (notably with schools and disabled people).

Since 2008, BIRD Theater also runs the BIRD Theatre Festival TOTTORI, a circus and street festival with an international focus (NUUA Company « Lento » (2015), XY Company « Il n'est pas encore minuit... » (2016)



Equipment: Theatre Auditorium - old primary-school gymnasium (196-seats), Studio-old kindergarten (90 seats), also used as a "foyer" with BIRD Café.

Contact Info: Nakashima Makoto, Artistic Director (He speaks English)

Email: nakashima@birdtheatre.org

Phone: +81-90-8743-8639

Website: www.birdtheatre.org

Setouchi Circus Factory / « Seto la Piste » Festival

📍 Takamatsu

Setouchi Circus Factory (SCF) is the first resource centre dedicated to contemporary circus in Japan, aiming at developing and structuring the field by providing contacts, international opportunities and training to emergent artists. Created in 2011 by Michiko Tanaka, Setouchi Circus Factory is based in Takamatsu City, in Shikoku Island, crossing the Seto inland sea in the southeast of Japan.

SCF also runs a 3-day circus festival, called "Seto la Piste" in the region of Takamatsu. A few Circostrada members visited the second and last edition in December 2016. Since 2017, SCF is also a member of Circostrada.

In a nutshell, Michiko is your entrance door if you want to know everything about circus arts in Japan and she is eager to develop new contacts and artistic collaborations! Here are some examples of current collaborations between SCF and European fellow organisations: *Institut français / "Nuit Blanche Kyoto"*, where SCF programs circus performances, *Compagnie GdRA/Bunraku* puppeteer Yoshida Kanroku in partnership with *l'Usine/Tournefeuille*, collaboration with *CNAC- National Center for Circus Arts in Chalon etc....*

Contact Info: Michiko Tanaka, Artistic Director (She speaks English and French)

Email: mitintin@hotmail.co.jp

Phone: +81-80-3265-8505

Website: www.setouchicircusfactory.com

<https://www.facebook.com/setouchicircusfactory/>



SETOUCHI CIRCUS FACTORY

Setouchi Art Triennale

📍 Takamatsu

Setouchi Art Triennale is one of the projects of the "Benesse Art Site Foundation", funded by the billionaire, former chairman of Benesse Holdings and art lover Soichiro Fukutake on a dozen islands in the Seto Inland Sea (between Honshu and Shikoku, two of Japan's main islands).

Major contemporary art festival, the Setouchi Triennale is held every three years, where more than a hundred artists from Japan and overseas - working in almost every medium possible - conceive and exhibit a site-specific art piece disseminated on the islands of the Seto inland sea.

In addition, a considerable number of museums and artworks are visible throughout the year, including

permanent art installations and initiatives such as the *Art House Project* - a collection of abandoned traditional houses and temples that have been converted into living art installations by Japanese and international artists.

Symbiosis of art, architecture and landscape, the Setouchi Triennale has become a not-to-be-missed destination witnessing the revitalization of the region in a sustainable and creative way and bringing contemporary art and economic vitality into aging and depopulated areas.



Last edition: March-November 2016

Next edition in 2019

Website: <http://setouchi-artfest.jp/en/>

Art House Project: <http://benesse-artsite.jp/en/art/arthouse.html>

TPAM – Tokyo Performing Art Market

📍 Yokohama

Tokyo Performing Arts Market (TPAM) is an international industry networking event taking place every year in February in the city of Yokohama (1 hour by train from Tokyo). Dedicated to performing arts professionals, TPAM offers many satellite professional events, as well as a rich artistic programme aiming at showcasing local and international performances. TPAM is one of the major performing arts platforms in Asia. The last edition took place on February 2-19, 2017 (free-based event upon registration)

TPAM includes 3 programmes for professionals:

TPAM Exchange: TPAM's networking programme for information sharing, promotion of one's productions and projects, meetings on topics that participants propose and open discussions on issues around the situation of performing arts in the world.

TPAM Direction: TPAM's showing programme reflects the currents of contemporary performing arts in Asia and the world.

TPAM Fringe: TPAM open-call programme for artists and companies looking for opportunities, international touring and new audiences; and for TPAM participants to discover emerging talents and new works.

More Info

Website: <https://www.tpam.or.jp/2017/en/>



国際舞台芸術ミーティング
Performing Arts Meeting

Festival/Tokyo

📍 Tokyo

Festival/Tokyo (F/T) is the leading performing arts festival in Japan, funded by Tokyo Metropolitan Government and Toshima City (northwest of Tokyo). It replaced the previous annual Tokyo International Arts Festival in 2009 (which was itself a rebranding of a biannual festival first held in 1988).

F/T has introduced many major European artists to Japanese audiences, developed work by local artists and also launched a pioneering programme for emerging artists across Asia to present their work. F/T has also a circus programme.

Next edition: September 30th - November 12th, 2017

Contact Info: Shiori Sunagawa, Producer (She speaks English)

Email: s-sunagawa@festival-tokyo.jp

Website: <http://www.festival-tokyo.jp/en>



SOME OF THE MOST IMPORTANT STREET FESTIVALS ACROSS JAPAN

Tokyo and its region

Sancha de Diadogei - Setagaya Street Performance Festival

📍 Tokyo

Co-produced by Setagaya Public Theater, Sancha de Diadogei is a two-day street performance festival held each autumn in Setagaya district, in west Tokyo.

Website: <http://setagaya-pt.jp/en/performances-en/201610daidougei.html>

Koenji Bikkuri Street Performance Festival

📍 Tokyo

Koenji Street Performer Festival (Koenji Bikkuri Daidougei) is an annual event held during Golden Week in Koenji, Tokyo.

Last edition: April 29-30, 2017

Trolls in the Park

📍 Tokyo

"Open air stage in a park" - Zempukuji Park

Next edition: November 3-23, 2017

Contact Info: Machiko Watanabe

Email: mobydic3@gmail.com

Website: www.trollsinthepark.com

Dance New Air festival

📍 Tokyo

Held every two years and mainly focused on dance, New Air Festival is also opened to other performing arts in the public space.

Next edition: October 1-10, 2018

Website: <http://dancenewair.tokyo/about-en>

Heaven Artists Project

📍 Tokyo

Initiated in 2002 by the Tokyo Metropolitan Authority, the "Heaven Artists Project" is a system that licenses street artists who pass the audition of a judging committee to give them the opportunity to perform in public places all over the metropolitan area and all around the year (outside festival period).

Noge Daidogei (Street Performance) 2017

📍 Yokohama

Noge Daidogei is one of the oldest and most popular street performance festival held in Japan. It is an annual festival where street performances are held on the streets of Noge district, Yokohama.

Last edition: April 22-23, 2017

Website: <http://nogedaidogei.com>

Southwest of Japan

BIRD Theatre Festival TOTTORI

📍 Tottori

Held for the first time in 2008 and organised by the BIRD Theater company, the BIRD Theatre Festival Tottori programs circus and street shows, featuring international companies.

Website: <http://www.birdtheatre.org>

Japan Juggling Festival 2017

📍 Fukuoka

Last edition: September 22-24, 2017

Contact Info: Hiroyasu Kurose - Board member Japan Juggling Association

Email: kurose@juggling.jp

Website: <http://www.juggling.jp/jf/2017/jp/>

<https://www.facebook.com/Japan-Juggling-Festival-729718833710947/>

Southeast of Japan

Daidogei World Cup

📍 Shizuoka

Held every year at the start of November, the Daidogei World Cup in Shizuoka is a four-day street performance festival.

Next edition: November 2-5, 2017

Website: <http://www.daidogei.com/english/>

Open air performing arts festival under Mount Fuji

📍 Shizuoka

Shizuoka Performing Arts Center (SPAC) hold an annual World Theatre Festival in Shizuoka, under the Mount Fuji and its beautiful scenic area, programming a wide range of cutting-edge theatre programs from Japan and abroad at venues in Shizuoka City and the surroundings. Coinciding each year with the national Golden Week holiday in Japan, SPAC also organises at the same period the Shizuoka Street Theater Festival "Strange Seed".

Last edition: April 28-May 7, 2017

Website: <http://www.strangeseed.info>

Okinawa Island

Ricca ricca*festa - International Theater Festival Okinawa for Young Audience

📍 Naha City (Okinawa Island)

Held for the first time in 1994 on Okinawa Island, Ricca ricca*festa is a summer performing arts festival happening each year in July for children and young people presenting a range of theatre, dance, puppetry, physical theatre, circus and interdisciplinary works from Japan, Asia and all over the world.

Last edition: July 24-30, 2017

Website: <http://2017eng.nuchigusui-fest.com>

THE ARTISTIC ADDRESS BOOK OF THE NETWORK

Here you will find an overview of some of the street and circus artists/companies we have met. We recommend you to have a look at their work. You might probably recognize some of them as some companies have already toured around Europe; others are eager to establish new contacts and to show their work overseas!

Hisashi Watanabe (Juggling arts)

Hisashi Watanabe has emerged on the Japanese performing arts scene like a shooting star with a new type of performance that skirts the boundaries between contemporary dance and juggling, which he calls "Floor Juggling." You can read the full interview of Hisashi Watanabe at http://www.performingarts.jp/E/art_interview/1701/1.html

Creation 2015: "Inverted tree"

Discover the trailer:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qpjz72NFwew>



European Touring 2017: SPRING Festival, March 24 (Elbeuf, France) - Rencontres des Jonglages, April 30 (Paris, France) - Mirabilia, June 28-30 (Fossano, Italy)

Contact Info: atamatokuchi@gmail.com

<http://atamatokuchi.com>

Compagnie Sivouplait (Street arts/Mime)

A silent, pantomime, danced and physical Japanese couple in the mood of Japanese manga and love. "A silent couple in humorous white", Nozomi Horie and Takeshi Shibasaki's gentle street theatre satire on the perfect couple in love.

Creation 2017: "S-CARGO A GO-GO", by company Sivouplait and The Escagots (Japan/Belgium)



European Touring 2017: Festival Namur en Mai, May 26-28 (Namur, France)

Contact Info: cba07312@nifty.com

<http://svp.twinstar.jp/home.html>

Nagamekurasitsu (Juggling arts)

Nagamekurasitsu was formed by juggler and stage director Yosuke Meguro, with the aim of creating theatre-style art pieces which combine juggling and music. With a focus on juggling, stage design and live music, the company creates performances as cross-genre physical expressions. In recent years, the group has focused on talent development and promotion of juggling as an art form. Nagamekurasitsu is one of the few circus companies touring and performing in theatre venues in Japan.

Creation 2016: "Leave the heart behind"

Discover the trailer:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pmCx2wHzoCk>



Contact Info: nagameinfo@gmail.com
<http://nagamekurasitsu.com/index.html>

Cru Cru Cirque DX (Circus techniques, mime)

Cru Cru Cirque DX is a circus company composed of four friends mixing clowning with juggling (various props), street culture and manga atmosphere.

Creation 2016: [8Q3] is performed by 4 Japanese men, all born in the Showa period (Emperor Hirohito period). "Love and Violence", "Smile and Hatred" and "Enlightenment and ambivalence", they challenge all the taboo of the Japanese society. [8Q3] is a non-verbal performance which defies the boundaries of a classical circus show; with a taste of Yakuza film!



European Touring:

- Oerol festival, June 9-12 2017 (Terschelling, Netherlands)
- Mirabilia, June 28-30 2017 (Fossano, Italy)
- Del Mundo, June 24-26 2017 (Maasmechelen, Belgium)

Contact Info: info@crucru.net

<http://www.crucru.net>

Keisuke Kanai (Solo circus artist)

Former student at the Centre National des Arts du Cirque (National Centre of Circus Arts), Keisuke Kanai has been working with Philippe Decouflé, Camille Boitel, Heddy Maalem, Baro d'Evel company to name a few.

Dancer, mime artist, acrobat and juggler, Keisuke is leading a project for Tokyo2020 Cultural Olympiad in Japan with disabled people. He also develops several artistic projects including solo piece *Do Kendama (Le Chemin du bilboquet)*. He is also one of the members of Cru Cru Cirque DX company.



Contact Info: Keisuke Kanai

Email: keisukekanai@gmail.com

(He speaks English and French)

<http://keisukekanai.blog87.fc2.com/>

To R Mansion (Clown, acrobatics, humour, magic)

Based on pantomime, humour, dance, acrobatics and magic, To R Mansion street company has already performed worldwide.

Manga-like hilarious world, cartoon scenes, juggling, they entertain the audience and seduce the whole family with their boundless energy!

Contact Info: Kayo Nozaki

Email: to-r-m@kta.biglobe.ne.jp

(She speaks English and French)

www.tormansion.com



Cover picture

© Marie-O Roux,
drawing of Tokyo realised
in December 2016

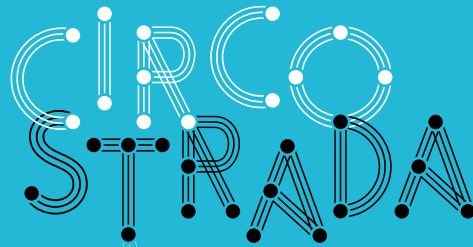
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