

Negotiating Democracy: A Cultural and Theoretical Analysis of Theatre for Children and
Young People in Postwar Japan

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ABSTRACT

Underneath the imposition of democratic ideology during the Occupation years, Japanese society underwent enormous changes that impacted almost every facet of the community, from individuals to institutions, the education and economic systems, and the notion of the public sphere. In many ways, theatre for young audiences in postwar Japan is the manifestation of the project of democratization that began in the aftermath of the explosion experienced around the world. From promoting the democratic ideology imposed by the United States after the war to becoming a tool of grass roots movements and community groups, the evolution and growth of the field of theatre for children and young people in postwar Japan presents evidence of both democracy's success and its problems. This dissertation examines the major movements in the field of theatre for children and young people in postwar Japan, and argues that as youth increasingly became seen as the future of the nation and the direct target of democratization efforts, the realm of theatre for children and young people in Japan became a space of negotiation, transmission, and transformation of these democratic values. The field was shaped

by artists' responses to the historical and material circumstances of the postwar period, and the shifting and challenged notions of youth and childhood left in the war's wake.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Like a scar protruding from the landscape of memory, the Pacific War, or World War II, remains a constant presence in modern Japan. Generations of educators, politicians, artists, intellectuals, and citizens alike have grappled with the complex political and social milieu left behind by the war, exemplified by shaken conceptions of family, community, and nation. Japan has since struggled with the legacies of domination and victimization, and they reflect strongly on its position as a former occupier and an occupied space, as the victim of the world's only nuclear attack, and as the perpetrator of horrific violence throughout the Asia-Pacific region. These struggles marked the postwar stage in Japan, which provided a collective voice to a wide cross-section of those who were thrust or born into the post-Hiroshima world. Consciously and unconsciously, narratives of the modern postwar stage in Japan reflect a story strongly influenced by the persistent, lingering memory of the war, the political circumstances of its aftermath, and a strong desire to never repeat the mistakes of the past. Artists in Japan and around the world engaged intensely with this new order amidst rapidly shifting dynamics of international and localized power. The stage became one of the most important foci of these movements in the postwar period as it simultaneously became an instrument of democratization efforts, political organizations, and grassroots citizens' movements.

Each of these movements or efforts specifically targeted children and ideologies of childhood in their quest to insert influence in postwar Japanese society. Each effort was also strongly motivated by the concepts of war memory and democracy, and these ideologies shaped the field of theatre for children and young audiences in Japan for generations to come. Almost immediately following the war's end, there was an explosion of work targeting children and

young people in community auditoriums and schools across the country, and while much of it was amateur, it paved the way for a vibrant, professional, and organized youth and family theatre movement that reached almost every community in the nation by the 1970s. These movements have largely been ignored in the narratives of postwar theatre historiography, but they drew the attention of artists and local citizens alike, and parallel many of the same impulses that thrust Japan's well-known and well-documented experimental artistic movement of the 1960s into the international spotlight.

These impulses emerged not only from the new postwar order, but also from the seeds of modernity sown before it. Postwar *jidō seishōnen engeki*, the field of “theatre for children and young people,” as it is known in Japan, is defined as adults (and adolescents, at times) performing works for child and adolescent audiences of school age. The movement is inextricably tied to numerous cross currents rooted in a conversation with the “West” back to the Meiji period that shaped modern Japan, including its forms of art. Both the prewar forms and new movements shared an important place in postwar Japan. According to the artist Enomoto Kazuko:

The 1950s and 1960s meant that the craving for recovery from the ashes of war produced an energy different from today. Politics, society, and culture were filled with unprecedented vitality. On the one hand, the prewar musical, artistic, and literary establishment was revived; on the other, young artists with a clear understanding of contemporary issues attempted to express themselves outside this framework in progressive ways (Havens, *Radicals* 4).

As I will demonstrate, Enomoto's picture of a vibrant, politically engaged artistic community almost perfectly frames the expansion and development of the form of theatre for children and young people in postwar Japan.¹

This dissertation examines the major movements in youth theatre, or the theatre for children and young audiences, that emerged in Japan during the first thirty years of the postwar period. It also frames them against the dominant narratives that have come to define the modern and postmodern stage. For example, in a personal interview, the director and playwright Fujita Asaya, one of the foremost figures in the field, ties the early expansion and development of theatre performed by adults for children in Japan directly to the early experiments inspired by Europe or "Western" theatre, called *shingeki* or "new theatre," as well as subsequent reactions against this form. In the immediate years following the end of the war, this encounter was reflected in the important role that *shingeki* companies played in shaping the genre of theatre for children and young people. In the 1960s, however, as many emerging artists came of age in a democratic Japan, this new generation sought to redefine Japanese identity through a return to popularly imagined roots in the form of fascination with the rural and radical experimentation with "traditional" form. Many of the same artists were also extremely concerned with the notion of childhood and the social influences that shaped it, and sought to engage directly in conversation with it through performances for children and young people.

Evidence of this appears even in canonical English language texts on modern Japanese theatre, including the oft-analyzed *angura* or "underground" theatre movement of the 1960s. In

¹ In standard Japanese lexicon, family names are stated before given names, and this is now the norm in the majority of academic publications on Japan in English. I have adhered to this custom throughout this study, with the exception of some works by Japanese authors published in English. In this case, I have cited the sources as published.

the inaugural 1969 issue of the journal *Concerned Theatre Japan*, the manifesto of Theatre Center 68/69, later known as Kuro Tendo, or the “Black Tent Theatre,” one of the *angura* theatre movement’s most visible groups and a prominent focus of the only English language journal of Japanese theatre to date, states that it aimed for a theatre that both “assaults the complacent bureaucrat” and “cajoles and caresses the children at the corner and gives them something beside the brain-rotting intoxicant of television to surge and explode in the corridors of their imaginations” (4).² Despite this link, scholars have thus far largely neglected to either examine or theorize any links between the prominent underground, experimental *angura* movement and the genre of theatre for children and young people in postwar Japan. Likewise, scholars have examined neither the shifting ideological construction of childhood in the popular imagination nor the parallel development of several theatre companies for children and young people at the same time. This oversight omits several possibilities for continuing to shape our understanding of the impact of the enormous changes in Japanese society in the postwar era, and their direct impact on the stage today.

Ric Knowles argues that all theatrical performance should be considered “cultural productions which serve specific cultural and theatrical communities at particular historical moments as sites for the negotiation, transmission, and transformation of cultural values, the products of their own place and time that are nevertheless productive of social and historical reification or change” (10), and this concept is foundational to this study. Likewise, the values of the turbulent postwar period continue to impact production today. Peter Eckersall asserts,

² *Concerned Theatre Japan* was published from 1969-1973. David Goodman edited the volume and has published several works reflecting on the experience. The volumes are an excellent primary source for English language researchers.

“The cultural space of the 1960s continues to haunt contemporary performance in Japan even though the era itself has turned to nostalgia” (*Theorizing* 21). With the objective of adding further insight into this dynamic time and space, this study not only scrutinizes the nuances of the parallels and connections between the cultural space of the 1960s and the stage, but also ties this directly to the development and proliferation of theatrical productions for children and young people in Japan during the same era.

Because the roots of this movement in many ways stem from policies concerning education and children’s rights implemented during the American occupation of Japan as well as the ideology of the Cold War, this study traces the path of works and theoretical positions of the early postwar era as well. Andrew Gordon, Carol Gluck, and others have pointed out that the conditions of “postwar” Japan cannot be understood simply as emerging from a point of rupture demarcated by the end of the war, however, and this study likewise argues that several pre-war factors, including Japan’s earliest encounters with the “West,” also strongly influenced the form of theatre for children and young people in the postwar period. The major movements of the postwar period cannot be understood without recognizing this first. The field of theatre for children and young people the 1960s and the first thirty years of postwar Japan in its entirety must therefore be understood as part of a much longer process, and as part of a cultural landscape that extended far beyond its shores.

Integrated Binaries

These sites of negotiation are complex, and stem from a seemingly endless continuum of factors. The end of the war and the imposition of democracy in postwar Japan created a society

defined by numerous binaries and seeming contradictions that shaped the circumstances of postwar Japan, postwar theatre in Japan, and the field of theatre for young audiences itself. Integrating the binaries of global and the local, “high” culture and folk, mass culture and the more immediate, the cultural landscape of postwar Japan resembled a postmodern “meta-mass” that Marilyn Ivy argues, “no longer exhibits the vertical cleavages of the past—the distinctions between high culture and mass culture, dominant culture and subculture, no longer apply...[C]ulture today is a mosaic of cultural styles. Culture is dispersed, fragmented, and decentered” (“Critical” 35). Japan’s rich and well-documented history of theatrical production for children and young people must be understood within the context of this rapidly shifting political and cultural landscape. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari famously made parallels between this degree of multiplicity and interconnectedness and a rhizome, declaring that the rhizome can and must be connected to anything else, does not follow any type of structural or generative model, has multiple points of entry, and, “may be broken, shattered at a given spot, but it will start up again on one of its old lines, or on new lines” (9). This conceptual model almost perfectly frames the social and cultural context of postwar Japan and has strong implications for any study of the theatre in postwar Japan, which, like nearly all aspects of daily life, was strongly influenced not only by the temporal past and present, but also by increasing interest in “tradition” and the local community, as well as the accelerating global flows of information and ideas.

Rob Wilson and Wimal Dissanayake, and Benedict Anderson before them, point out that increasing access to media worldwide brought the “global and local, city and country, the center and the periphery” together in “imagined communities” in new and totally unprecedented ways.

They are quick to note the seeming disjunction between global and localized interaction, pointing out that this is symptomatic of the postwar, postmodern condition, an increasingly “fractal terrain” in which “one-way models of domination” are joined by forces that “activate multiple lines of social invention, contestation, mobility, reimagining, coalition, and flight” (2-3). This study, therefore, seeks to place the history of early postwar theatre for young people in Japan within the multiple political, cultural, and ideological contexts of this period of time that simultaneously came to represent new birth, oppression, technology and consumerism, a search for roots, often in the past and in folk tradition, and increasing international and global influence.

Youth and Childhood Studies

The shifting conception of childhood, which directly shaped the development and expansion of theatre for children and young people in Japan’s postwar era, is one such point of multiplicity, rupture, and continuity. Referring to the impact of prewar notions of childhood in postwar Japan, Norma Field asserts:

Th[e] child, together with his father and mother, had to be transformed into the productive subject of the nation-state (ideologically cast as the devoted child of the emperor-father), while Asia had to be repudiated as [a] contaminating sign of backwardness. The desire to contest Westernization, when it emerged, took the form of the exoticization of the mature (though pure, bright, and presumably simple) native tradition. Somewhere in this process, the child of so-called folk society vanished, and discourse of childhood came into its own shortly after the war. (69)

While this is a study of the postwar stage in Japan, the discourse of child and youth studies strongly shapes it. As I have previously asserted, most theatre historians and researchers have thus far neglected to inform their research with notions of child and childhood, but scholars in the field of childhood and youth studies offer compelling evidence for the inclusion of these ideas in studies of the modern stage in Japan. Kathleen Uno argues, “Japanese modernity, a complex series of intertwined changes in society and culture that has been most commonly defined in terms of industrialization, demographic trends, class stratification, and nation-state formation, also involved significant changes in womanhood and childhood, and by extension in gender and household or family life as well” (*Passages* 6). The importance of these changes in childhood and family life greatly informs this study.

While studies of childhood have existed for decades, many disciplines globally have been slow to devote significant energy and analysis to their impact on key issues, including studies of the stage. In a 2002 article, Mary Bucholtz laments the short shrift youth culture and youth studies in general have been given globally in anthropological studies, and argues that the attention paid to adolescence focuses primarily on “initiation ceremonies, sexual practices, courtship and marital customs, [and] intergenerational relations,” a perspective that largely “downplay[s] youth-centered interaction and cultural production in favor of emphasis on the transition to adulthood” (525). Implicit in this assessment, by ignoring youth and childhood, one misses a key source of information on social anxiety. Carol Lorenz argues, “Because all language directed toward the child comes out of the social, educational, and artistic institutions that produce the idea of the child, the language inherently carries an adult point of view regarding the nature of the child and what the child is” (99). Christine Griffin offers another

concrete example of the numerous possibilities of expanded research. In her analysis of youth research conducted in the United States and the United Kingdom published in 2001, she references her earlier work, *Representations of Youth: The Study of Youth and Adolescence in Britain and America*, and argues, “Youth is...treated as a key indicator of the state of the nation itself...Young people are assumed to hold the key to the nation’s future, and the treatment and management of ‘youth’ is expected to provide the solution to the nation’s ‘problems’ (Griffin, 1993: 9-10). So research on ‘youth’ tells us at least as much about the social, psychological, and political concerns of adult societies, in all their diversity, as it does about the lives of the young people themselves” (“Imagining” 149). Joseph Zornado concurs, adding, “Seeing children’s stories as a cultural reproduction of the relationship between the adult and the child—determined as it is by the unconscious ideology harbored by the adult—offers a way of seeing diverse forms of children’s literature, human relationships, the story of Western culture, and the production and reproduction of dominant ideology of Western culture as diverse expressions of the same story” (4).

This idea is neither limited to Western cultures nor the present. Historians and researchers of the concept of childhood in Japan point to the past to explain conceptions of childhood today. Lizbeth Halliday Piel’s dissertation *The Ideology of the Child in Japan 1600-1945* argues that to understand the ideology of the “modern” child, one must look to both the recent and the distant past. She posits that not only were modern conceptions of childhood rooted in and shaped by the search for national identity that began in the Meiji Era in 1868, but also that the roots of this search began much earlier than this. According to Piel, “Important changes in the ways adults viewed and valued children in the Tokugawa period [1600-1868] are

tied to philosophical ideas about the Japanese spirit and the relationship between the family and the state. These ideas informed Meiji policies regarding the school system and child protection, and Meiji attitudes toward child rearing.” She adds, “Japan’s history of modernization in the 19th and 20th centuries provides a window on the way in which the modern ideology of the child emerged out of competition as well as cross-fertilization between a non-European intellectual tradition—particularly Confucianism—and an imported European one: bourgeois Romanticism” (2-3).

In a 1975 essay in the journal *Tenbō*, renowned intellectual and literary critic Maeda Ai discusses this “cross-fertilization” in his analysis of the ways that both modernization and nationalism shaped childhood. He comments on Iwaya Sazanami’s 1891 work *Koganemaru*, one of his first short stories geared toward children, or more specifically, as Piel notes, young boys (“Loyal Dogs” 209).³ Iwaya, one of the most famous children’s authors in modern Japan, is also considered one of Japan’s first advocates for child drama. Following a trip to Germany in 1900, during which he observed both adults performing fairy tales, or “*otogi shibai*,” for children, as well as children performing them for each other, he began to push for a similar practice in Japan, believing it was well suited to child development. Kawakami Otojirō and Kawakami Sadayakko, leaders of the *shinpa* movement, one of the first forms of modern theatre that used many kabuki styles but attempted to communicate with audience in a slightly more “realistic” fashion, began to experiment with *otogi shibai* shortly after Iwaya’s return to Japan in 1902. Iwaya was, in

³ Iwaya also edited the children’s periodical *Shōnen Sekai* (Youth World) from 1895 to 1914, as well as its sister publication, *Shōjo Sekai*, from 1906 to 1931. Both were published by Hakubunkan, a major publishing house, and were the forerunners to a wave in mass publishing targeting children and women that emerged in the interwar period. Like compulsory education, this key component of mass culture is also directly linked to the emergence of the middle class.

short, a major influence in both child drama and children's culture in modern Japan, and his works in many ways linked childhood to the state. Maeda discusses Iwaya's practice of instilling a sense of awareness in children in their role as "future citizens of Japan," and points out that the series in which Iwaya's *Koganemaru* was first printed advertised its works with, "Boys are the flowers of life; and when they bear fruit, they become the bedrock of Japan" (111).⁴

Mark A. Jones, author of *Children as Treasures: Childhood and the Middle Class in Early Twentieth Century Japan*, concurs with this sentiment and links childhood to both emerging nationalism and the growth the middle class in Japan in the early twentieth century. He argues that the middle class functioned as the "social foundation for national strength" at this time (16), and that "in addition to the family and the mother, the child and the child's life became reflective and constitutive of the emerging public definition of what it meant to be middle class" (18). Compulsory education, and correspondingly, the expansion of the middle class, was implemented incrementally. According to the National Institute for Educational Policy Research, a division of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT), four years of compulsory education for all citizens were first instituted under the direction of Mori Arinori, modern Japan's first Minister of Education, in 1885. Elementary schools "were identified as the training centers responsible for bringing up children to be loyal subjects of the Emperor" (4). By the 1890s, sixty-nine percent of elementary school aged children enrolled in school as the law required. In 1907, the period of compulsory education was extended to six years, and by 1918, ninety-nine percent of the school aged population attended public school as

⁴ Please see David Henry's "Japanese Children's Literature as Allegory of Empire in Iwaya Sazanami's *Momotarō* (*The Peach Boy*)" for further information on the construction of empire in common tropes within children's adventure stories and Iwaya's work.

required. After the war, as the United States instituted a concerted effort to demilitarize and democratize the institution of education, compulsory education was extended to nine years (5-6). In addition, by 1950, 42.5% of young people continued on to high school, which remains voluntary even today. By 1960, this figure was 57.7%, by 1970, it was 82.1%, and by 1980, it was 94.1% (7).

According to Uno, “The diffusion of childhood as a dependent stage of life (in practice if not in conception) roughly paralleled families’ acquiescence to the state’s demands for school attendance” (*Passages* 144). Jones also posits that “the prewar definition of the middle class as a child-centered, educationally obsessed, socially aspiring stratum survived the war and prospered into the years beyond” (*Passages* 19). The modern ideology of the child is thus strongly linked to the imposition of compulsory education, a marker of the expanding middle class. As an ideology, compulsory education in many ways lengthened the extent of childhood by firmly disseminating the notion of child dependence throughout modern society. There is, therefore, a critical link between the development of modern conceptions of childhood, and other critical frameworks of modernity, including nationalism, education, and the growth of the middle class.

While each these ideas, especially the role of compulsory education, bore strong influence on the role of childhood in the postwar era, the ideals of childhood and family also began to shift in many ways almost immediately following the war. These new conceptions of childhood and family were critical components of the rapidly expanding youth theatre movement, and each of these notions was directly connected to evolving ideas of the nation, citizenship, and the public sphere.

Simon Andrew Avenell posits that the postwar period prompted a reconceptualization of the public sphere in communities throughout the nation, and this concept holds enormous significance for this study. In many ways, this was due to new laws designed to eliminate the vestiges of prewar militarism by leaders of the American-led Occupation. These laws and regulations extended to nearly all aspects of society, and encompassed an international conversation on the rights of the child that continues today. In *Making Japanese Citizens: Civil Society and the Mythology of the Shimin in Postwar Japan*, Avenell outlines the ways in which the newly introduced, key idea of “citizen” (*shimin*) in postwar Japan was used to initiate localized citizen activist movements. According to Avenell, “So important was this concept of performative citizenship for reformers that they gave it a name: *shimin* (citizen)—a word that spoke to some of the central aspirations of the Japanese people as they refashioned their nation into a modern liberal democracy in the wake of war and national humiliation” (1). While strong evidence of this shift does not appear until approximately fifteen years after the end of the war, in Avenell’s words, “*Shimin* [citizen] encapsulated a vision of individual autonomy beyond the outright control of the state or the established left and within an idealized sphere of human activity they called civil society (*shimin shakai*). For them, as well as many others, *shimin* became one of the quintessential symbols of liberal democracy in postwar Japan, taking its place beside other powerful motifs such as peace (*heiwa*) and democracy (*minshushugi*)” (2).⁵

⁵ As Goto-Jones points out, locating the various schools of Japanese thought within the political “Left” and “Right” binaries of the “West” has long been a complicated proposition, as to intellectuals in the early twentieth century, they appeared to be “internal concerns or subdivisions of the ‘West’” (3). By the 1920s, however, Marxist ideas consumed the intelligentsia, and while many intellectuals did not publicly identify as Marxists, “Across the political spectrum in the 1920s and 1930s, it would have been hard to find an intellectual who did not broadly agree with Marx’s basic diagnosis of the problems of capitalist society – the atomization and alienation of the individual due to his/her commodification” (5). The “Left” in postwar Japan, on the other hand, has generally been defined as an opposition movement, albeit one with that drew support from a wide variety of social positions. While the Japan

Childhood was not immune to this shift. According to Christian Galan, in the postwar period, childhood “pass[ed] from a conception of the child as a subject of the Emperor...to a modern and democratic image of the child, as a free and self-sufficient individual who has rights and to whom parents have duties” (189). This idea is fundamental to understanding the youth theatre movements in postwar Japan. In his study on human rights in East Asia, Ian Neary includes an entire chapter on children’s rights in Japan. He draws parallels between industrialization, rights, and childhood in the postwar period, stating, “If in the pre-war period the education process functioned to produce citizens and later soldiers who would willingly serve the state, from the 1950s onwards the education system was molded to serve the needs of industry” (214). By the 1960s and into the 1970s, these shifts had taken hold. Citing the work of Nakai Takaaki, a childhood historian, he adds:

[R]apid urbanization and industrialization led to a reformation of the notion of childhood within Japan...there had been a notion of ‘childhood’ among the middle-class intellectuals of the inter-war period who collected songs and folk tales but this had not affected nor represented the bulk of the population as the necessary economic affluence was not present. Rapid economic growth in the 1960s spread that affluence throughout society. This coupled with the changes in the nature of education and the number of children staying full time in school until the age of eighteen—up from 57.7 percent in

Communist Party (JCP) was viewed as more extreme and failed to draw as large a number of supporters, the Japan Socialist Party (JSP) drew members from a wide cross-section of society, including factory workers, the growing “salaryman” class, university students, and young, educated, urban elites. While the ruling Liberal Democratic Party “was committed to overturning the constitutional order imposed by the American Occupation,” these initiatives were opposed by the progressive Left (Curtis 29-30). In educational politics, which has special relevance to this study, the “Left,” since 1955, has been aligned with progressive groups such as the Japan Socialist Party, Japan Communist Party, and the Japan Teachers’ Union, the largest and most powerful of the teachers’ unions nationwide. The “Right,” on the other hand, has generally been aligned with the Ministry of Education and the Liberal Democratic Party, which has been the ruling party, except for a few brief periods, since 1955 (Aspinall 65).

1960 to 91.9 percent in 1975—meant that the nature of the years before eighteen changed.

As Nakai puts it: they lost nature, work, friends, and the link with the community and in their place they gained material wealth, mass-pleasing media, exams as the purpose in life and the nuclear family. Moreover as the family unit became increasingly concerned, not to say obsessed, by educational performance, the family started to function as the link between school and work. Children in this process were freed from work (at least until eighteen) but not from consumption and they became merely the ‘half person’ of a pupil (213-4).

As Nakai’s description demonstrates, many adults also became increasingly concerned over a sense that childhood was being lost amidst the rapid industrialization and educational pressure of the late postwar period, and this was directly tied to the increasingly influential children’s rights movement. While the number of teenagers entering the workforce before finishing high school decreased rapidly between 1960 and 1975, they were instead met with different pressures: “examination hell” and a system that rewards conformity and high test scores at all costs. In recent years, scholars have paid close attention to the increasing pressures of the high achieving educational system in Japan, the unrelenting pressure by the “*kyōiku mama*” or “education mother” who pushes her children toward academic and social success, and the phenomenon of endemic bullying. Field laments the “disappearance of childhood” in contemporary Japan and offers that it has been subsumed by ideologies of children as laborers and consumers, asserting, “I have meant by the ‘disappearance of childhood in contemporary Japan’ the emergence of a new continuity between childhood and adulthood through

technocratically ordered labor” (68). She lambasts the education system as “endless labor” (53), “abuse,” and one that systematically encourages bullying (56).

Maeda also comments on the state of childhood in postwar Japan. His comments, written in 1975, hold special significance for this study, as they suggest in concrete terms that adult interest in childhood became a means of both atoning for the rapid industrialization of the postwar period and the sense that the promise of childhood had been abandoned amidst the pressure to succeed. Childhood thereby became a symbol of escape in addition to being one suffering the effects of rapid economic growth and development. He says:

As symbols of unspoiled innocence, and as resisters of a technologized world, children hold manifold significance for contemporary life. We adults, formerly heaping expectations on children as ‘future adults’ and casting an oppressive and vigilant eye on them, are now reexamining our own warped world and attempting to rectify it through a recovery of the child’s gaze. This may be taken as a kind of atonement for our having usurped children’s places of play, one after another, and thereby stripping children of their life force. In this age of ludic poverty, we adults have taken a more lenient attitude toward the role of play in children’s lives...The recent trend toward greater leniency also indicates an effort to restore the child’s worldview [*kodomo no ronri*], which was heretofore wholly shut out by the adult’s. In other words, as our freedom to *act* becomes an ever more elusive goal, we have taken to peering into the child’s domain, which has come to symbolize the freedom to *escape*. The journey back into children’s time, together with the desire to return to nature, forms an illusory axis that propels our detachment from modern industrial society; at the same time, it provides an indispensable

vantage point from which we can see through life's barrenness lurking in the shadow of our daily affairs. (110)

While these assertions that childhood was becoming lost by the 1970s may be tinged with a sense of nostalgia or longing for a utopian ideal of childhood that never existed, they very clearly demonstrate the growing concern that rapid industrialization, urbanization, and increased emphasis on exams within the education system had frayed bonds with the community, with nature, and with the individual child's human element. Many artists and companies involved in the child and youth theatre movement expressed similar interest in and concern over the loss of the child's domain, especially over childhood lost or erased by the horrors of war, rapid economic growth and industrialization, and severe academic pressure. Many artists, educators, and parents, including the influential artists Tada Tōru, Sanetō Akira, and Fujita Asaya, expressed distrust in adults and began to look for alternatives to this framework. The development and expansion of the theatre for children and young people movement in the 1950s and 1960s is therefore directly tied to each of these factors, including the reconstruction of the ideology of childhood and its relationship to the state, the position of the child within the education system, and the relationship of the child to the community in the face of increasing pressure from the educational system. Just as childhood in the early postwar period came to represent the future of nationhood from the Meiji period until the end of the war, the political and socio-economic circumstances of the postwar era, largely tied to economic redevelopment and industrialization, directly shaped the ideological construction of childhood as well.

Contextualizing Postwar Democracy

These shifting conceptions of childhood and the public sphere are strongly linked to the postwar imposition of democracy. American Occupation leaders attempted to almost completely erase the seeds of militarism by restructuring Japan's constitution, educational system, labor organizations, land ownership system, and myriad other bodies, initiating the paradox that John Dower terms a "genuinely democratic revolution...associated with a military dictatorship, to say nothing of a neocolonial military dictatorship" (81). The imposition of democracy after the war provoked a seismic shift in the cultural landscape that extended to all realms of education, politics, and the arts. As the nation heard the emperor's voice on the airwaves for the first time, and his divinity was officially renounced, Japanese society was rebuilt and structured around democracy and democratic principles, and democracy and democratic principles, in turn, reshaped the institutional structures that promoted and managed the arts. Like the institution of childhood, the imposition of postwar democracy was enmeshed in questions of tradition versus modernity, East versus West, and modern versus feudal. This did not mean a wholesale repudiation or rejection of values considered to be "Japanese," but a context in which authorities targeted the vestiges of fascism and imperial aggression for eradication while others sought to maintain, or reimagine, markers of identity aligned with the past. According to Rikki Kersten, "If the 'modern' could only be associated with the West, then modernization meant rejection of Japanese identity. Intellectuals wondered whether the realignment of value associations in the wake of defeat in occupied Japan inevitably meant the rejection of Japaneseness. The crux of the issue was postwar democracy" (1, 109). Democracy, therefore, was at the core of the postwar debate on the future of Japan, and the identity of the nation itself. This conception also lies at the

very core of the field of theatre for children and young people in the postwar era, and must be carefully scrutinized in this context.

Many public intellectuals debated the degree to which democracy could be successfully implemented in postwar Japan, as it “never existed as an abstract construct, but always as a historically specific condition under the hegemony of US military power in East Asia” (Eckersall, *Theorizing* 10; Igarashi 137). While viewed by some as a foreign influence, Maruyama Masao and many other intellectuals came to view democracy as an intrinsic part of modernization and postwar advancement. According to Rikki Kersten:

The juxtaposition of a victorious, democratizing Occupation force with the discredited wartime order of Imperial Fascism imposed an iron incongruity between what was ‘Japanese,’ and what was ‘democratic.’ In order to avoid such a clash, modernization had to transcend its Western image...[M]odernization and democratization were eventually seen as interchangeable processes. (109)

In order to overcome this incongruity, the process of implanting democracy targeted the individual in addition to public institutions. In many ways, this also speaks to the paradox of democracy that Maruyama often described: While democracy extols the virtues of individualism on one hand, it requires the subjugation of the individual to the rule of the majority, and relies on institutional procedures to carry this out (Kersten 3). This link between democracy and *shutaisei* or “autonomy” in the postwar era is extraordinarily important. Both the American Occupation leaders and progressive intellectuals in Japan viewed autonomy and the individual as key concepts for the successful dissemination of the ideology of democracy. According to Christopher Goto-Jones, “[A] vital first task for the progressive Left after August 1945 was to

transform the ‘common sense’ (*jōshiki*) of the Japanese people; if progressive individuals could not succeed in disseminating *shutaisei* into the psyche of the Japanese, then Japan would never really escape from the dark valley” (4).

The conceptions of both democracy and individual autonomy, and their relationship to both the democracy and pacifist movements, hold strong implications for both the children’s rights movement and the development and expansion of the youth theatre movement in postwar Japan. In *Theorizing the Angura Space*, Eckersall argues that both the *shingeki* and *angura* genres, the “new” theatre and more experimental “underground” movements, two of the major movements of the postwar stage in Japan, employed the conception of *shutaisei*, “autonomy” or “selfhood,” pervasively. The idea permeates the postwar stage. He first uses the example of psychological realism and individual characters in the subject matter of the *shingeki* companies, mostly realist interpretations of works from the European canon. With reference to the later works of the experimental artists, he also posits, “the sense of self that emerged—a form of embodied expression with radical political sensibilities—underlay the avant-garde nature of the work as a whole.” This focus on autonomy and selfhood are distinctly parallel to key concepts of democratization and modernization as they were manifested in postwar Japan as well.

The *shutaisei* debate that erupted amongst intellectuals in the early postwar period, peaking in 1947-48, exemplified the mood of introspection and concern with selfhood that was characteristic of the time. War responsibility and the role of the individual were widely discussed, and many began to view the roots of the war as symptomatic of the “violation and deception of the individual” (Kersten 90). The debate was approached with urgency, as many believed that the rise of the fascist state had been spurred on by both the manipulation of ideas

and the failure of individual and social autonomy. One segment of society believed that the war could be directly explained by the absence of autonomy. In Kersten's words:

This segment of the postwar intelligentsia equated the wartime obliteration of the individual with the obliteration of the ego. The failure of writers to engage in protest, the phenomenon of *tenkō* (apostasy), and active efforts to assist in the propagation throughout society of the state's war psychology (despite the fact that this supposedly did not accord with the writers' will) was likewise explained as the product of a weak, submissive ego.⁶
(90-91)

More broadly, ideas and free thought, and by extension individual autonomy, therefore had to be advanced, or, this segment of society believed, it would be impossible for democracy to take hold. According to this view, "The individual of postwar Japan had not only to realize his status as an individual, but also formulate values which would propel him to act, as a subjective, motivated entity, to realize and legitimate reform" (104).

While discussion and debate on the degree to which the individual and autonomy shaped the course of history took place on an academic level, a similar conversation was threaded throughout the discourse of the wider society as well. Similarly, just as Eckersall draws parallels between autonomy, selfhood, and expression, these themes and key concepts in the formation of democracy drove the youth theatre movement in the coming three decades.

⁶ The phenomenon of *tenkō*, a public statement renouncing socialist beliefs and activities and in favor of the official ideology of the state, was prevalent in the realm of theatre as well. In one particularly notable case, fourteen prominent *shingeki* figures, including Senda Koreya and Kubo Sakae, were arrested *en masse* in June 1940 for crimes against the state stemming from political activity. They were given suspended prison sentence and released in 1942, after they had committed *tenkō*. According to John Swain, "The Japanese state saw most modern theatre as a subversive activity because socialist ideology was central to *shingeki* as it developed in the early twentieth century" (77).

Democracy and Theatre for Children and Young People

The Occupation years were a time in which, simultaneously, pre-war children's theatre companies were revived, new companies were born, and a vast array of new ideas were explored (Tomita, *Nihon* 278). The perception of children and young people as agents of democratic change was widely apparent at this time. This activity must be understood through the key concepts of democracy, individual autonomy, and the social movements they spurred. From the beginning of the Occupation, when many artists and companies were censored by Occupation authorities who hoped to eradicate "feudalistic" tendencies viewed as a threat by both Occupation leaders and the new government, to the citizens' movements of the 1960s and 1970s, children and childhood became the targets of these efforts.⁷ This can begin to be explained by the fact that in addition to the massive rights and education reforms targeting children that were put in place by the new governing bodies, many factions viewed young people as holding the keys to successfully imposing democracy in Japan. For example, the Japan Children's Research Association (Nihon Jidō Engeki Kenkyūjō), a fledgling organization established by Gekidan Tōdō, or the Tōdō Theatre Company, soon after the war's end, aimed to establish theory and practice in youth theatre, and began to publish a short-lived journal titled *Jidō gekijō*, or "Children's Theatre." According to the introductory issue, "With regard to the democratization of Japan, McArthur's Command Headquarters had low expectations concerning Japanese adults who had already come of age. Because it was said that youth in particular had these capabilities,

⁷ The Tsubouchi Memorial Theatre Museum Archive at Waseda University contains a collection of scripts from Kyushu that were censored by the occupation authorities. Censored scripts targeting children that can be found in the collection include Miyatsu Hiroshi's *Akatonbō*, Miyazawa Kenji's *Kaze no Matasaburō* and *Bananan shōgun*, and Saida Takashi's *Kōfuku no kuru hi*. Closer analysis of these pieces follows in Chapter Two.

however, the establishment of Japan Children's Theatre Research Association was necessary" (Tomita, *Nihon* 280). This was a shared objective found across a wide range of media and organizations, and initially, at least, was widely embraced.

The incorporation or acknowledgment of the role of childhood and youth into the frame of the postwar history of Japan is therefore of tantamount importance. Efforts to impose democracy were specifically targeted toward youth, and theatrical productions for children and young people became instruments in the drive to completely change the public's collective consciousness from one of imperial subjects to a nation of democratic citizens. Likewise, as the above passage demonstrates and as I will demonstrate in the subsequent chapters, in the decades that followed, the themes of many works and major organizational structures in the realm of theatre for children and young people were shaped by democratic principles as well.

This mutual dependence between the conception of childhood, democracy, and the development of the state itself has increasingly attracted the attention of scholars in recent years. According to Louise A. Jackson, "The idea of childhood is now presented as crucial to the development of modern welfare states and to histories of identity, sexuality and selfhood in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries...children themselves are being reclaimed as historical actors; not merely as 'heroes of their own lives' but as agents of change within a variety of spheres" (639). The idea of childhood and the language that shapes it are strongly influenced by what Louis Althusser terms the "ideological state apparatus," represented by the educational system, religion, the family, the legal system, political systems, trade unions, media, and culture, through which the dissemination of the ruling ideology provides the means for the reproduction of the skills of labor power (17). The ideologies of youth and childhood embraced by artists and

parents operating under these apparatuses thus speak directly to Japan's shifting ideological positions in the aftermath of the war.

Historiography of Postwar Japanese Theatre and Theatre for Children and Youth

While theatre and drama with, by, and for young audiences is widely acknowledged to be an under-analyzed, under-theorized, and marginalized field in the United States, similar analyses of the ideologies of childhood and youth on the stage are even more noticeably absent in English language research on theatre in Japan. Significant and important work has been conducted in recent years on the impact of the international avant-garde and counterculture movements on the experimental theatres of Japan, but scholarship that contextualizes theatre and drama for young people within similar frameworks is almost non-existent in the English language despite a massive amount of carefully documented information available in archives and journals in Japan. This oversight omits several possibilities for continuing to shape our understanding of the enormous changes in Japanese society in the postwar era, particularly in the turbulent 1960s and 1970s, as well as their impact on the stage today. With the exception of Takeo Fujikura's groundbreaking 2006 dissertation study of Tsubouchi Shōyō's child drama theory and his series of publications in journals such as *Youth Theatre Journal* stemming from this work, Robin Hall's snapshot of the most internationally recognized children's theatre company, Kaze no Ko, composed in the mid-1980s, and brief, encyclopedic surveys of theatre for young audiences in Japan by Lowell Swortzell, Yuriko Kobayashi, Wolfgang Wohler, and Don Rubin, theatre and drama research in the English language largely ignores theatre and drama specifically for young audiences.

Scholars in Japan, however, often artists themselves as well, have left a long and rich trail of commentary, theoretical positioning, and other documentation on youth theatre that demands further examination and analysis. They have kept incredibly detailed records and research into the development and expansion of theatre for children and youth, a form that has come to be recognized and researched as an integrated but distinct field from theatre for adults in the twentieth century. The limited English language research currently available does not begin to convey the massive number of books and journals dedicated to the study of child and adolescent drama, theatre and education, drama in education, and theatre for young audiences in the Japanese language. For example, Tomita Hiroyuki's 1976 book *Nihon jidō engeki shi* ("The History of Children's Theatre in Japan") was the first major work to chronicle the history of the expansion and development of works created specifically for young audiences in the twentieth century. Tomita's work is empirical, detailed, and supported by the archival collections of the Tsubouchi Memorial Theatre Museum at Waseda University. It is a foundational piece and greatly informs this study as well as countless Japanese language works that have emerged since its publication. JIENKYO (the Japan Union of Theatrical Companies for Children and Young People), the largest and most influential national organization of professional companies performing works for children and young people, has also published a significant number of works documenting this growth. It recently published *Shōgen, Jidō engeki: Kodomo to hashitta otonatachi no rekishi* ("Testimony on Children's Theatre: The History of Children and the Adults Who Participated"), an excellent collection of essays and recollections of the movement by its leading figures. The Japan Children's Theatre Association, formerly known as the Association of Children's Playwrights, another leading contributor, adds works such as *Nihon*

jidō engeki kyōkai 100 nen shi (“The One Hundred Year History of the Japanese Children’s Theatre Association”), published in 2005, *Nihon no jidō seishōnen engeki no ayumi* (“The Progress of Children and Youth Theatre in Japan”), and *Jidō engeki chihō junkai kōen: 30 nen no ayumi* (“Children’s Theatre Regional Touring Performances: Thirty Years of Progress”), which was revised and republished in 1998 and 2008. These book length publications are complemented by academic journals specializing in theatre for young people such as *Engeki kyōiku*, *Kikan geki*, *Geki*, *Jidō engeki*, and *Jidō gekijō*, an early postwar publication. Likewise, major journals whose work focuses on theatre for all audiences, such as *Teatoro*, described by Tanokura Minoru as the “most provocative of existing journals in Japan” (315), *Shingeki*, and *Higeki kigeki*, have all published articles on theatre for children and young people.

In contrast, most English language scholarship on the postwar stage in Japan assumes the perspective that the major movements in the theatre reflect a pursuit almost solely for adult audiences, despite the fact that many of the most prominent “adult” theatre companies also actively targeted child and family audiences. These studies can largely be divided into three distinct camps: those that focus on the classical or traditional theatres, those that analyze the impact of modernity and modernism on the stage, and those that analyze the postmodern intercultural and experimental movements in the theatre. Nevertheless, these works have strong implications for continued research into the intersections of youth and the stage, as the major movements in the realm of theatre for children and young people are directly tied to these same movements and trends, and the figures with which they are associated.

Despite the omission of youth in most studies, in recent years, North American and European scholars have, by and large, produced fascinating material interpreting the traditional

or classical theatres such as *kabuki*, *nō*, *rakugo*, and *kyōgen*, as well as neo-interpretations of each. In addition, scholars have in recent years produced several revealing analyses of the “modern” theatre in Japan, routinely defined as that which contains elements of “Westernization.” Both loosely defined genres have had an enormous impact on theatre for young audiences in postwar Japan. While most scholars are beginning to acknowledge that the modern stage cannot simply be defined as a Westernized stage, studies of the modern theatre tend to position it as the result of interactions between Japanese and “Western” artists, and routinely depict the Meiji Restoration as a point of rupture from which the modern theatre developed. Some see World War II, or the Pacific War, as the event that shaped much of the theatre of the past half-century. Still others rely on the highly internationalized or internationally conscious set of experiments, often attempting to fuse old with new, and global with local, that pushed the limits of the stage in the postwar period. Of this genre, the volume *Japan and the Internationalized Stage*, edited by the renowned scholars of the Japanese stage, Samuel Leiter and Stanca Scholz-Cionca, presents its history of the international stage in roughly the same categories outlined above. Part One delineates “The Infancy of Reception,” while Part Two presents “Folk and Traditional Theatre: At Home and Abroad.” In Part Three, “Japan Embraces the Modern,” and in the final section, “The West Embraces Japan.” The volume is a collection of papers presented at a symposium titled “Japanese Theatre in the World,” and is largely representative of the type and scope of English language and European language research that has been published to date.

As the Scholz-Cionca and Leiter volume demonstrates, theatre research has taken monumental steps in recent decades toward expanding the understanding of the relationship of the stage in Japan to the complex political and social milieu of postwar Japan. Beginning with

accounts of theatre during the American Occupation, scholars have delved into continually shifting notions of the place of theatre in Japanese society. In a broad but rich survey of Japanese theatre since the Meiji Restoration, Brian Powell's *Japan's Modern Theatre: A Century of Continuity and Change* details continuing efforts to censor the stage, as well as challenge these measures. He reminds readers that General Douglas MacArthur's army "dedicated itself to rooting out anything that might have contributed to Japan's slide into war...*Shingeki* people in general were not concerned about the censorship apparatus...but *kabuki* was specifically mentioned and it was likely that the use of the term 'feudal', however defined, signaled problems for much of the classic *kabuki* repertory" (136-137). This sentiment provides clues to the trajectory that the Japanese stage took in the postwar period, and the ways in which historiographers have attempted to frame its development. While the classical theatres and their repertoire were often viewed with suspicion by the Occupation forces, *shingeki* was lauded as an acceptable alternative, thus eventually sealing its reputation as a form beholden to the "West" and a somewhat staid relic. As the form began to be seen as a tired, commercialized enterprise, a new alternative theatre developed: *angura*, which attempted to be all that *shingeki*, in its estimation, was not: radical, young, and anti-realist.

A number of English-speaking scholars, including David Goodman, Carol Fisher Sorgenfrei, Keiko McDonald, David Jortner, Kevin Wetmore, Peter Eckersall, Steven C. Ridgely, and Miryam Sas have written specifically about the roughly twenty-year period throughout the 1960s and 1970s during which *angura* was at its peak. Senda Akihiko contributes a volume of his reviews and analyses of the contemporary Japanese stage in *The Voyage of Contemporary Japanese Theatre*, and back issues of *Concerned Theatre Japan* also provide an abundance of

information on the era through a variety of interviews, manifestos, and articles on the experimental stage. These works constitute an important body of foundational works that greatly inform this study and have pushed me to sharpen my focus on the political activism and engagement of behalf of many artists during this period.

As the examples I have presented thus far demonstrate, the largely neglected field of English language research on postwar theatre for young people in Japan is fertile ground for adding increased nuance and dimension to our historical understanding of the stage and its cultural context. Just as scholars have rightly scrutinized the ideological framework of theatre and performance through such a variety of lenses as postcolonial, intercultural, feminist, and other theories, works for young audiences are equally as laden with the ideological assumptions and historical circumstances under which they occur. Theatre for young audiences likewise is not just a study of what is occurring on the stage, but also ideological constructions of childhood and adolescence, youth culture, history, education, economics, and politics.

While the theatre for children and young people should be read as a distinctive movement with its own objectives and constraints due to both the ideological constructions of childhood and the very real limits of often operating within the educational system and systems of government funding, artists and companies often moved back and forth between both realms. In truth, while theatre for young audiences has come to be defined as theatre production presented to young people by adults, this line was often blurred in Japan.⁸ While theatre for young people is produced under altered circumstances from theatre for adults, it is also not produced in a

⁸ The influential Tōdō Theatre Company, and countless others, employed both child and adult actors for many years until the Labor Standards Act of 1947 severely curtailed this (Ogawa 25).

vacuum. In Japan, theatre for children and young people developed *as part of* many of the most significant movements on the modern and contemporary stage, and it was also strongly influenced by the countless binaries, factors, and conditions that shaped this space. This dissertation, in summary, analyzes the expansion and development of theatre companies and productions specifically for young people in Japan within the context of the reform movements and the conceptions of childhood and family that subsequently evolved in the increasingly globally connected postwar period. This study investigates multiple layers enveloping postwar theatre for children and young people in Japan, most of which, in some way, were marked by the memory of war: domestic and international politics, educational policy, and shifting ideals of childhood and family life. While focusing primarily, albeit not exclusively, on theatre companies based in the urban areas of Tokyo and Osaka during the first three decades of the postwar era, I will also demonstrate how the majority of these companies both sought and depended on audiences in the suburban and rural communities throughout the entire country as well. In addition to several key Japanese language studies, this study draws on archival research at the Tsubouchi Memorial Theatre Museum at Waseda University in Tokyo, a series of interviews and discussions conducted with major figures in the field, and numerous documents graciously supplied by many of the theatre companies themselves during the summer of 2012.

With this in mind, this study will follow a loose chronology of sorts, but this choice has been made to further highlight the shifts in circumstances and development of different forms throughout the first three decades of the postwar era. In Chapter Two, I examine the impact of the Occupation and its project of imposing democracy immediately following the war, the impact of censorship and revised civil codes on the revival of children's theatre performances in the

postwar period, and also analyze their impact on performances for young people. I examine the preference for the *shingeki* genre by the Occupation forces and the resulting dominance of the *shingeki* companies in this realm.

In Chapter Three, I examine the increasingly controversial form of *shingeki* and look at the economic and political implications for the revival of the school performance tour as the major means of performance for child and youth theatre companies. In Chapter Four, I examine the impact of the Anpo protests and youth theatre's turn toward the avant-garde and "neo-traditional." I examine the links between increasingly visible activist movements and look at the revival in interest in folk tales and traditional theatre. In this manner, I position the youth theatre movement in parallel with the experimental theatre movement that emerged at the same time in both form and ideology. I frame this chapter with the rapidly increasing influence of puppet theatre companies, television, and commercial ventures, and analyze the economic and artistic benefits these developments presented to the field.

In Chapter Five, I examine the continuing legitimization of the movement through the formation and centralization of two key organizations in the youth theatre movement: Kodomo Gekijō and JIENKYO. I examine the establishment of the parent and child theatre movement in the context of numerous citizens' movements and argue that civic activism became a key force in the path that theatre for children and young people took in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Once again, the clash between education and politics features heavily, and I position the parent and child theatre movement as a counternarrative to the oft-referenced, highly pressurized education system, increasingly saturated media culture, and highly eroticized, liberated performance culture of the late 1960s. I also examine the establishment of JIENKYO, the Jidō Seishōnen

Engeki Gekidan Kyōdō Kumiai, or the Japan Union of Theatrical Companies for Theatre and Young People, the first national union for companies performing works for children and young people.

In Chapter Six, I summarize my findings and offer concluding thoughts.

CHAPTER 2: *JIDŌGEKI NI MO MINSHU*:

IN THEATRE FOR CHILDREN ALSO, THERE IS DEMOCRACY

Just four short months after the apocalyptic end to the war that had enveloped much of the planet for more than a decade, professional companies began to renew their activities under the entirely different political, social, economic, and ideological conditions of the postwar era. Material evidence proves that companies began to experience the reality of these new circumstances almost immediately after the end of the war. On December 11, 1945, a headline in the *Asahi Shinbun*, one of Tokyo's major daily newspapers, declared, "*Jidō geki ni mo 'minshu'*," (児童劇にも“民主”) or “In theatre for children also, there is ‘democracy’” (2). The article advertised the theatre company Gekidan Tōdō's production of Maurice Maeterlinck's symbolist play *Blue Bird*, which is commonly described by writers, including Ōno Yukinori, Ogawa Nobuo, and others, as Japan's first postwar professional production for young people, and something that offered a fresh start for children who had experienced the “abyss” of hunger and poverty due to the war (Ōno, “Senzen” 11, Ogawa 21). The headline proves that the objective of the performance was not just escapism or relief, however. While productions targeting children and young people in the immediate years following the end of the war were most definitely produced at times with such therapeutic objectives, they also strongly bear the marks of a massive effort on behalf of both the United States and a number of progressives and intellectuals to institute and disseminate the ideology of democracy in the wake of the war.

In both theory and practice, productions of live theatre for young people bore the marks of an effort from above to completely erase the seeds of militarism embedded in Japanese society through the forced embrace of democratic principles. The pronouncement “There is democracy

in theatre for children also,” demonstrates clearly that both the system of power had changed abruptly, and that the principle of democracy was linked to theatre for children and young people from the early days of the occupation. This link was one that would shape theatre for young people for years to come.

Context is key in this analysis. First, the advertisement appeared in a censored publication and is framed by news that would come to define the brutality that characterized Japan’s imperial reign throughout the Asia-Pacific region. This news emphasized the need, from the perspective of the occupation leaders of the General Headquarters, heretofore known as the GHQ, as it is commonly known in Japan, to disseminate the ideology of democracy as a means of eradicating militaristic impulses in Japanese society. Gekidan Tōdō’s announcement appears alongside an article discussing both the emperor’s war responsibilities and an article describing the Bataan death march, attesting to efforts to make war atrocities widely known amongst the general public as part of the postwar democratization efforts. This also emphasizes the highly charged sphere of mass communication during this period, and places the field of theatre for children and young people within this new public consciousness.

The article also clearly demonstrates a concerted effort on behalf of a major children’s theatre company to either embrace the new conditions of the postwar period or simply to operate within its challenging new parameters. The advertisement states that the production of *Blue Bird* would be sponsored by the Nihon Jidōgeki Kenkyūjō, the Japan Children’s Theatre Research Institute, and that the organization aims to promote what it terms “democratic” children’s theatre (*minshushugi jidō geki*) for regional children’s theatre companies nationally. Upon closer examination, the advertisement echoes parallel reforms directed by the GHQ that targeted

children throughout the cultural and educational spheres. These also included the introduction of “democratic” children’s magazines and the foundation of the Nihon Jidō Bungakusha Kyōkai, or the Japanese Writers of Children’s Literature Association, whose expressed mission included “creat[ing] and spread[ing] democratic children’s literature.” As part of this project, efforts included a program called the Gift Book Program, which aimed to introduce “Democratic America” to both children and teachers, and the program’s carefully crafted message aimed to package the United States in a favorable light by means of its content. Among the major accomplishments of the program was an exhibition that displayed more than seven hundred books chosen by members of the U.S. Education Mission and librarians in the U.S. The exhibition traveled throughout Japan, and in February 1947, reportedly attracted more than 250,000 people in Tokyo alone (Ishihara 62-63).⁹ Gekidan Tōdō’s appeal sounds strangely parallel to this movement.

Finally, the article directly raises the question of how censorship affected both the content and means of performances and other types of cultural reproduction. The *Asahi Shinbun*, the newspaper in which Gekidan Tōdō’s advertisement proclaimed the democratic virtue of its work, was under close scrutiny by the censorship board of the GHQ at the time the piece was printed. On September 18, 1945, American censors closed the newspaper down for two days after “publish[ing] information that fail[ed] to adhere to the truth or disturbs public tranquility”

⁹ Earle Ernst points out the multiple objectives of the GHQ’s Civil Censorship Detachment and Civil Information and Education Section. While all public media, including newspapers, radio, magazines, books, records, films, theatre, and mail, were subject to censorship by the GHQ’s Civil Censorship Detachment as part of its efforts to gather information and suppress any material it deemed counter to its objectives of democratizing Japan, the Civil Information and Education Section aimed to present the United States in a positive light. The Civil Censorship Detachment and Civil Information and Education Section unofficially worked together to accomplish these tasks (258).

(Okamoto 45). The simple fact that the piece publicizing the Tōdō Company's performance was published speaks to the fact that this particular piece was deemed acceptable to the GHQ censors. In contrast, much of the repertoire of the traditional theatres, especially kabuki, was deemed impermissible in the early days of the Occupation due to "feudalistic codes of loyalty and its treatment of revenge" (Okamoto 48-49), and this censorship had important consequences for the field of theatre for children and young people.

Thus, the use of the term *minshu* or "democracy" in the advertisement was likely either acknowledgement of Japan's new circumstances, a deliberate appeal to the censors, or both. Whatever the case, the reference to *minshu* attests strongly to the fact that just four months after the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the beginning of the postwar, the idea of "democracy" was part of the public's new rhetoric and consciousness, and this theme was critical to the field of theatre for children and young people for years to come.

The New Constitution and Ideological State Apparatuses

The concept of democracy is prevalent in the work for children and young people that emerged immediately following the end of the war. Before analyzing the minutiae of this, however, theatre for children and young people must first be contextualized within these newly defined boundaries of the state during this period, and the process by which the public conscience largely shifted from being the subjects of the Emperor to citizens. In "Ideology and the Ideological State Apparatus," Louis Althusser argues that ideological state apparatuses are the means through which ideology that shapes our views and social practices is disseminated, including the reproduction of labor power. He categorizes the ideological state apparatuses as

public institutions that reach into private life, including religious, educational, family, legal, political, trade union, communications, and cultural institutions (17-18). As part of the GHQ's public reeducation efforts, reforms targeting these entities were carried out at all these levels. Why were these moves so instrumental from the perspective of the GHQ? These same institutions, including theatre companies that primarily performed for youth like Gekidan Tōdō, which traveled to Korea and Manchuria during the war to perform for Japanese citizens on the front, had been used to disseminate the wartime ideology (Miyatsu and Tajima 315).¹⁰

According to Louise Young, "Whether one looks at the mass media spreading the war fever of the early thirties, academic institutions recruiting engineers to build heavy industry in the new empire, or government agencies organizing the resettlement of hundreds of thousands of Japanese farmers in the Manchurian plain, a variety of organizations played a part in the ongoing process of mobilization for empire" (16). The GHQ was employing these same means. Just as war fever had been cultivated through a massive effort by forms of mass culture to instill a patriotic spirit and unquestioning commitment to both the Emperor in the years leading up to the war, these media had to be recalibrated to disseminate the new official ideology of democracy.

The GHQ therefore carefully monitored these institutions and actively encouraged works that promoted its democratization efforts. One of the major tenets of these objectives was Japan's new constitution. The "Peace Constitution," was promulgated November 3, 1946 and enforced May 3, 1947. It declared that Japan would henceforth elect its representatives, power would reside with the people, and that Japan would strive to be a peaceful nation unable to

¹⁰ According to Miyatsu Hiroshi, Gekidan Tōdō's director, the company performed both Pinocchio and Tsubota Joji's *Torahiko Tatsuhiko* ("Tiger Boy, Dragon Boy") on this tour. Miyatsu does not specify the year (Miyatsu and Tajima 315).

engage in war. The new constitution declared Japan a structural democracy, stripped it of the authority to wage war, and “guaranteed democratic civil and human rights to all Japanese people as a ‘gift’ of the American occupiers rather than the fruit of a Japanese democratic revolution” (Seraphim 15). It also outlines several themes and objectives that would emerge in the children’s and youth theatre movements in the coming decades:

We, the Japanese people, acting through our duly elected representatives in the National Diet,¹¹ determined that we shall secure for ourselves and our posterity the fruits of peaceful cooperation with all nations and the blessings of liberty throughout this land, and resolved that never again shall we be visited with the horrors of war through the action of government, do proclaim that sovereign power resides with the people and do firmly establish this Constitution. Government is a sacred trust of the people, the authority for which is derived from the people, the powers of which are exercised by representatives of the people, and the benefits of which are enjoyed by the people.

The document continues, adding:

We, the Japanese people, desire peace for all time and are deeply conscious of the high ideals controlling human relationships, and we have determined to preserve our security and existence, trusting in the justice and faith of the peace-loving peoples of the world. We desire to occupy an honored place in an international society striving for the preservation of peace, and the banishment of tyranny and slavery, oppression and

¹¹ The Diet is Japan’s bicameral legislature, or *Kokkai*, consisting of the House of Representatives and the House of Councillors.

intolerance for all time from the earth. We recognize that all peoples of the world have the right to live in peace, free from fear and want. (2)

According to John Dower, the ethos of “peace and democracy” was meant to prevent the future remilitarization of Japan, and the authorities set out on a course to create a nation of “culture,” which was “understood to be synonymous with the paired ideals of peace and democracy” (“Peace” 3). Along with media, the education system was one of its first targets. In the first two years of the Occupation, the Ministry of Education was ordered to rid its education system of teachers viewed as unacceptable, including former military and naval officers, and those deemed to hold militaristic and ultranationalist views. This resulted in the expulsion of more than 100,000 teachers from the profession, and was in line with the directives of the First Education Mission. According to Mari Boyd, the mission outlined the following recommendations to General MacArthur in March 1946: “education as preparation for ‘life in a democracy, based on recognition of the worth and dignity of the individual’”; “a drastically revised curriculum designed to attain such a goal...but with Japan’s great cultural heritage retained”; and “the improvement of teaching methods, including a diverse selection of textbooks and establishment of a teachers’ training institutes” (222-223). These measures had a strong impact on Japan’s social fabric, and as the educational system underwent rapid changes, the institution of childhood underwent an extraordinary transformation as well.

Fostering Official New Conceptions of Childhood

The spheres of both childhood and youth, defined in this study as younger than twenty years of age, the age at which young people are considered to have “come of age” and are legally

considered adults in Japan, began this transformation almost as soon as the war came to an end. As the evolving notion of childhood, described at length in the introduction to this study demonstrates, and as the performance of Maeterlinck's *Blue Bird*, first popularized in Japan in 1920, makes clear, however, the end of the war did not signal a complete break with the past. Institutions continued to negotiate between both rupture and continuity. This truism extended to the realm of education as well. As educational historian Horio Teruhisa points out, "[H]istory is propelled by contradictions between the actual and the ideal, or the new and the old, [and] in order to grasp the problematic character of postwar Japanese education it is necessary to more fully explore the continuities and ruptures between schooling in prewar Japan and that in the postwar years" (130). These impulses must therefore be understood in order to contextualize children's culture and therefore theatre and drama for young people as it developed in the postwar period.

In addition to the education system, GHQ leaders initiated a direct effort to overhaul many of the institutions impacting youth and childhood, including family life. The entire family unit became the root and focus of new efforts to encourage peace and democracy efforts. Efforts also included the "emancipation of women," "unionization of labor," and the "opening of schools to a more liberal education," which General Douglas MacArthur believed were key components to encouraging the new officially pacifist and democratic value system (de Bary, Gluck, and Tiedemann 327). Public school education, now compulsory and subject to some of the fiercest ideological battles in the postwar era, played an important role in this shift.

After the Constitution, a succession of documents, including the Fundamental Law of Education (1947), the Children's Charter of 1951, and the United Nations' Declaration of the

Rights of the Child (1959), formed Japan's official policies toward children and childhood in the early postwar years.¹² As noted in the introduction to this study, the notion of children's rights had a profound influence on the institution of childhood. Referring to both the impact of the new constitution and these laws on childhood, Field asserts, "In postwar Japan...the very definition of the institution of childhood has taken the form of a discourse of rights." She adds, "These early postwar measures were dedicated to undoing the tenets of the Imperial Rescript on Education (1890), which defined learning as the exercise of hierarchical loyalty culminating in the emperor, and to undoing the notion of state as family with all the people as children" (66). This key idea was present in GHQ sanctioned works from the beginning of the Occupation, and represents the framework within which companies were forced to operate if they hoped to produce their work in public.

Despite these changes, however, public education also struggled to shed numerous elements of its pre-war incarnation, thus emphasizing the contested position of childhood in the new postwar period. Horio cites the reluctance on behalf of many of the ruling elites to dispose of the 1890 Imperial Rescript on Education [Appendix 1] in favor of the proposed Fundamental Law on Education [Appendix 2] as evidence of the vestiges of prewar political impulses remaining in the system. While the American military and diplomatic corps hoped to eliminate what it perceived as the "ultranationalistic and militaristic educational ideologies" espoused by the Imperial Rescript document, others, including the Ministry of Education, perceived the document as essentially unflawed, or simply needing to be updated (Horio 131-134). The

¹² The United Nations' Declaration of the Rights of the Child is a non-binding resolution of the United Nations General Assembly. It should not be confused with the [International Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) which was adopted by the UN General Assembly on the thirtieth anniversary of this document, 20 November 1989. That document is a binding treaty to which 176 nations have become "states parties."

Fundamental Law of Education was officially passed in 1947, however, and the Imperial Rescript was rescinded the following year, instituting a number of highly visible and influential changes.

The new Fundamental Law of Education cited Japan's commitment to contributing to peace through a focus on the whole child. The document begins:

Having established the Constitution of Japan, we have shown our resolution to contribute to the peace of the world and welfare of humanity by building a democratic and cultural state. The realization of this ideal shall depend fundamentally on the power of education. We shall esteem individual dignity and endeavor to bring up people who love truth and peace, while education which aims at the creation of culture, general and rich in individuality, shall be spread far and wide.

The document continues by adding articles addressing the aim of education, "the full development of personality, striving for the rearing of the people, sound in mind and body, who shall love truth and justice, esteem individual value, respect labor and have a deep sense of responsibility, and be imbued with the independent spirit, as builders of a peaceful state and society." It adds provisions for academic freedom, equal opportunity in education, public and compulsory education, coeducation, social, political, and religious education, and the responsibility of school administration to the people.

The Fundamental Law of Education initiated broad changes that stretched far beyond its schools. A concerted effort was made to focus on the whole child, and this extended to both the family and the arts. The School Education Act, passed March 29, 1947, pledged to "[C]ultivate interest in expressing themselves through music, drama, pictures, and other means" among

children (342), thus emphasizing the creative ideals of this new administration and laying the groundwork for both a growing middle class through increasing access to public education.

These documents thus played an instrumental role in incubating strong links between education and the new democracy, artistic expression, and a reconstitution of the idea of childhood itself.

Censorship and Early Postwar Productions for Young People

Production circumstances in early postwar Japan were difficult from the start. In addition to these newly defined ideologies and boundaries, companies that wished to produce work in the immediate aftermath of the war's end faced major hurdles: First, artists previously concentrated in Tokyo had largely been dispersed to the front during the war. Many actors and playwrights were sent to Japan's occupied areas throughout the Asia and Pacific region as "war correspondents" and had yet to return. Many of those who had remained behind had been assigned to mobile theatre units and sent to both factories and the rural areas to perform "patriotic" works, and of those who remained, most were evacuated to the countryside for safety during the bombing of Tokyo and other major cities (Zheng 280-281). Second, the majority of the theatre spaces in Tokyo, the epicenter of professional theatre in Japan, were damaged or destroyed during the firebombing that took place as the war reached its final stages.¹³ Theatres that were destroyed or severely damaged included the Kokumin Shingekijō (previously the Tsukiji Shōgekijō), the Kabuki-za, the Shinbashi Engekijō, and the Honjo Kotobuki-za (Tomita,

¹³ In one particularly horrific episode, approximately 2,000 people taking shelter in the basement of the Meiji-za were killed on March 10, 1945 when the building burned down during an air raid (Leiter, "From Bombs" 13).

Nihon 284). Third, while prewar and wartime restrictions were lifted, artists faced new restrictions on works from American censors.

Most English language research on Occupation-era censorship to date has focused on its impact on kabuki, but as previously noted, all forms of theatrical production, including performances for young audiences, attracted the attention of censors as well. Referring to kabuki performances, Samuel Leiter notes, “In September, October, and November 1945, producers staged plays at their own discretion, including plays Japan’s wartime censors had forbidden, but also *jidai mono* (history plays) that glorified the ‘Japanese spirit’ (*Yamato damashii*), so prominent as a wartime ideal.” In late September 1945, however, the GHQ issued the following order:

Kabuki plays that are based on feudalistic loyalty and revenge are unwarrantable in the present world; and so far as deception, murder and faithlessness are justified before the masses, and private revenge is allowed directing the laws, the Japanese will not understand the basis of the acts that control the international relations in the current world.

(“Good Censors” 92-93)

Why was the GHQ so concerned with eliminating elements it considered “feudal,” and how did this order shape the works for children and young people during the Occupation? Maruyama Masao offers an intriguing hypothesis. He proposes:

In the absence of any free, subjective awareness, an individual’s actions are not circumscribed by the dictates of conscience; instead, he is regulated by the existence of people in a higher class—of people, that is, who are closer to ultimate value. What takes the place of despotism in such a situation is a phenomenon that may be described as the

maintenance of equilibrium by the transfer of oppression. By exercising arbitrary power on those who are below, people manage to transfer in a downward direction the sense of oppression that comes from above, thus preserving the balance of the whole. This phenomenon is one of the most important heritages that modern Japan received from feudal society (“Logic” 556).

Because the GHQ was attempting a nearly total overhaul of the public consciousness and the ideologies that shaped it, the focus of this censorship is clear. As the GHQ attempted to eliminate any sense of “arbitrary” power imposed on the population from above, “feudal” or “traditional” storylines and elements became suspect, and all productions were subject to the GHQ’s examination and approval.

Censorship extended to companies producing theatre for young people as well. According to Suda Rintarō, a member of the Hitomi-za, a major postwar puppet theatre company founded in 1947 that targeted children and young people:

Even with puppet theatre performances with fifty child audience members, a report had to be filed, and the permission of the authorities was required. Theatre scripts to be produced also were required to be inspected and approved by Captain Thompson of the GHQ. Naturally, it is not remembered quite like that, but small companies were held in a constrained position so that they could not cause trouble.¹⁴ (55)

This notion of constraint is also supported by the assertions of the puppet theatre company Gekidan PUK.¹⁵ According to the company’s self-authored history:

¹⁴ “Captain Thompson” is likely W. L. Thompson. See David Jortner, “SCAP’s Problem Child.”

¹⁵ PUK, Gekidan PUK’s standard English nomenclature, is an abbreviation the company’s original name, “La Pupa Klubo” in Esperanto.

The Cold War became heated and the Occupation policy of the U.S. shifted largely toward the right. Just before the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950, the American Occupation took control of the government, and in a variety of different realms, including politics, economics, administration, and labor, it began to punish people critical of occupation policy. The Sendagaya performance of Grimm's "Koyagi to Ookami" (The Wolf and the Seven Young Kids) by PUK was not authorized due to orders from the GHQ. That year, at the end of April before the May Day night festival, contents that were critical of the American occupation plan in the work "The King Kong Suppression of Pukichi" were proclaimed to displease the occupation army. Thereafter, PUK was named a "non grata" company, and performances at the elementary schools and public halls where they were previously performed became difficult. From roughly 1952-1953, the PUK management collapsed into such a terrible state that the electricity, gas, and telephone were cut (1).

Both Suda and PUK's assertions of heavy-handed interventions on behalf of the GHQ are strongly supported by more than 8,300 censored scripts housed at the Tsubouchi Memorial Theatre Museum in Tokyo. The scripts in this collection represent copies of censored scripts just from the island of Kyushu and the Chūgoku region, implying that the number of scripts the GHQ actually censored is far, far greater. The scripts represent a wide variety of genres as well, ranging from the popular theatre genre of *matatabi-mono*, or "wandering outlaw stories," a staple of regional theatre performance, worksite and union plays, *shingeki*, *shinpa*, kabuki, *bunraku*, and dramatic dance ("GHQ-Censored Scripts"). The vast majority of the censored scripts in the collection is comprised of works originally from Japan. Out of the 8,308 scripts, only thirty-nine are labeled as "foreign." Six of the scripts in the collection are labeled as *jidō geki*, or "child

drama,” and while that number represents a fraction of the total number of scripts in the collection, they offer a further glimpse into the ideology the GHQ sought to diffuse and reinforce.

While the cover to each script has been digitized, the scripts themselves are in delicate condition and are unable to be copied.¹⁶ The condition and form of each of the scripts varies.¹⁷ Among the scripts labeled as *jidō geki*, or theatre for children, there are four works by major figures of the pre- and postwar field, including Miyatsu Hiroshi’s *Akatonbo* (*Red Dragonfly*), Miyazawa Kenji’s *Kaze no matasaburō* (*Matasaburō of the Wind*) and *Bananan shōgun* (*General Bananan*), also known as *Starvation Camp*, and Saida Takashi’s *Gendai kōfuku no kuru hi* (*The Day that Happiness Will Come*). Unfortunately, it is impossible to know what, exactly, concerned the censors most, as there are few notes recorded on the pages and many of the scripts have one to two-inch pieces conspicuously cut out of the pages. This phenomenon appears curiously in line with the observation that, in David Rosenfeld and Donald Keene’s words, “Not only did Occupation censorship forbid criticism of the United States or other Allied nations, but the mention of censorship itself was forbidden. This means, as Donald Keene observes, that for some producers of texts ‘the Occupation censorship was even more exasperating than Japanese military censorship had been because it insisted that all traces of censorship be concealed’” (Rosenfeld 86, Keene 967). Nevertheless, Leiter lists several criteria that were now considered unacceptable for the stage: vendettas or revenge; nationalism, warlike

¹⁶ The online search engine is available at <http://www.enpaku.waseda.ac.jp/db/kenetsuk/index.php>.

¹⁷ One must apply in advance to view the scripts in the reading room of the Tsubouchi Memorial Theatre Museum, as they are stored in a secure facility and are not immediately available. Photocopying the scripts and even taking pictures using a cell phone are strictly forbidden. In addition to the security cameras already monitoring the reading room, when I viewed the scripts, I was asked to sit in a secure area near the front desk so that the reading room staff could keep a close eye on what I was doing at all times. Due to these understandable restrictions, a comparative analysis of the censored scripts with other publications is, unfortunately, impossible.

behavior, or exclusivity; distortion of historical facts; segregation or religious discrimination; feudal loyalty; praise of militarism; suicide in any form; women's submission to men; death, cruelty, or triumph of evil; anti-democracy; praising personal devotion to the state, nation, race, the emperor, or Imperial Household; and anything against the Potsdam Declaration or GHQ orders ("Good Censors" 94).

It is clear from the source material that the censors were first interested in both categorizing the scripts first as *gendai*, or "modern," and *jidai*, or "historical pieces," as each piece is labeled as such. This appears to be consistent with observations that historical material was treated as suspect, as values often reinforced in these works such as *shūshin* ethics, which emphasized filial piety and loyalty, were ones that the GHQ specifically targeted in its reforms (de Bary, Gluck, and Tiedemann 340). On the front of the script for *Bananan shōgun*, a censor wrote "comic operetta," and on the back, two words, comprising an enticing yet ambiguous clue: "banana bans." Because the censors left few other written clues, however, or because their comments have been carefully removed from the texts, it may be more fruitful to attempt to analyze their content and context. The two Miyazawa pieces, *Kaze no matasaburō* and *Bananan shōgun*, offer intriguing material for analysis, and where concrete material is absent, the fact that these scripts are among those that were targeted by the censors is intriguing in and of itself.

Miyazawa Kenji, one of the most prolific writers of twentieth century Japan, was a teacher, agrarian, and a devout vegetarian and Buddhist from rural Iwate Prefecture in the northeast region of the country, and he was one of the educators who experimented with the school drama movement that swept through the nation in the early 1920s, as theorized and discussed by artists and intellectuals ranging from Obara Kuniyoshi to Tsubouchi Shōyō. Miyazawa died of

pneumonia in 1933 at the age of just thirty-seven, but his poems, short stories, and plays had lasting impact. He gained a large following posthumously, when his works were finally published, and he was lauded by the intellectual circles in Tokyo as a provincial writer who embodied a spirit “in contrast to the maelstrom of contemporary life and the chaos of urban intellectualism” (Long 5). He authored just one volume of poetry and one volume of children’s literature before his death, but his works have had enduring impact. His most famous piece, *Night of the Galactic Railroad*, which traces the journey of a young boy to the Milky Way and back, was written after the death of Miyazawa’s sister and has since become part of the postwar canon of adaptations of children’s literature for performance.

Bananan shōgun, one of the scripts in the censored scripts archive, is a one-act play first written by Miyazawa and performed by his students in 1922, more than a decade after Japan forcibly annexed Korea and Taiwan, but before rampant imperialism and war fever truly gripped the nation after Japan invaded Manchuria in 1931. The play, more commonly known by the title *Kiga jin’ei* or *Starvation Camp*, is a one act, “comic operetta” that is set on the front lines of a battlefield in a non-descript, tropical setting, clearly referencing the seeds of militarism and expansionism that were just beginning to take root firmly throughout Asia. The play features the Shōgun or General, a sergeant, and ten soldiers who cannot find any food to eat. While the general has plenty to eat, the soldiers remain desperate to find food and believe they will die. After a sergeant and the soldiers eat both the sergeant’s banana epaulettes and medals made of candy, the general then invents “production” exercises that will produce food. While Tomoko Aoyama argues that the military in the scene is “given a chance to change starvation into harvest, without the use of violence or aggression against other human beings or any other living

creature: the play is a celebration of communal and ethical food production” (64), the one act also makes the general appear selfish, foolish, and inept.

As the play does not glorify war directly, and does not appear to glorify an ethical system based on submission to authority, it seems unlikely that these were items of concern for the GHQ censors. Instead, it seems possible that the simple representations of both Japan’s very recent encounter with militarism and empire in the story may have been enough to give the censors pause. Likewise, it is also possible that the references to hunger, a very real experience in postwar Japan, concerned the censors. Miyazawa’s second work in the collection, *Kaze no matasaburō*, was a familiar one to audiences at the time and was even made into a film by the same name in 1940. The story features a young boy who appears at a rural school one day and is an outsider among his classmates. At first, the students believe he is a foreigner, and then, they discover that he was actually born of the wind and appeared with them because of the wind. The play includes a lengthy description of his adventure throughout the world by means of the wind, which takes him to China, Greenland, the equator, and the North Pole, among other locations. In a fascinating analysis of the work that was clearly influenced by the school drama movement of the 1920s, Hoyt Long argues that the adventure tale of the wind was actually Miyazawa’s method of teaching his students about basic thermal mechanisms that affect the atmospheric circulation of air, as they matched the science textbook explanations of the time period, and that the story was an attempt to make the nationalized textbook material more accessible to students through local references (111-115). While it is impossible to know definitively why these works caught the attention of censors due to the pieces cut away from the scripts, we do know that both of these pieces represent a continuity with pre-war conceptions of childhood, performance

practice, and even educational ideologies. In retrospect, it was exactly these types of ideals that the GHQ, at first, attempted to eliminate, and it seems entirely plausible that these works were targeted for the very same reasons.

As an alternative to works featuring “feudalistic” material and other ideologies that concerned the GHQ, the Occupation authorities actively promoted European and American works. In doing so, the administration also propped up many *shingeki* companies. The *shingeki* movement was strongly influenced by theatre in early twentieth century Europe, and especially Russia and the Soviet Union. While it is a somewhat ambiguous term, the term *shingeki*, which literally means “new theatre,” generally refers to the modernist, non-traditional, European-influenced works that emerged early in the twentieth century. Maki Morinaga posits that in *shingeki*’s earliest days, its founders defined the genre as “that which is not kabuki” (120), while Uchino Tadashi asserts, “In a more exclusive usage, it [*shingeki*] refers to modern theatre practices which were heavily influenced by equivalent Western (mostly European) theatre” (203). By promoting the *shingeki* genre, however, the GHQ also more firmly entrenched the left’s influence in the realm of theatre and performance. Ōzasa Yoshio goes as far as to assert, “No discussion of postwar *shingeki* is possible without considering its relationship to the Japanese Communist Party [JCP]” (qtd. in Zheng 296), which was once again legal due to the reforms of the GHQ. Many companies, notably Zenshin-za, began to openly maintain close affiliation with the newly legal Japanese Communist Party (JCP) once again, an act which had previously been illegal and for which many artists had been jailed.¹⁸ The relationship between *shingeki*, the left,

¹⁸ The Public Safety, or Peace Preservation, Law of 1925 officially outlawed association with the Japan Communist Party, and penalties breaking the law became more severe as Japan grew increasingly militaristic and less tolerant of dissent. The law was repealed in 1945. On August 9, 1940, a huge number of *shingeki* artists, including Kubo Sakae,

and postwar theatre for children and young people, therefore, was a highly charged one. Thus, while the “left” has many implications in Japan, when linking “leftist” activity to the early *shingeki* movement, I am referring specifically to its relationship with the Japan Communist Party and the party’s complex relationship with authorities of the time.

According to David Jortner, “Occupation officials saw the modern theatre as a locus for the production of ‘American’ theater and a place to promote ‘Americanism.’ For the Occupation authorities, the goal of the stage was not only to use *shingeki* as a propaganda medium, but also to refine the Japanese theater along Western (i.e. American) realistic lines” (260).¹⁹ Authorities even attempted to insert more American works into the *shingeki* companies’ production line up as a means of shaping the genre aesthetically, promoting Americanism and the “American” way of life, and emphasizing “democratic” concepts. For example, in 1948, Occupation leaders of the Civil Information and Education Section called *shingeki* leaders to the headquarters of Nihon Hōsō Kyōkai (NHK), the national, state-funded broadcasting conglomerate.²⁰ Those called to the

Senda Koreya, and Matsumoto Kappei were arrested in a crackdown against the theatre (Zheng 282). The *shingeki* movement was quickly resurrected after the war, however. According to Powell, “As early as the beginning of 1944, Senda Koreya was urging his actor friends from prison to form a group that would be ready to start *shingeki* productions as soon as the war finished. Ten of them (only nine are listed as Senda’s name could not be used) founded the Haiyū-za in February 1944 and in August managed to put together a programme of one-act plays that were performed in the Tsukiji Little Theatre...In 1945 only mobile theatre was possible, but Haiyū-za met the end of the war with a production team and an incipient drama school already in place” (Powell 134).

¹⁹ For further information regarding the GHQ and the revival of kabuki, please see Samuel Leiter’s translation of Shirō Okamoto’s *The Man Who Saved Kabuki: Faubion Bowers and Theatre Censorship in Occupied Japan*, U of Hawaii P, 2001.

²⁰ As Carol Gluck notes, NHK is a publicly owned broadcasting company similar to the BBC, rendering it independent but linked to the state in a way that most commercial stations are not (“Past” 74 n. 20). NHK was also a key component of the democratizing objectives of the GHQ. In addition to censorship, Ji Hee Jung analyzes the quiz show genre that was introduced during the Occupation as part of its democratization project. Occupation leaders believed that the quiz show genre would assist spectators and contestants in overcoming a “feudalistic fear of loss of face.” According to the “Weekly Report of Radio Branch for Week Ending 19 Feb 1947,” “Further, this program can be subtly used to disseminate democratic thought; it is, in itself, democratic, and the fact that experts

station were forced to listen to a Japanese language recording of Thornton Wilder's *The Skin of Our Teeth*, and the GHQ officials who were present suggested that *shingeki* companies should consider performing it (Powell, *Century* 142-143). According to Ernst, the piece was translated into Japanese, and performances of *The Skin of Our Teeth* as well as John Van Druten's *The Voice of the Turtle* did take place around the same time, but were performed "before small, bewildered audiences" (260). Powell suggests that it was either the depiction of suburban, middle class American life in *The Skin of Our Teeth* or the satire of a coming ice age to which the actors and audiences could not relate, or both (*Century* 143). *The Voice of the Turtle*, a sentimental comedy about the challenges of the single life in New York City during the war, which also became a movie featuring Ronald Reagan in 1947, likewise also depicted the American middle class lifestyle and an American style of comedy. In terms of reception, in an era so close to the end of the war, and before television became ubiquitous, these choices likely would have been distancing in some respects and very difficult for audiences in Japan to relate in terms of lifestyle and values. Certainly, plays from the "West" had been a staple of the *shingeki* genre since the beginning of the twentieth century, but after the war, during which "traditional" forms were emphasized for patriotic reasons, this depiction of contemporary American life was likely too alienating in the moment.

This pattern conforms well to Earle Ernst's explanation of the limited view of the GHQ's highly idealized objectives:

can muff a question and not commit hara-kiri because of loss of face may indicate that the Japanese are making progress" (qtd. in Jung 176). The adult version of the quiz show *Hanashi no izumi* [*Fountain of Knowledge*] inspired a similar movement for children called *Kodomo nōanashi no izumi* [*Children's Fountain of Knowledge*] in which children both competed and formed questions. The event became a cultural movement and was often held in schools, and the form later became a common "parlor game" in workplaces, public gatherings, and on public transportation (Jung 184-185).

Their view of the function of the theatre in a democracy was based not so much upon the existing American theatre (the Occupation was largely concerned with the ideal) but upon notions of the function of this theatre in a perfect democracy: The theatre should deal honestly and fearlessly with the stuff of life; it should be intimately related to the actual life of contemporary people. Its characters should be individuals rather than types. The theatre should not serve as a propaganda medium but as a free sounding board for all honest opinion. The theatre should not merely provide, like the average American film, anaesthetic escape into a world of unsubstantial fantasy, but on the contrary, sensitive perception of the meaning beneath the fact. The theatre should not be an evasion of reality but an intensification of it whether in comedy or tragedy (261).

Thus, a large number of works produced for young people in the early postwar period were by *shingeki* companies, and this was directly due to the United States' active promotion of *shingeki* companies and their works as a means of introducing democratic values through works from the "West."

Early Postwar Children's Theatre Companies and Performances

Thus, it is clear why Gekidan Tōdō's production of *The Blue Bird*, widely considered the first professional "children's" theatre production of the postwar era, was allowed, as it conformed to the GHQ's view of what theatre in the new, democratic Japan should look like.²¹

²¹ While Maeterlinck's symbolist work *The Blue Bird* has child characters and is often posited as a play for young audiences, there is no reason to believe that Maeterlinck intended it to be for this age group. Nevertheless, the work was often performed for young audiences beginning in Russia in the early 1900s, and it has been performed in many places around the world for young audiences since, including in the United States. Winifred Ward, one of the foremost early theorists and practitioners of theatre for young audiences in the U.S., argues in her 1939 work *Theatre for Children* that this is because of the strength of its story. She writes, "Some symbolic stories and plays,

Performances were held from December 20-26, 1945 at the Hitotsubashi Kyōritsu Auditorium in the Kanda area of Tokyo, and that same week, another landmark performance of *The Cherry Orchard*, touted as the first “adult” postwar *shingeki* production, was produced at the Yuraku-za theatre nearby.²² The circumstances under which *The Blue Bird* was produced were likewise very similar to the *Cherry Orchard* production, and in many ways, it held both symbolic significance and further linked these first postwar performances to the early *shingeki* experiments in Tokyo from the early 1920s. Both were also important Moscow Art Theatre pieces, largely symbolic choices that in hindsight predict the importance that both *shingeki* and its relationship to the Soviet Union and the international left possessed in the prewar period and would once again come to possess in the following decades.

Like *The Cherry Orchard*, *The Blue Bird* had a long history of production in Japan and was produced by many different companies during the late Taishō period, the early 1920s, a relatively peaceful period of growth and prosperity. The first known performance of *Blue Bird* in Japan was produced by the Minshū-za company at the Yuraku-za theatre (the same space as the first postwar production of *The Cherry Orchard*) in 1920. Gekidan Tōdō first produced the work in 1928, and performed the piece again in 1931 and 1941. Notably, *Blue Bird* was also a staple production in the United States, having been produced on Broadway first in 1910, after which it became extraordinarily popular in the 1920s and 1930s, when it was produced at the

such as *The Selfish Giant* and *The Blue Bird* are enjoyed by young people, but it is because of their story interest rather than their symbolism. Pageants representing Faith, Peace, Democracy, and other great abstractions are seldom really impressive to child audiences” (122-123).

²² According to Guohe Zheng, “The most significant indication of *shingeki*’s revival...was undoubtedly the production of Anton Chekhov’s *The Cherry Orchard*, December 26 to 28, 1945, at the Yuraku-za. *The Cherry Orchard* was deliberately chosen as the first postwar *shingeki* production in order to allow as many *shingeki* stars as possible to appear on stage in a symbolic demonstration of the genre’s revival” (282).

Goodman Theatre in Chicago as well as other venues across the country (McCaslin 25, 56). A production of *Blue Bird* was also heralded as “the world premiere of America’s National Children’s Theatre” when it was produced by the Association of Junior Leagues of America at Chicago’s Selwyn Theatre in 1930 (Bedard 39). Like many of the plays for children and young people that would come to be further canonized in early postwar Japan, *Blue Bird* fulfilled three criteria: It was an important work that had been produced in the Soviet Union, it had been produced before the war by a *shingeki* company, and was well known in the United States, and therefore at least familiar to the censors, as well.

Due to the limited number of theatre spaces available, Gekidan Tōdō’s 1945 production was held in the public space of the auditorium, a practice that was very common in postwar Japan. Like the performance of *The Cherry Orchard*, the performance of *The Blue Bird* represented, for many, the first signs of the revival and resuscitation of the stage, which had seen a series of setbacks during the war due to deployments, evacuations, censorship, and the physical destruction of theatre space. In addition to this designation as a “first,” however, the performance was significant also for the manner in which it laid the groundwork in form and theory for thousands of performances to follow.

The performance was accompanied by a performance bulletin that professed interest in establishing an organization called the Nihon Jidō Kenkyūjō, or the Japan Child Drama Research Center, which Tomita cites as evidence of the growing interest in establishing a more concrete form of theory and practice in children’s theatre. The bulletin included an article titled “Jidō Gekijō” (“Children’s Theatre”) (*Nihon* 280). Like the newspaper announcement for the production of *Blue Bird*, the notes state that the company wished to establish the Nihon Jidō

Engeki Kenkyūjo, or the “Japan Children’s Theatre Research Institute,” and sought to collaborate with educators and other persons with connections to youth culture throughout the country. In this bulletin, the writer stated that it was necessary to establish this research institute, as General MacArthur had said that children and youth in particular, as opposed to those who had already come of age, had the capability or capacity to embrace democratization (*Nihon* 280). Presumably, at least initially, this was a shared objective of Tōdō’s work.

Despite this relatively short period, Gekidan Tōdō’s activities laid much of the groundwork for countless productions for young people to come, and continued to establish both works and practices common both before and during the war as a postwar standard. At the close of *Blue Bird*’s run in Tokyo, Tōdō toured to Osaka and Kyoto with the same production in the spring of 1946, and produced a performance of Cervantes’ *Don Quixote* (directed by Miyatsu Hiroshi) at the Tamagawaen Gekijō (Tomita, *Nihon* 281). This act of touring to remote regions was another practice that was held over from the pre-war and wartime era. The Cabinet Information Office, or Jōhōkyoku, promoted touring performances for mobilization purposes during the war, and companies who participated in this movement lacked suitable performing spaces in most towns and villages (Powell, *Century* 131). Iizuka Tomoichirō, a theatre academic and panel judge for one of Jōhōkyoku’s wartime drama competitions, believed that theatre, along with schools and the state religion, had vast potential for the “spiritual mobilization” of the masses (Powell, *Century* 117). Iizuka also argued that as part of producing a new form of patriotic theatre, adolescents and children should perform the works.

The method of touring with simple sets allowed performances to be held anywhere, and this form would prove to be the most dominant form of performance for young people in the

postwar era as well. This style of performance also had further lasting influence. Like touring and producing work in found spaces, the practice of children and adolescents performing for others of the same age was a pattern that continued for more than a decade after the end of the war, and Gekidan Tōdō was one of its strongest proponents.

Recurring Aesthetic Values and the Reemergence of Theatre in the Classroom

Since the early years of Tōdō's existence, it had often toured to the rural areas of Japan, and specifically targeted the Tohoku region of northeastern Japan. This became especially important during the wartime, when it toured its works to evacuated children in this area. Their works at this time included *Aizu Nisshinkan*, or *Aizu Samurai School* by Ōbayashi Kiyoshi in late 1944 (Tomita, *Nihon* 281). Ōbayashi's work was frequently used in the mobile theatre units during the war, and he also directed a number of these works himself (Shinomura 287-288). *Aizu Samurai School*, no doubt, was evocative of *Yamato damashii*, the Japanese spirit, and sufficiently patriotic as required during the wartime. The flavor of Tōdō's work soon after the end of the war is distinctly different, however, as it produced a series of works that originated in the United States and Europe. After its initial performance and tour of *Blue Bird*, Tōdō followed up with a performance of *Don Quixote* then toured to schools and auditoriums along the Tōkyū Densetsu Railway line in the Tokyo area later that year. Tōdō's next production, in 1947, featured Stuart Walker's *Six Who Pass While the Lentils Boil*, and this time toured nationally. The works were by no means new material for Gekidan Tōdō. The company produced *Six Who Pass While the Lentils Boil* at the Tsukiji Shōgekijō, or Tsukiji Small Theatre, for the first time in June 1935 for an audience of children, adolescents, and adults (Tomita, *Kenji* 127). According

to records in the theatre museum at Waseda University, the company also produced a version of *Don Quixote* adapted and directed by Miyatsu Hiroshi at the Tsukiji Small Theatre in 1936.²³ It is also worth noting that like *Blue Bird*, *Six Who Pass While the Lentils Boil*, and *Don Quixote* were all pieces familiar to Americans. Stuart Walker's *Six Who Pass While the Lentils Boil* premiered at the Portmanteau Theatre in 1915 during the early wave of children's theatre performances in the 1910s and 1920s (McCaslin 36), and each had also been performed under the auspices of the Federal Theatre Project in the 1930s. It therefore seems entirely plausible that these early postwar pieces were chosen as common ground between Gekidan Tōdō and the censors: They were pieces with which both the company and the authorities had experience and familiarity, and are likewise evidence of the important influence of the early *shingeki* movement and transnational influence on theatre for children and young people in postwar Japan.

As Tōdō began to shift its efforts toward tours to public schools, this new paradigm became important for several reasons. First, it is further evidence that practices developed before and during the war maintained important influence even though the ideological, political

²³ Formed in 1924, the Tsukiji Shōgekijō, or “Tsukiji Small Theatre,” was an extraordinarily influential *shingeki* company in Tokyo. The company was founded by Osanai Kaoru and Hijikata Yoshi, and their widely divergent artistic visions for the theatre ultimately came to represent a fundamental theoretical disagreement on politics and theatre aesthetics that lasted long after Osanai's early death in 1928. At several different points in his abruptly curtailed career, Osanai developed both a professional and personal relationship with many of the preeminent individuals of pre-Revolutionary and post-Bolshevik Russia, including both Stanislavsky and Chekhov. In Osanai's mind, the Tsukiji Shōgekijō was to be formed in the image of the Moscow Art Theatre. He stressed “realism” in acting, which Powell points out was widely associated with that of the Moscow Art Theatre by the 1920s in Japan (“Japan's First Modern” 76, n. 29). Conversely, Hijikata also drew substantial inspiration from Moscow theatre, but he travelled there in 1922, ten years after Osanai and encountered a post-revolutionary Soviet Union and the experimental works associated with this rupture. In the wake of both World War I and the October Revolution, and under increasingly strict state monitoring of the theatres, a starkly different mood pervaded the city. While the Moscow Art Theatre remained influential, Meyerhold had begun to develop his system of practical exercises for actors called biomechanics. As the new Director of the State Higher Theatre Workshop, he found himself in an influential position, and had a powerful platform from which to share his work. According to Edward Braun, editor and translator of *Meyerhold on Theatre*, Meyerhold believed that his system “was devised in response to the demands of the new mechanized age, as opposed to th[at] of Stanislavsky and Tairov, which w[as] unscientific and anachronistic” (183).

conditions and circumstances of the postwar period were entirely different. Second, as both a “forerunner of the theatre in the classroom movement” in Tomita’s words (*Nihon* 280), and a the purveyors of a project to develop “democratic” theatre for children, the highly important relationship between Gekidan Tōdō and the education system must be scrutinized, as this became one of the most fundamental relationships in the field of theatre for children and young people in the first few decades of the postwar period, and even yet today. I assert that it was also foundational to imposition of democracy first through the dissemination of the values of the GHQ, as well as the values of the administration, educators, and the companies themselves.

Performances that were held in schools were generally held in the auditoriums, a practice that came to be called “*Engeki Kyōshitsu*,” or “Theatre in the Classroom.” This form of performance, the practice of professional theatre company tours to schools, was adopted by the vast majority of theatre companies producing works for children and young people in the early postwar period. This was by no mean’s Japan’s first instance of theatre or drama in schools, however, and as such, it is important to understand the history of this relationship.

Iwaya Sazanami, who translated numerous fairy tales into Japanese in the early twentieth century, including the works of Hans Christian Andersen and the Grimm brothers, is frequently cited as the “pioneer” of theatre for children and young people in Japan. Iwaya reportedly witnessed both theatre performed by adults for young people and German schoolteachers working with children to perform these works and began to advocate the development of a similar form of child drama in Japan (Kobayashi, “Drama” 93; Fujikura, *Reevaluation* 37). It wasn’t until the Taishō Period, or the late teens and early 1920s, however, that strong interest in employing drama as a means of assisting child development began to take root. It was during the

late teens and early 1920s that a more liberal education movement, along with the *dōshin* or “child’s heart” movement, which espoused the innocence of the child through publications such as *Akai tori (Red Bird)* by stressing child psychology and child centeredness, gained popularity and strength. According to Nona Carter, during the height of this movement, “Schools rapidly underwent transformations in teaching methods and content based on the new notions of what suited the child’s intellect, and authors consciously attempted to write stories that would appeal to the child’s intellect and imagination” (79). It was under these circumstances that both Tsubouchi Shōyō and Obara Kuniyoshi began to advocate their theories of child drama. According to Fujikura, Tsubouchi was directly influenced by these movements, and attempted to apply their child-centered concepts to drama (70). At almost the same time, Obara Kuniyoshi published the book *Gakkō gekiron (Theory of School Drama)*, in which he encouraged children to perform drama in schools due to its holistic nature, and teachers began to adopt these methods (Fujikura, *Reevaluation* 142; Kobayashi, “Drama” 93).

As noted earlier in this chapter, Miyazawa Kenji, the distinguished author and playwright, was a teacher in rural Iwate Prefecture, and employed similar methods by encouraging students to perform the plays he wrote as a means of assisting them to grasp complex subjects, including weather patterns in *Kaze no Matasaburō*. While drama in schools was effectively banned in 1924 by the Ministry of Education due to concerns that this type of free education threatened the Emperor-based national ideology (Fujikura, *Reevaluation* 142-143), it was effectively revived in the 1930s with the foundation of the School Play Study Society in 1932 and the Japanese School Play Association in 1937. These organizations were prohibited in 1941, however, and forced to dissolve (Kobayashi, “Drama” 94).

A clear example of the lasting influence of these movements can be found in the work of Gekidan Tanpopo, which was officially inaugurated in 1947. In many ways, Tanpopo's early work drew on the most important movements in the field from both the pre- and postwar period, including the role of fairy tales and folk tales as subject matter, the "child mind" movement of the late 1910s and 1920s, the early experiments of both Kawakami Otojirō and Kawakami Sadayakko, the importance of companies founded in local communities, and a simple production aesthetic designed for found spaces and touring, such as to schools and community centers.

Sayuri Yōko, the founder of Tanpopo, was a major figure in the field of theatre for young people in Japan. As a child growing up in Shizuoka Prefecture, Sayuri was reportedly deeply impressed by the fairy tale plays of the legendary Kawakami Otojirō and Sadayakko, a couple who toured the United States and Europe between 1900 and 1902 and inspired a generation of avant garde artists fascinated with their "exotic" performances. Likewise, Kawakami and Sadayakko returned to Japan influenced by the European tradition of performing fairy tales for children, and Sayuri attended a performance by the pair at the Hamamatsu Kabuki-za in 1907, when she was approximately six years old. In her autobiography, Sayuri claims that this performance of 1907 performance of Iwaya Sazanami's *Ukare kokyū*, or "Violin on a Spree," made an enormous impression on her. In the pre-war period, she was active in the theatre world of Tokyo, where she both worked as an actress with *shingeki* companies and participated in Tsubouchi Shōyō's Jidō Geki Kenkyūkai (Child Drama Research Society) at Waseda University (Tomita, *Nihon* 291-292). Like many, she was evacuated to the countryside as the bombing of Tokyo drew near. Sayuri traveled to Shinonoi City in Nagano Prefecture during the evacuations and remained there for several years. During the period of evacuation before the end of the war

in 1945, Sayuri founded the Shinonoi Geijutsu-za (Shinonoi Art Theatre) and worked to produce different types of plays and puppet shows at schools and factories for the local community.

Gekidan Tanpopo grew out of this work.

Sayuri's objective, she said, was to bring some form of hope and happiness to people who had witnessed the horrors and trauma of war, were still with very little food, and were in the recovery process. Sensing a need among children in particular, she began to focus her efforts more directly toward them. In April 1947, the year Gekidan Tanpopo was formally inaugurated, the company performed Osanai Kaoru's translation of Walker's *Six Who Pass While the Lentils Boil*, clearly calibrated to the tastes of the GHQ censors, who would likely have been familiar with the play, as well as Yamamoto Yūzō's *Umi-hiko yamahiko* ("The Sea Boy and the Mountain Boy"), and Sayuri's own *Kakurenbo* (*Hide and Seek*), a puppet theatre production for elementary school audiences. Unlike most companies, which focused on either live or puppet performances, Tanpopo continued to produce performances with both ("Tanpopo;" Ōno; "Senzen" 13).²⁴

In addition to content, Tanpopo also appears to have employed production elements that appealed to both Japanese tradition and the GHQ's demands that companies perform American and European works. While *Six Who Pass While the Lentils Boil* is an American work, in an image from the company's 1947 production of *Six Who Pass While the Lentils Boil* at the Shinonoi Theatre in Nagano Prefecture, actors appear in what appears to be both traditional costumes and European "fairy tale-like" garb. The Queen appears to be in a western style long, flowing white dress, and the boy wears short trousers and a vest. The Headsman, on his way to

²⁴ The company continues to be based in Shizuoka Prefecture today, and remains a major theatre company producing work for children and young people.

behead the queen for a breach of etiquette, on the other hand, wears patterned *hakama*, a type of clothing common in the martial arts and by some characters, musicians, and stage hands in the more traditional performing arts. Another unknown figure in a topknot and *kimono* appears to watch the action from the middle of the stage. The set, on a raised stage, is simple and features a table, a chair, and what appears to be a sink, and an audience of mostly children surrounds the stage. While it appears that the choice of script was, on the surface, an act to appease the censors, the production appears to have incorporated visual elements that give the production an aesthetic that blends “western” and Japanese forms (“Tanpopo”).

As these examples demonstrate, the early postwar stage engaged with a variety of competing aesthetic goals and values. Many practices developed both before and during the war, including touring and found spaces, continued to be important, and performances in schools were shaped directly by these practices. After the war, theatre in the classroom (*engeki kyōshitsu*) continued to make use of found, convertible performance space within schools. Ogawa ties both the practice of touring and performing in schools to those developed during the war, asserting that at that time, companies such as Gekidan Tōdō had often performed in schools during tours to areas to which children had evacuated to escape the bombings in metropolitan areas (22). This necessitated practical accommodations to staging that became the norm during the early postwar period. While it is a bit lengthy and specifically references the Hitomi-za’s activities in the 1950s, Suda Rintarō, a director with the company, gives a fascinating insight into both the process of touring to schools and the performance theory behind it. In its entirety, his remarks have extraordinary implications for understanding the form and theory of theatre in the classroom and theatre in education in early postwar Japan:

Burdened with carrying in both hands the puppets, a pre-built stage, and all the stage equipment, seven people would head toward the school on the first train. We were usually unable to take the bus due to large baggage, and at that time, theatre company trucks were still a dream. The teacher in charge of the night watch at the school did us the favor of meeting us and opening the school gates. We had to begin stage construction and making the place of assembly immediately. Public elementary and junior high schools that possessed auditoriums and gymnasiums were exceedingly few in the 1950s, and almost all conducted things like school art meetings by meeting in classrooms with the partitions removed (*buchinuki kyōshitsu*). Puppet theatre companies that played an active role in performing at schools in the 1950s, including the Hitomi-za, Ningyō-za, Gekidan Kurarute, and Ningyō Kyōgei, all experienced puppet productions in the *buchinuki* classroom, and obtained the spirit of their works from this, I believe. And, due to the scale of the stage and mobility, compared to regular stage theatre, it seems that there were more choices suited to the conditions of a small-scale puppet theatre. We stretched a horizontal curtain at the end of the *buchinuki* classroom that had been converted into a puppet theatre space to create an almost three-meter area and then constructed a puppet stage. It was an operation with which we became very familiar, but due to the various preparations, two hours before the opening were required. Puppet theatre stage preparations could be done in about half the time when high school students began to make the assembly space under the guidance of the teacher in charge. Usually, three classrooms became the *buchinuki* classroom, and the blackboards, teachers' desks, students' desks, chairs, etc. were carried out and piled up in the corridor. If the heavy teaching platforms were removed through

the large wooden doors of the three classrooms, space could be created on the floor for three hundred people. And then, before the performance, we cleaned the floor and stage and made guest seating which was mats spread out on the floor, and students returned to the classroom. Due to the meager lighting equipment that the company had brought, darkening the room with just a small blackout curtain and blanket to try to make the stage lighting work as best as possible was a group effort by both the teachers and company members. I also recall that there were schools in which the principal very graciously helped us.²⁵

In the language of *nō*, there is *hare* and *ke*. Even though it was a *buchinuki* classroom, it was “extraordinary.” Naturally, the companies producing theatre wanted the children in the audience to shake off the “ordinary” and become happily immersed in the world of theatre. The enthusiastic cooperation between teachers who also wished for this and theatre companies raised the value of theatre in schools and became the driving force in the expansion of performances in schools throughout the entire country, I believe (56-57).

Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney explains the meaning of *hare* and *ke*:

The Japanese concepts of sacred and secular, expressed by the pair of words *hare* and *ke*, have received much attention among scholars of Japanese religions. The term *hare* refers to space, time, objects, and phenomena out of the ordinary, as opposed to *ke*, which refers

²⁵ This staging process was largely similar at the Hitomi-za performance of *San biki no kobuta*, or *The Three Little Pigs*, that I attended at Tokufu Yōchien, or Tokufu Kindergarten, in Yokohama in July 2012. The performance was held in a converted second-floor classroom that was darkened by a dark cloth covering the windows. A black curtain and small, portable stage were set up at one end of the room, and the students sat on the floor to watch the performance. A number of the children’s mothers also attended (and taped) the performance, but they sat in specially designated folding chairs in the back of the room as opposed to the floor. In contrast to taking the train to the performance, however, the Hitomi-za and most contemporary companies that tour and perform in schools now possess large company vans that make transportation of the stage and equipment more convenient. Nevertheless, the aesthetic quality of portability described by Suda here appears to have endured.

to mundane or day-to-day property. Celebrations and rituals in honor of deities mark their time as *hare*; people use *hare* space to perform rituals and wear special clothes for *hare* occasions...*Ke* is the secular counterpart of *hare*" (140-141).

In addition to Suda's description of the process and special accommodations required to both tour and perform in schools, his assertion that the performance space becomes "*hare*," or "extraordinary," "sacred," or a separate space and time out of the ordinary, is strikingly similar to Mitsuya Mori's description of *geinō*. Mori describes *geinō* as a conception of theatricality that is prevalent in Japan today that allows for the seemingly ordinary to easily become "extraordinary," as Ohnuki-Tierney describes. In "The Structure of Theater: A Japanese View of Theatricality," Mori argues that events such as sumo wrestling and tea ceremony conform to this idea of theatricality not because of spectacle but because of the concept of *geinō* (90). Defining theatricality as being "theater-like," *geinō*, according to Mori, is a conception of performance that has existed in Japan for approximately a thousand years (73, 89). He argues that "*geinō* is often used in scholarly research works as a concept to cover all theatrical genres and performative activities." He analyzes the triangular relationships between both A) player, role, and spectator, and B) actor, character, and audience. Defining example B as the "elevation" of A, Mori argues, "*Geinō* includes every kind of performance that contains the above schematized triangular structure of A, but that it needs even the slightest hint of the triangle B." One of the fundamental points of this analysis is that in example B, there is no "spectator," as the audience is just as much a part of the performance as the actors. In other words, the spectator becomes the audience and shares in the event (thus becoming *geinō*), whereas a spectator remains outside of the event and thus maintains separateness (90). This concept seems to complement Suda's

assertion that theatre in a converted classroom, or a gymnasium, took the form of *hare*, or an “extraordinary” or “sacred” experience. Likewise, in somewhat less ephemeral terminology, according to Fujita Asaya, school performances “[c]ame to be called ‘gymnasium theatre,’ but it is not making theatre in a gymnasium. Above all else, it is the idea that the gymnasium specifically *is* a theatre” (“Jidō engeki” 272).

In addition to the theory and practice of touring performances due to the absence of permanent space, the movement was an important part of the educational objectives of the GHQ. Ōno Yukinori makes a fascinating comparison between the “audiovisual education” (*shōkaku kyōiku*) promoted by the GHQ in the early postwar period as a means of promoting the “peace education” (*heiwa kyōiku*) it saw as critical to the ideological retooling of the nation. The GHQ ordered films and slide shows endorsing its agenda to be shown in schools across the country, and Ōno argues that live theatre and puppet theatre can also be thought of in this light. In his words:

In the early postwar period, the GHQ ordered the implementation of audiovisual education in order to promote peace education, and movies and slides were often screened shown in schools. Stage theatre and puppet theatre also can be thought of as audiovisual education. For example, in the Kansai area, teachers fully realized the huge significance of going to the theatre and puppet theatre productions, and while it was an unusual teaching material, regarded as “immersion material,” the fact that it was able to create the groundwork for the development of “theatre in the classroom” is supported by the testimony of those connected to the theatre companies (“Senzen” 17).

In a personal interview with Ōnōe also drew a parallel between this form of audiovisual education (*shichōkaku kyōiku*) imposed by the GHQ and the development of the form of theatre in the classroom (*engeki kyōshitsu*) and theatre education (*engeki kyōiku*), asserting that teachers witnessed the effectiveness of the GHQ efforts and began to study and critique its use. Takeo Fujikura offers another perspective. As opposed to imposition from above, he suggests that it was, in fact, the school drama movement of the early 1920s that contributed to the rapidly growing theatre in education movement soon after the end of the war. He says:

[T]he school drama trend or fad reached its peak around 1922-3. This might be an important clue to understanding how school drama after the World War II began with such explosive energy. Those who experienced the school drama trend in their elementary school days (six years old to twelve years old) would have been about age twenty-nine to thirty-five by the end of World War II in 1945. That is to say, if many of these school drama fans were to become schoolteachers around this time, they could have been the central force in promoting dramatic activities in the school environment.

(personal e-mail)

Both perspectives offer clear evidence that schools were viewed by the new administration as an important field to target in their reeducation efforts, and that many teachers at the time viewed theatre in the classroom and other dramatic activity as important elements of their work.

Education and Performance Politics During the Wartime and Occupation

The expanding trend of theatre and drama in schools had advocates in powerful positions. These works should not necessarily be viewed completely in sync with administrative objectives,

however, as their sponsors, ranging from the Ministry of Education to the Japan Teachers Union, the largest union for teachers in Japan, often held incredibly different goals and objectives. The works that these companies produced fell in step with these objectives, as many companies began to work collaboratively with the teachers union, leading to a conflict of interest between the newly formed and energized teachers unions and the far more conservative Ministry of Education.

Dozens of new troupes began performing once again and organized under the banner of the Shin Jidō Engeki Nin Kyōkai, or the New Association of Children's Theatre People, shortly after the war's end. Participants included several companies from the pre-war era, including Gekidan Kodomo-machi (Theatre Company Children's Town), Midori no Oka Dōwa Geki Kenkyū Kai (The Green Hill Fairy Tale Theatre Research Society), and Teatoru Pikkoro (Theatre Piccolo), as well several new companies. The wartime company Kokumin Ningyō Gekidan, or National People's Puppet Theatre, changed its name to Ningyō Gekidan Kurumi-za (Walnut Puppet Theatre) and began to perform once again, and the newly formed companies Jeune Pantoru (Young Painter), which would go on to become the massively popular Mokuba-za in the 1960s, and Gekidan Dōwa-za (The Fairy-Tale Troupe), which featured the works of the playwright Nomura Masao, also joined the group. The New Association of Children's Theatre People deserves special attention, as its first meeting was both sponsored by and held in a meeting space of Monbushō, or the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, and Technology on June 14, 1946.

The Division of Art was established within Monbushō, essentially taking the place of the former Jōhōkyoku, or Information Bureau, and its parent administration, the Bunka Geijutsu

Gyōsei, or Cultural Arts Administration, in February 1946. This division, like most institutions, was undergoing major changes at the time, but had not entirely broken some ties from the wartime era. It is thus an important example of an institution that was forced to restructure itself after the war but also did not entirely break with its past. The Division of Arts administration included administrators who had worked within the wartime Cultural Arts administration, which had also been responsible for the wartime mobilization of many theatre companies and performers (Tomita, *Nihon* 285).²⁶ The first head of the Division of Arts, Kon Hidemi, was a conservative writer and critic, and was a member of the propaganda corps during the war. He was also one of a thousand cultural figures to be recruited by the military to become “culture warriors” and sent to various locations throughout Japan’s sphere of control throughout East and Southeast Asia (Brandon 193).

The culture propaganda corps of the wartime period oversaw local artists who created “stage productions, children’s paper-picture plays, songs, and films” in the local languages to disseminate imperial doctrine. The themes of their works included “Asia is One,” “Japan: Light of Asia,” “Promote Increased Food Production,” “Security From Spies,” and “Promote the Fighting Spirit of Japan.” Kon, who had previously worked with the leftist theatre troupe Kokoro-za, spent the majority of his time in the Philippines, where he organized the International Revue Company in Manila in 1942. The revue was composed of vaudeville artists who performed regularly at the Metropolitan Theatre, usually waving Japanese flags and singing Japan’s “Patriotic March” in the finale. He also oversaw a production by the Fong Wong Chinese opera troupe that celebrated the fifth anniversary of Japan’s invasion of China in 1942.

²⁶ See p. 57 for further information on Jōhōkyoku’s role in the wartime mobilization of theatre companies.

After the war, Kon founded the Japan Arts Festival, sponsored by the Ministry of Education and first held in October 1946, and became the first head of the Japan Foundation in 1968 (Brandon 193-194).

To be certain, Kon was not the only figure from the world of theatre to have actively promoted the nationalist, imperial wartime agenda. As noted previously, many actors and artists had been sent to the war front as part of a large-scale propaganda effort, including Gekidan Tōdō and many companies associated with the left. Many of those not sent abroad actively promoted its agenda at home, and Zheng details a tense meeting of *shingeki* artists shortly after the war's end, where the issue of war responsibility was heatedly discussed. Even Senda Koreya, perhaps the most prominent and famous actor and director of his time, and one who had been jailed for his activities with the illegal Communist Party beginning in 1940, acknowledged that he had acted in nationalist propaganda films during the war (Zheng 287).

Under Kon's leadership, the Division of Arts also began to sponsor the *Seinen Engeki Kenkyū Kai*, or Youth Theatre Research Association, in May 1946. Many of the same companies that were members of the New Association of Children's Theatre Companies participated, as well as some other groups, including Gekidan Kodomo-kai, the Kamoshika-za, Gekidan Teatoru Pikkoro, the Tsumiki-za, the Dōwa-za, the Dai Ichi Shihan Jidō Bunka Bu (the Teachers Children's Culture Division Number One), and the Tokai Kagaku Senmon Gakkō Jidō Bunka Bu (the Tokai Science Vocational School Children's Culture Division). In conjunction with Monbushō, the Ministry of Education, the Youth Theatre Research Association also published a series of works containing scripts it recommended for young audiences, including Mafune Yutaka's *The Water Thief* (1926), which included a director's note by Senda Koreya, a

collection called *The School Arts Festival After the Devastation* which included two works, Miyatsu Hiroshi's *Hometown Hideo* and Saida Takashi's *Yotsushi's Pippo* (1947), and compilations of Tsubouchi Shōyō and Kubota Mantarō's works, both published in 1948 (Tomita, *Nihon* 285). Mafune, Tsubouchi, and Kubota were three of the most important cultural figures of the prewar era, and it is important to observe this choice. As previously noted, Tsubouchi is one of the figureheads of the modern theatre in Japan, and his theories of child drama and its educational value are foundational works. Mafune was a renowned *shingeki* and *shinpa* playwright, and Kubota Mantarō was also one of the most influential figures in the field. In addition to writing plays and radio dramas for NHK, Kubota was one of the founders of the *shingeki* company the Bungaku-za. Like Kon, Kubota was also a "culture warrior" during the war, when he was sent to Manchuria at the behest of the imperial government. Nevertheless, these textual and performance recommendations on behalf of the Youth Theatre Research Association stand in stark contrast to its first postwar production.

Before this series of publications the companies that were organized under the banner of the Youth Theatre Research Association jointly produced *Peter Pan* at the Shinjuku Seikatsu Hall in 1946. Like the early postwar works of Gekidan Tōdō, this choice was likely one with which the censors would have been familiar and comfortable, and it too had become canonized in Europe and the United States, including as a work supported by the Federal Theatre Project. It is also clearly a very different aesthetic choice than the works the organization advocated in its later publications. While we do not know the specifics of either what occurred at the initial meeting of theatre companies or what the Youth Theatre Research Association specifically aimed to accomplish, it is not an enormous leap to surmise that the companies were gathered

under the auspices of a campaign to encourage the (carefully watched) Ministry's agenda. Given the strong interest in both children and young people and the stage on behalf of Occupation leaders, it makes sense that the newly reformed Ministry of Education, Department of Social Education, and Division of Arts would also demonstrate similar interest. These links cannot be ignored, and the ideological makeup of the New Association of Children's Theatre Persons became an almost perfect microcosm of the divergent yet synchronous schools of thought that would characterize the educational system by the 1950s: a conservative administrative body that governed a largely progressive body of teachers. Because of its strong relationship to the education system, theatre for young people in early postwar Japan was produced within the parameters of these competing ideologies.

In the early postwar years, education was a highly charged ideological battleground as public school teachers, facing increasing recognition that their support of the war effort had contributed heavily to Japan's militarization, became increasingly politicized, and theatre in the schools remained politicized as a result. Gary Allinson attributes teachers' drift toward the left to low pay and poor working conditions, stemming from both the physical destruction of urban schools and pay that failed to keep up with inflation. Teachers joined Nikkyōso, or the Japan Teachers' Union (JTU) in masses. Many JTU branches were affiliated with the Japan Communist Party and Socialist Party, a move that also contributed in part to the increasing radicalization of the teaching profession. Allinson explains:

As more teachers joined unions affiliated with the political left, tensions grew between the ministry and Nikkyōso. Cool to Allied reforms from the outset, bureaucrats in the central ministry strove to restore the educational system to norms more in keeping with

the prewar era. Determined to make the schools a bastion of democracy, the teachers in Nikkyōso defended the schools against the intrusive conservatism of the center. (73)

In addition to teachers' unions, other leftist organizations and affiliated artists and community leaders also engaged in this struggle to engage with young people under these new postwar circumstances, including in the theatre. When the *Shin Engeki Jin Kyōkai* (Association of New Theatre People) was formed in 1946, it began to advocate for youth theatre activities almost immediately. The chairperson of the organization was another major figure in the modern theatre movement, Hijikata Yoshi, who founded the Tsukiji Small Theatre along with Osanai Kaoru in 1923.²⁷ Hatta Motoo, who had been the leader of the proletarian theatre company Tokyo Shōnen Gekidan (Tokyo Youth Theatre Company) in the prewar era, strongly encouraged producing work for young people. Hatta had been in charge of production at both the Tsukiji Small Theatre and the New Tsukiji Small Theatre, a leftist organization formed by members of the Tsukiji Small Theatre after Osanai Kaoru's death. As a result of Hatta's activities, the Shōnen Engeki Kurabu (Youth Theatre Club) was organized more formally in 1947 as a means of coordinating the work of the newly formed teachers union and democratic cultural organizations. According to Tomita, "Theatre specialists, leaders of school theatre, and leaders of children's circle theatre, as well as ordinary cultural persons actively collaborated with the movement." Strongly reminiscent of Gekidan Tōdō's appeal to democracy in theatre for children, the organization stated that it wished to encourage the transition to democratization. Its prospectus announced, "The complete democratization of Japanese culture cannot be done

²⁷ Please see page 59 for a detailed description of this important venue.

without the independent encouragement of youth, who will come to be the leaders of the future” (*Nihon* 297).

Linked to these groups, circles, including children’s theatre circles, were a social phenomenon strongly linked with the local community, leftist groups, and the formation of democracy in the early postwar years. They also became a vital constituency of theatre companies and organizations in the late 1960s. Wesley Sasaki-Uemura notes that circles were grassroots organizations, usually originating out of citizens’ workplaces or places of residence (23). As opposed to political parties, however, circles were firmly centered in the local community, and adopted “older egalitarian forms to counteract the centralized hierarchies that still remained from the prewar period.” In the early postwar period, circles often were a form of community support, attempting to mitigate the deprivation of the time. As time progressed, circles sometimes were committed to a wide range of activities such as recording the everyday through journaling and transcription of conversation, often focusing on aspects of personal exploitation, studying formerly restricted or forbidden subjects as a supplement to that which was taught in the school system, and focusing on cultural activities such as music, dancing, or drama.

In addition to local communities, circles were also actively promoted in workplaces by organizers of the Japan Communist Party as a means of propagating awareness of political issues and mobilizing masses of people for political action. The Japan Socialist Party was also involved in the circle movement to a lesser extent, but to a large degree, but this political involvement on behalf of the left did not necessarily mean active political engagement. On the contrary, circles were often viewed as an extension of the workplace, and became a means of

both strengthening relationships with co-workers and expressing the value of one's job (Sasaki-Uemura 27-28). Even so, this political framework and its associations are excellent models through which to analyze the Youth Theatre Club, as they are also evidence of the growing influence of democracy taking root in the time period. As Justin Jesty argues in his dissertation on the arts and social engagement in the early postwar period in Japan, "Criticism of Japan's democracy is as old as democracy itself, and the above argument runs counter to the conservative claim that democracy was forced on the Japanese people. On the contrary, circles provide ample evidence that they [the Japanese people] embraced it" (33).

Circles are indeed evidence of the growing influence of democracy at the grassroots level. At the Youth Theatre Club's first general meeting, the group laid out the following goals and principles for the organization: 1) the exchange of independent children's theatre circle training; 2) the cultivation of professional theatre companies intended for children, and collaboration among them; 3) official encouragement of a national youth theatre; and 4) the complete abolition of taxation for youth cultural activities. As I will demonstrate in the subsequent chapters, while there is no evidence that the group's taxation goals had any results, and a national, state supported children's theatre has never been realized, these ambitious goals bore fruit as circles and amateur groups developed into new professional companies, and as companies began to collaborate and organize on a national basis. Furthermore, the Youth Theatre Club's mission to encourage the democratization of young people was indeed a successful one, as subsequent analyses and chapters will prove, but it was not without a struggle.

Zenshin-za and Theatre for Children and Adolescents

This tension between the GHQ, the Ministry of Education, teachers, community leaders, and theatre companies can be seen clearly in the early postwar work of Zenshin-za, another very important company performing works for children and young people in postwar Japan. In *Japan's Modern Theatre*, Brian Powell details the journey of the company Zenshin-za, a troupe that was formed in 1931 by a number of relatively low-ranking kabuki actors, including Kawarasaki Chōjūrō II, Nakamura Kan'emon III, and Kawarasaki Kunitarō V, who had grown tired of the Shōchiku management conglomerate, or as Tomita describes it, “Matsutake's Kabuki Kingdom” (*Nihon* 290), and set out to create a company that went against the seemingly ossified practices of the kabuki realm. The actors created a hybrid kabuki and *shingeki* company, and attempted to rid itself of the ranking system of actors and star billing system (Powell, *Century* 86, Leiter, *Kabuki* xxvi). Its members lived together and became well known for this collective lifestyle, and despite its early (and later) leftist orientation, the company remained in favor with authorities through most of the war, when the left became highly suspect.

This favorable treatment may be due to the company's relationship to an art form seen as traditional, even though the founders of Zenshin-za broke away from the kabuki establishment, as well as the company's ability to reach mass audiences through its film productions. In fact, the company collaborated directly with the war effort, and was endorsed by the Ministry of War for its production of *Ōhinata-mura* (*Ōhinata Village*), which lent explicit support to the village colonization movement, a key component of the Manchurian colonization program in the

interwar period.²⁸ Just four years after the end of the war, however, in 1949, the entire Zenshin-za company joined the newly legal Communist Party and found itself with unwanted extra attention from both the GHQ and the new government as Cold War tensions began to coalesce. While membership in the newly legal Japan Communist Party was by no means rare, and the party held roughly ten percent of the seats in the Diet in 1949, near the peak of its power, Powell muses, “It is intriguing to speculate on how Zenshin-za managed to move from the high ideals (for a while, even put into practice) of the early years of its history to being the darling of the militarist establishment during the war to being a Communist company a few years after the war had finished” (*Century* 121).

Zenshin-za found itself under increasing police surveillance after its political affiliation became so public. The unwanted attention culminated in an incident that has since become a part of theatre lore. Nakamura Kan’emon, one of the leaders of the company Zenshin-za, was wanted and aggressively pursued by the police for his political activities. Wanting to arrest Kan’emon, the police attempted to arrest him at a performance in Hokkaido in 1952. Rather than submit to the arrest, however, Kan’emon escaped by having doubles in heavy make up appear on the stage in his place while he slipped out the back door of the premises. Kan’emon fled to

²⁸ Zenshin-za’s production of *Ōhinata-mura* was part of a “boom” in reproduction of the Ōhinata myth based on Wada Tsutō’s novel of the same name, which told the story of the group of villagers from Ōhinata in Nagano Prefecture who were recruited to emigrate to Manchuria. According to Louise Young, “The popularizing of the Ōhinata myth largely took place after 1939, when the initial surge of enthusiasm for village colonization was fading and recruitment fell off sharply. Partly due to the encouragement of emigration officials, movie companies, playhouses, record companies, and publishers created a boom in Ōhinata village productions. Tokyo theaters sent troops of actors to visit the village and prepare themselves for the role. The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry invited leaders of the local movement to advise a Shinbashi playhouse on how to dramatize their story. In movie, novel, short story, photo essay, and song form, the moving story of Ōhinata’s struggles to better the condition of the community became an advertisement for the village colonization movement” (388).

China thereafter, where he remained until 1955 before returning to Japan (Powell, *Century* 148). It is unclear what specific circumstances prompted him to return at that time, but it is certain that he was no longer in fear of his immediate arrest. This seems to be completely in line with the experience of many *shingeki* companies associated with the Japan Communist Party and the left, however: While they were shunned by some schools and important theatre spaces as tensions between the government and leftist groups escalated, as *shingeki* companies became increasingly associated with the more lucrative television and film markets in the 1950s, their level of perceived ideological danger seemed to deflate proportionately. Nevertheless, in the early years of the postwar period, especially as the Korean War erupted in close geographical proximity, Zenshin-za remained a politically and ideologically charged entity.

Given this context, Zenshin-za's performances for young people are especially interesting. Zenshin-za was one of the most important theatre companies to create performances for young audiences in the postwar period, and is a fascinating case study due just as much to its unapologetic political stance during the Occupation, which appeared to shift across the political spectrum, as its critically acclaimed work. The company created performances specifically aimed toward young people ranging from elementary school through high school. Like many of the previously cited companies, Zenshin-za produced a work originating in Europe and familiar to the censors for its first postwar production for children, Maeterlinck's *Blue Bird*, in September 1946. According to Tomita, the children's theatre section, or the company that presented works to children, was composed of the younger members of the acting company, technically children themselves, as was common at Gekidan Tōdō and other companies. Zenshin-za's children's section conducted its first tour in the Tokyo area in September 1946, performing at seven

different venues with a program consisting of both Japanese dance and *Blue Bird*. Its repertoire for children quickly changed to one that mostly featured Japanese folk tales and works, however, which appears far more consistent with Zenshin-za's roots as a company formed by kabuki actors, albeit actors yearning to escape the confines of the kabuki establishment.

In the following year, 1947, Zenshin-za produced a series of Japanese works as part of its children's theatre program, including *Saru to kani (Monkey and Crab)* by Mayama Miho,²⁹ *Makoto no yujō (A True Friend)* (author unknown), Fujimori Seikichi's *Tomodachi (Friend)*, directed by Ichikawa Iwagorō, Hirata Kanesaburō's adaptation of *Shitakiri suzume (The Tongue Cut Sparrow)*, a Japanese folktale, directed by Nakamura Shingorō, Mitsumura Shin'ichi's *Raion to washi to saru (The Lion, the Eagle, and the Monkey)*, directed by Bandō Seiichirō, and then reprised *Shitakiri suzume*, once again directed by Nakamura. Following this cycle of works, the practice of using young child actors was disbanded by Zenshin-za, and in 1948, Zenshin-za substituted its use of child actors with "young" actors, likely adolescent or young adult actors, who performed for elementary school students.³⁰

²⁹ Mayama Miho, a well-known figure in the postwar children's theatre movement, is the daughter of the well-known *shin-kabuki* ("new kabuki") playwright Mayama Seika. According to her entry in *Who's Who in Contemporary Japanese Socialists and Writers*, Mayama joined Zenshin-za in 1944 but left to go to the Shinkyo Gekidan in 1946 before establishing her own theatre company, the Shin-Seisaku-za. Mayama Miho was a director at the Shin-Seisaku-za, and was recognized for developing a system that assisted a new generation of *shin-kabuki* actors learn to cope with the verbal complexities of her father's works (Cody and Sprinchorn 880-881).

³⁰ In addition to Zenshin-za, Gekidan Tōdō is also specifically remembered for its heavy reliance on young, apprentice actors, and it was also criticized for this as time wore on and concerns about children's rights became more mainstream. This practice continued until the company disbanded in 1960, and a program for the company's 1957 revival of *Pinnocchio* features a photograph of a group of actors on its cover who are very clearly young children and adolescents. In truth, however, many of the companies cited here employed adolescents and actors in training in their productions for young people, and while this had been a source of controversy even during the height of the school drama movement in Tsubouchi Shōyō's time, evolving attitudes in the postwar period became more concerned with the rights and welfare of the child than the appropriateness of children wearing makeup and appearing on the stage.

At the same time, Zenshin-za was also performing works directed toward junior high and high school students, for which it received some of its highest accolades. As opposed to works based on Japanese stories and folk tales, the works intended for adolescent audiences were by and large adaptations from the European canon. In 1946, the year after the war officially ended, Zenshin-za produced *Les Misérables*, dramatized by Kume Masao and directed by Kon Hidemi, the head of Monbushō's new Division of Arts, himself. While it is impossible to definitively determine what, exactly, led to the close alignment between the company and the Arts Division of the Ministry of Education through its direct association with Kon, it was likely either a strategic move to attain official favor amidst the new circumstances of the postwar, possibly influenced by the company's cordial wartime relationship with the government, a time when countless artists were imprisoned for association with the left, or out of obligation due to official government interest. Kon was not the only bureaucrat to favor Zenshin-za, however. In a treatise written during the war, Iizuka Tomichirō suggested Zenshin-za as the company best suited to developing his conception of a patriotic theatre. In this context, Zenshin-za's production of *Ōhinata-mura* makes perfect sense. As part of wartime mobilization efforts, Iizuka imagined a theatre movement that "took its place alongside schools and places of religion in contributing to the 'spiritual mobilization' of the whole nation." Powell attributes this to a lack of knowledge of Zenshin-za's ideological background. He says, "[Iizuka] must have been talking in terms of a company of classically trained actors who had attempted to adapt to the modern age, but he cannot have been aware of their ideological background" (*Century* 117). While it seems unlikely that Kon was similarly unaware of this, it is compelling evidence that

Zenshin-za was not viewed as posing any sort of ideological threat either before or immediately after the end of the war, and makes their fall from grace, so to speak, all the more intriguing.

As noted previously, Kon's division was keenly interested in the work of companies performing works for children and young people, or youth theatre companies. It is possible that Kon had contacts in the company through his early association with the Kokoro-za and viewed Zenshin-za as a safe venue through which he could reenter the Tokyo theatre world and the Ministry could effectively exert influence. In any case, Zenshin-za was quickly lauded by for its work. In 1948, Zenshin-za produced Tsubouchi Shōyō's translation of *The Merchant of Venice*, directed by Miyakawa Masaharu, as a national touring school production. The acclaimed production received the Asahi Cultural Prize, even today one of the most prestigious prizes in the realm of culture and society in Japan. It seems that the performance was not just limited to schools, however. As was common with organizations associated with leftist politics, the company also traveled to factories and workers' groups. Kawarasaki Chōjūrō, one of Zenshin-za's founders, states in the program notes to *The Merchant of Venice* that Zenshin-za was "loved" by factory workers, that students believed in it, and that the company was well received by "persons of culture" (*bunkajin*). Revealingly, the notes also strongly suggest continuing economic struggles. Touring, it seems, was one way the company attempted to cope with this, but Kawarasaki makes clear that this did not even fully cover their debt. After apologizing for the extensive time on the road, he indicates that the company would follow up with a performance at the Yomiuri Auditorium that was meant to convey the company's gratitude toward its Tokyo based fans shortly after its return to the city. He notes that the Tokyo performance fee would be paid by free will donation (*jiyūna kifu*), and that the company hoped

to pay its debts this way (1). In many ways, this struggle for revenue is also indicative of one of the major problems companies producing work for children and young people would face: Turning a profit or even breaking even when targeting young audiences was, and remains, an exceedingly difficult proposition.

Increasing Politicization and the End of Occupation

Thus far, I have given examples of several companies that both aligned themselves and collaborated with the democratization objectives of the Occupation government, and evidence suggests that companies producing work for children during this time period were likely coming under increasing scrutiny by authorities for the heavy involvement by leftist organizations. This often stemmed from a desire to never repeat the egregious horrors of the Pacific War, and the belief that young people in particular were at a stage in which their worldviews and ideas could be shaped. The fact that theatre companies often produced works for children in schools means that they are inescapably bound to the ideological framework of the educational system, and a new generation of educators, by and large an increasingly vocal group strongly opposed to the militarization that had swept through the school system in the preceding decade, is tied to this. At the same time, the Arts Division of the Ministry of Education's involvement and interest in theatre for young people, often at odds with its teachers, demonstrates that they also recognized its value as an instructional tool, and set out to bring a group of several theatre companies under its wing, culminating with the establishment of the Japan Arts Festival in 1948. Overarching all of these movements, was the undeniable presence of American-led postwar reforms in Japan, many of which directly favored the *shingeki* movement early, and which played a strong role in

the youth theatre movements concern with democracy during this period of rapid transition and change.

In the context of the escalating cold war, from the perspective of the GHQ, the official policy that favored *shingeki* began to show symptoms of backfiring as leftist groups became some of the most prominent, and the division in the arts community that resulted from these tensions can be detected in the works for theatre for children and young people at the time as well. Given the *shingeki* genre's long association with the left, it was only a matter of time until their work began to be suspect. As the Korean War escalated in the following decade and the Occupation began to near its official end in 1952, both the film industry and the *shingeki* stage underwent a "red purge," in which many associated with the party were officially blacklisted. Hirata Tetsuo and John Dower describe the moment as a "notorious counterpart" to McCarthyism, adding, "[E]arly ideals of demilitarization and democratization were soon subjected to a "reverse course" preoccupation with reconstruction and remilitarization. The so-called Red purges involved [the] firing of thousands of individuals in both the private and public sectors—focusing not only on the ranks of organized labor, but also progressive and leftwing critics of the Cold War and reverse course in educational circles and the mass media" (1). As the Cold War grew more intense, this also played out visibly on the stage.

CHAPTER THREE: PROFESSIONALIZATION AND ADAPTATION:

SHINGEKI'S DECADE OF DOMINANCE

In most accounts of theatre for children and young people in Japan today, the 1950s are disparaged as a time of malaise, as actors and companies became increasingly attracted to television and stepped away from live works intended for child audiences. The 1950s most certainly do represent a time in which companies grappled with decreased revenue amidst the increasing prevalence and influence of mass communication; however, it was also a period that saw increasing professionalization of children's theatre companies, adaptation to new political, economic, and cultural circumstances, and laid the groundwork for the explosive confrontations between the established theatre community and a new generation of artists who pushed for an entirely new conceptual and aesthetic framework in the following decade. Referring to a production of Samuil Marshak's *Twelve Months*, often cited as the decade's turning point, Suda Rintarō argues:

The phrase, 'In the 1950s, the Haiyū-za's *Twelve Months* impacted the world of children's theatre and caused change, even though the period was stagnant,' is noted in the chronology and classification of children's theatre history, but whatever the impact the Haiyū-za's production may have been, labeling a period of the expansion in school theatre and in children's theatre throughout the country as a time of stagnation is like 'looking at a tree without seeing the forest' (57).

Indeed, the period spanning almost one decade, marked by the formal cessation of the Occupation and ending with the massive protests that marked the renewal of Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between the United States and Japan (Anpo) in 1960, was anything but

stagnant. The period was enmeshed Cold War ideology and politics at the same time that access to new media such as television expanded rapidly, and the performances produced for children at the time are excellent barometers of their currents as these ideas and phenomena spread throughout society.

With the signing of the San Francisco Peace Treaty in 1951, the American military officially ended its occupation of Japan's mainland in April 1952. It maintained administrative control over Okinawa until 1972, however, and the bases that dotted the entire country remained. These bases would prove to be an extraordinarily contentious matter as the decade came to a close. In the interim, Japan's abrupt postwar transformation on many levels of society began to pick up steam, rendering a space in which the new postwar ethos and longing for a sense of national identity that was lost began to collide. The post-Occupation 1950s marked the decline of several companies that were born in the interwar period and solidified the position of *shingeki* companies as the major force producing works for young audiences at the time. In addition to the increasing influence of works tied to both Japanese children's literature and many works popular in the Soviet Union at the time, and this is clear evidence of both the roots of modern theatre in Japan and a growing political and artistic alliance with the Soviet Union. This was also directly connected to both continuing domestic political struggles and an increasingly tense Cold War, which had erupted violently in neighboring Korea.

The works of this decade also represent adaptation to the growing influence of an access to mass media. At the same time that television and media began to rapidly expand their influence and many artists drifted to this line of work, others continued to search for identity in a nostalgic turn toward agrarian roots. As many companies drifted toward the more lucrative

sphere of television production, new companies such as Gekidan Nakama emerged and began the trend toward interest in rural folk cultures in the following decade. Others companies benefited from growing domestic consumerism in the form of a popular performance space, the Mitsukoshi Gekijō, or Mitsukoshi Theatre, a small performance space in the basement of the flagship Mitsukoshi Department Store in the Nihonbashi district of Tokyo.

Finally, at the same time that the rights of children became increasingly important, companies began to back away from a strong reliance on child and adolescent actors. The period, in short, pulled artists and companies in numerous directions, and companies that navigated this diverse and rapidly changing field began to thrive, while those that didn't became relegated to the past. Competing ideologies were omnipresent, and companies were required to navigate this field to survive the decade.

Domestic Political Tension and the Education System

These struggles played out visibly in the realm of education. While the educational reforms of the Occupation period focused primarily on the dissemination of democratic and pacifist values by means of the Constitution and the Fundamental Law of Education (Horio108), these reforms did not mean that they were accepted by all. It was, according to Horio, “inevitable that those elements in Japanese society which still valued prewar notions would dress them up in new guises,” and these tensions were readily apparent in the state's administration of educational law (130). Maruyama Masao employs the concept of *kokutai*, or “national polity,” the state supported emperor system and the ideological circumstances that supported it, to explain this seeming embrace of prewar ideals. He argues:

When the new constitution was adopted, the governing elite expected *kokutai* emotions were still deeply rooted among the people. This also led to the famous ‘theory of longing’ [for the monarch] in [postwar] popular sovereignty. But if the consciousness of the imperial subject retreats into the background, and a democratic consciousness of some sort takes hold, the ruling class will be in a bind. (“8/15” 394)

Soon after the Occupation ended, the Ministry of Education, which was supported by the conservative parties, including the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), reasserted control over public education. The Ministry returned to the pre-war system of controlling all textbooks, and the local boards of education that had been instituted by the Occupation authorities were abolished. Instead, prefectural educational authorities were instituted, and these bodies tended to strongly support the goals and objectives of the Ministry (Neary 213). According to Horio, “Shifting sovereignty from the Emperor to the People represented a clear and unambiguous rupture,” and, likewise, “The system founded on the Imperial Rescript on Education could not be swept away in one broad stroke by early postwar education reforms” (30). Under this rubric, attention to “peace education” on a national level was usurped by reexamination of the principles of “national independence” and “love for the homeland” after the signing of the San Francisco Peace Treaty, and these tensions manifested themselves in a movement among the country’s elite to “correct the excesses of democratization” (142-143, 146).

The U.S. continued to maintain a watchful eye on Japan’s domestic politics and attempted to reinforce its diplomatic and military presence in the East Asia region at a moment when the Korean War was a flashpoint of regional and global politics. Robert Aspinall notes that during this time, unions and the left, key audiences of most *shingeki* companies, were

increasingly viewed as serious domestic threats by the LDP. Referring to the balance of domestic political power led by the conservative LDP and the leftist parties, of which many teachers and the majority of companies producing works for children were members, Aspinall asserts:

The division of the political world into two great camps was not confined to political parties but also applied to allies of the two sides, especially private business and industry interests in the case of the LDP, and public sector unions in the case of the JSP...The linking of domestic politics with the international politics of the Cold War led some people on both sides to see their enemies as literal military threats. Thus, right wing conservatives worried about communist subversion and the role of the Left in Japan as an agent of Soviet or Chinese aggression. Meanwhile, left-wingers worried about Japan's role as an agent of American imperialism and the danger of Japan being sucked into an American war in Asia (68).

Department Store Performance: The Mitsukoshi Gekijō Youth Series

These heightened political tensions were readily apparent on the stage, especially in terms of genre and audience. The Mitsukoshi Gekijō, or Mitsukoshi Theatre, was built in 1927 as a performing arts venue on the sixth floor of the Mitsukoshi department store, and was able to seat six hundred seventy-eight people in its two tiers of seating. During the interwar and wartime period, the venue was primarily used as performance space for traditional dance alongside the occasional kabuki production, but in postwar Japan, it was one of the few spaces that remained functional in Tokyo due to massive destruction (Hibino 109). Presumably, the

major benefit to having a performance space in a department store from the perspective of its management was to draw in consumers and potential buyers, as department stores were massive conglomerates that employed a wide variety of tactics to bring in customers, including often building railway lines that terminated at the stores themselves.³¹ The Mitsukoshi Gekijō space played a key role in the rebirth of theatre in the postwar years, however, and deserves attention as both a unique commercial enterprise and incubator of many of the major movements on Japan's postwar stage, including productions targeting young audiences.³²

After years of renting out the space to different performing artists and troupes, the theatre began to produce its own kabuki performances shortly after the war's end at the urging of the aforementioned Kon Hidemi, head of the Department of Arts of the Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture. At first, the theatre primarily produced pared down, pre-packaged kabuki works from the Shōchiku Company that featured the Nakamura Kichiemon Troupe,³³ but after the "suggestion" by the GHQ that the theatre feature *shingeki* works as well, it began to branch out to include other genres (Hibino 110, 114). Given the concerns among Occupation authorities concerning the perceived "feudalistic" content of kabuki works that led to active promotion of *shingeki* works as a more ideologically appealing alternative, described in detail in the previous

³¹ Tokyo's Mitsukoshi department store did not own its own railway line; however, the Ginza line, the oldest line on Tokyo's subway system, opened the Mitsukoshimae Station directly in front of the store in 1932.

³² The phenomenon of performances for children in department stores is not unique to Japan. In one notable example in the United States, the Filene's Department Store in Boston held performances for children on Saturdays beginning in 1925. The stage was set up in the dining room and was not a permanent fixture, however, and performers were typically drawn from local colleges, dancing schools, and lyceums, not professional or semi-professional companies, which made the work of amateurish quality (McCaslin 71). The Mitsukoshi Gekijō space, on the other hand, was a separate space and drew some of the most well-known and popular companies in Tokyo.

³³ The Mitsukoshi Gekijō space originally lacked many of the physical features that had become common in kabuki theatres by this time, including a *hanamichi* or part of the stage that extended into the audience, a revolving stage, and a trap door. A trap door and modified version of the *hanamichi* were later added to the space, but many accommodations had to be made for the kabuki productions (Hibino 110).

chapter, the reason for this unsolicited intervention on behalf of the authorities is clear.

Nevertheless, parallel to the growing concerns about leftist activities that began to grip the GHQ and the new government in the later years of the Occupation, including activities amongst members of *shingeki* companies, similar fears appeared to have affected the management of the Mitsukoshi group itself. This, in turn, affected the direction many productions targeting young people would take and, in many ways, represents a microcosm of the world of professional theatre in Japan in the decade of the 1950s.

The major *shingeki* troupes, the Haiyū-za, Shinkyō Gekidan, and Bungaku-za, produced works in the Mitsukoshi Gekijō space in the Occupation years. Despite the dire economic circumstances of the immediate postwar period, however, across the board, the productions at the Mitsukoshi Gekijō were successful. Both *shingeki* works and more traditional works produced in the space managed to turn a profit. Foreign plays, including *The Cherry Orchard* and *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, were especially popular with audiences at first. *Shingeki* works by Japanese playwrights were marginally less successful financially, but works such as *Onna no isshō* (*A Woman's Life*) by Morimoto Kaoru, one of the most enduring and popular *shingeki* plays of the postwar period,³⁴ and *Yūzuru* (*Twilight Crane*), a 1949 piece by the leftist playwright Kinoshita Junji, drew large crowds. *Yūzuru* was based on two works of the early twentieth ethnographer and folklorist Yanagita Kunio, who argued that Japan's "essence" could be found

³⁴ *Onna no isshō*, or *A Woman's Life*, was first performed by the Bungaku-za in a cinema in the waning months of the war on April 11, 1945. The Bungaku-za performed the piece more than two hundred fifty times between 1945 and the mid-1950s, and Powell credits the performance with saving the company financially on several occasions. It is also considered to be the final full-scale *shingeki* production to occur before the end of the war (130-131).

in its folklore.³⁵ *Yūzuru* was also a very popular work to produce for children at a time that an early wave of nostalgia for “tradition” was beginning to make its way through Japanese society.

Yūzuru is the story of a poor farmer who saves a wounded crane, Tsū, and unbeknownst to him, she assumes human form and becomes his wife. Tsū becomes a crane once again each night weaves a beautiful cloth for her husband from her own feathers to help him pay off some of his debts. The farmer becomes greedier and demands more cloths, making Tsū become sicker and sicker until she completes the cloth and returns to the form of a crane at the end of the play, leaving her husband behind. The story was one of the most popular yet contentious pieces of the postwar period due to its perceived ideologically driven content, but proved to be extraordinarily popular with audiences at the Mitsukoshi Gekijō as well. Criticism of the piece has come from across the political spectrum, however, as the intelligentsia has debated whether the piece is anticapitalist propaganda, represented by the increasing demands placed on Tsū, or an example of the “true spirit” of Japan with its folkloric roots. Some have argued that the piece actually “mourn[s] the loss of divinity of the beloved emperor (represented by Tsū) who sacrificed all for an ungrateful nation” (Sorgenfrei, “Fabulous” 318).

This debate has played out at the highest levels of the government as well. In 1980, the ruling, conservative Liberal Democratic Party condemned the story’s inclusion in an elementary school textbook, arguing that the play was “ideologically biased, prejudiced, or one-sided (*henkō*).” On the other hand, Prime Minister Koizumi Junichirō, a member of the LDP, gave a

³⁵ While popularly imagined as a folktale, this work has been the subject of debate concerning its “authenticity” of its adaptation in recent years. Carol Fisher Sorgenfrei argues that while *Yūzuru* was indeed based on Yanagita Kunio’s folktale studies, it should not be considered a folk tale itself. In her words, “*Twilight Crane*...is not ‘authentic’ folk art...Rather, *Twilight Crane* is a *shingeki* (modern drama) play based on folk tales; it is thus, in one sense, a fabulous ‘fake’ (“Fabulous Fake” 320).

copy of the folktale to the Prime Minister of Mongolia, Miyeebombyn Enkhbold, in 2006, upon the Enkhbold's request for a copy of a story that exemplified a "typical" Japanese folktale to be included in elementary school textbooks. Thus, *Yūzuru* is also, as Sorgenfrei points out, evidence of the shifting notion of what constitutes "Japaneseness" at different points in time ("Fabulous" 319). It may be helpful to consider the children's programming at the Mitsukoshi Gekijō in this light.

The first performances for children and young people at the Mitsukoshi Gekijō began in August 1949. Sponsored by both the Tokyo Metropolitan Board of Education and NHK, an event titled *Natsu no Kodomo Gekijō*, or "Summer Children's Theatre" was first held in 1949. August is the month of the summer holiday from school, and the event was held to coincide with this. It featured four different companies, three of which were discussed in the previous chapter: the Shin Jidō Gekidan performed Koike Shintarō's *Kin no kutsu* (*The Golden Shoe*) during the first week, Teatoru Puppe presented Yamane Nōbun's adaptation of *Ali Baba and the Thieves* during the second week, the Taiyō-za performed a dramatization of *Rinkān den*, or *The Legend of Lincoln* during the third week of performances, and in the final week, Gekidan Tōdō presented Miyatsu Hiroshi's adaptation of the Doctor Faustus legend, *Fausuto Hakase to Akuma*, or *Doctor Faustus and the Devil*.

Like many works introduced in the previous chapter, those produced at the Mitsukoshi Gekijō during the Occupation reflect adaptations of American works highly conducive to its narrative of democracy, especially *The Legend of Lincoln*, other works with which the censors would be familiar (*Ali Baba* and *Doctor Faustus and the Devil*), as well as a Japanese work, Koike's *Kin no kutsu*, that had presumably raised no cause for concern amongst them. While it

is not immediately clear which English version these works were adapted from, it is worth noting that all three of these again were popular in the United States, were produced in various forms as part of the Federal Theatre Project, and were therefore likely familiar to the censors. Official American censorship did not end until November 1, 1949, and this quadruple billing fits the pattern established earlier in the Occupation of works that reflected these characteristics. The event was considered a success, and in the following year, 1950, the Mitsukoshi Gekijō and the Tokyo Metropolitan Board of Education continued sponsoring performances in the venue with a spring event featuring the Shin Jidō Gekidan's production of *Wilhelm Tell* and Gekidan Tōdō's *The Burmese Harp*, based on the award winning 1946 children's novel by Takeyama Michio of the same name (*Biruma no tategoto*).³⁶ These productions appear to be extremely safe choices in terms of company and content. None of major *shingeki* companies appear on this sponsored list, and the content carefully balances GHQ-approved works for children and an adapted work, *Biruma no tategoto*, that is widely read as an exhortation to peace.

In 1952, the same year the American Occupation formally ended, the Mitsukoshi Gekijō space underwent an upheaval of sorts, and this tension communicates much about the ideologies of the early post-Occupation years. *Shingeki* productions at the Mitsukoshi Gekijō, including youth theatre productions by the major *shingeki* companies, were halted. Theories concerning the reasoning behind this abound, and most likely, the termination can be attributed to multiple causes, but they are still indicative of the increasing friction between *shingeki* companies and the establishment at this time.

³⁶ *The Burmese Harp* was based on the true story of commander in the Imperial army who was reportedly fond of music and an article Takeyama read about the bodies of Japanese soldiers left in Burma. The novel received the Mainichi Award for Books and Publications in 1948 and the Ministry of Education Award for the Arts in 1951. It was translated into English by the Charles Tuttle Company as *The Harp of Burma* in 1966 (IILC).

Officially, the Mitsukoshi Gekijō stated that evening performances were no longer practical (Hibino 121, n. 43). Iwasaki Eiji, the editor of an unpublished manuscript on the seventy-year history of the theatre, attributed it to the appearance of the Ichikawa Shōjo “kabuki” troupe on the stage. The performance featured teenage girls, and according to Iwasaki, in 1953, the management decided to cease these productions due to “humanitarian” reasons related to concerns about employing juveniles (Hibino 118). The Ichikawa Girls’ Kabuki troupe was formed by Ichikawa Dankichi II, a “minor league” kabuki actor, in Loren Edelson’s words, in his hometown near Toyokawa City in Aichi Prefecture shortly after the war’s end in 1945. After its Tokyo debut in 1953, the troupe became so-called “media darlings,” and received official support from the famed Naritaya house, the Ichikawa Danjūrō line of performers. The troupe was often cited as evidence of the success of the postwar constitution in advancing women’s rights. According to Edelson, at least one reviewer referred to the troupe as “kabuki’s *Jeanne d’Arc*,” a common label for progressive women in Japan, while another believed that it was evidence that the Occupation’s success in efforts to erase the feudalistic elements of kabuki by turning the all-male structure it had maintained for several centuries on its head. Edelson argues that on the contrary, the troupe actually reinforced many of these feudalistic elements by performing the same works from kabuki’s repertoire that highlighted ideals that the GHQ had hoped to erase. The troupe’s repertoire was primarily drawn from *ningyō jōruri* or *bunraku*, a traditional form of puppetry that had strong roots in the region of Ichikawa’s hometown, and its works often emphasized the struggle between individual feeling and duty, revenge, and self-sacrifice, qualities and ideals targeted by the censors during the Occupation (75-76). Nevertheless, given the Mitsukoshi group’s conservative disposition and concerns about its

upper class clientele, it is easy to see why a female kabuki troupe featuring teenage actresses would have elicited disapproval from the management.

Hibino, on the other hand, strongly suggests that the reason *shingeki* performances were halted was political. Prior to the Occupation's end, a few of the works produced by *shingeki* companies, including Miyoshi Jūrō's *Sonōito o Shirazu* (lit. *I Don't Know that Person*; translated by Hibino as *Peter's Denial*), had drawn the extra attention of the GHQ censors. According to Hibino, Tanaka Takashi, the Mitsukoshi manager, stated that the store management actively sought to avoid plays deemed too "ideological," as it believed that the upper class clientele to which the Mitsukoshi department store in particular catered sought "sensible" *shingeki* works, and Hibino suggests that the leftist orientation of the *shingeki* companies had finally become too controversial for the store's management, as it suggested an alliance with the Japan Communist Party, as friction was growing between the party and authorities at the time. In June 1952, leftist groups attempted to collect money to fund their activities during the intermission of the Budō no Kai's production of Kinoshita's political satire *Kaeru Shōten*, or *The Ascension of a Frog*. While the incident failed to draw an official response from the Mitsukoshi management, presumably, it would have provoked its ire. It should be noted that this incident occurred in the wake of escalating tensions between groups associated with the Communist party and the authorities that led to a series of riots in Tokyo and other major cities in Japan in February 1952 and once again on May Day, just days after the Occupation officially ended. If the management wanted to appease its upper-middle and upper class clientele, therefore, the reason for its discomfort with associating with leftist *shingeki* companies is clear: At that specific moment in time, *shingeki*

groups were simply too controversial to continue to bring in the necessary audiences and potential buyers to the space.

In addition, soon after the end of the Occupation, the store management had begun to turn its attention toward a program it established in 1950, the Mitsukoshi Meijin Kai, or “Mitsukoshi Great Masters Society.” The program featured a wide variety of traditional performing arts, including *utazawa* melodies, variety show songs accompanied by the shamisen, *jiuta* chanting, performances by individual kabuki and *kyōgen* stars, *gidayu* ballads, and *kagura* music, as well as French chansons and popular modern music occasionally. Glancing at this list, it appears that the majority of the program’s offerings was largely nostalgic in nature, like *Yūzuru*, and gave a clear nod toward a past that represented, in the popular imagination at least, a clearly defined Japanese identity, as well as simpler and more idyllic times. The Mitsukoshi Meijin Kai was subsequently deemed far more lucrative than the earlier kabuki and *shingeki* performances, and attracted an audience that could afford its much more expensive admission fees of three hundred yen (Hibino 114-118). Clearly, the choice to ban *shingeki* companies from its space and instead focus on works considered traditional stemmed from much more than a scheduling conflict. It was strongly rooted in the economics and politics of the times, during which *shingeki* became increasingly leftist as Japan’s ruling government moved further to the right.

What is fascinating about the cessation of *shingeki* performances at the Mitsukoshi Gekijō is the fact that despite the severance of ties between the *shingeki* companies and the Mitsukoshi group in 1952, performances by companies that specialized solely in works for children and families, such as Gekidan Tōdō and Shin Jidō Gekidan, continued. Referring to the elimination of *shingeki* performances shortly after the end of the Occupation, Tomita repeats the

official explanation for this by saying that the space was no longer available for nighttime use, and this put a damper on *shingeki* performances for children. It is plainly obvious, however, that the reasoning went much deeper than this and was connected to the red purges of the same time. Clearly, performances for children by the major *shingeki* companies, which became a dominant force in the 1950s, invited too much potential political controversy immediately after the Occupation's end, and the works that the Mitsukoshi group found acceptable were far more safe. Performances by non-*shingeki* companies for young people continued for several years after the *shingeki* performances were halted (Tomita, *Nihon* 301).

Nevertheless, *shingeki* companies parlayed this early marginalization into a dominant and powerful role in the field by the end of the decade. While the Mitsukoshi group continued to sponsor works by select companies like Gekidan Tōdō and the Shin Jidō Gekidan, the *shingeki* companies, experienced a surge in popularity after this. Faced with this loss of space, they began actively touring their productions for young people and all ages to local and regional schools in earnest. Whether in a major venue like the Mitsukoshi Gekijō or in the found space of a school, however, theatre for children and young people began to be an increasingly visible and influential presence at this time, and this is evident in the birth of the Children's Theatre Conference in 1952.

The Birth of the Children's Theatre Conference

With this increasing interest and visibility of works for children also came increasing organization and professionalization. A number of societies and groups concerned with creating professional work for children emerged in the early 1950s, and the meetings offer clues

concerning the ideological framework under which the companies worked. In the spring of 1951, one of the first such organizations, the Jidō Geki Saron, or the Child Drama Salon, began to meet on the third Tuesday of each month at a coffee shop called Nittō in the Kanda area of Tokyo to discuss problems of children's culture and children's drama. A number of the same companies that performed at the Mitsukoshi Gekijō, which was within walking distance, were members of the Child Drama Salon (Tomita, *Nihon* 302). Member companies included Gekidan Tōdō, Ningyō Gekidan PUK (PUK Puppet Theatre), the Shin Jidō Gekidan (New Children's Theatre), Gekidan Midori no Oka (Green Hill Theatre Company), the Tsumiki-za (Building Block Company), the Kokugakuin Daigaku Jidō Engeki Kenkyū Kai (the Kokugakuin University Children's Theatre Research Society), the Minshū-za (People's Theatre), the Ginga-za (Milky Way Theatre), the Dōtaku-za (Bronze Bell Theatre), the Haiyū-za's Kodomo no Gekijō (Children's Theatre of the Haiyū-za), Gekidan Komadori (Robin Theatre Company), and the Dōmu (童夢) Ningyō Gekidan (Child Dream Puppet Theatre Company). In the following year, 1952, the Child Drama Salon became the Jidō Engeki Kyōgikai, or Children's Theatre Conference, and its membership grew to twenty-four companies. Excluding the Kokugakuin Daigaku Jidō Engeki Kenkyū Kai, in addition to the aforementioned, Gekidan Dōshin-za (Child's Heart Theatre Company), Kaze no Ko, Jidō Gekidan Yume no Gekijō (Dream Theatre Children's Theatre Company), the Midori no Oka Dōwa Geki Kenkyū Kai (Midori no Oka Fairy Tale Theatre Research Society), Ningyō Gekidan Ondori-za (Rooster Puppet Theatre), Ningyō Gekidan Jūnu Pantoru (Young Painter Puppet Theatre), Tokyo Shōnen Gekidan (Tokyo Youth

Theatre), and Chidori Kai (Plover Society) became members of the Children's Theatre Conference.³⁷

This list of companies encapsulates a wide range of genres within the field of theatre for children and young people, including some of the major *shingeki* companies. As a group, the Children's Theatre Conference began to publish a bulletin titled "Nihon Jidō Geki," or "Japan Children's Drama." The publication reflects the primary objectives and mission of the organization. The Shin Jidō Gekidan's Konno Ken'ichi wrote the introduction to its first issue, published in May 1954, and is an excellent framework for shaping our understanding of what this assembly of major children's theatre companies aimed to accomplish:

"Nihon Jidō Geki" is a bulletin of the Children's Theatre Conference, and is published based on the consensus of opinion of more than forty children's theatre companies in Japan. Children's theatre in Japan still can't escape from its low value. Although there is some incredibly bad technique, we believe it is also due to the tide of this country's derision of child culture. Unable to stand this discontent, as a means of personally communicating to the masses, we, at last, are able to publish "Nihon Jidō Geki." In this modest publication, we entrust two major messages. The first is for the purpose of advancing our personal research, and second, to spread children's theatre strongly throughout society. We hope for the public's support (qtd. in Tomita 303-304).

This mission statement demonstrates that companies hoped to raise the perceived aesthetic quality of performances for children, share these performances with a much larger audience, and establish a group dedicated to research on theatre for children and young people.

³⁷ In addition, there were four unknown member companies (Tomita, *Nihon* 303).

While many of these companies eventually faded from memory, others, including Ningyō Gekidan PUK, the Haiyū-za Kodomo Gekijō, Kaze no Ko, the Minshu-za, and Tokyo Shōnen Gekidan, emerged as the leading voices of the time.

Soviet Child Drama Theory and Aoe Shunjirō's Critique

One reason that members of the Children's Theatre Conference saw the need to defend and improve theatre for children was increased critical attention to this work, including in the major journals for theatre criticism and research. In September 1954, just a few months after the introductory issue of "Nihon Jidō Geki" was published, the author and critic Aoe Shunjirō published a critique of the state of children's theatre in *Higeki kigeki*, a major journal of theatre research and criticism, in response to the Children's Theatre Festival sponsored by the Yomiuri Shinbun company in recognition of International Theatre Month in May and June 1954. After attending the Shin Jidō Gekidan's production of *Aladdin and the Magic Lamp*, Aoe called for companies to move beyond the practice of employing juvenile actors, emphasizing the rights of children and the fact that the actors were also students. The article is almost scathing in its tone, and all the more notable since Aoe himself directed many works at Gekidan Tōdō, a company that actively employed child and adolescent actors itself, and the departure denotes a stark shift in attitudes toward their employment in an era increasingly concerned with children's rights. It also blasts the quality of work being created for children. It should be noted that the company Shin Jidō Gekidan, led by Koike Shintarō and Totsuka Hiroshi, split from Gekidan Tōdō shortly after the end of the war for reasons presently unknown, and it is possible that many of the comments may also signal a more personal conflict. The comments target the state of theatre for

children in Japan in general during that time period, however, and are representative of a major theoretical shift in the sphere of theatre for children and young people that would come to dominate the 1950s.

First, Aoe takes companies to task for seemingly emphasizing the value of theatre with very little research and for companies' emphasis and concern with the future of the nation. He argues that the "slogan" of companies until that point had been, "A good child is raised through good nurturing. They are the future of Japan. In order to achieve this, theatre is great for children," but then argues that it is really an empty phrase. Instead, he argues, "If one really places importance on children, they can 'raise them better' through the theatre" (34). Then, referring to the relationship between education, theatre, and child development, Aoe castigates what he sees as hypocrisy in the field of theatre for children and young people. Aoe asks, in the following paragraph, "Before improving our children's general education, shouldn't we first improve our own?" (35).

From this platform, Aoe launches into a full throttled critique of the use of child and adolescent actors, lambasting the use of child actors as a system linked to exploitation and profit:

In the olden days, when calls to protect children's human rights were not so loud, in the amusement quarters at night you could see many young girls hanging about offering to sing. There, a boss figure stood, and the girls would display their talents to the sympathizing onlookers. Now, thanks to child protection laws, these girls hide in the shadows, and in their place, small and large youth theatre groups are used instead (35).

He then cites the works of two Russian pioneers Natalia Sats and Henriette Pascar, whose wildly divergent views on the theory and purpose of theatre for children in many ways mirror the

ideological differences discussed in the previous chapter that split the Tsukiji Shōgekijō of the 1920s into two camps: Pascar, an early leader of Moscow's First State Theatre for Children, advocated fairy tale plays with music, dance, and magic as a means of escape for children during difficult times post-Revolution, while Sats viewed fairy tales as the most appropriate means of teaching political and ideological themes to children. Whereas Pascar was ultimately dismissed from her position because of her refusal to accept the condition that theatre for children should be an arm of the state for the education of children and adolescents in its ideology, Sats, the niece of Anatoly Lunacharsky, the first post-October Revolution Commissariat of Enlightenment and in charge of the culture and education needs of the new Soviet state, founded the Moscow Theatre for Children in 1921 under the control of the Department of Education of the Moscow Soviet.³⁸ While Pascar served on the artistic committee of the First State Theatre for Children along with Stanislavsky and a teenage Sats, she was replaced by Iurii Bondi, a student of Meyerhold's, after her dismissal (van de Water 43-48).

While alluding to the distinct ideological differences between Pascar and Sats, Aoe asserts:

After the Russian Revolution, there were two symbols that came out of the youth theatre companies which were born in the country. One was Henriette Pascar, and the other was Natalia Sats...Even though their assertions were markedly different, Pascar and Sats shared a common principle. That is, "Do not use child actors!" One of the reasons for this is that the rehearsals for a performance put too much strain on the body and mind of a

³⁸ van de Water notes that the Department of Education of the Moscow Soviet, the department under which Sats's Moscow Theatre for Children was founded, was different than Narkompros, the agency Lunacharsky headed (48).

child. This is very true. This is the way to show true compassion to children...I myself know many child actors who have performed on the radio and been exhausted thanks to late night recording sessions. Whether the guilt for this crime falls on the side of the broadcasting company, theatre company, or the parents in general, I suspect that none of them could escape from the blame. In principle, child actors should not be used. A youth theatre system that shows more respect toward the position of young boys and girls as students needs to be put into place (35).

Aoe makes several other points in the article and quotes Sats by saying, “Adults have the power to choose. Children, however, do not. Therefore, it is an important responsibility for us to nourish children's sense of appreciation. That is to say for the future of our children, we should show them good theater. We have to show children theater which will lead them in the right direction.”

Anchoring his final critique to this sentiment and lamenting the perceived quality of productions for children and young people, Aoe asks, “Are your screenplays, your directing, and your acting worthy?” He notes that while production costs in children’s theatre were the same as the adult theatre, children’s theatre performances could only charge thirty yen, whereas performances geared toward adults could command almost two hundred yen (36). Then, almost as if he were commenting on the rapidly growing influence of media that would spark a backlash in the following decade, he declares:

What is interesting is that if something is highly artistic then schools and parents are both happy to pay one hundred yen and take their children to see it. For example, when *Fuefuki dōji* [*The Flute Playing Boy*], which was a drama on the radio, was produced at

the Grand Kabuki Theatre, foolish parents brought their children along to see something malicious. However, because it was apparent that the theatre was filled with parents and children, further plans are being made that take their tastes into account. Children's plays were originally like this. Although there has been a mobilization of schools, parents should be happy to take their children to see children's plays. At Pascar's theatre, thirteen percent of spectators were adults. If six hundred people attended, eighty would have been adults. In Japan at that time, there wouldn't have even been ten (36).

Aoe concludes his indictment by calling for a figurative cataclysmic event on the scale of Noah's flood, asserting, "Once upon a time, God was angered by the fall of man and brought about a great flood...The youth theatre world is also like Noah's flood. My comments will likely infuriate a few people related to youth theatre. However, I fear the future of children's theatre more than I fear the anger of these people. We absolutely must show children good theatre" (37).

A New Paradigm for *Shingeki* and Theatre for Young Audiences

During this period of transition, companies began to take notice of Aoe's criticism. A number of companies, including several new companies that featured graduates of the Haiyū-za's affiliated programs, including Gekidan Nakama (Friends Theatre Company), Gekidan Shinjinkai (Newcomers' Group), and Gekidan Sankikai (later known as Tokyo Engeki Ansanburu, or the Tokyo Theatre Ensemble), began to repudiate the model of using child and adolescent actors. Like the Haiyū-za, this newly active group of theatre companies continued to be associated with the left in both content and membership. Maintaining the ties established by the early modern theatre movement decades earlier, the companies continued to embrace

European works, especially Russian ones, and this is clearly reflected in the production choices. With deep ties to the Japan Communist Party, these choices were clearly a potential source of continued friction. As Aspinall asserts, “[R]ight wing conservatives worried about communist subversion and the role of the Left in Japan as an agent of Soviet or Chinese aggression” during the decade (68), but *shingeki* grew more and more mainstream as the decade progressed. A number of actors began to accumulate significant wealth due to the growing influence and visibility of television, to which many actors fled. This also must be seen as a reason for the growing visibility and acceptance of the *shingeki* genre in the public sphere, as well as the growing influence of the major *shingeki* companies and their offshoots.

The Haiyū-za’s production of Samuil Marshak’s *Mori wa ikiteiru*, or *The Forest is Alive*, better known in English as *Twelve Months*, is considered a landmark production, or a “turning point” that also appears to have both heralded the end of *shingeki*’s reign as a political problem child by the end of the decade and began to appear to some as a form that no longer spoke to the younger generation. *Shingeki*’s increasing visibility and acceptance by the mainstream by the end of the decade undoubtedly contributed to the sharp turn toward the experimental that would be unleashed as the 1960s drew near. While *shingeki* productions were widely seen as ideologically potent political pieces early in the decade, *shingeki* gradually lost its reputation as a politically driven genre and productions increasingly drew accolades from the bastions of the establishment. This shift lies at the heart of theatre for children in the 1950s. While many of the post important companies producing works for young people were banned from the most prominent spaces shortly after the end of the Occupation, their increasing acceptance by the end of the decade on behalf of the establishment marked increased visibility and professionalization,

as well as increasing dissatisfaction with the status quo that would be challenged in the following decade.

Twelve Months reflects concerns about the brutality of war, and more broadly, extraordinary cruelty to a child protagonist that resonated strongly with audiences of many ages who continued to recover from the harsh reality of war. Marshak wrote *Twelve Months* in 1943, when he was on the front lines during the siege of Leningrad. The piece, reminiscent of Cinderella, is a fantastical retelling of a Czech folktale and was first produced at the Moscow Theatre for the Young Spectator in 1947. It traces the path of a young orphan who is sent into the forest in the middle of winter with the impossible task of gathering snowdrop flowers for her stepmother. She is able to fulfill this task only with the help of twelve magical brothers who represent the months of the year. When the young protagonist returns home with the snowdrops, her stepsister and stepmother attempt to procure strawberries in winter by going into the woods themselves. Instead of finding the strawberries, they are instead left to freeze in the forest, thus reinforcing the values of childhood innocence amidst real and present danger. This emotional connection to the memory of war and the brutality that children faced moved many.

In Japan, the first production of *Twelve Months* ran from May through September 1954 at the Haiyū-za's new theatre in the Roppongi area of Tokyo. While first-hand information on the performance is limited, the program notes contain a plot summary, information on Samuil Marshak written by the translator, Yuasa Yoshiko, and a translation of an essay written by the Soviet theatre scholar and critic P.A. Markov on the theory and purpose of theatre for children and young people. Presumably, the Haiyū-za shared these objectives, and, perhaps not coincidentally, they echo many of the sentiments expressed by Aoe at almost the same time.

The piece included in the bulletin is a translation of a talk Markov gave at the Freund Theatre in Berlin on December 19, 1950. Markov appears to have been well known in the world of theatre in Japan for his work at the Moscow Art Theatre. His comments similarly express a belief in the educational value of theatre for children. Like Aoe, Pascal, and Sats, Markov insists that children should not appear as professional actors on the stage. Instead, he says that children's roles should be played by adults and notes that many actors became famous that way (25). He also argues that child audiences are both the easiest audiences to move and the most demanding ones, and that the emotions they encounter in the theatre will stay with them for a long time. Markov quotes Stanislavsky, saying, "Our teacher, Stanislavsky, was once asked the following question. 'What is the difference between theater for adults and theater for children?' He answered in this manner: 'In its essence, there is no difference. However, for young audiences, it is necessary to perform even more truthfully, even more honestly, and even more skillfully.'" He explains that in the Soviet Union, children under the age of six aren't allowed to go to the theatre in the evening and asserts that performances depicting life's problems can only be understood by those who are at least age seven or eight, and argues that performances for children should appeal to the sensibilities of adults as well. He cites Veniamin Kaverin's *The Two Captains* as an example of this, asserting:

In this way, a classic piece can be performed alongside a production like *The Two Captains*. As an example, there are the works of Ostrovsky and Gogol, particularly important for education, and also discussed in schools. Children should see these pieces vividly expressed on stage. While staying true to their contents, there are provisions made for eight year olds, eleven year olds, etc., but a piece that is performed and

presented with all of its essential elements will have the particularity of also pleasing adults. In this regard, I think of, for example, [Evgenii] Schwartz's *Snow Queen* (a dramatization of the Andersen fairy tale), or Marshak's fairy tale *Twelve Months*.³⁹ Sometimes, these pieces are performed at night, for adults. The time in which we wouldn't go near fairy tales has passed. However, contained in fairy tales is a vivid representation of the connection of people to reality. Fairy tales also contain very high morals, as in the end the entirety of their contents has to do with the final triumph of good over evil. Because of this, fairy tales are important educational tools which develop the fantasy of young audiences (24).

In the wake of both Aoe's critique of the state of theatre for children and young people in 1954 and the Haiyū-za's landmark production of Marshak's *Twelve Months*, many companies did move away from using child actors, and productions of fairy tales, representations of reality, increased as well.

Based on the description of Itō Tomoko, it is clear that *Twelve Months* appealed to a demographic ranging from children to the elderly. Itō, an actress who worked as an apprentice with the Haiyū-za's Training Institute and later went on to work with Gekidan Nakama, one of at least three studio theatre companies that were founded during the mid-1950s with actors who had graduated from the institute, describes both her experience attending the theatre as a child and

³⁹ The text here literally says Marshak's "December" ("12 月"). I believe the writer means *Twelve Months*, however. *Twelve Months* is usually translated into Japanese as "The Forest is Alive" ("森は生きている"). There is no record of a Marshak piece titled "December," however. I believe the discrepancy is due to the text being translated from Russian to German to Japanese to English, rendering a mistranslation of the title possible along the way. Furthermore, the note appears in the program for the Haiyū-za's performance of *Twelve Months*.

her observations of the actors preparing to perform *Twelve Months* ahead of its debut in 1954.⁴⁰

While Itō does not mention her role in the original Haiyū-za production, according to the program, she played the month of July in the production. She writes that *Twelve Months* was first produced during a time in which the Haiyū-za was producing a number of works under the auspices of *katei no gekijō*, or “family theatre,” at Mainichi Hall in front of Yurakucho station in Tokyo, which implies that the mass appeal of *Twelve Months* is in line with this movement.⁴¹

Itō’s words also share a personal reflection on the rehearsal process and practice of touring that developed into a model that remains today. Reminiscing fondly, she remarks:

My first production of *Twelve Months* began with the training of my superiors, whom I looked up to, at the Haiyū-za. They received song instruction on the piano from the composer Hayashi Hikaru, and made props with Ito Kisaku and Senda Koreya very late into the night each day.⁴² Hats as well. Dinner was delivered by a soba shop employee, and the break time, during which everyone chatted noisily, was very enjoyable. With a smile and gentle laugh, the director Aoyama Sugisaku peeked in the room from the door

⁴⁰ Ōno Yukinori, the president of Gekidan Tomoshihi, the current head of JIENKYO, and vice-president of ASSITEJ Japan, cites the work of Itō Tomoko and Gekidan Nakama as being highly influential to his interest in theatre for children and young people. In a personal interview, he noted that Gekidan Nakama was based in Nakano-ku, Tokyo, and because he had grown up in the same neighborhood, he often saw Gekidan Nakama and Itō’s work at school.

⁴¹ By the 1950s, the Haiyū-za and other *shingeki* companies began marketing some performances as family theatre, and thus opened up opportunities for audiences beyond factories and schools. According to a 1959 article in the *Yomiuri Shinbun*, one of Japan’s major daily newspapers, the Haiyū-za’s family theatre division and NET, Nihon Educational Television (later Asahi Television), joined forces in 1959 to produce a series of dramas, puppet performances, and quiz programs for children, thus marking the early influence of television of the field of theatre for children and young people in postwar Japan (“Patān” 6).

⁴² Itō Kisaku and Senda Koreya were both brothers and members of a family whose artistic influence reached across the globe. Another brother, Itō Michio, is frequently noted in theatre historiography as the dancer who inspired W.B. Yeats to write his *nō*-inspired (or imagined) *At the Hawk’s Well*, and yet another brother, Itō Yugi, worked as a mask and costume designer on Broadway.

and then entered.⁴³ To this great extent, his demeanor was gentle and warm; the “dandy” director was not present. For ten years after the defeat in the war, things had been scarce, but everyday was also brimming with energy. Today, if I look back, I can’t help but think that I, while singing and dancing everyday, had the incredibly good fortune of eagerly pursuing my superiors. Encountering this production became the first irreplaceable step of my lifetime...At this time, performances targeting children, as well as *shingeki* itself, seemed to hold incredible power. The thing that was particularly influential was the production of *Twelve Months*. (29)

Itō goes on to speculate on why, exactly, audiences connected to the piece both during its first run with the Haiyū-za and during its revival by Gekidan Nakama five years later, and contributes it to the harsh reality of the war and its aftermath. She connects the lingering reality of the war to the play and hypothesizes, “Hoping that the orphan protagonist would not die in the cold forest, I think that people thought strongly about the question of what killed the children in this awful war, and especially about the times when children are made into victims” (33). Itō then connects this sentiment to the conditions under which *shingeki* artists worked during the war and its aftermath. Citing the work of the Marshak scholar Tanaka Yasuko, she writes, “Fantasy in which no one knows where it came from is nonsense. In great fantasy, there is always a realistic base, and in order to become a great work, the expression of the reality, thought, and the way of thinking of modern society is required” (33). She also describes a cathartic element of the work, adding, “During the war, when the freedom of expression was absolutely forbidden,

⁴³ Like Senda, Murayama Tomoyoshi, Hatta Motoo, and others, Aoyama was also one of the early artists associated with the Tsukiji Shogekijō.

theatre persons, who had been suppressed by the Peace Preservation Act of 1925 and were imprisoned, masked their own consciences. They had to praise the war in order to perform on stage. *Twelve Months* became the first page of our new lives and continues to live in our hearts” (33).⁴⁴

Despite the fond early memories and critical attention, Itō notes that the original production of *Twelve Months* was impossible to sustain financially. It is instead remembered for both its emotional impact in a nation still recovering from war, and the way it shaped perceptions of the potential for increasingly professional work for young people. The production toured nationally, performing in schools, public auditoriums, and other converted spaces, but Itō notes that when its run ended in 1955, it was running a deficit of 257,000 yen (30), worth approximately \$714 U.S. dollars that same year. For comparison, in U.S. dollars, per capita income in Japan was just \$519 in 1955 (Noland and Pack 25), so the deficit was significant. These results reveal two important truths about theatre for children during this time: First, despite critical acclaim, it was extraordinarily difficult to produce profitable work targeting young people. This was due in part to the reluctance or inability of companies to demand high ticket prices from children and audience members, whom Itō notes often had difficulty paying the required ticket fee of ten yen (29). Touring often made up the difference. Second, it is important to note that the practice of a rigorous touring schedule with performances in converted spaces continued, further cementing this aesthetic choice as a standard. While this was an aesthetic choice that first became the norm due to the need to disseminate information during the

⁴⁴ A sound recording of the original Haiyū-za production of *Twelve Months* can be found in four parts on YouTube. Please see <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IVA22-CdDzo>, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aHsuftZNDtw>, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e6BlnCvEW0A>, and <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BGvimuY0fq0>.

war and continued due to the spatial restraints of the early postwar period, it remained, and continues to remain, a major feature of most companies producing work for young people in Japan.

Other Landmark Performances of the 1950s

Apart from noting that the Haiyū-za decided to refrain from producing works specifically for children following the initial run of *Twelve Months*, including a planned production of Senda Koreya's *Rikōna oyomesan*, or *The Clever Bride*, likely due to the financial difficulties of performing for young audiences, Itō does not give any further information on the initial run of the Haiyū-za's production of *Twelve Months*. She does give a fascinating glimpse into Gekidan Nakama's revival of the piece in 1959, however, and her observations have enormous theoretical and practical implications concerning how theatre for children should be framed within an educational context, and the world of theatre itself.

Gekidan Nakama, or the Friends Theatre Company, was formed by several graduates of the Haiyū-za's actor training institute and became a company well known for its productions for young audiences. It was also a company that had roots in rural Iwate prefecture, where the director Nakamura Shun'ichi was from, and despite its Tokyo base, remained strongly committed to touring its productions to the Tohoku region and throughout Japan. Between 1953 and 1955, the company produced five productions targeting both children and adults, ranging from Osanai Kaoru's *Mitsu no negai* (*Three Wishes*) and Mushanokōji Saneatsu's *Susanoo no mikoto* to William Saroyan's *Coming Through the Rye*, as well as six productions solely targeting children and young people. The performances of *Mitsu no negai* and *Susanoo no*

mikoto toured to Dento-mura in Iwate Prefecture, according to Itō, and were among the first professional staged productions many in the village had ever seen.

Because the company was so committed to touring to rural areas, it is significant that Gekidan Nakama chose to tour with one of Mushanokōji Saneatsu's works, as despite the largely urban, Tokyo-centric nature of companies producing works for children and young people at the time, Mushanokōji epitomized both a distinctly nostalgic sense of place exemplified by the rural village and the continuing influence of Russia in the theatrical imagination. From both the source and its chronology, the continuing influence of modernity and the modern theatre is clearly evident. In many ways, Mushanokōji's work was a perfect amalgamation of the creeping nostalgia for "tradition" and the continuing artistic and cultural conversation with the "West." Mushanokōji was heavily influenced by Tolstoy, whose works became extraordinarily popular during the Taishō period, lasting from 1912-1926. According to Steven Marks, Tolstoy's works struck a chord with many intellectuals at the time they became popular, as "he was not mystical and exotic, but familiar and easily digestible; there was a perception that he was close to Zen Buddhism or traditional Japanese philosophy." He adds, "Opposition to Meiji industrialization, militarism, and Westernization was led by socialists, pacifists, and anarchists encouraged to varying degrees by Tolstoy's works" (124). Mushanokōji, a member of the neo-Idealist, anti-naturalist White Birch faction of writers, merged Christian and Zen elements in his works and fully embraced this philosophy by founding a Tolstoy-inspired commune called the New Village on the island of Kyushu in 1918. He dedicated the community to "brotherly love, pacifism, and

peasant life,”⁴⁵ and Nakamura likely drew parallels not only between the rural community in which he was raised and the rural area to which he and Gekidan Nakama toured their productions, but also in the content of the work. In Japan, Tolstoyism was a major impetus for agrarian, back to land movements, and was a major factor in the rediscovery, so to speak, of the countryside in the modern era (123-124). Mushanokōji’s work, therefore, is significant in a time of both growing remorse for wartime atrocity, and the objectives expressed by many on the left at the time, including teachers, activists, and many associated theatre companies: To never again return young people to war.

In addition to Mushanokōji’s works, in 1956, Gekidan Nakama produced Hans Christian Andersen’s *The Tinderbox* at both the Itabashi Public Auditorium and the Toyoko Department Store in Shibuya. What is interesting about this production is that images from the program suggests strict adherence to realism among the human actors, complete with a blonde wig and period costumes suggesting European influence. Oversized animal heads reminiscent of cartoon characters adorn the heads of the actors playing the dogs, however, almost like a precursor to the very commercial *nuigurumi* theatre movement featuring fairy tales played by characters with oversized masks that would come to be extraordinarily popular in the following decade. Furthermore, the program notes that the production would participate in the Tokyo Metropolitan Board of Education Children’s Theatre Contest that year, further evidence that the tensions between some *shingeki* companies and authorities had begun to wane by the mid-1950s.

Gekidan Nakama continued to expand its repertoire of theatre for children with L.

⁴⁵ The New Village (*Atarashiki-mura*) relocated to Moroyama-machi, Saitama-ken after a dam project forced the community to abandon its original location in 1939. The community continues to function today.

Neuhaus' *Mekishiko e ryokō to omottara* (*If You Are Thinking About Going to Mexico*) and Wakabayashi Ichirō's *Kaguya hime* (*Bamboo Princess*) that year.⁴⁶ It was through these productions in particular that Gekidan Nakama began to establish a reputation for offering productions for children that were perceived to be of better "quality" than its predecessors and began to rehabilitate the image of companies that produced works for children. Itō insists that she was unaware of the perception that theatre for children was considered to be of low value, but cites the words of Watanabe Isao of Sendagaya Wakabayashi Elementary School as evidence of both the marginalization of theatre for children and the perception that the act of touring these productions was increasingly a profit-scoring device. In Watanabe's words,

Because *shingeki* companies are not 'children's theatre companies,' the essence of the performance is related to adult performance. Among actors, the fact that the level of recognition facing theatre for children is low is also true, and this awareness is hidden in the depths of the psyche. Due to the social credibility and length of the performance of *San biki no mahō no inu* [*Three Magic Dogs*, or *The Tinderbox*], however, an important change, awareness of the fact that theatre is for both adults and children, is beginning to occur among actors as well. (30)

According to Itō, this recognition did not prevent the company from whispers of disapproval from a variety of sources. She writes, "Among *shingeki* companies, it was gossiped that 'Gekidan Nakama has been downgraded to a children's theatre company,' while theatre companies that specialized in works for children began to snark that the work was 'the side job

⁴⁶ Aoe notes that it was Wakabayashi Ichirō himself who translated a copy of Henriette Pascal's *Mon théâtre à Moscou* ("My Theatre in Moscow") that he read, suggesting the influence of Pascal and Russian theories of theatre for children on Wakabayashi as well (35).

of a *shingeki* company that only wanted to spend money” (30). Itō then responds to this criticism by quoting the theatre critic Ozaki Hirotsugu. While the source of Ozaki’s quotation is unclear and therefore cannot be independently verified, it is clear that Itō felt compelled to justify Gekidan Nakama’s mission, its approach, and its incorporation of theatre for children and young people into its program. According to Itō, Ozaki opined, “I understand the importance of theatre for children in foreign countries even now. Using young boy and girl actors obstructs the art of children’s theatre and hinders children. I express respect for Gekidan Nakama, which is enthusiastically offering theatre for children, a genre lacking in abundance” (30-31).

In the year following its production of *The Tinderbox*, Gekidan Nakama added a production of Sergei Mikhalkov’s adaptation of Mark Twain’s *The Prince and the Pauper* to its repertoire, and this also reflects a choice laden with the weight of historical memory and ideology. According to Gene Sosin, *The Prince and the Pauper* was a natural choice to dramatize for children in the Soviet Union, as it reinforced the Soviet ideological perspective on class and the economy through its portrayal of children’s lives under capitalism. While seemingly brushing the historical significance of fairy tales in Russian and Soviet theatre for children under the rug in favor of the aesthetic preference of socialist realism, in a 1950 article for *Theatre Arts*, Sosin writes:

Realistic plays more than fairy tales help answer the educational demands made upon the children’s theatre by the Communist party and the Soviet government. Since the middle twenties, this three-dimensional medium has supplemented the work of the classroom in teaching the gospel according to Lenin and Stalin. Western classics have been adapted to show children’s life under capitalism. Mark Twain’s *The Prince and the Pauper* was a

natural for this purpose, with the class angle played up heavily. (30)

Performing *The Prince and the Pauper* in Japan cannot simply be read as a reinterpretation of class-centered, Marxist-Leninist ideology, however. The production is an excellent example of the multiple ways in which information was transmitted in the modern world. In *Mark Twain in Japan: The Cultural Reception of an American Icon*, Tsuyoshi Ishihara traces the introduction and reception of Mark Twain in Japan from the early Meiji period through the late twentieth century. He notes that *The Prince and the Pauper* was first introduced to the public in Japan in 1898, and asserts that it was the most popular Mark Twain work through the end of the war, with four different translations appearing in print (37). At least two versions were serialized in the magazine *Shōnen Kurabu*, which targeted juvenile boys, included a samurai version that appeared in twelve monthly installments in the year 1939. The version, translated by Osaragi Jiro, “transformed the democratic and antifeudalistic elements of Twain’s original into form more acceptable to Japanese readers, reflecting feudalistic and didactic cultural sentiments and the hierarchical social structure of prewar and wartime Japan” (39).

The program notes for the 1964 production of this work stress that the company is producing Mikhalkov’s work, not Mark Twain’s, however. It notes that while Mikhalkov borrowed Twain’s motif, he created an entirely new work (Saigō n. pag.). Therefore, this play must also be read in terms of this continued conversation with Russian and Soviet work, but understood in terms of the multiple ways in which the production likely would have been received by audiences in Japan at the time.

Itō, who played the role of Tom in the production, doesn’t focus on the ideological and political ramifications of this, but does outline the conditions under which Gekidan Nakama

produced its work. In the process, Itō also spells out the continuing importance of the relationship between teachers and theatre companies that produced works for young audiences. After *The Prince and the Pauper* premiered at the Itabashi Public Auditorium, it moved to Toyoko Hall and the Hibiya Geijutsu-za before embarking on a national tour. As an indication of how grueling the performance schedule actually was, Itō notes, “From August sixth through the twenty-eighth, we only had one day of rest, on weekdays we had two performances at 10:30 am and 2 pm, on Saturdays and Sundays we had performances in the morning only, and through the end of December, we performed one hundred seventy times” (31-32).

Itō makes two more comments concerning the relationship between professional theatre companies and schools that deserve increased attention. First, she discusses the careful balance between artistic, educational, and developmental goals that artists and companies travelling to schools were forced to navigate. She notes that the performance was just on the cusp of the *kodomo gekijō* (theatre for children) or *oyako gekijō* (theatre for parents and children) movement, and stresses that the relationship between theatre companies and the movements had yet to be established. These joint movements, which stressed community-supported interaction between parents and children through the medium of performance, came to prominence in the late 1960s and will be discussed in further detail in chapter five. Instead, Itō says, “It was a time when we truly felt like we were creating theatre together with teachers,” and adds that increasing critical attention assisted the company as well. In her words, “The performances included teachers, and in addition, *shingeki* critics were very precise in their critiques, and the fact that all the newspapers carried articles influenced our work greatly” (32).

Another *shingeki* company that made strong contributions to the professionalization and development of theatre for children and young people at the time was Sanki-Kai, which later changed its name to Tokyo Engeki Ensemble in 1967, under which it continues to operate today. Sanki-Kai, like Gekidan Nakama, was formed by graduates of the Haiyū-za's Actor Training Institute. Its first productions were Sergei Mikhalkov's *Toranpu no Kuni*, or the *Land of Cards*, usually translated into English as *Laughter and Tears*, an adaptation of Carlo Gozzi's *Love of the Three Oranges*, in 1956. The production, directed by Kumai Hiroyuki, was the third installment of the Haiyū-za-sponsored *Katei no gekijō*, or "family theatre," which began in 1955. The Soviet play spins a tale of a young Russian boy whose father works in a theatre. After promising to take the young boy, Andryusha, to a show, Andryusha becomes ill and is unable to attend. As he falls asleep playing cards, Andryusha is transported to another world where he assists the King of Hearts defeat the evil Queen of Spades. The underlying message of the piece, which like Mikhalkov's *The Prince and the Pauper*, served to reinforce the official ideology of the state, depicted masculine ideals designed to reflect the state's idealized image of boyhood. According to Sosin, "Andryusha is resourceful, clever, self-sufficient and capable of overcoming all obstacles—in short, the very model of a modern Soviet school boy and one with whom young spectators identify themselves" (30). The production ran for ninety-two performances, and also toured the Tokyo metropolitan area. The production was revived in 1959 with thirteen performances at Toyoko Hall in Tokyo, and also toured the Tohoku region and Kanagawa region, in addition to performances in the Tokyo area ("Tokyo Engeki Ensemble"), for much of the year.

Kansai Area Performance and Other Regional Companies

While companies based in Tokyo comprised the bulk of organizations producing increasingly professional live work for young people, there are several companies from the Kansai area that deserve mention as well. Osaka's Gekidan Seisaku-za was formed by Michii Naotsugu, and it featured works by prominent *shingeki* playwrights such as Kubota Mantarō, including *Kita kaze o kureta tēburu kake*, or *The Table Given to Us by the North Wind*, as well as adaptations of European works such as *The Emperor's New Clothes*, *Pinocchio*, and Tolstoy's *The First Distiller*. In May 1957, three Kansai area *shingeki* companies, the Seisaku-za, the Gogatsu-za, and the Geijutsu Gekijō, combined, creating the Kansai Geijutsu-za, or Kansai Art Theatre, a major company of the Kansai area which produced a range of works for children in the late 1950s, most of which were tied to Soviet and European works: Mikhalkov's *Rabbit Nose-in-the-Air* and *The Prince and the Pauper*, Marshak's *Kōfuku ha dare ni kuru*, or *To Whom Does Happiness Come*, and Madeleine Barbulée's adaptation of *Beauty and the Beast* (Tomita, *Nihon* 329). While the national impact of the activities of these Kansai area *shingeki* companies was limited during the 1950s, its formation is important, as the company and its associates became some of the strongest national influences in the following decade.

Signs of Change

Without a doubt, *shingeki* companies became the most dominant forces in live performance for children and young people in the decade of the 1950s, and companies that had played a dominant role before and after the war, such as Gekidan Tōdō, began to be seen as increasingly less influential and unable to adapt to the circumstances of the new postwar order.

While Gekidan Tōdō continued to produce many of the same works it had produced during the Occupation, many of which had roots in the *dōshin shugi* or “child’s heart” movement of the interwar period, emphasizing the innate innocence or naivety of children,⁴⁷ the historical and material circumstances of childhood were now completely different. Whereas Tōdō continued to produce works popular in the interwar period, including Miyazawa Kenji’s *Yodaka nōoshi* (*Nighthawk Star*, 1951), Kanegai Shōzō’s *Tamago* (*Egg*, 1952), Ogawa Mimei’s *Akai rōsoku to ningyō* (*The Red Candles and the Mermaid*, 1952), Kikuoka Kuri’s *Tokai no nogamo* (*The Wild Duck of the City*, 1952), Akita Ujaku’s *Umoreta haru* (*Buried Spring*, 1953), and works more familiar to English speaking readers: Barry’s *Peter Pan*, 1953, Maeterlinck’s *Blue Bird* (1954), and Dickens’ *Oliver Twist* (1955), and *Cinderella*, which was the company’s final performance in 1959, other companies who survived the war began to adapt more forcefully to the changed circumstances. Tomita argues that a sense of inconsistency (*ikkansei ga nai*) can be sensed when one analyzes this list of works, and that this contributed to its decline (*Nihon* 319). Furthermore, Tōdō works ran deeply into the red, and the company never found a way to make them financially viable. In retrospect, it appears that Aoe’s critique of the state of theatre for children in the early 1950s, was prophetic, and when the company with which he was closely associated, Gekidan Tōdō, did not adopt his suggestions, it faded into the realm of memory.

In contrast to this, one of the only companies to survive both the war and the increasing financial difficulties for theatre companies in the 1950s, the Shin-Jidō Gekidan, or New Children’s Theatre, offered both a variety of dramatizations, often of popular works of children’s literature. The Shin-Jidō Gekidan split from Gekidan Tōdō in 1941, and was led by Koike

⁴⁷ Please see the introduction to this study for further information.

Shintarō and Totsuka Hiroshi. In addition to producing popular works, the company had better quality management and was perceived as having a much more flexible structure (Tomita, *Nihon* 319). In contrast to the *shingeki* companies, most of the Shin Jidō Gekidan's works were produced at the Mitsukoshi Gekijō, a clear indication that its works were viewed as ideologically less controversial. A sampling of the company's work suggests that it sought to produce new adaptations of classics of children's literature from the United States, Europe and Japan, including Jules Verne's *Fifteen Boys Stranded at Sea* (adapted by Tsushima Noboru, 1951) and Hans Christian Andersen's *The Little Mermaid* (adapted by Koike Shintarō, 1952). A noticeable difference is readily apparent after the end of the Occupation, however. The company largely, albeit not exclusively, began producing works largely by Japanese authors, including an adaptation from the Kojiki, Totsuka Hiroshi's *Umihiko Yamahiko*, or *The Sea Boy and the Mountain Boy* (1953), Miyazawa Kenji's *Kaze no Matasaburō*, dramatized by Koike (1954), and Akutagawa Ryūnosuke's *Toshishun*, also dramatized by Koike (1955). The company also produced adaptations of relatively new works, including *Kotan no kuchibue*, or *Kotan's Whistle*, a 1958 work that dramatized the contemporary novel of the same name by Ishimori Nobuo and depicted the harsh discrimination faced by the Ainu population in Japan. Much like Markov, Yuasa, and Itō's calls for a form of theatre that in some way reflected the reality of people's lives, whether in fairy tale form or not, this piece proves that these depictions of current issues were valued and increasingly important features of the field.

Finally, the work of the Shin Jidō Gekidan is notable not only for its popularity, but also because of the parallel trajectory it possessed to the challenges faced by companies that produced works for children at the time, and the path that many would choose to take. Like many artists

who made the financial decision to jump from the stage to the rapidly expanding fields of television and film in the 1950s, the artistic core of the Shin Jidō Gekidan adapted to the reality of the new era in this way as well. Tsushima Noboru, one of the young founders of the company, made the leap to commercial television in the late 1950s and worked for NET, or Nihon Educational Television, a for-profit educational programming channel established in 1957. The station focused on educational programming for children, and the Shin Jidō Gekidan was actually featured in its programming in the early 1960s under the name Gekidan Shin Jidō (Tomita, *Nihon* 319). Nevertheless, the company remained primarily dedicated to touring productions to schools, but this structure is a clear example of the challenges faced by nearly all companies producing works for children as the tumultuous decade of the 1960s neared: Adapt to the increasing commercialization and technologization of work due to rapidly growing influence of mass media, or risk becoming a relic of the past.

In reality, as I will discuss in the following chapter, those who adapted to the influence of this new technology were the artists and companies who survived the increasingly volatile period the next few years would bring. It is important to note, however, that while the practice of employing child actors began to fall increasingly out of vogue, it also launched the careers of some major figures, including some of the artists who actively pushed the boundaries of the artistic world in the following decade. Satō Makoto and Kara Jurō, two of the most influential artists of the *angura* movement in the 1960s, both got early starts as actors with the company Gekidan Kyūpidō, or Theatre Company Cupid, a company that produced radio dramas throughout the 1950s and later began commercial television broadcasting (Tomita, *Nihon* 326). While the company itself did not survive long after the leap into commercial broadcasting, Satō

and Kara became canonical figures in the experimental movements of the following decade, and it is important not to overlook the fact that the practice of employing child actors was both influential and widespread.

As the works in this chapter demonstrate, the post-Occupation years were marked by a continuing political struggle initiated by the encouragement of *shingeki* groups in the early years of the Occupation that bore fruit as an artistic reflection of the Cold War, with works by Soviet writers often appearing on the stage. Works and companies associated with the proletarian theatre movement of the interwar period were revived, but their messages and ideological positions became less controversial as the decade wore on. Indeed, while many *shingeki* companies appeared to express artistic solidarity with their counterparts in the Soviet Union during this decade, as the Japan Communist Party lost some of its influence, the relationship between the *shingeki* companies and the establishment became far less tense. This would, in fact, spark a new artistic wave in the 1960s, as *shingeki* came to be seen by a new generation as the establishment. As many companies also discovered, one of the largest challenges was adapting to the new circumstances of the increasing influence of television and media. It was these companies that became the stepping stones for many of the artists about to leap onto the scene in the 1960s.

CHAPTER FOUR: NOSTALGIA, EXPERIMENTATION, AND UNREST

In the spring of 1961, a twenty-seven year old artist boarded a train in Tokyo bound for Hiroshima. After witnessing countless scenes of rice planting fly by from the train window over the course of the lengthy, day-long journey, he arrived in the city, which on the surface, appeared to have been rebuilt in the almost sixteen years since the atomic bomb had obliterated the core of the city in August 1945. The artist, Fujita Asaya, attended a meeting in the city of Hiroshima and then continued his journey by bus to a rural village in the mountains, where a rice planting festival was being held that day. With the beat of a *taiko* drum echoing in the background, he observed rice planters carefully placing the seedlings in the field with the assistance of about a dozen cows wearing multi-colored *hanagasa*, and persons from neighboring villages crowded into the trees surrounding the field to witness the event. It was there, Fujita recounted in an essay just a short time thereafter, that he began to feel a strong sense of “culture.” He recorded his experience in a brief essay titled “*Tokai to chihō no aida de*” (“Between the City and the Countryside”), and remarking on the journey to the village, emphasized, “There is culture here.” As he continued to ruminate on the sense of absence or lack of traditional culture in the urban area of Tokyo, his birthplace, he remarked:

Wisdom that has been reproduced by the livelihood of farmers is most certainly something that should be called ‘culture.’ It is said that Japan’s traditional culture stopped its flow in the Meiji era, and European culture entered Japan, as though to cover up traditional culture from the top of the head. Japanese culture then began to enter into a state of *bunmei kaika* (“civilization and enlightenment”), and when we entered into this

state, it was convenient, and it spread throughout Japan. It is not the case that culture was ruined, however; its smoldering fires were preserved in the nooks and crannies of agricultural villages. (52-53)

Fujita's comments are largely representative of a broad sense among many artists and public intellectuals of the time that Japanese culture had been swept aside at multiple points in its modern history; first, after Japan's initial encounter with the United States and Europe in the Meiji period, and second, under the conditions of the postwar, when American culture was actively emphasized and officially encouraged under the Occupation. Furthermore, because the traditional forms of theatre were officially suppressed under the Occupation and *shingeki* had ascended to a dominant position in the 1950s due to American censors' early intervention in the first few years after the end of the war, the sense of crisis that was unfolding in the arts in many ways mirrored the sentiment expressed above.

This sense that Japan had moved too far aesthetically and intellectually from its cultural roots, is strongly connected to the concept of *furusato*, which can be translated as the phenomenon of the "hometown" or "old village." *Furusato* became an increasingly influential cultural phenomenon as Japan became ever more urbanized and went through a period known as *Kōdo Keizai Seichō*, or "Rapid Economic Growth and Development" between 1950 and 1973 under the official policy of the government.⁴⁸ Stephen Dodd writes that the ideology of *furusato* emerged during the Meiji period, which began in 1868, as a "newly invigorated symbol of desire and discontent," but continued to evolve throughout the Shōwa period, which began in 1926 and

⁴⁸ During this time, in 1960, Prime Minister Ikeda Hayato famously announced his plan for doubling household income in ten years, a feat that was accomplished in just seven years.

came to an end in 1989. Citing the work of Marilyn Ivy's *Discourses of the Vanishing: Modernity, Phantasm, Japan*, Dodd explains, "Since many who had moved to cities felt an increasing sense of alienation, 'the government began to revalorize customs as a means of stabilizing the nation. A preoccupation with custom developed as a pretext for definitively locating the traditional'" (18, Ivy 72). This concept took on special meaning during the 1960s and 1970s, when, according to William Kelly, "Japanese culture was associated with and frequently expressed as an exaltation of Japanese folklore and rural nostalgia. A feverish *furusato būmu* (home village boom) idealized country life and country folk as the true exemplars of Japanese values and communal forms" (194).

Jennifer Robertson has also famously described *furusato* as nostalgia for a lifestyle aesthetic demoting rustic simplicity, a spatial and temporal dimension that "signifies pastness, historicity, senescence, and quaintness," as well as familiarity and naturalness. Likewise, *furusato* suggests a "natal household, a hamlet or village, and the countryside," and "a self-governed, autonomous area, and by extension...local autonomy" ("Furusato" 494-495). *Furusato* is also a construct of nativist and nationalist impulses *across* the political spectrum, and a concept that elicited the sense of a national community lost in the aftermath of war. According to Robertson, "*Furusato* Japan" is an ideological construct that "constitutes a synthesis of nativism and nationalism. In the case of nativism, nostalgia embodies a profound rejection of externally imposed identities. With respect to nationalism, nostalgia is or influences the style in which nationalness is imagined" ("Furusato" 512). She adds, "Appropriated at different administrative levels and popularized in the mass media, *furusato* is engendered by nostalgic memories just as it engenders the remembering of nostalgia. Prefixed to Japan, *furusato*

facilitates the collective ‘re-membering’ of a national community dismembered by defeat in the war” (514).

As if he were also ‘re-membering’ the national community in his description of the festival and the ritual planting activities of the rural villagers, culturally and geographically a far cry from urban Tokyo, the concept of *furusato* permeates Fujita’s description of the agricultural village as the heart of culture in Japan. In many ways, it directly explains and reflects Fujita’s deep interest in traditional forms of theatre, which strongly influenced his work with young people. The sense of nostalgia and longing that *furusato* represents also underscores the brewing storm about to unleash itself in the sphere of the arts in turbulent decade of the 1960s, one that would also reshape the world of youth theatre as well. As increasing urbanization throughout Japan replaced village life, and artists and activists became increasingly disillusioned with the “West” politically, this disenchantment manifested itself in form as well. Artists and activists often turned to rural and “traditional” forms of art and performance as a means of expressing the growing sense that Japanese culture had been ripped away from the masses both during the Meiji Period and in the aftermath of the Occupation. *Shingeki* fell out of favor with many members of the generation of artists coming of age in the late 1950s and early 1960s, and referring to the new wave of experimentation across a broad spectrum of the arts on the horizon in the early 1960s, Peter Eckersall notes:

[D]espite the originality and topicality of a new generation of writers such as Abe Kōbō and Mishima Yukio working in *shingeki*, the modern theatre was regarded as too comfortable (for the artists and the audiences), too western, not involved with Japanese aesthetic or political sensibilities, too removed from the people (in their smooth new

buildings), too intellectual, and subsequently lacking visceral engagement with the everyday world. (14)

Eckersall's words reflect the aesthetic choices that would come to redefine theatre for children and young people in the 1960s as well. Fujita, who became one of the most influential directors and playwrights in the realm of theatre for children and young people in the late twentieth century, also expressed profound disappointment with the increasingly commercial nature of *shingeki* and the parallel influences of prosperity and commercialism in the theatre world in 1968, just a few years after his trip to Hiroshima. In an article in the journal *Teatoro*, he laments:

I had thought that the original *shingeki* was a movement. It was a movement that shifted European theatre to Japan, tried to create contemporary theatre that reflected Japan's reality, and tried to express a certain ideology...On the contrary, how wrong that seems. Since about 1955, we have witnessed a time period in which television has become theatre company businesses' principal source of funds. If you get fully on board with this, a situation in which one can make a living just on theatre—which used to be unthinkable—has materialized. The 1960s age of consumerism and prosperity spurred this on...The appearance of *shingeki* actors who had become stars via television made *shingeki's* one month-long large scale public performances possible. The age of “being in the sunlight” arrived for *shingeki*, which had not yet been touched by it. *Shingeki* actors began to live in a time period in which they had their own cars, traveled to foreign countries, and lived in luxury condos. If you look at it from the perspective of the pre-war period of “the time of no bread, when they ate even turnips,” you would think it was

nothing but a dream. The feeling of “Yes, at last we have become mainstream,” is perhaps not unreasonable. The place in the sunlight is comfortable. People without their own cars are thinking about whether or not to at least have a compact motor vehicle. People who don’t live in luxury condos are thinking about whether or not to at least move into a multi-storied apartment building. By trying to enter into the “sunlit place,” however, an enormous amount of energy has been wasted. (“Warera” 23)

Fujita’s disillusionment with both consumerism and the mainstream *shingeki* companies is plainly visible in many of the major the artistic movements of the 1960s, which, for good reason, have received much critical attention by theatre historians. From this new generation of artists, the first to grow up and come of age in the postwar, democratic Japan, some of the loudest and most influential voices in the theatre emerged, and numerous experimental movements ensued as a counterpart to *shingeki* and its increasingly commercial productions. The most famous of these movements is the “*angura*” movement, an alliteration of the word “underground,” which has received the most attention by international scholars. *Angura* was a major experimental movement that challenged the status quo of *shingeki* both aesthetically and politically. Roughly two decades following the end of the war, the *shingeki* movement came to be seen as something that the experimental movement needed to “transcend.” Senda Akihiko, one of Japan’s foremost and influential theatre critics since the 1960s, cites three primary reasons for this that are very similar to those that Fujita expresses: *Shingeki* in the postwar period was influenced heavily by Western theatre, its employment of realism, especially the form of socialist realism, was viewed as irrelevant by the younger generation, and the movement was dominated by those associated with the increasingly less influential, dogmatic, and aging Japan Communist Party. In contrast,

the students associated with the *angura* movement, a major sphere of *avant garde* work, primarily aligned themselves with the liberal, anti-Vietnam War politics of the New Left movement that swept across the globe at the time, and their works are marked with this ideology (“Japanese Theatre” 3-4). As opposed to European works, *angura* artists often expressed a strong interest in national and community roots, and therefore in the traditional forms of theatre in Japan. Both politics and aesthetics shaped this movement’s work.

John Gillespie links these artistic movements to both civic activism and the memory of war, remarking:

The widespread unrest and nationwide demonstrations rattled Japan’s cultural bones and playwrights were in the midst of the fray, their work reflecting the unsettled psyche of the times. They fervently believed that what they staged could stimulate social, political, and cultural change. Not surprisingly, they often delved reflexively into what they and their plays were about; rendering memory is everywhere in evidence (35).

Senda concurs, adding, “Although the little theater [*angura*] movement was fundamentally a movement in the arts, there was nonetheless a clear connection with the political situation, especially the impetus in society toward reform” (“Japanese Theater” 3-4).

Theatre for Children and Young People and the Politics of Protest

The “political situation” in Senda and Gillespie’s descriptions is directly connected to widespread opposition to the renewal of the U.S.-Japan Mutual Security Agreement, abbreviated as “Anpo” in Japanese, in 1960 and the American military presence in mainland Japan, Okinawa, and Southeast Asia, and the movements the conflict inspired. The treaty stipulated that U.S.

military bases and troops would remain in Japan, and also permitted the United States to intervene in domestic disturbances. Due to the perceived threat of remilitarization, social problems surrounding the U.S. bases, and the treaty's affront to Japan's sovereignty, opposition to the treaty renewal sparked massive citizen protests. An estimated sixteen million people participated in the protests, which began in 1959 and peaked in 1960. Ten million people signed petitions against the treaty's renewal, six million laborers went on strike, and hundreds of thousands of citizens demonstrated in Tokyo and around the country. Many of the protesters were students, the first generation to both experience war at a very young age and to reach adulthood under the new "democratic" Japan. The students were joined by peace activists opposing nuclear weapons, residents of areas surrounding the military bases, associations that promoted the normalization of relations with China and Korea, labor unions, women's groups, student organizations, merchant associations, Christian groups, progressive intellectuals, ethnic minority groups opposed to legal and social discrimination, and artists, among others (Sasaki-Uemura 16-17).

David Goodman has long asserted that it was the failure of established *shingeki* companies to organize resistance to the renewal of the Anpo treaty in 1960 that led to widespread disillusionment on behalf of students and young artists and sparked the *angura* movement. In 1971, Goodman wrote,

Many of today's young theatre people were personally involved in the 1960 struggle against renewal of the United States—Japan Mutual Security Treaty [Anpo], and, even for those not directly involved, the year 1960 stands out as the most important moment in their lives, both politically and theatrically. The inability of the established theatre to

organize itself in opposition to the Security Treaty and to respond artistically to the crisis was the major reason for young people to turn away from *Shingeki*. (“New” 159).

Senda Koreya, arguably the most influential *shingeki* artist of the twentieth century and whose work was discussed in detail in Chapters Two and Three, disputes this assertion, however.

Referring to his postwar activities, he remarks, “There were some leftist groups that dominated theatre in the period of so-called postwar democracy, but we steered clear of politics until the Korean War. With the Korean War, we began to participate in political activities and continued to do so up to the 1960 campaign against the U.S.—Japan Mutual Security Treaty” (65).

Regardless of this dispute, the Anpo struggle directly shaped works created for young people that emerged during the decade of the 1960s. This makes sense, since, as Goodman argues, the 1960 protests were a watershed moment in many young artists’ lives. Senda’s comments indicate that the protests drew the attention of the *shingeki* world as well, and both factions remained central to the field of theatre for children and young people. Ōno asserts, “The 1960s produced many classics. These were influenced by the Anpo conflict, which affected the fate of democracy, and children’s solidarity and respect for children’s personalities were the themes of almost all of these works” (“Senzen” 15). This statement is fascinating for several reasons, first because Ōno connects theatre for children and young people to the concept of democracy and widespread disillusionment with its form in Japan in the aftermath of Anpo, and because it draws a distinct parallel to the same political winds that flamed the barrage of experimental works that have drawn the attention of so many. Just as theatre historians and researchers frame the wave of new works that came to define the 1960s as a struggle between the establishment and the new guard, a very similar ideological split can indeed be seen among

youth theatre companies that emerged from *shingeki* and post-*shingeki* or experimental companies, including Kaze no Ko, Operetta Gekidan Tomoshihi, and a host of others.

To be certain, *shingeki* companies continued (and still continue) to be major players in the field of theatre for children and young people, and there was an explosion of commercial work targeting children and families at this time as well, including “mask play” work by companies such as Gekidan Hikōsen, but the turn toward traditional and neo-traditional forms that embraced *kyōgen*, *bunraku*, and even *kabuki* was similarly groundbreaking. As I will demonstrate, this interest in roots can even be found in commercial genres as well. In form, theory and content, theatre for children and young people in postwar Japan branched out significantly in the 1960s, and this new wave was directly tied to a new generation of artists who had personally witnessed the horrors of war as children and, like activists, sought to prevent children and the institution of childhood from being employed as agents of militarism and war again. Against the backdrop of an increasingly hostile conflict in Vietnam, and other social movements, including growing concern about the rigidity of the educational system, opposition to increasing consumerism, and the environmental movement, this new generation of artists attempted to sow the seeds of caution toward adults and authority among the young people who comprised their audiences.

Shikata Shin summarizes these social changes well. He asserts that in the postwar period, “Humans were changed, and, together with humans, living, breathing culture also met the same fate. Therefore, when discussing the condition of children and culture in this country, you must discuss the enormous change in the economy and society that began in the 1960s.” Building on this concept, Tomita Hiroyuki also directly ties the post-1960 field of theatre for children and young people to the 1960 protests. In his words, “Theatre for children and young people in the

1960s...meant addressing the question of how children's theatre could continue to survive in a society that had been transformed after the period of rapid economic growth and development due to the Ikeda cabinet of the 1960 Anpo struggle" (*Nihon* 336).

From the late 1950s and throughout the decade of the 1960s, the field of theatre for children and young people was thus bound together with the same artistic and political impulses that fed the well known artistic and political debates that led to an explosion of new activity. As the field also was irreversibly changed by commercial ventures, including growing opportunities for companies within the television and film markets, artists and activists increasingly turned to traditions of the past, or their perceptions of it, for source material and aesthetic choices. As mass media became ever more ubiquitous and education became more exam focused, artists increasingly saw the need to create works that addressed human interaction and education of the "heart."

Theatre for Children and Young People and Postwar Education

Like their predecessors, one of the primary targets of this new generation of artists and activists was the public education system, and this contributed significantly to the growth of performing in schools, the staple of most companies performing works for children and young people in Japan even today. Looking at the decade of the 1960s as a whole, the relationship between theatre companies performing works for young audiences and the education system at large became the most influential factor in the genre's expansion and development. According to Ōno Yukinori, "Whatever one says, the largest event of the 1950s and 1960s was theatre companies and school teachers creating "theatre in the classroom," which spread like wildfire. It

is not an exaggeration to say that school theatre forms the foundation of children's theatre in Japan today" ("Senzen" 16).

These years proved critical in building the strong relationship between the education system and theatre companies performing works for children and young people. After the war's end, there was a similarly strong sense among educators that the mistakes that led to the war could not be made again, and that children should be exposed to media such as live performance as a means of creating a space for emotional development outside of the state sanctioned curriculum. This idea held similar resonance in the wake of Anpo and the escalating war in Southeast Asia. After World War II, a strong connection developed between theatre companies and Nikkyōso, the Japan Teachers Union (JTU), Japan's oldest and largest teachers' union, which was founded in 1947. Similar to the ideals expressed by the new Constitution, the organization advocates peace, non-discrimination, and human rights, in addition to academic and lifestyle skills ("This is What I Want to Know"). In 1951, the Japan Teachers Union adopted what it terms its "Four Principles of Peace:" full pacification, adherence to neutrality, opposition to the provision of military bases, and rejection of rearmament, in part in recognition of the fact that teachers and the education system itself had directly contributed to wartime militarism. The JTU adopted the slogan "Do not send our students to war again!" in 1951 and increasingly called for lifestyle writings such as "Yamabiko gakkō,"⁴⁹ creative cultural study, and theatre education to raise artistic and moral sensitivity (Suda 56).

⁴⁹ According to Kaori Okano and Motonori Tsuchiya, "Yamabiko gakkō" refers to a journal started by a teacher shortly after the end of the war that was a revival of the Essay Writing Education Movement, a grassroots educational movement that emerged in the 1930s through which teachers were able to stress creativity and circumvent the official state-sponsored educational curriculum. In their words, "Teachers encouraged students to write about their immediate lives, and in doing so to develop the ability to comprehend the present realities in a critical way" (26-27).

Live performance also became a key component of this objective, and the relationship between schools and theatre companies grew exponentially. This relationship was not without risk on behalf of teachers, however, and Suda Rintarō describes a level of tension between teachers and upper level management. According to Suda, “Naturally, it was not the case that the Board of Education encouraged this. Even if you said, ‘It is for the children,’ you could not guarantee that grades would be raised, and the teacher in charge would have a problem in the end” (56).

While insisting that theatre for children should not be didactic or ‘educational’, Fujita also describes similar tensions when explaining how the relationship between theater companies and the education system grew in the 1950s and 1960s in his experience. When asked to comment on the relationship between the education system and postwar theatre for children and young people, he responded:

Originally, there was no relationship, because in Japan, there wasn't a curriculum that taught theatre. Theatre wasn't something that was taught in schools, and this was a problem of education in Japan. That is to say, it was because the leaders of the world of education didn't think theatre was something that was taught, and there was nothing that could be done about that. The leaders of educations in Japan perceive that we, like guerillas, made friends with the teachers at schools, established good relationships with them, and then said “Let's cooperate with each other and let's show good performances to the children.” This is what we have been doing for decades and it is the major activity of children's theater in Japan. (Personal interview)

Fujita adds that it was specifically because of this connection with teachers that the relationship between companies performing works for children and young people and the world of education is deep.

Ōno explains that the relationship between theatre companies and public education was tied strongly to the idea of educating the heart or spirit:

Performing in schools is something that all children in this country can experience...and, if you use a word from the past, Japanese people thought that children's "aesthetic sensibility education" and education of the heart were important, but in truth, there was no curriculum that taught this. In Japan's situation, it stresses language, math, reading, writing, using the abacus, etc., but if you focus only on this, it isn't an education that is connected to the heart. There was cultivation of aesthetic sensibility, and the question of doing something good or virtuous began to be discussed, and especially from the 1950s to around 1960, because there were many teachers who reflected deeply on what caused the Japanese people to go to war due to the prewar cultivation of aesthetic sensibility, that which is called "moral education," was not really thought about at the time. Therefore, it was a means of "educating the heart," with everyone seeing theatre, movies, which at the time were amazing, and listening to concerts. (Personal interview)

A New Generation of Artists: Sanetō Akira, Fujita Asaya, and Tada Tōru

Against the backdrop of the heated anti-war politics of the 1960s, the sense of disillusionment with the status quo, and a strong desire to communicate the mistakes of the past to young people, Tada Tōru, the founder of the Kaze no Ko company, the author and playwright

Sanetō Akira, and the director and playwright Fujita Asaya became three of the most prominent artists of the 1960s and 1970s. Sanetō and Fujita made strident efforts to push the *shingeki* model in new directions through a reimagination of the folklore theatre genre, or *minwa geki*, and experimentation with traditional forms such as *nō*, *kyōgen*, and *sekkyōbushi* narrative, while Tada aimed to create works with strong child protagonists that explicitly critiqued and challenged both “war mongering” and the perceived inequalities of “democracy” as it was implemented in the U.S. and by the U.S. in Japan. Like Sanetō, Fujita, and Tada, many in this new generation of artists were also children themselves during the war and experienced this early trauma, and it is very clearly present in their work. As this generation became young adults in the 1950s and 1960s, memory of the war and its aftermath became a major impetus in the burgeoning new wave of works being produced for children and young people.

Fujita, whose most well known works for young people include an adaptation of the classic tale *Sanshō daiyū*, or *Sanshō the Bailiff*, and dramatization and direction of Sanetō’s books for children *Bekkanko oni* (“Funny Faced Ogre”) and *Jibetakko-sama* (“Earth God”), is one of the most ubiquitous and prolific figures in the field of theatre for children and young people in Japan today. In addition to the previous two works, one of Sanetō’s most well known contributions to the field is *Furimukuna Pedro* (“Pedro, Looking Back”), which premiered in 1961 at Gekidan Nakama and was directed by Nakamura Shun’ichi.⁵⁰ Strikingly, both Fujita and Sanetō describe the strong influence the phenomenon of adult distrust that emerged after the war, and this became a major theme in their work. Both experienced the shock of air raids and

⁵⁰ The play was published under the name Hisanōarumitsu, which appears to be a pseudonym for Sanetō. For further information on Gekidan Nakama and Nakamura Shun’ichi, please see Chapter Three.

evacuations as the war's end grew near, and, in Sanetō's case, the experience of actually being in Hiroshima prefecture on August 6th, 1945, and witnessing its horror at a distance. Both describe the enormous impact of this trauma on their work, and in a clear example of the shift in dominant ideology and conceptions of childhood provoked by the war's end, they also describe the profound shock and new sense of distrust in adults and authority as this shift took root. Sanetō explains, "Adults were the enemy. After I saw the picture of the emperor, the one where MacArthur and the emperor are lined up, as one would expect from a youth from a militaristic country, I began to have my eyes opened...and I began to feel that they [adults] were crooks" (Sanetō and Fujita Forum).

The sense of distrust in adults extended to the education system. According to Fujita, his work with young people stemmed first from his mistrust of the educational system, which he believes contributed directly to an ideology that promoted war. When asked why he specifically began to create work for young people, in a personal interview, he responded:

I have many reasons, but the first is that I was a sixth grader when World War II ended. Until the end of the war, all Japanese children believed that that war was correct, and this was the direct result of education. Teachers glorified war, and they taught that working for the purpose of war was our obligation, and because we were innocent youth, we believed them. However, after the war's end in 1945, there was no righteousness on Japan's side, and it knew that it had made a great mistake. At that time, I held extraordinary distrust toward education, which had created a militarized youth. And, as a result, I understood the terribleness of this education, and I felt compelled to continue to say something against

this kind of education that had resulted in a militarized youth. That idea continues until this day.

As the interview continues, Fujita elaborates on how this early childhood trauma shaped his work, including his frequent collaborations with Sanetō Akira, the most well known of which include *Bekkanko Oni* (“Funny Faced Ogre”) and *Jibetakko-sama* (“Earth God”). In his words, “At the time that I realized that His Majesty the Emperor was not a god but human, my surprise initiated my work. We [Sanetō and I] both wanted to create and move toward a world in which all could express their own opinions and pursue reality.”

The following public exchange between Sanetō and Fujita during a forum at the JIENKYO general meeting in July 2012 clearly demonstrates the impact of this feeling of distrust and disappointment with the institutions that shaped the wartime ideology on their work. Sanetō remarked, “I have gotten considerably older, but...I also [continue to] mistrust adults because of this as well, and no matter what you say, I feel strongly that I want to develop a signal for children to be vigilant,” to which Fujita responded, “That is something we share. Isn’t that somehow what drove the two of us to do child drama?” Sanetō agreed, and responded, “Yes, that was starting point, and if [the war] hadn’t happened, I don’t think we would have done it.” Sanetō continues, asserting, “I’m very old now, but you could still say that I hate adults. I feel like you need to always be on your guard around them. Of course I am an adult, beyond an adult really, and probably going to die soon, but even now I have a mistrust of adults. I have a strong feeling that I want to send children the message to always be cautious.”

In Sanetō’s case, this distrust in adults bore fruit when he became a member of Gekidan Nakama, discussed at length in the previous chapter. While Sanetō notes that he had to take

some time off from school in the aftermath of the war, no doubt due at least in part to the trauma of witnessing the bombing of Hiroshima from a distance, he was able to enter Waseda University, where he was active in the student theatre groups. He recounts that he opened an issue of the journal *Teatoro* and saw a notice that Gekidan Nakama, a *shingeki* company, was accepting applications for trainees. Sanetō was one of three people chosen to join the group out of a field that he says included approximately forty or fifty applicants. Shortly after he joined the company, it produced its well-known and lauded production of Marshak's *Twelve Months*, also discussed in detail in Chapter Three. In addition to its critical acclaim, Sanetō asserts that this production was fundamental in both creating a generation of artists dedicated to producing work for children and in cementing his own desire to work with children. In his words, "The group of people who worked together in *Twelve Months* grew to like theatre for children and thought, 'Why don't we work to make this happen again?' And, well, with that, we made an organized theatre group. So, it was really a conscious decision that we made, to choose children's theatre."

Sanetō's early contributions to the field included the landmark production of *Furimukuna Pedro* with Gekidan Nakama in 1961. Publicity materials for the production indicated that the piece was a politically charged piece of work, as demonstrated by the subject matter of a revolution. The play takes place in Mexico in 1910, during the time of the Revolution, and centers around the life of Pedro, the young, orphaned protagonist. Publicity materials note, "[H]aving seen one of his comrades kill an old fisherman, Pedro is disgusted with his gang, leaves his native town with one of his friends, and they join a revolutionary society. When he loses his friend during the fighting against the government, his comrades say to him, 'Don't look back, go ahead!'" (International Theatre Institute 25).

By Sanetō's own admission, the work is based on an imaginary ideal of Mexico's history. Sanetō explains that he knew very little about the country's revolutionary history, but says that the work was spurred on by a strong sense of international solidarity brought on in the wake of the Bandung Conference of 1955. The Bandung Conference, or Asian-African Conference, at which representatives from twenty-nine countries from Africa and Asia gathered in Bandung, Indonesia, aimed to discuss each country's role potential in furthering economic development and decolonization. The Conference participants, many of whom were from nations considered by the U.S. as "developing" at the time, discussed the role of the nations in attendance in the midst of growing Cold War tensions. The conference's core principles included the right to political self-determination, respect for sovereignty, non-aggression, non-interference in internal affairs, equality, and peace (U.S. Department of State). This sense of solidarity must be read in terms of its opposition to perceived American interference in Asia, a topic that had acute resonance in Japan after 1960.

According to Sanetō, this conference stimulated his interest in countries and regions around the world, from Central and South America to Africa and the Middle East. Noting the increasing number of international collaborations conducted by companies performing works for children and young people in Japan in recent years, Sanetō also shares that he believes the work would have been ideally suited to it. As if commenting on the wave of international collaborations and exchanges among youth theatre companies that would become extraordinarily popular in the 1990s and 2000s, Sanetō shares that while the work was never performed in Mexico, if the circumstances had been right and had allowed for collaboration with a company or playwright, he believes a performance of the work would have been "without parallel" (Forum).

While this interest in international collaboration is speculative, it is telling that at a moment that many artists and intellectuals in Japan worked diligently to prevent further military expansion by the United States in Japan and Southeast Asia, Sanetō found inspiration in international solidarity spurred on by an organization founded to attempt to keep the balance of Cold War power in check.

Sanetō's increasing interest with the idea of international solidarity expressed by movements like the Bandung Conference is not the only area from which his dramaturgy developed. Like Fujita and many others of his generation, Sanetō began to find the form of *shingeki*, Gekidan Nakama's primary genre, lacking in relevance and connection to audiences at the time, essentially becoming the victim of its success. He explains his growing distaste for the genre in the 1960s:

Even if we say "*shingeki*," it's more about the popularization of *shingeki*...I thought about it in the sense of it being a theatre where the performers would be seen by everyone, bring happiness to their audience, and where everyone would be united in a sense of harmony. You know, *shingeki* was sort of this thing that everybody joined trying to be really profound. After a while, people stopped understanding what it was about, and when the curtain came down, it got really boring. They were doing plays where people would just clap and then go home, and I think both the performers and the script writers were a little lost. The audiences were lying to them, and it was bad...Well, I think it was a disaster. (Forum)

Sanetō concludes his rumination on *shingeki* audiences by noting the honesty of their child audiences, remarking, "Children don't lie...Really, they react all the way down to the trivial

things. They're happy, they start laughing at a particular line of dialogue. I think it's a kind of intelligence. It's a very high level of intelligence, of sensitivity. When I met children, I thought, 'This is it.'"

While Sanetō continued to work with Gekidan Nakama for several years, he began to write plays for young people under the guise of *minwa geki*, or "folktale theatre," inspired by the *minwa* or "folktale" writers of the early postwar period, including Kinoshita Junji, Matsutani Miyoko, and Saito Ryusuke. Sanetō departs from these writers in one clear way, however, by making a clear contrast between his work and that of the early folklorists by emphasizing the fallibility of human beings. Sanetō's *Jibetakko-sama*, on which Fujita and Sanetō later collaborated to adapt for the stage, was highly praised and received both the Newcomer Prize on behalf of the Japan Association of Writers for Children Award and the Noma Award for Juvenile Literature in 1972. Nevertheless, the International Institute for Children's Literature describes the collection of eight stories in Sanetō's *Jibetakko-sama* as "shocking" for its description of the "ugly acts of people, such as betrayal." Drawing a clear distinction between his style of folktales and those of Kinoshita Junji, Sanetō states that while Kinoshita, in his opinion, was attracted to a spirit of rebellion found in folk stories, he often wrote from too much of an intellectual's perspective, and denied that the "people" make mistakes.⁵¹ Sanetō counters this idea in *Jibetakko-sama*:

The infallible people, you know. That's a big lie. I wanted to demonstrate that lie so much that I wrote the story *Jibetakko-sama* ("Earth God"). The idea of "the infallible

⁵¹ Kinoshita Junji is considered one of the most important playwrights of the postwar period. Please see Chapter Three for more information on his work.

people” really comes from too high a point of view. If you look down from up high, you think that those little bug-like things living down there, those people, they might be poor but, every day, one after the other, they're doing their best, heroically yelling, “Heave, ho! Heave, ho!” In this way, the powerful lord looks down at the people toiling below him...and with that point of view, the people seem infallible.” (Forum)

In the postscript to a volume containing *Jibetakko-sama* and Fujita’s landmark work, *Bekkanko Oni*, Sanetō expands on his departure from Kinoshita’s work and the earlier forms of *minwa geki* by offering this explanation:

Later on, our work was brazenly called “the anti-*minwa minwa*,” but both Fujita and I grew up with something like Kinoshita’s folktales. After the war, a folktale boom occurred before and after the peace treaty, but eventually, nobody knew what a “democratic” Japan should be under the postwar Constitution. We were taught well about “the Emperor’s Japan” by means of prewar education, but we were almost completely ignorant about “the people’s Japan.” Because of this, if we “untied” folktale stories that had been passed down among the people, we would begin to understand them. Our work, which in some ways emulated Kinoshita’s folktale theatre, wanted to know the Japan that did not require “the emperor.” However, after the 1960 Anpo treaty renewal, and eventually, after the 1970 Anpo treaty renewal, it was not just this problem of awareness that emerged. We also saw the dark side of people’s history. This side of folktales must be expressed. (161)

This desire to shed light on the darker side of the “people’s” history through folklore and adaptation of “traditional” and folk performance is strongly reflected in Fujita’s work as well,

although Fujita's earliest work was in television. In an essay detailing his early work as an artist producing work for children and young people, Fujita describes becoming head of the Children's Hour on NHK while working for a variety of companies, including the *kagee* or shadow picture company Kakashi-za, which produced works for NHK almost exclusively at the time.⁵² He also arranged the mime Yoneyama Mamako's television debut *Watashi wa paku* ("I am Puck"), and then wrote one of his most well-known works, *Sanshō daiyū*, or "Sanshō the Bailiff," with Kazami Keisuke. The company Kamen Gekijō (Mask Theatre) performed the piece in schools throughout the country in 1957. While it was fifteen years before the piece became a popular Zenshin-za piece for young people, it was repeatedly revised until then. The final product was an experimental work that blended narrative with traditional forms of storytelling. Fujita explains, "*Sanshō daiyū* aimed to revive the structure of the *sekkyō bushi* ballad narrative within the framework of modern drama, and this became the basis of my methodology" ("Jidō geki" 266). This is key to understanding Fujita's approach to creating theatre for children and young people. *Sekkyō-bushi*, according to Nobuko Ishii, is:

[A]n important element of the popular culture of Japan during the medieval and early Edo periods. They formed the basis of an art in which they were chanted, latterly with increasing musical accompaniment. This reached its peak in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, when professional chanters performed before paying audiences to the accompaniment of the shamisen. Puppets were also used in the dramatization of tales, and shows were staged in theatres built or adapted for the purpose (283).

⁵² The Kakashi-za, which bills itself as Japan's first professional shadow puppet theatre company, was founded in 1952 and began to produce work for NHK that same year. Its predecessor, the Koguma-za, the "Little Bear Theatre," was founded as an amateur circle of the Kamakura Academia (Kakashi-za).

This form of experimentation with traditional forms, including *sekkyōbushi*, *nō*, *kyōgen*, and others, is a key feature of Fujita's work.

Sanshō daiyū became a staple of the repertoire at Zenshin-za, which, as outlined in Chapter 2, had ceased to perform works for children in the early 1950s, very close to the time that the company came under increasing police surveillance. It was first produced at Zenshin-za in 1974, more than sixteen years after it first debuted as a touring production, during a time in which the company had decided to begin producing works for children and young people once again.⁵³ When asked about his methodology and purpose in writing *Sanshō Daiyū* in a personal interview, and whether or not it should be considered a play for young people, Fujita responded by explaining his deep interest in traditional forms of performance and how he believes it is important to share with young people:

I wrote it [*Sanshō daiyū*] as a piece of theatre for children and young people. That has not changed. However, at the time we were trying to cultivate child audiences at Zenshin-za, I was at first writing a child drama called *Kanashi the Flute Player* that used material from Okinawa, and then wrote many works for the stage for children and young people with Zenshin-za.⁵⁴

⁵³ I was very graciously invited to a preview performance of a revival of Fujita's *Sanshō daiyū* at Zenshin-za's theatre near Kichijōji Station in Tokyo in July 2012. By chance, Fujita himself happened to be seated next to me in the audience that evening, and it was there that I was first introduced to him.

⁵⁴ *Fuefuki kanashī*, or "Kanashi the Flute Player," was a piece that was born after what Fujita says was an accidental meeting with Zenshin-za's Takase Seichiro and Nishiyama Kazuo in Naha, Okinawa, when he was gathering information on *eisa* for a recording being produced for CBS Sony, and Takase and Nishiyama were gathering information on Gima Hiroshi's *Akai sotetsu no mi*, or "Seed of the Red Palm." After returning to Tokyo, the two asked Fujita to write the script, which became *Fuefuki kanashī*, first produced at Zenshin-za in 1974 (Fujita, "Jidō Engeki" 266-267).

Fujita then explains his belief in the power of storytelling, and how it forms the basis of his work:

In Japan, storytelling, the telling of stories, was the foundation of theatre. And, having this in mind, when people who are in theatre also think about trying out something new, something that would be completely new, they always try to do it using the conventions of “modern” plays, and I don't think that's a good idea. You see, I made this play thinking that, rather, there had to be an effective way within Japanese traditional methods for making theater that would work today. That was *Sanshō the Bailiff*. In *Sanshō the Bailiff*, many storytellers travel to the theater hall to tell their stories. While telling those stories, they wear different clothes and play each part. They play music, speak the dialogues of the stories, and when it's all over, everyone returns to their original appearances and leaves. Stories that are passed down to us from long ago are passed along like this, and this play was valued because it sort of went back and dug up the ways in which characteristic Japanese plays were made. (Personal interview)

This method of experimentation with traditional forms to form a new type of “modern” theatre is a foundational component of post-1960s theatre for children and young people in Japan, and in the conclusion to an essay on his work and theoretical positions on the field, Fujita reiterates that it is the form of telling stories and creating performances that is important. He writes, “While it is true that the subject must be something that children know, wouldn't it be good if the manner of telling the story was original? If that is the case, compared to ‘what’ we say, ‘how’ we say it becomes an experimental challenge.” Citing the work of the directors Kumai Hiroyuki and Sekiya Yukio, who worked with a wide range of companies during the

same era, including Gekidan Kaze no Ko, Tokyo Engeki Ensemble, and the Haiyū-za, Fujita argues that this concept is one of the most important factors shaping work for children and young people in late postwar Japan (“Jidō engeki” 272).

Like Fujita and Sanetō, Tada Tōru,⁵⁵ the founder of the internationally recognized company Kaze no Ko, sought new paradigms for producing work for young people, and his model was strongly influenced by similar politics, aesthetic choices, and the trauma of war. The company aimed to “produce shows for children in belief that children were builders of the future democratic Japan,” asserting that theatre for children should be a “symbol of peace” (Kaze no Ko 1-2). Kaze no Ko, which grew into one of the most influential and prolific children’s theatre companies in postwar Japan during the 1960s, was strongly influenced by Tada’s personal memories of the war, and his work in the field began shortly after the war’s end.

Tada was seventeen years old when the war ended, but it was at the same time that he felt a strong desire to produce works for children. According to Tada’s autobiography, *Boku no rongu māchi* (My Long March), he attended variety shows as a high school student at the Moulin Rouge theatre in Shinjuku until it was destroyed during the war, and often felt drawn to creating work for children while reading folktales and fairy tales. He attended Gekidan Tōdō’s original postwar production of *The Blue Bird* in Tokyo in December 1945, but it was a performance of *Midsummer Night’s Dream* at the Imperial Theatre in Tokyo in June 1946 that truly sparked his interest in creating work for children and young people. Tada attended the performance, produced by theatre legends Hijikata Yoshi⁵⁶ and Takizawa Osamu,⁵⁷ with his friend, Nijima

⁵⁵ Tada’s birth name was Kishi Tōru.

⁵⁶ Along with Osanai Kaoru, Hijikata was one of the founders of the Tsukiji Small Theatre.

Atsuyoshi. Even though Tada was seated in the third floor balcony, he insists that he was so moved by the production that he wanted to share something similar with the children who had just returned to a largely devastated Tokyo after their evacuation, and in his words, “had nothing to look forward to but hunger” (19). Tada recalls that he felt that he had truly felt strained and a lack of emotion due to his upbringing during a time of militaristic education, but that he also had fond memories of the works produced at the Moulin Rouge. Together with Nijima, they decided to produce a performance.⁵⁸ The two adapted a fairy tale Nijima’s younger sister had written titled “The Tale of the Lotus Pond,” as well as two other original works by Tada. Tada describes the simple aesthetic of their first performance, albeit one with surprisingly sophisticated improvised technology, and also involved more than one personality who went on to become a leading figure in the realm of theatre for children and young people:

The stage was Nijima’s house in Eifukuchō. Having a six- and eight-tatami mat room to use, we decided to use the six-tatami mat room as the stage, and have the audience in the eight-tatami mat room and the hallway. We asked Itō Tomoko, who lived in the neighboring house, to play the piano as accompaniment, and she played through an open window.⁵⁹ The costumes were gathered from what we had and things we made out of paper. Other friends also participated if they were interested, and we were able to create

⁵⁷ Takizawa was a well-known actor and director for stage and film, and also a member of the Tsukiji Small Theatre Company.

⁵⁸ Nijima went on to become a professor in the Politics and Economics Department at Waseda University, a well regarded Maoist scholar, and the founder of the Kōfuku Gakuen, part of the Yamagishizumu commune in Mie Prefecture.

⁵⁹ Itō Tomoko went on to become one of the most popular and successful actresses with the *shingeki* company Gekidan Nakama, as well as the head of JIENKYO, Japan’s national union of professional theatre companies. Please see Chapter Three for further information on her work, including her leading role in Marshak’s *Twelve Months*.

a “mini theatre” with elaborate lights powered by water resistance. The performance was supposed to last one or two nights, but due to being incredibly popular, we continued it for three nights (20).

Following this successful performance, the group began to meet as a circle called the Suiren Kodomo Kai, or Waterlily Children’s Association, a community organization that also supported the Suiren Bunko, a private library for local children. The group attracted both university students and office workers, mostly friends from his junior high school and from Waseda University. With Tada as its head, the group officially formed an amateur theatre company in 1950. Tada notes that the company was founded one week after the Korean War began on June 25, 1950, which is a striking detail. Soon thereafter, Tada and the others in the company began to not only produce theatre, but also to participate in anti-nuclear activities and study associations in response to the Stockholm Appeal of 1950, a call by the World Peace Council, affiliated with the Soviet Union and European leftists, to check “war mongering” on behalf of the United States by banning all nuclear weapons.

The dual purposes of activism and concern for children’s rights and welfare remained at the top of Kaze no Ko’s agenda even as it became professional. Kaze no Ko became a professional company in the early 1960’s, but its genesis was firmly rooted in the conditions of the war and the new politics and ideological circumstances of the postwar period. Tying Kaze no Ko to the most prominent company discussed in chapters two and three, Gekidan Tōdō, Tomita goes as far to assert, “If we assume that the children’s theatre companies of the early Showa period, such as Tōdō, emerged as the ‘legitimate children’, so to speak, of the Taisho period’s ‘*dōshin*’ [“child’s heart”] children’s cultural movement, Gekidan Kaze no Ko, surely,

emerged as the heaven sent child of postwar democratic principles” (*Nihon* 324).⁶⁰ This is a clear reference to the often-blurry line between politics and aesthetics in the artistic movements of the 1960s, which describes Kaze no Ko well. Referring to political engagement through the 1960s protest movement, counterculture theorist Julie Stephens argues that this engagement “collaps[ed] the distinctions between politics and art, politics and culture, politics and everyday life” (5). This engagement is clearly evident in Kaze no Ko’s emphases on civic activism, child authority and individuality, as well as the imperfection of the world of adults.

Kaze no Ko’s early peace activism grew stronger as it became a professional company in 1960. The company’s first professional production, *Karedonia no shuppansu* (“The Departure of the Caledonia”), toured to schools as a piece designed for the “gymnasium theatre” trend described in Chapter Three that continued to rapidly expand in the 1960s. It was a pointed look at the history and politics of the United States. The work, which analyzed the concept of slavery in the United States, drew parallels between slavery and the present, suggesting strongly that the practice had not yet disappeared. It was written by Tada as a commemorative piece for its tenth anniversary and opened during the peak of the Anpo protests. The piece was set in the United States and examined issues such as the Ku Klux Klan and the issue of slavery, clearly identifying problems with the concept of democracy as implemented in the United States. Tada wanted to write about the origin of democracy and human logic, and describes the piece as one that “was concerned with the adult world of prejudice and hatred,” yet “depicted the child as seeing with his own eyes and thinking about this theme with his own brain” (41). With this emphasis on the authority of the child and the problems perpetuated by adults, the piece falls squarely within a

⁶⁰ For further information on the “child’s heart” or *dōshin* movement, please see page 61.

growing body of drama and literature by this new generation that castigated and questioned the role of adults and authority, in this case, the United States, in society's ills.

Like Sanetō and Fujita, in an interview at Kaze no Ko Tokyo's current office and rehearsal space, the converted home of the late Tada Tōru in Tokyo's Shimo-Kitazawa neighborhood, Nakajima Shurui, a member of the present day Kaze no Ko company and head of its publishing department, described the distrust members of the early company felt toward both adults and authorities. Describing the piece *Botakko Koshinkyoku*, or "Botakko Marching Song," which debuted at almost the same time as Sanetō's *Furimukuna Pedro* in 1961, Nakajima asserts:

The founders felt like they had been tricked by adults during the war. They asked themselves, 'How are we going to build a future with the children now? Let's leave adults behind, and live only with the children.' This piece was born as a sort of expression of their determination to do that. It was trying to say that in order to change the world, young people shouldn't collaborate with adults, but rather that young people and children should forge ahead together.

Nakajima explains that the tactics the company used to try to help children "forge ahead" included a strong emphasis on child protagonists and adventuresome spirit, which can be seen in *The Departure of the Caledonia* as well. These methods and emphases were not without detractors, however, and the company came under some criticism for promoting an ideology that appeared to some as one that was too embedded in an adult conception of the child's world, one that emphasized a type of "Neverland" in which the child's will ultimately prevails. Nakajima notes that some were concerned that they were giving the child too much agency:

All of the main characters are children around the age of ten, and they encounter problems in society, forge a path through them, and change the world. It's that sort of story...On the one hand there were the people who were wondering if we weren't aggrandizing children, like we were apologists in a sense. We were criticized for only emphasizing the adventurous spirit of children, in the way that they look overseas or to the future, and people seemed to think that we had a “*kodomo banzai shugi*” (“long live children”) ideology. After having experienced the war, however, we felt that we had to move forward with the children, and that's why we made it. We might have been criticized, but Kaze no Ko has always continued moving forward.

Nakajima also explains how Kaze no Ko began to adapt and develop its methodology as increasing concern for children's rights and children's well being emerged in the 1960s and early 1970s:

At some point in time, Japan also started to change a little, and only showing children who changed the world started not to feel right for the times, so we started to show not just children looking forward, but also the kinds of problems that they might have inside them. This stemmed from the fact that Kaze no Ko basically gambled everything on the possibilities of these children...When people do drama they say that the children are at the center of everything, but when you look at the way they make plays, and at the way plays were made until then, they always followed the way adult plays were made, and only the contents of the drama were different. After a while, we started searching for a different way to make plays, a way different from the “adult” way of making plays for children.

Given the fact that the major *shingeki* companies had played the most dominant role in producing works for children and young people from the end of the war until the early 1960s, and truthfully, only appeared to alter its content when performing for children in the audience, Nakajima's criticism of the status quo, in which plays for children and young people modeled the way that adult plays were made very closely, seems remarkably in sync with the criticisms leveled by Fujita and Sanetō, and the vast new wave of young artists pushing for new paradigms in the field.

Kaze no Ko also created new expressive paradigms in the field of theatre for children and young people in Japan. Tada's approach to creating theatre relied heavily on the idea of play, and after Sekiya Yukio began to direct productions with the company in the early 1970s, Gekidan Kaze no Ko also emphasized the expression of the actor's body in its work. The company established the National Children's Theatre Research Institute in 1971, and endeavored to develop actors for children's theatre who experimented "with all possibilities" (Ōno, "1970" 112). Today, in addition to Tokyo, Kaze no Ko has six local branches across the country, located in various places from Hokkaido and Kyushu. The company actively tours internationally, thus carrying out the company's mission to "go to any place where children are" (Kaze no Ko 1).

Television, Folktales, and Other Genres of Theatre for Young Audiences

Fujita, Sanetō, and Tada were by no means the only notable artists focused on young people to emerge during this period. While their antipathy toward war and attraction to traditional forms were common themes, not all companies shared their objectives and emphases

either. Although the period also saw increasing cooperation among existing companies, including *shingeki* companies, and many companies and artists viewed their work as a means of providing a check against an education system increasingly fraught with examination pressures and intent on turning out a productive middle class, many companies also embraced Japan's increasing economic security and began creating highly commercial spectacles that seemed to showcase the rebound of the middle class and its consumerist desires. Increasing organization in the field, often initiated by *shingeki* companies, in many ways also laid the groundwork for the national mobilization and organization that would sweep through the country as the decade came to a close.

According to Tomita, the Nishi Nihon Jidō Engeki Kyōgikai, or “Western Japan Children’s Theatre Conference” (WJCTC) was formed in Osaka in January 1960, and the formation of this organization in many ways heralded the new era of producing theatre for children and young people. The organization was later named the Zenkoku Jidō Seishōnen Engeki Kyōgikai, commonly abbreviated “Zenjien” or the “National Children’s Theatre Conference,” which remains an active organization to this day.⁶¹ The formation of the Japan Union of Theatrical Companies for Children and Young People (JIENKYO), which will be discussed in further detail in Chapter Five, can also be traced to the WJCTC. The WJCTC’s objective was to support the mutual exchange of technical and creative aspects of companies that

⁶¹ According to its website, Zenjien presently “[F]ocuses on children and youth companies and individuals engaging in theatre for children and young people (pro and amateur), and teachers engaging with theatre education, to: 1) Create theatre that can assess the present accurately that must be the means by which children make the future; 2) Have roots in the local area while striving for the elevation of activities, heighten the exchange between both national and international youth theatre persons, and contribute to the international children and youth theatre movement; and 3) While leveraging the distinct characteristic of battling against people who prevent the progress of humanity, advance the movement and build up a prosperous future through peace.”

were creating works for children on a regular basis. The members of the conference included professional companies such as the Kansai Geijutsu-za (The Kansai Art Theatre), Ningyō Gekidan La Clarte (Clarte Puppet Theatre), Gekidan Kyōgei (The Kyoto Art Theatre), and Ningyō Gekidan Kyōgei (The Kyoto Art Puppet Theatre) as well as several amateur companies. Tomita argues that the formation of this conference represents several important trends from the decade of the 1960s, each of which must be given its due (*Nihon* 331-332).

At the time of the organization's foundation, the Kansai Geijutsu-za's Michii Naotsugu took over as its head. The organization began to produce a journal, *Kikan geki* ("Drama Quarterly"), and developed a research division that addressed many of the questions that would come to define the field during the decade. Its platform, developed in 1962, was to 1) Accurately reflect the reality of children's lives while engaging strongly with themes of life to raise "forward facing" children; 2) Share common themes and enhance children's theater while opposing a system of education and activities that prevent making human beings; and 3) While combining various movements that do not "take the hands" of every company and require ceremonious effort, focus on teachers and spread performances as the result of children and guardians coming together.

In a fascinating link to the political turmoil of the time, Tomita finds a strong parallel between these objectives and those adopted by the eighth general meeting of the Japan Communist Party in July 1961 in the sense that the platform appeared to emphasize the means by which to gather and gain traction for the movement. This is not surprising, as the Kansai Geijutsu-za, of which Michii was a member, was a *shingeki* company, and, as Guohe Zheng reminds us, the history of *shingeki* in Japan cannot be understood without recognizing its strong

relationship to the JCP (296). Just five years later, however, the organization's platform shifted to strongly resemble the divergent new directions in which the field was headed, as it addressed four major themes: 1) How to include more folktales and traditional performance into theatre for children; 2) How to insert the energy of laughter into child drama; 3) The question of what impression of the child to seek in child drama; and 4) How to disseminate the form of theatre for children and young people more widely (*Nihon* 333-334).

As these objectives demonstrate, in genre and form, the new companies and missions that emerged during the 1960s and early 1970s were vastly different from each other. The decade also saw a boom in new professional theatre companies producing works for children and young people, including Operetta Gekidan Tomoshihi (Torchlight Operetta Company), which was strongly tied to the *utagoe kissa* movement,⁶² Gekidan Gunma Chūgei (Gunma Central Art Theatre), Gekidan Arauma-za (Wild Horse Theatre), which emphasized folk performance, Gekidan Enzeru (Angel Theatre), which later produced some of the *angura* artist Ota Shōgo's lesser known works for young people, including *Chikatetsu no akai hana* ("The Red Flower of the Subway") in 1973, Gai-shi Sokkyō Ningyō Gekidan (Guy's Improvisational Puppet Theatre Company), Gekidan Koguma-za (Little Bear Theatre), Gekidan Haikyo (Actors' Cooperative Theatre), Gekidan Hikōsen (Airship Theatre), Gekidan Fuji (Fuji Theatre), Gekidan Mitō (The Unexplored Theatre), Gekidan Minwa-za (The Folk Theatre Company), Ningyō Gekidan Musubi-za (The Joint Puppet Theatre), Gekidan Choryu (The Tide Theatre), Minzoku Geinō

⁶² *Utagoe kissa* can be translated as a "singing voice cafe." The cafes were popular from roughly the mid-1950s through the mid-1970s and tended to attract young, leftist individuals who sang peace anthems and Russian folk songs together. The movement, considered a predecessor of karaoke, has dwindled considerably, but Café Tomoshihi, from which Operetta Gekidan Tomoshihi emerged, continues to operate in Shinjuku, not far from the east exit.

Ensanburu Wakakoma (The Young Horse Folk Art Ensemble), Gekidan Dōke (The Clown Theatre), the Geiyū-za (Classic Arts Theatre), Gekidan Nobara (Rose Theatre), Ningyo Gekidan Poporo (Poporo Puppet Theatre), Gekidan Urinko (Urinko Theatre Company), Gekidan Erumu (Elm Theatre Company), and Gekidan Kio (The Kio Company). These companies ranged from companies emphasizing folk performance to highly commercial spectacles made for spaces like the new Nissay Theatre space that opened in Tokyo in 1963, one year before the Tokyo Olympics in 1964 brought the world's attention to a city that had been essentially burnt to the ground and leveled less than two decades prior.⁶³ Viewed as a whole, the works and objectives of these companies give us a very accurate glimpse into the new directions in which the field was moving.

Of these new companies, Operetta Gekidan Tomoshihi strongly demonstrates the activist impulses exemplified by the works of Fujita, Sanetō, and Tada. Operetta Gekidan Tomoshihi, which produced “musical theatre of the common people,” was inaugurated in 1962, and drew from operetta and other performative activities that were part of May Day celebrations. The company attracted the director Sekiya Yukio, who also directed at Kaze no Ko, the Himawari-za, and the Kakashi-za, among other companies, and began to produce works that targeted audiences ranging from children to adults (“Tomoshihi ni tsuite”). According to Ōno Yukinori, current president of JIENKYO and a leading member of Operetta Gekidan Tomoshihi since the 1970s,

⁶³ The Nissay Masterpiece Theatre, founded by the Nippon Life Insurance Company, offered performances to children and families at no cost and attracted a wide variety of talent when it first opened its doors in 1963. The venue attracted a wide range of talent. Terayama Shūji, the provocative and controversial *angura* artist, adapted a version of Andersen's *The Emperor's New Clothes* and the Greek legend *King Midas Has Donkey Ears* that were billed as “musical plays for children.” The plays, directed by the founder of Gekidan Shiki, Asari Keita, were produced at the theatre in 1964 as part of the special Nissay Masterpiece Summer Holiday Performance Series. Both of Terayama's adaptations continue to be produced for children and families, including a production of *The Emperor's New Clothes* most recently by Gekidan Shiki, the largest producer of commercial musicals in Japan, in December 2012.

the development of the operetta branch performing works for young people grew out of the activities of the larger group Tomoshihi.⁶⁴ He explains:

[C]ulture and art are not only watching and listening; they are things you participate in, and we thought that enjoying them together was best. As such, we were regularly doing something called “*utagoe kissa*” that was geared toward adults, and both the company and I thought that we were creating culture along with the *utagoe kissa* customers.⁶⁵ The company Operetta Tomoshihi, the meaning of which is not “opera,” so to speak, began using the word “operetta” to mean musical theatre for the common people. Similarly, we do not create performances just to let children sit, watch, and listen because we believe in sharing culture with children. (Personal interview)

The idea of the community as an important partner in producing works for young people in postwar Japan has long been an influential one. As previously noted, companies such as Gekidan Tanpopo grew directly out of works performed for both adults and children, and early postwar touring performances targeted entire communities. Ōno asserts that forms of theatre that appealed aesthetically to both adults and children developed during the war and continued after its conclusion, becoming a unique characteristic in the realm of theatre for children and young people in postwar Japan. In his words:

[This theatre] was neither preachy nor instructional, nor sickeningly sweet ‘pretend’

⁶⁴ Ōno notes that he became a member of the company while he was a university student studying political science. He had plans to be a journalist, but after leaving school before graduation, became a full-fledged member of the company. He notes that his family was quite involved in the arts, however, so the idea of working in the theatre was not a foreign concept. In an interview, he describes an uncle who taught actors how to sword fight in films, and a sister with whom he often sang who collected the music of popular songs and scores published in the popular magazine *Myōjō*.

⁶⁵ See footnote 62. “*Utagoe kissa*” means “singing voice cafe.”

theatre. In the real world, adults and children breathe the same air, and adults' problems are reflected in children, and children's problems are reflected in adults. Indeed, the theatre was concerned with 'humanity.' That is, it abandoned the feudal, hierarchical relationship that had existed between adults and children for many years, since the Meiji era, and 'human drama' that spoke to both adults and children was born. ("Senzen" 16)

In many ways, this desire for "human drama" that spoke to both adults and children, and the nostalgia for perceived simpler times and "traditional" forms of art and culture can be seen in the sheer number of companies whose works were dedicated to the performance of folktales by the end of the decade, including the aforementioned Gekidan Arauma-za, Gekidan Minwa-za, and Minzoku Geinō Ensanburu Wakakoma. As the *furusato* phenomenon demonstrates, this longing in many ways also counterbalanced, or was a symptom of, the rapidly growing influence of television in the decade of the 1960s. While companies frequently collaborated with schools and performances in gymnasiums, bringing a level of immediacy in performance to students and teachers across the country, television became the medium of choice for many companies striving to survive financially.

Beginning in the 1950s, emerging broadcasting companies, including NHK, began to solicit works from puppet theatre companies and shadow theatre companies, both of which were and continue to be integral forms among companies performing works for children and young people even today. Television also became a launch pad for many emerging artists, with most moving back and forth between broadcasting and live performance with ease. Fujita himself was introduced to the world of theatre for children and young people when he began writing scripts for television as a university student. He notes that in television's early days, students had ample

opportunities to write because famous actors and actresses did not yet perform on television (“Jidō engeki” 266). By the 1960s, however, television was the medium of choice for many companies, as it offered a steady paycheck and the opportunity for more widespread recognition in a period exemplified equally as much by rapid economic growth and development as political turmoil.

Companies like the Hitomi-za benefitted greatly from television exposure. According to Suda, the company took a break from school performances in the late 1950s after being contacted by NHK about creating puppet performances specifically for television. After negotiating with the Ozawa Tetsuo and three other members of the Hitomi-za company, Ozawa and his wife, whom Suda does not name specifically, broke off from the Hitomi-za to become members of Gekidan Yamaimo in 1956, launching the era of professional puppet theatre for television broadcast. Gekidan Yamaimo produced some well-known classics of the genre, including *Chirorin mura to kurumi no ki* (“Chirorin Village and the Walnut Tree”), which was broadcast from 1956 until 1963, and paved a system through which the television station was responsible for writing scripts, music, and adding sounds to their recordings, and the puppet theatre companies were responsible for the puppets, building props, and operating the puppets in tandem with the script and score.

The Hitomi-za itself began to produce works on television, and began to collaborate with the well-known writer and director Inoue Hisashi through the extraordinarily popular *Hyokkori hyōtan shima*, which ran from 1964 until 1969 and replaced *Chirorin mura* in the rotation. It was also one of the first productions NHK produced in color, and likewise proved to be very popular. The Hitomi-za’s experimentation with mass media did not end at television alone,

however. In 1963, it produced a short black and white film specifically for television titled *Iga no kagemaru* (“Iga of Kagemaru”). In 1970, it produced the film *Ōananuchi no bōken* (“The Adventure of Ooananuchi”), a “parent and child” film that was one of the first of the genre to be produced in color (Suda 58-59).⁶⁶

The Hitomi-za was not the only company producing work for young people to take advantage of the expanding opportunities in the television and film market. Gekidan PUK, which Tomita argues was at the peak of creativity by the early and mid-1960s with works for the stage such as an adaptation of Moliere’s *Amphytrion* in 1961 and *Erumā no bōken* (“Elmer’s Adventure”) in 1965 (Tomita, “Nihon” 335; Hasegawa 53), produced a series of works for television, including a shadow puppet performance of *The Tale of 1,001 Nights* for Japan Television in 1953, *Ōkiku naru ko* (“The Child Who Grew Up”) for NHK Educational Television in 1959, and *Ganbare Beru-chan* (“Go Beru-chan!”) for TBS. Hasegawa Masaaki, a member of the company since 1950, stresses that the turn to television was purely an economic one. He quotes Gekidan PUK founder Kawajiri Taiji and remarks, “Whatever you do, you must also be able to eat” (52).

While PUK may have come to television due to economic difficulties, other companies actively embraced it. In what could be considered a barometer of the emergence of the burgeoning and influential genre, the Mokuba-za exploited this newfound interest in television and commercial interests, and in doing so became one of the biggest and most controversial forces in the field. Tomita begins his introduction of the Mokuba-za, or “Rocking Horse

⁶⁶ In addition to the “parent and child” theatre movement that will be discussed in Chapter Five, during the late 1960s, “parent and child” film and neighborhood library movements, which encouraged parents and children to attend films and go to the local library together, also developed. Fukushima terms these developments forms of “social education” (Fukushima 231).

Theatre,” with a note of reservation, however, asserting that there were companies, including the Mokuba-za, that faced harsh criticism at the time. Despite this, the Mokuba-za represents one of the strongest trends of the 1960s, and must be given due analysis, as a number of companies producing similar work emerged at almost the same time that the Mokuba-za became immensely popular, and many of these companies continue to be influential today.

The Mokuba-za first formed shortly after the end of the war, in January 1946, as an amateur operation while its founder, Fujishiro Seiji, was still a student at Keio University. The company was named Ningyō Gekijō Jūnu Pantoru, or the Young Painter Puppet Theatre, but it changed its name to Mokuba-za in 1952. At its start, the company produced puppet theatre, but soon expanded its focus to *kagee*, or shadow pictures, due to the technical difficulties of producing puppet theatre on a consistent basis. After graduation, Fujishiro began to work in the advertising division of Tokyo Kōgyō Kabushiki Kaisha, or Tokyo Entertainment Company, one of Japan’s major corporate film, hotel, and real estate entities, which later became the Tokyo Theatres Company, Inc. The job undoubtedly made him familiar with the vast possibilities of mass media, and in 1948, Fujishiro began publishing his paintings in the newly launched *Kurashi no techō* (“Lifestyle Notebook”), a magazine that targeted women. Shortly thereafter, in 1953, Fujishiro began broadcasting puppet and shadow picture shows professionally on NHK exclusively. From there, he began to be known throughout the country and began to branch out into regional areas through live performances of well known works of literature, including Piotr Ershov’s *The Little Humpbacked Horse*, Hamada Hirosuke’s *The Red Devil Who Cried*, Miyazawa Kenji’s *The Twin Stars* and *Night of the Galactic Railroad*, and Hans Christian Andersen’s *The Little Mermaid* and *Little Match Girl*. By the early 1960s, Fujishiro branched

out into an entirely new commercial genre that proved enormously popular, *nuigurumi*, or “stuffed toy theatre.”

Nuigurumi was launched at Mitsukoshi Gekijō Theatre after the summer performance of Mushanokōji Saneatsu’s *Nihon Taro* (“Taro of Japan”), which featured life-sized, stuffed toy puppets, in 1961. The choice proved exceedingly popular, and the Mitsukoshi Gekijō’s Christmas Family Theatre performance of *Hansel and Gretel* was performed later that same year using these stuffed toy costumes worn by live actors. The performance is considered to be the Mokuba-za’s first official *nuigurumi* performance. The performance genre was exceedingly popular with children and families, and the company began performances around the country, targeting families. Critics such as Ibaraki Tadashi leveled that it debased theatre into “an amusement park,” however, which appears to be a common critique. Tomita himself notes that the Mokuba-za had indeed performed in amusement parks in the late 1950s, and makes no effort to counter Ibaraki’s critique (*Nihon* 341).

Despite its successes, however, by 1971, the Mokuba-za was bankrupt and more than 140,000,000 yen, or approximately \$450,000 US dollars at the 1971 average exchange rate, in debt. Ogawa Nobuo ties this to mismanagement on behalf of the company itself, noting that more than 10,000 spectators holding tickets were turned away from a performance at the Nippon Budōkan on Children’s Day, May 5, 1967, leading to an image problem for the company (26). Tomita, on the other hand, attributes the company’s fortune and decline directly to economic circumstances of the decade. In his words, the Mokuba-za “boom”:

[C]learly expressed the doubling of income and rapid economic growth and development, and [the Mokuba-za] was set back at the end of 1971 due to the collapse

of economic growth. It seems that the Mokuba-za was most definitely a phenomenon that symbolized children's theatre and culture that occurred in the time of rapid economic growth and development...The Mokuba-za's *nuigurumi* theatre was a unique genre that most certainly targeted young children and mothers as spectators, and the "boom" that was seen...was something like a seed. (*Nihon* 340).

While the company folded, becoming what Ogawa describes as a case study in management for companies seeking mass audiences such as Gekidan Shiki, the most prolific producer of commercial musicals in Tokyo today, and the Nissay Masterpiece Theatre, which would come to be one of the largest producers of commercial works in Japan after it opened in 1963, it maintained its influence. The seeds that were sown by the Mokuba-za became those which would stimulate companies that would dominate the decades to follow, including Gekidan Hikōsen.

Gekidan Hikōsen, or "Air Ship Theatre," grabbed this mantle and became a very successful commercial company that continues to perform musicals for mass audiences of kindergarteners, elementary school students, and parents today.⁶⁷ Formed in 1966, the company, which, as Ogawa notes, essentially became the successor to the *nuigurumi* theatre movement, employs "mask play" featuring live actors who wear large masks and are dressed as characters from a variety of Japanese stories, European fairy tales, and well known *anime* works. Words and music are entirely taped, and can be dubbed into other languages quite easily when the

⁶⁷ My first personal encounter with Gekidan Hikōsen was at a joint performance for several kindergarten classes and their parents in Tokyo's Shibuya Ward at the Jingu Kaikan on the grounds of Meiji Shrine in Harajuku in July 2012. The performance was held just before classes adjourned for summer vacation, and it essentially functioned as a farewell for students ahead of the break. Along with instructions from the schools' principals on watching the performance, students were reminded of ways to stay safe over the holiday during the introduction to the piece.

productions travel abroad, a frequent occurrence. The company's motto, "Beautiful Dreams and Excitement to the Very Young!" does not entirely capture the enormity of the company's audiences and the scale of its performances, but the company aims to produce work that share a fantasy world with large audiences including both children and adults.

In a personal interview, Gekidan Hikōsen President Suzuki Tōru explained that the function of the masks used in performance is not only an aesthetic but also a practical choice. Part of the appeal of using large masks in the company's performances is the fact that the company can more easily communicate with large audiences. The masks also, according to Suzuki, employ techniques for communicating emotions that *nō* artists, or actors in one of Japan's traditional performing arts, have used for centuries:

The interesting thing with masks is that, although it should be impossible for their emotions to change, with just a little bit of movement, all sorts of dolls can be made to have emotions...This is an expression but, just like manipulating a small doll with your hand, inside of it is an entire human. How to angle a large doll, what its emotions are going to be, how can those emotions be conveyed...all of the company members think about these things.

He adds:

Just by raising its head a little bit, a doll can be made to seem to have a little bit of courage, of resolution, those kinds of emotions. In this, we receive hints from the old Japanese *nō* masks...When you face the mirror, first you indirectly see which angle gives what emotion, you feel it, and now you actually put the mask on...It really is a unique way of theatrical expression. So, masks with too strong of an expression are not that

good. For example, if I put on a laughing mask, and I look out at the ocean, sadly expressing something like “Where did my daddy go,” my sad feelings regarding “daddy” aren't really going to get conveyed to the audience. Really, emotions are conveyed much better with a neutral mask.

The assertion that the masks employed in Hikōsen’s mass spectacles adapt techniques found in a form of performance such as *nō* may be surprising, but given the strong interest in “returning” to Japan’s roots during the 1960s through experimentation with traditional forms, this choice makes sense and in many ways exemplifies the paradox of the decade. As rapid economic growth and development stimulated a media culture that grew at an exponentially increasing rate during the decade, it is not surprising that a reflection of this was seen on the stage in the form of spectacles that resembled the characters found in *anime* and other forms of media. At the same time, however, through the function of masks, the genre also demonstrates both practical choices in communicating with large audiences and an aesthetic that reflects increasing interest in tradition. As Fujita explained when asked whether his interest in traditional forms had evolved or changed since the early 1960s, when he extolled the virtues of culture found in the agricultural villages in the essay “Tokai to chihō no aida de”:

In short, in order to touch the hearts of Japanese people, it is necessary to take a second look at drama within Japanese culture...My first try was a *kyōgen* piece. *Kyōgen* was the first theater in Japan, the first theater with actual lines. Of course, *nō* itself was established a little before it, but *nō* plays could more properly be called musicals, so *nō* and *kyōgen* would be performed together as a set...And it's the pleasure, the power found in *nō* that I am trying to bring out in modern theater. I haven't changed in this regard

since the sixties...Truly, everything has remained linked to that thought I developed back in the 1960s. (Personal interview)

In the face of an increasingly urban society that was increasingly bombarded with new media images, this nod to the idea that *furusato* Japan remained at the heart of the Japanese nation and represented an idyllic, simpler past, was one through which Japanese society and its artists could find meaning in the increasingly urbanized and mediatized present.

CHAPTER FIVE: ORGANIZATION AND CITIZENS' OPERATIONS: JIENKYO AND THE OYAKO GEKIJŌ MOVEMENT

Kodomo Gekijō and Community Movements

Since the days of the Occupation, and earlier, theatre and drama performed for children and young people in Japan often grew out of the work of community circles and amateur groups. Even the work of professional companies targeted these same local communities and organizations through performances in schools, which served as gathering places for the community at large. For example, as noted in the previous chapter, Kaze no Ko's work was first conducted under the auspices of the Suiren Kodomo Kai (Waterlily Children's Association), shortly after its founder, Tada Tōru, produced the company's first production in his home shortly after the war's end, in 1946. The Shōnen Engeki Kurabu, or Youth Theatre Club, led by Hatta Motoo and discussed in Chapter Two, was organized in 1947 as a means of coordinating the work of teachers' unions and democratic cultural organizations. The group attracted theatre artists, leaders of the theatre in the classroom movement, leaders of children's theatre circles, journalists, and others who had no specific affiliation with any of these entities. In Osaka, activities that led to the formation of the puppet theatre company Gekidan Kurarute (Clarte), even today one of the most prominent companies producing works for young people, began very shortly after the end of the war as the hobby of a group of friends from Osaka City Junior High School. While such circles and community and neighborhood based organizations have a long history in Japan, beginning in the late 1950s and early 1960s, organizations that dotted communities across the nation began to organize on an unprecedented national scale. This type

of mass organization was prompted by growing discontent with democracy as implemented in postwar Japan, and the conviction that organizing could in some way affect increasing disillusionment with politics, consumerism, the environment, and education, among countless issues that became lightning rods in the public sphere by the late sixties and early seventies. These new citizens' movements, or *shimin undō*, also ushered in a new paradigm of creating and presenting work to young people in Japan, a model that essentially continues to operate to this day.

As the Occupation ended and Japan entered its period of increasing economic growth and development, many local community circles became concerned with issues facing both the community itself and the public at large. This phenomenon had an outsized influence on theatre for young audiences. Like the aesthetic differences that emerged from discontent with *shingeki's* status quo, this can also be linked to the Anpo protests, which are largely seen as a watershed moment in the history of postwar Japan, as it was the first time that political dissent was expressed on such a massive scale by the public. Wesley Sasaki-Uemura argues that there is a strong link between the Anpo protests of 1960 and later protest movements against the Vietnam War, environmental movements, consumer movements, and grassroots networking of citizens' groups that swept through Japan throughout the succeeding decade (2). One of the most prominent of the protests groups to emerge from this milieu was *Beheiren*, or the Citizens' Alliance for Peace in Vietnam, founded in 1965, but numerous other groups can be considered part of this paradigm, including the National Association of Researchers for the Protection of Democracy, the Grass Seeds Association, the Voices of the Voiceless Association, the YWCA, the Buddhist Peace Conference, and the Japan Association for the Protection of Children, each of

which took part in the Anpo protests under the banner of the National Assembly for the Defense of Democracy (Avenell 70).

These movements indicated a distinct paradigm shift from “ideologies of class struggle and mass movements dominated by workers and the opposition parties to smaller, diverse movements based on citizens as the main actor” (Sasaki-Uemura 2). They also marked the decline of Japan Socialist Party and Japan Communist Party influence, as many groups, and student groups in particular, began to view the party ideologies as too rigid. Students began to sever ties to the organizations, opening the door to the influence of the New Left in the late 1960s (Sasaki-Uemura 18). As party ideology became less influential, citizens’ visions of a new political subjectivity through which they could create change began to take root. Sasaki-Uemura asserts:

The Anpo struggle was the culmination of years of activity among groups trying to resist the state’s drive to restore prewar structures and create alternative visions for postwar democracy. Citizens’ movements articulated new ideas of political subjectivity through both their organization and their social and political praxis, and these ideas had important consequences for future movements. Thus, the Anpo protests need to be seen as an extended process rather than a single, limited event. (3)

Citizens’ movements, a symbol of national organization of grassroots efforts, are thus hallmarks of the new democracy in postwar Japan, and they played a key role in producing and reinforcing this new image of “citizen” as opposed to “subject.” In *Making Japanese Citizens: Civil Society and the Mythology of the Shimin in Postwar Japan*, Simon Andrew Avenell outlines the ways in which the newly introduced idea of “citizen” (*shimin*) in postwar Japan

sparked localized citizen activist movements. Just as the conception of childhood underwent a transformation from “subject” to “democratic child” as Galan describes (189), so too did adulthood in the form of “subject” versus “citizen.” According to Avenell:

Shimin [citizen] encapsulated a vision of individual autonomy beyond the outright control of the state or the established left and within an idealized sphere of human activity they called civil society (*shimin shakai*). For them, as well as many others, *shimin* became one of the quintessential symbols of liberal democracy in postwar Japan, taking its place beside other powerful motifs such as peace (*heiwa*) and democracy (*minshushugi*) (2).

Avenell also argues that the Anpo struggle “set in motion two streams of civic activism, one focused on conscientious dissent and the other on pragmatic grassroots initiatives” (105). Activists took the framework of the Anpo protests and formed other similar models for civic engagement. He adds:

Movement intellectuals of the Anpo struggle contributed to the formation of a master frame of civic activism in two ways. First, they used the *shimin* idea to articulate a new activist mentality that connected independent political action to private life, self-interest, and the postwar ethos of ‘peace and democracy.’ Second, in terms of modes of activism, movement intellectuals attached the *shimin* idea to two streams of collective action: one based on conscientious dissent and the other embedded in prosaic local activities. (242)

The two streams encapsulated by the *shimin* ideal, conscientious dissent and engagement with local activities, hold special importance for theatre for young audiences in postwar Japan. The citizens’ movements and the processes from which they emerged shaped the 1960s stage and space on many fronts. This is most frequently analyzed in theatre studies on the ideological

differences between *shingeki* companies and the *angura* movement, discussed at length in the previous chapter, but the seeds of discontent with the political and social circumstances of the 1960s were much deeper than this. The model of the citizens' movements lent itself well to groups of parents and artists who were concerned about the state of childhood in an age of rampant consumerism in the context of rapid economic growth and development, increasing academic pressure, and mounting concerns over pollution and democracy itself in the wake of Anpo, and these concerned citizens turned to mass national organization to address their causes.

The Kodomo/Oyako Gekijō Movement in Context

The *kodomo gekijō* ("children's theatre") or *oyako gekijō* ("parent and child theatre") movement began in Fukuoka in 1966.⁶⁸ The movement, heretofore given only passing mention in English language studies of Japan, and very rarely in theatre research, deserves notice not only for its birth amidst the vibrant and turbulent arts movements of the mid-1960s, but also for its longevity and strong commentary and commitment to social concerns throughout its history. It began as a citizens' movement that aimed for "wholesome growth, increased creativity, independence, and friendship between children by means of creating and developing the appreciation of great stage art," according to Fukushima Jun, who conducted a case study on the movement. The "regional education and culture movement" (*chiiki kyōiku bunka undō*), as Fukushima describes *oyako* and *kodomo gekijō*, is one by which children are "raised together" by the community, and a "parent and child educational movement." The movement, according to

⁶⁸ In most works, the terms "kodomo gekijō" and "oyako gekijō" are used interchangeably. Therefore, I use both terms in this piece to denote a singular movement. When referring to the organization, I have decided to use the term Kodomo/Oyako Gekijō, as writers invariably use both terms.

Fukushima, was part of a nationwide trend toward extracurricular education that gained traction by the 1970s (231-232). After its inception in 1966, the movement spread very quickly throughout the country. According to Yuriko Kobayashi:

The local chapters of this organization invited theatre companies for children and young people to perform plays for children in their areas. Many mothers participated in the ‘Oyako-gekijyo’ trying to offer high quality children’s activities—though their choices in materials tended toward the safe. This ‘parent-children-theatre’ movement remained especially important in the 1970s and 1980s when the organization boasted over 500,000 members. (“Theatre” 16)

Many of these activities were rooted in concerns about rampant commercialism and the growing influence of testing and pressure to succeed academically in the rigidly structured educational environment, and theatre companies and individuals in the field tapped into this anxiety. For example, Gekidan KIO, the name of which is derived from “Kids Open Company,” was founded in Osaka in 1971, under the philosophy that “People are not just living, but must live their lives to the fullest.” The founders asserted that the company intended to “provid[e] something better for the children” who had encountered “the harsh experience of student eva[l]uations” (The KIO Company).⁶⁹ According to Deidre Onishi, who presented a research paper on the company at the International Theatre for Young Audiences Research Network (ITYARN) conference in Malmö, Sweden in 2011, “One of the fundamental influences on this philosophy is the time period in which KIO was created...KIO went into elementary schools and

⁶⁹ KIO’s website actually says “the harsh experience of student evacuations,” but given the context, I believe this is a typo. An inquiry concerning the discrepancy was not returned.

began performing in rented spaces in the community to give the children “a break” from the hardships. The performances were unabashedly and joyfully escapist” (6-7).

Likewise, these concerns can be seen more broadly in the field as well. In March 1966, just two months before the inaugural meeting of the Kodomo Gekijō organization, Tokyo’s Seinen Geijutsu Gekijō, typically abbreviated as Seigei, or “Youth Art Theatre,” was commissioned by the Engeki Kyōiku Kenkyūjō, or Educational Theatre Research Center, for its first *katei gekijō* or “family theatre” work.⁷⁰ Seigei, which was founded in 1959 by the playwrights Fukuda Yoshiyuki, Miyamoto Ken, and Kanze Hideo, the “rebellious scion of an important family of *nō* actors” who was forced to leave the *nō* world that same year (although he returned in 1979) due to his frequent dalliances in film and other theatre genres, attracted many of the most influential artists of the decade, including Betsuyaku Minoru, Kara Jurō, and Satō Makoto.⁷¹ According to David Desser, the company’s formation was largely representative of the post-Anpo break with the *shingeki* establishment on behalf of a new generation of artists dedicated to avant-garde and experimental works discussed in Chapter Four. The company members aligned themselves politically with Zengakuren, the radical National Federation of Student Self-Government Associations, as opposed to the Japan Communist Party, with which many of the established *shingeki* companies were aligned, and were largely frustrated by the way the “old guard” organized the demonstrations (173). They were, in short, representative of the

⁷⁰ According to Tomita Hiroyuki, “The Educational Theatre Research Center was launched from the proposal of the Educational Theatre League (Enkyōren) for the purpose of propelling foundational research and investigation into the construction of a permanent children’s theatre in April 1964. It was endorsed by many. The chairperson was Saida Takashi, and the general secretary was Tomita Hiroyuki. The Educational Theatre Research Center was the driving force behind fund raising, research, and producing experimental performances, but it was economically challenged, and dissolved in April 1971” (*Nihon* 347).

⁷¹ One of Fukuda’s first works, the critically acclaimed *At the Foot of Mt. Fuji* (1952), was a collaboration with Fujita Asaya, discussed at length in Chapter Four.

new generation of artists attempting to “transcend” the perceived rigidity and increasing irrelevance of the *shingeki* establishment on behalf of these young artists.

Beginning in March 1966, the company began a series of performances it marketed as “family theatre” in collaboration with the Educational Theatre Research Center in Tokyo. The first, and seemingly final, manifestation of this new partnership was a production of Iwama Yoshiki’s *Oretachi no māchi*, or “Our March,” starring Kanze himself, that was produced at different venues throughout the Tokyo area, including the Nihon Seinenkan (Japan Youth Hall), the Kokuritsu Kyōiku Kaikan Toranomon Hall (National Education Hall, Toranomon), the Shinjuku Welfare and Pension Hall, and other public halls in Suginami, Setagaya, Shinagawa, and Ōta Wards. A proposal for the venture states that the group, led by the critics Itō Noboru, Ozaki Kōji, the actress Kishi Teruko, the playwright and director Kurihara Kazuto, Hayakawa Moroji, a child psychologist, and Fujita Tamao, an author of children’s literature, wished to target junior high school students, their parents, and their teachers as their regular audience, as well as PTA members, women’s groups, youth groups, and members of a new “Family Theatre” group the Educational Theatre Research Center would target. The proposal also states that students would be charged one hundred yen, while adults would have to pay two hundred yen, both of which were less than one U.S. dollar using the historical exchange rate (“Katei no gekijō”).

The proposal suggests the stage as an alternative to the “warped modern conditions of extreme competition to get into good schools,” and poses the question:

Why do young boys and girls become isolated and commit acts of delinquency? This drama asks the parents and of teachers, sharply, yet with understanding, why this is.

Why does the crisis of junior high school age-children not gradually grow, but explode suddenly? When the heartfelt exchange between parents and children is cut off, how can it be recovered? The stage, more so than reading a book, more so than listening to speaking, definitely more than worrying by oneself, is lively and makes children, parents, and teachers truly think about nature of this issue, and gives them courage and wisdom to confront it. (“Katei no gekijō”)

The document then outlines the Family Theatre mission and objectives, many of which echo those of the *kodomo gekijō* movement. The group aimed for “the appreciation of art that links art, the family, and art and education, for the benefit of children, parents, and teachers.” Expanding on these objectives, the document states:

- 1) In a person’s period of youth, if they are exposed to high-quality art, this exposure can act as base for an abundant range of emotions and interests, which is essential. Also in this age of mass communication, theatre, film, and music, and other excellent art should be chosen and provided to them. For the children, adults should create the good things in this world, and provide for them the most beautiful things. This is the number one priority of “Family Theatre.”
- 2) In providing great art like theatre, film, and music, there are obstacles and difficulties. Therefore, an essential condition is that the children must be allowed to be exposed to great art that is prepared routinely and economically that overcomes these difficulties. This is our responsibility as adults, and as an organization, making this a possibility is an issue we will deal with. This is the second objective of “Family Theatre.”
- 3) Parents and families are a mirror for children. An excellent base for a child’s

emotional life and interests can be made by good art, in addition with emotionally-rich parents, and the fostering of this kind of home environment. In other words, the theatre strengthens the solidarity of things seen, and makes heartfelt exchange possible. Through art, parents and children can experience sympathetic emotions, and the bonds of the heart can be strengthened. This is the third objective of “Family Theatre.” (“Katei no gekijō”)

To accomplish these objectives, the document states that the group will 1) Hold regular performances of “great” plays and puppet shows for children at least three times per year; 2) In addition to these regular performances, promote theatre, musical performances, and films at discounted prices; 3) Hold meetings, lectures, and discussions; 4) Publish a news pamphlet; and 4) Assist members who would like to join the group but do not otherwise have the means financially (“Katei no gekijō”).

While the archival trail goes cold after this and there is no evidence to suggest that the joint venture between Seigei and the Educational Theatre Research Center’s Family Theatre movement continued after 1966, its goals and objectives were in many ways remarkably similar to those realized by the Kodomo/Oyako Gekijō movement that began in Fukuoka the same year. It is possible that ideological differences among the members of Seigei prevented the venture from moving forward, as Kanze left the company that same year to form the Jiyū Gekijō (Freedom Theatre) with Satō Makoto, and Seigei went under shortly thereafter. More likely, however, is that both the grassroots nature of the Kodomo/Oyako Gekijō movement and the perception that it offered “safe” content ultimately drew more support from parents. With Seigei’s reputation as a haven for artists working in the *angura* genre, which at times blatantly

pushed society's limits with its at times graphic depictions of sex and violence and openly challenged the boundaries of acceptability, it may not have been seen as an acceptable realm to be associated in any way with children. Ōno Yukinori strongly suggests this possibility. Referring to the time period during which the *kodomo/oyako gekijō* or "parent and child theatre" movement emerged, he argues:

This was the time of erotic, grotesque culture. Corrupt culture...It was a time of blatant sex and violence, and these kinds of things were everywhere. In children's culture, unfortunately, it was becoming widely available as well, and the time of this kind of degenerative culture was just a fleeting moment, but with the dissemination of this, these mothers had a sense of impending crisis. (Personal interview)

In addition to the sense that commercial culture was becoming degenerative, this growing frustration with its ubiquity can also be glimpsed in a brief essay by Michii Naotsugu published in the journal *Kikan Geki* in 1967, shortly after the movement was organized, titled "*Jidō engeki wa kyōiku papa ya mama no oki ni meshite ii no deshō ka?*" The article posed the question, "Is it good that parents who are seemingly obsessed with education like theatre for children?" but it is clear that he is referring directly to the large commercial spectacles represented by companies like the Mokuba-za. Michii, a member of the *Kodomo/Oyako Gekijō*-affiliated *shingeki* company Kansai Geijutsu-za, discusses parents who appear overly obsessed with education in addition to consumerism and mass spectacles. He says that parents are forced to treat their children excessively with material goods and allow them to watch animation on television in order to endure the pressures of the school system. Michii then seems to rail against the commercial theatres that had opened their doors to families at the time, likening them to

amusement ventures with no purpose. While he never expressly endorses the *kodomo gekijō* or *oyako gekijō* movements, Michii decries isolation within families and lack of community interaction. He argues that children need to make friends and play in order to experience human growth, and that parents who are truly wise will recognize that in activities where children can interact with others they will find true educational benefit (4).

An agreement between the Kodomo/Oyako Gekijō organization and the Japan Association of Theatrical Companies for Children (JIENKYO), which will be discussed in detail later in this chapter, attests to similar concerns. It also reflects remarkably similar values to the Family Theatre proposal by the Seinen Geijutsu Gekijō. According to the preamble of the document, which discusses the formation of the *kodomo* and *oyako* gekijō movement:

While the parents, teachers, and theatre companies all wished for the rich growth of the children and continued in pursuit of this on a daily basis, despite each individual working conscientiously, it was still difficult to create a better situation. Not only that, but the cultural environment and the environment surrounding the education of the children also deteriorated with each passing day. Delinquency, emotional instability, and an absence of importance placed on human values all became prominent. All of the adults had to join hands together...The culture of great decadence led to many mothers standing up and saying ‘we will not tolerate this any longer’. This was the birth of the ‘*gekijō* movement’. The *gekijō* movement grew out of a wish for children’s rich growth. It came about as an intimate joint venture between the parents, teachers, and children after the long journey through the war. (qtd. in Sone 127)

Both Matsumoto Hisashi, a member of Gekidan PUK, and Ōno also directly tie the popularity of Kodomo Gekijō to the growing concerns about public education and the influence of consumerism and commercialism in performance in the late 1960s and early 1970s. In Matsumoto's words, "Due to young people and mothers who could no longer stand this flood of commercial culture, 'Kodomo Gekijō' spread throughout the country" (126). Ōno makes similar remarks. According to Ōno, the Kodomo/Oyako Gekijō movement expanded very quickly, acting like a "countermeasure" to what was perceived as rapidly deteriorating conditions for children by the early 1970s, exacerbated by the economic impacts of the "Nixon Shock"⁷² in 1971 that rattled international currency markets and the "oil shock" or oil crisis of 1973 ("1970" 110).⁷³ According to Ōno, in 1966, the year in which the movement began, there was a groundswell of support from local citizens to change the conditions surrounding children in regional areas and across the country. This movement quickly built momentum in the 1970s through the efforts of mothers and young people who aimed to correct the "strain" and "distortion" of the period of rapid economic growth and development that had helped boost Japan's "miracle" recovery in the postwar period ("1970" 110).

⁷² The "dollar shock," commonly known in Japan as the "Nixon Shock," was caused U.S. President Nixon's new economic policy put in place in 1971 that called for eliminating the convertibility of the dollar into gold, a ten percent surcharge on imports across the board, and a ten percent reduction in foreign aid expenditure. The policy was viewed in Japan as an attempt to force it to revalue the yen. The dollar exchange rate that had been in place since 1949 had been pegged at three hundred sixty yen to one dollar, and many believed that this contributed to Japan's strong period of growth in the 1960s. The "Nixon Shock" did force Japan to revalue the yen to three hundred eighty yen to the U.S. dollar, a significant appreciation, and viewed by many as a contributing factor to the period of economic stagnation that came to define the 1970s (Higuchi 120).

⁷³ The "oil shock" of 1973 hit Japan especially hard. According to Watanabe and Mochizuki, "Japan suffered the most severe damage among industrial countries from the oil shock of 1973 because it depended on imported oil for eighty percent of its energy" (96).

While the movement swept through the country relatively quickly, it began modestly. Matsumoto, a member of Gekidan PUK who worked as the stage manager the performance of Ruth Stiles Gannett's *Erumā no bōken* ("Elmer's Adventure," or "Elmer and the Dragon"), which became the inaugural performance of the Fukuoka Kodomo Gekijō organization on May 28, 1966, recounts the experience and the enthusiastic response on behalf of the audience forty-three years later.⁷⁴ Six hundred twenty-one adults and 1,242 children attended the sold out performance, which took place at the Fukuoka Denki Hall in Chuo Ward. Matsumoto attributes the success of the first performance to both awareness of the company's work through local television and local performances and a growing backlash against the commercial nature of the Mokuba-za's *Keroyon*, which performed in Fukuoka around the same time and began its national syndication on Japan Television in November 1966. In May 1965, Gekidan PUK performed Sergei Prokofiev's *Peter and the Wolf* and *The Tiger's Lullaby* by Tachihara Erika in Fukuoka, leading to further recognition among future Kodomo Gekijō audiences, and it also taped *The Tiger's Lullaby* for the local television at RKB Mainichi Broadcast Studios (125).

After the inaugural performance in May 1966, Kodomo Gekijō performances in Fukuoka quickly increased. On August 27, 1966, the local theatre company Gekidan Dōke, which had formed the previous year in the city, performed *Aladdin and the Magic Lamp* at the Fukuoka Shimin Kaikan, and eight hundred seventy-five people attended. In November of the same year, Kaze no Ko performed *Happy Hans* for parents and children in attendance, and in March of the following year, the shadow puppet theatre company Gekidan Tsunobue produced *Treasure*

⁷⁴ According to the notes accompanying the essay, Matsumoto finished its draft just two weeks before he died of liver cancer in May 2009.

Island for the Kodomo Gekijō group. Gekidan PUK then revived Maeterlinck's *Blue Bird*, a staple of postwar theatre for children and young people in Japan, and performed it for Kodomo Gekijō audiences in Fukuoka the following year. In doing so, Matsumoto ties his company's efforts directly to the growing success of the Kodomo Gekijō group, remarking, "Our company, as one that 'supports working with good children's culture,' sowed the seeds and helped to spread this movement throughout the country" (126).

Propelled by these concerns, the Kodomo Gekijō/Oyako Gekijō movement spread throughout the country and established groups in every prefecture. It was centralized and organized as the Kodomo-Gekijō/Oyako-Gekijō National Center in 1974, and reorganized as the Kodomo-Gekijō National Center in 1998. The movement remains a significant force yet today, and the Kodomo-Gekijō organization is affiliated with more than seven hundred regional organizations in all forty-seven prefectural and city jurisdictions across Japan.

Kodomo/Oyako Gekijō, the Community, and Children's Rights

While the movement is notable for both the breadth of its presence in Japan at the time of its formation and its significant contributions to the field of theatre for children and young people even today, it is also important to note its relationship with both parallel grassroots activist movements and growing concern for children's rights. As noted in the introduction to this study, in his study on human rights in East Asia, Ian Neary includes an entire chapter on children's rights in Japan. In addition to pacifist groups weary of a return to nationalistic ideologies promoted in the national education curriculum, many new groups, including Kodomo/Oyako Gekijō, were concerned about the increasing emphasis on exams and economic success. Neary

then draws parallels between rapid economic development and industrialization in the 1950s and 60s and the Ministry of Education's direct support of this phenomenon, stating, "If in the pre-war period the education process functioned to produce citizens and later soldiers who would willingly serve the state, from the 1950s onwards the education system was molded to serve the needs of industry." For example, between 1962 and 1972, school textbook content nearly doubled, and teachers were forced to move quickly through the curriculum. Neary also notes that a 1976 survey found that teachers moved on from the content when they felt that fifty percent of students understood the topic, creating the necessity of *juku* or "cram schools" students attended in the evening simply to keep up (214). Horio Teruhisa, one of the most highly regarded progressive educational theorists in postwar Japan, sums up the issue of children's rights in the educational system:

As the pressures increase to get children on the academic elevator leading to social success, we find growing numbers of young people having no time or place to play, nor friends to play with. Under the pressure of their parents' expectations, and forced into endless studies intended to ensure later success in our society's entrance examination madness, our children are being robbed of their childhood. These abuses of children's rights to freely grow and learn result from the ideology of "over management," which dominates contemporary Japanese society. Whether it be their hairstyle, the length of their skirts, the color of their socks, or the width of their bookbags, all aspects of children's lives are managed through the highly detailed rules enacted by and enforced by the nation's schools...What kind of a society are we living in that permits such flagrant infringements upon the freedom of individual expression? (15)

Numerous organizations opposed this educational ideology, including the leaders of the Kodomo/Oyako Gekijō organization, which, as Fukushima points out, aimed to create an atmosphere that encouraged development of the “whole” child, emphasizing creativity and community interaction that many perceived the education system no longer afforded (232). The organization, therefore, must be seen in context with other major children’s rights movements that emerged during the first three decades following the end of the war. Neary points out a number of concerns of rights activists surrounding the conditions of childhood during this time period that advocates of the *kodomo gekijō* movement shared: the perceived deterioration of society due to rapid economic growth and industrialization, the perceived loss of community ties and links to nature, and concern about the over-emphasis on exams in the education system. Neary draws parallels between the Kodomo Gekijō organization (1966), the Japan Teachers Union (JTU) (1951), and the Japan Association to Protect the Children (Nihon Kodomo o Mamoru Kai) (1952), an association that had also been especially vocal during the Anpo protests of 1960, arguing that each played important roles in opposing the Ministry of Education’s increasing emphasis on serving the needs of industry (214). By mapping out the objectives of these organizations, it is plain to see how the children’s rights movement was inextricably tied to the development of the Kodomo/Oyako Gekijō movement and organization.

As noted in Chapter Four, Nikkyōso, the Japan Teachers Union (JTU), Japan’s oldest and largest teachers’ union, was founded in 1947. Like the ideals expressed by the new Constitution enacted the same year, the organization advocates peace, non-discrimination, and human rights. It also stressed academic and lifestyle skills for students, (“This is What I Want to Know”). In 1951, the Japan Teachers Union adopted what it terms its “Four Principles of Peace:” full

pacification, adherence to neutrality, opposition to the provision of military bases, and rejection of rearmament, in part in recognition of the fact that teachers and the education system itself had directly contributed to wartime militarism. The JTU adopted the slogan “Do not send our students to war again!” in 1951 and increasingly called for lifestyle writings such as “Yamabiko gakkō,”⁷⁵ creative cultural study, and theatre education to raise artistic and moral sensitivity (Suda 56). Similarly, the Japan Association to Protect the Children, proclaiming, “Children are valued as people,” was established in 1952. Like the JTU, the organization was steadfastly against war and notes in its mission statement, “At the time, during the height of the Korean War, children had become the front line of the American military were under the conditions that the children’s charter and were being trampled by factors ranging from lifestyle, education, culture, welfare, health, and the environment” (“Nihon Kodomo”). Both groups, along with Shufuren (Housewives Association), the Women’s Democratic Club (Fujin Minshu Kurabu), the Christian Temperance Union, the Federation of Women Organization, became part of a larger associated called the Mother’s Convention in 1955. The Mothers’ Convention was a convergence of organizations dedicated to “protecting children, the defense of women’s lives and rights, and the defense of peace” (Shigematsu 12).

The Kodomo/Oyako Gekijō organization, as Neary notes, has much in common with these movements in their concern for the environment in which children were being raised, the stressful nature of the education system, and the sense that “community” was a fading entity.

⁷⁵ According to Kaori Okano and Motonori Tsuchiya, “Yamabiko Gakkō” refers to a journal started by a teacher shortly after the end of the war that was a revival of the Essay Writing Education Movement, a grassroots educational movement that emerged in the 1930s through which teachers were able to stress creativity and circumvent the official state-sponsored educational curriculum. In their words, “Teachers encouraged students to write about their immediate lives, and in doing so to develop the ability to comprehend the present realities in a critical way” (26-27).

Ayumi Sasagawa, who studied one chapter of the *Kodomo Gekijō* organization in the late 1990s as part of her research on the social world of mothers in the suburbs of Tokyo, asserts that the organization was formed with the intention of establishing a social environment in which children were given the opportunity to live “a human life,” or “a rounded life or full life” through exposure to play, concerts, and other artistic activities. While the study took place several decades after the formation of the movement, Sasagawa’s observations are meaningful to this study. Sasagawa notes that the mothers she observed formed the local chapter of the nation-wide group themselves. The mothers of the *Kodomo Gekijō* chapter targeted in Sasagawa’s study aimed to both create an ideal environment for raising children in the community and create an environment in which mothers’ lives were enriched as well. She adds, “What the mothers of the ‘Parent-Child Theatre’ [*Oyako Gekijō*] wanted to achieve was to bring up children in a neighbors’ network which they believed used to be common practice in Japanese society before the economically oriented society was established. They were trying to shape the community, rather than be shaped by the community” (141-2).

As an organization and a local movement that appealed to members’ desire to combat growing materialism, expressed concerns over the rigidity of the education system, and lamented the perceived loss of community, among other ideas, the *kodomo gekijō* and *oyako gekijō* movements have much in common with the other activist citizens’ movements that emerged in the 1950s, sixties, and seventies. The movement also represents increasing attention paid by activists to issues affecting the home and family life. This notion is strongly supported by J. Victor Koschmann’s assertion in a 1978 essay titled “Soft Rule and Expressive Protest” that “Social conflict is expanding in scope, and protest is becoming increasingly widespread. No

longer limited to international issues, such as the security treaty or the Vietnam War, the objects of protest are increasingly close to home” (27).

While it would be inaccurate to label the *kodomo* and *oyako gekijō* movement as a strictly political movement, and the organization publicly eschews this label, it demonstrates fascinating tendencies toward a new postwar ideal of motherhood and civic activism that reimagined the ideal of motherhood as one in which engagement with larger public issues related to childhood was encouraged. In a study on the influence of the early modern doctrine of *ryōsai kenbo*, or “good wife, wise mother,” Kathleen Uno draws a clear link between motherhood and civic activism in the postwar era. It is a fitting link to the *kodomo gekijō* movement, and one that demands closer analysis, as it in many ways demonstrates the myriad ways in which postwar ideals of democracy and citizenship, and the reimagination of the public sphere, shaped the trajectory of performances for children and young people.

The “good wife, wise mother” doctrine, which emerged in the Meiji period, prescribed an idealized womanhood through which domesticity was the means of contributing to the good of the nation. In her words:

Ryōsai kenbo defined women’s contribution to the good of the nation to be their labor as ‘good wives’ and ‘wise mothers’ in the private world of the home. Ideally the ‘good wife’ carefully managed the affairs of the household and advanced the well-being of its adult members, while the ‘wise mother’ devoted herself to rearing her children to become loyal and obedient imperial subjects. (“Death” 297)

After the war, Uno argues that the idea was not entirely erased with the restructured constitution and revised legal codes designed to prevent the resurgence of militarism. Instead, she argues that

the concept of “good wives, wise mothers” remained influential in Japan until the late 1980s. Motherhood, however, rather than wifehood, became the new image of ideal womanhood in the postwar years (“Death” 303-304). Engaging with the public sphere became a part of this idealized role.

Within this conceptual framework, Uno cites the testimony of an unnamed “activist housewife” with whom she discusses concerns about corporate food safety and the collusion between corporations and the government. The woman, in Uno’s words, “reinterpreted ‘good wife, wise mother’ to justify her involvement in larger public issues that affected home life” (“Death” 308). If this is true, then linking the *kodomo gekijō* movement to the larger phenomenon of citizens’ movements makes sense. The movement provided an opportunity for mothers to engage with important social issues while engaging in community interaction and exposure to the arts. Without the label of “politics,” the movement was a way to participate in the public sphere of the new democracy, engaging in new forms of civic and social activism and discourse on child rights, through theatre and performance.

Today, the Kodomo/Oyako Gekijō organization’s mission strongly retains echoes of the original organizers’ sentiment:

Kodomo-Gekijo National Center is a membership organization consisting of children, adolescents, and parents. *Kodomo-Gekijo* members appreciate a number of superior stage performances every year nationwide and they also participate in the various cultural activities held in their own district. In Japan, most of the theaters or music companies for children are concentrated in two large cities, Tokyo and Osaka, and their vicinities. For this reason, the opportunity for children in other cities to enjoy the theatrical arts on a

daily basis is limited to the enjoyment of live stage arts. The environment surrounding Japanese children has been getting worse. Excessive urban development, bitter competition for entrance examinations, and flooding materialism have deprived children of experiencing the beauty and richness of nature, leisurely enjoying cultural events, and influencing one another through joint play or study. We (*Kodomo-Gekijo*) have started our movement with the desire to change the children's environment for the benefit of their futures and to foster rich sensitivity and spiritual sensitivity in their lives [sic].

(“Welcome”)

Although more than forty years has passed since its inception, the goals and mission of the organization appear to continue to support the organization's original objectives and reflect the organization's continuing role in actively commenting on issues ranging from education, consumerism, and mutual cooperation through community activity. The movement and its commentary played a key role in the re-imagination of the public sphere in its early years, and when viewed in tandem with the citizens' movements of the 1960s and 1970s, it is clear that the movement has been shaped by many of the same sociopolitical concerns that drove the theatre and arts movements of the same time era.

The Birth of JIENKYO

Michii draws a direct connection between rapid economic growth, citizens' movements, and the major developments in the field of theatre for children and young people in the late 1960s and early 1970s. His words strongly denote an activist's vision. According to Michii:

The forces that created Japan's [increasingly affluent] lifestyle beginning in the mid-1950s also created the backdrop of the Kinpyo and Anpo struggles, the examination system, the flood of mass communication, and militarization.⁷⁶ Amidst the worsening conditions surrounding children who have no spare time and cannot stop to take a short breath, the responsibility of adults who must protect these children has emerged among theatre companies, and it is specifically because of these circumstances that the demands of teachers and parents to create *live* children's theatre grew strong." ("Shingeki" 76)

He adds that throughout the country, even in rural areas, the feeling that children had to be protected from these concerns led to the formation of both Zenjien (The National Children's Theatre Conference), discussed in Chapter Four, and the Kodomo Gekijō movement ("Shingeki" 77).

The Japan Union of Theatrical Companies for Children and Young People (JIENKYO), the largest organization of professional theatre companies presenting work to children, young people, and families, emerged from this backdrop as well. In fact, the organization's genesis is directly tied to the Western Japan Theatre Conference, its national successor, Zenjien, and the Kodomo/Oyako Gekijō movement. To be certain, JIENKYO was not the first regional or national organization of professional companies to present work to children and young people. In addition to Zenjien, organizations such as Rōen, the Workers' Theatre Council, Geidankyo, the National Council of Performing Arts Organization, and Minon, affiliated with the new

⁷⁶ The Kinpyo conflict of 1957 was fueled by opposition to the teacher accountability system introduced by a number of prefectural boards of education. Ehime Prefecture was the first prefecture to introduce this system, reportedly to overcome financial difficulties, but there was widespread opposition to the system across the country. Supported by the Japan Teachers' Union and other unions, many teachers took "leave" from their positions to protest, but many were put on trial for illegally going on strike. Across the country, more than two hundred teachers were arrested, and more than 2,500 faced some sort of disciplinary action (Nozaki 30).

Buddhist religion Sōka Gakkai, offered performing arts programs for children, young people, and families as part of their activities. Nevertheless, JIENKYO was the first national organization or professional theatre companies to both focus its works solely on young people and families and grab the moniker “Japan” as part of its title. It is also the most influential organization in the field of theatre for children and young people in Japan today.

As noted in Chapter Four, the Western Japan Children’s Theatre Conference was formed in Osaka in 1960. At the time of its formation, the organization endeavored to produce theatre that accurately reflected the reality of children’s lives while engaging strongly with themes of life to raise “forward facing” children; share common themes and enhance children’s theater while opposing a system of education and activities that prevent making human beings; and focus on teachers and spread performances as the result of children and guardians coming together. These goals were later revised to including more folktales and traditional performance into theatre for children, inserting the power of laughter into child drama, questioning the impression of the child to seek in child drama, and disseminating the form of theatre for children and young people more widely (Tomita, *Nihon* 333-334). The organization became the National Children’s Theatre Conference, better known as “Zenjien” in 1970, reportedly at the urging of Tada Tōru, the founder of the company Kaze no Ko, which was originally based in Tokyo but had, by that time, expanded with locally based troupes throughout the country. Tada argued that companies in other regions of Japan felt excluded by the “western” label. In his words, “The reality is that almost all theatre companies from Hokkaido to Kyushu that are actively contributing to the children’s theatre movement are affiliated with the Western Japan Children’s Theatre Conference” (Araki 38). Maintaining the objectives the organization spelled out at the

time of its formation in 1960, Zenjien began to form solid partnerships with community members interested in performing arts experiences for children, including teachers, parents, members of children's circles, and the Kodomo Gekijō organization throughout the country.

The attendance records from Zenjien's general membership meeting on August 29 and 30, 1970, reflects this wide pool of interest. Attendees included Dōke Theatre Company, the Fukuoka Kodomo Gekijō, Saihata Puppet Theatre, the Kansai Art Theatre, Clarte Puppet Theatre, February Theatre Company, the Theatre and Education League of Osaka, Kyōgei Puppet Theatre, Kyoto Women's University Theatre, Enshū Theatre Company, Nagoya Theatre Company, Musubi Puppet Theatre, the Aichi Theatre and Education Association, the Nagoya Kodomo Gekijō Preparation Committee, Tsukushi Association, Tanpopo Theatre Company, Kaze no Ko, Roba Theatre Company, as well as local teachers, parents, and persons related to children's circles. From this meeting, intense debate focused on some of the key issues in the field at the time emerged. The meeting focused on two major issues facing those involved with the children's theatre movement: the relationship between children's literature and performance and the role of the local in the Kodomo/Oyako Gekijō movement.

Adaptations of children's literature from both Japan and the "West" often served as the basis of theatrical performances for children and young people in early postwar Japan. Kaze no Ko's Tada Tōru openly questioned this approach at this general meeting. He asked those assembled whether it was due to the simplicity of adaptations of children's literature for commercial theatre, and stated to the group that he fundamentally believed in staging works that aim for the present. As discussed in Chapter Four, this assertion appears remarkably consistent with the philosophy expressed by Tada and the early members of Kaze no Ko in their emphasis

on creating works with child protagonists for the stage that spoke to the problems children faced in the present. In response, Michii Naotsugu, Zenjien's chairperson at the time, noted the history of exchange between theatre companies and writers of children's literature, but also questioned whether the exchange was happening in a fruitful way. Yokotani Teru, one of the authors of children's literature who attended the meeting, conceded that adapting children's literature for the stage may not address the needs of the present. He argued:

Children's literature is now said to be booming in popularity, but I would like to point out that while the child's existence is recognized and the self is established, like most mass communication, the sharpness with which the present is actually grasped is beginning to grow dull. The trouble with theatre and literature working together is that there are few forward facing works. (Araki 39)

Another author of children's literature, Nakagawa Masafumi, then tied the issue of mass culture and the needs of children back to local culture, arguing that the *kodomo* or *oyako gekijō* movement may meet these needs when literature fell short:

Oyako Gekijō is a place where adults and children are equal. It is a movement that shares an artistic experience, and consequently, if the arrogance adults demonstrate toward children is not eliminated, the movement will not develop. This is a local cultural movement. It is a self-made cultural movement filled with the love of parents for children who were facing a "ready made" culture that could not respond adequately to regional and individual differences in culture. It is very important for Oyako Gekijō's future for local companies to carefully respond to the needs of local children. (Araki 39)

According to Araki Akio, the head secretary of Zenjien at the time, the discussion prompted a serious debate about the objectives of the Kodomo/Oyako Gekijō organization. Representatives of the Kodomo/Oyako Gekijō organization argued that their work overlapped those of schools and the education system, but according to Araki, the discussion prompted some important changes in the relationship between Zenjien and Kodomo/Oyako Gekijō. First, the “creative contents” of work, as opposed to its educational content, became increasingly valued, and smaller, more intimate community spaces increasingly replaced larger performance venues. Finally, the importance of local theatre companies performing in local contexts was reiterated and reinforced.⁷⁷

As the relationship between Zenjien and the Kodomo/Oyako Gekijō organization grew, so did the desire to form a similar, Tokyo-based organization. In November 1972, companies in Tokyo formed the Shutoken no Jidō Engekidan Kyōgikai, or the Capital Area Association of Children’s Theatre Companies, the first incarnation of JIENKYO, the Japan Union of Theatrical Companies for Children and Young People. In early 1973, the organization sought to be recognized by Zenjien, and Tada Tōru again addressed Zenjien’s general meeting, noting that it had been a struggle to unify organizations in the Tokyo area, that the Capital Area Children’s Theatre Association wished to work closely with the Kodomo/Oyako Gekijō organization, and that organizing was the means by which they wished to facilitate this (Araki 40).

⁷⁷ This idea continues to be important. For example, Gekidan Kooro, a company based in Osaka, considers itself to be the only company that performs works for children in the local Kansai dialect. I attended a performance of *The Three Little Pigs* by Gekidan Kooro at the Takarazuka Shimin Kaikan on July 22, 2012. The actors engaged directly with the children in the audience using the Kansai dialect throughout the entire piece, and the children excitedly responded and spoke back to the actors. Gekidan Kooro is one of two companies into which Gekidan February, or February Theatre Company, was split in 1986. The other company is Osaka’s Gekidan Kisaragisha. Gekidan February was also one of the companies that attended the Zenjien general meeting in August 1970 discussed in this chapter.

Michii reportedly expressed his support for the idea of forming a Tokyo-based organization, but noted that he wanted to see the organization as Tokyo-centric organization, not a national one, as it would throw into question Zenjien's position and purpose. In retrospect, it appears that Michii's fears were founded in reality. On March 30, 1975, a group of leaders associated with the Capital Area Association of Children's Theatre Companies met at the Takazawa Lounge near the east exit of Shinjuku station to discuss renaming the organization. The following day, March 31, 1975, the organization's new moniker, the Nihon Jidō Engekidan Kyōgikai, or the Japan Association of Theatrical Companies for Children, became official, thus propelling it toward national influence (Araki 40).⁷⁸

Ōno Yukinori confirms the close early relationship between Kodomo/Oyako Gekijō and the Capital Area Association of Children's Theatre Companies/JIENKYO. He describes it as “almost like a married couple.” Fascinatingly, he also genders this relationship, asserting that among the early leaders of the organization, “There was a sense that they were like the father, and Kodomo Gekijō was the mother” (personal interview). While this assertion may certainly demonstrate a situation in which the male-dominated JIENKYO organization worked closely with the largely female group of mothers associated with the Kodomo/Oyako Gekijō organization, including the system of power that this relationship implies, this assertion may also refer to the complex, occasionally fractious relationship between the two. As both organizations grew, occasionally divergent objectives also emerged. In a lengthy opinion piece in the journal *Teatoro* in 1979, the director Kumai Hiroyuki lamented the “vulgarization” of the movement, charging that as the National Liaison Council that oversaw the Kodomo/Oyako Gekijō

⁷⁸ The organization added the term “seishōnen” or “young people” to its title in 1988, and the “union” label in 2001.

organization became more professionally focused, it lost the sense of direction of the original movement, specifically the sense of local, grassroots activism, and a sense of equality in this work. According to Kumai, the National Liaison Council argued that the movement had to “professionalize” because “mothers were inexperienced” with organization on a national scale, and this detracted from the movement’s original intent. He adds, “Over the course of more than two years of discussion, the word ‘movement’ has been bantered about to the extent that the word means nothing. Every time this word is popularized, it is vulgarized” (108).

Not everyone agreed with Kumai’s assessment, however. In a rebuttal to Kumai’s piece that appeared in the journal the following month, Sone Kiichi, a member of Gekidan PUK, noted that while the two organizations, JIENKYO and Kodomo/Oyako Gekijō, had engaged in lengthy discussions over a period of several years, an agreement between JIENKYO and the Oyako/Kodomo Gekijō National Liaison Council that was reached in March 1979 was evidence of increased cooperation between the two entities. Additionally, his argument denotes important features concerning the relationship between the two organizations on behalf of JIENKYO.

Sone notes that in Section A of the March 1979 mutual agreement between the two organizations, “The National Coordinating Committee makes all works submitted by the cooperating JIENKYO the subject of planning meetings. If work produced by a non-member group is chosen, it is desirable to obtain the consent of the JIENKYO.” Commenting on the historical relationship between the two organizations, he continues, “If something came up that thwarted the progression of the movement, it was removed, if there were differences in opinions it was ensured that these were solved through constant dialog, and it was also made sure that people faithfully observed any promises that were made in regards to the contents of the

decisions” (127). Sone concludes his assessment of the friction between JIENKYO and the Kodomo/Oyako Gekijō organization by stating, “If we were to treat each other with more humility and start moving properly in this regard, we would be fit to give candid opinions on what we want from what has been learned” (129).

Despite these early challenges, today, the JIENKYO is the largest and most powerful association of companies producing work for children and young people, and it maintains a close relationship with the Kodomo/Oyako Gekijō organization. Its members range from companies and individuals that produce musicals, spoken dramas, puppet performances, shadow plays, and pantomime to folk performing art (ASSITEJ Japan, “Theatre” 34). More than sixty different companies from across the country are members of JIENKYO today (JIENKYO).

ASSITEJ Japan, which was officially inaugurated in Japan in May 1979, by contrast, boasts only twenty member companies (ASSITEJ Japan, “Theatre” 5). These companies consist of many companies discussed in this study, including Gekidan Dōke, Gekidan Elm, Gekidan Kisaragisha (February), the Geiyū-za, Shadow Play Theatre Kakashi-za, Gekidan Kaze no Ko, The Kio Company, Gekidan Kooro, Gekidan Nobara, the Seinen Gekijō, Gekidan Tanpopo, Operetta Gekidan Tomoshihi, Shadow Play Theatre Tsunobue, Gekidan Urinko, and Zenshin-za.⁷⁹ In addition to companies and individual members, ASSITEJ Japan also counts the Nissay Culture Foundation, sponsored by Nippon Life Insurance, and the Japan Children’s Theatre

⁷⁹ Other companies that count themselves as part of ASSITEJ Japan include Gekidan Kagebōshi (1978), which targets its work toward other Asian countries and aims to “break[] new ground in the field of performing art in order to create, present, and spread high-quality performing art and make[] international collaborations in view of this rapidly globalizing society,” and Gekidan Poplar (1978), a musical theatre company that proposes to “go forward with joyful smile of much more children and to make friendly exchange with children of other countries” [sic] (ASSITEJ Japan 11, 19).

Association, formerly known as the Children's Playwrights Association, as members.⁸⁰ Almost all of the companies associated with ASSITEJ Japan are also associated with JIENKYO, but ASSITEJ's focus is international exchange. While the ASSITEJ Japan Center was not officially formed until 1979, representatives from Japan have been present at international meetings and congresses since 1964. One of Japan's first delegates, Ochiai Sozaburō, a teacher at Akabane Elementary School in Minato-ku, Tokyo, published a reflection on the first ASSITEJ international congress in London in 1964 in the *Yomiuri Shinbun* newspaper on June 24 of that year, and his words reflect many of the major themes discussed thus far in this study. Titled “*Oyako de tanoshimu kūki*,” or “An Atmosphere Where Both Parents and Children Enjoy Themselves,” Ochiai attempts to compare and contrast the state of theatre for children and young people in Japan and in other countries on a wide variety of issues, including the circumstances of professional production and the relationship between theatre, parents and children, and education. Ochiai even includes a picture of a Dutch production he does not name, except to note that it featured no words. Fascinatingly, Ochiai concludes, “I am under the impression that compared with all other countries in the world, drama that is acted by children during events like the school arts festival is most popular in Japan” (7). Ochiai's words are an excellent example of how the global meets the local in postwar Japan, and how local and international issues have shaped and continue to shape the field.

⁸⁰ The Japan Children's Theatre Association focuses strongly on theatre and drama in education and consists of individual theatre artists, writers, researchers, and teachers. The organization aims to: 1) Organize government subsidized tours of performances to remote areas; 2) Publish the monthly journal *Jidō Engeki*; 3) Manage the Ochiai Sozaburō Foundation for T.Y.A.; 4) Organize workshops; 5) Award the Saida Takashi Drama Prize and Japan Children's Theatre Association Prize; and 6) Organize various research meetings (ASSITEJ Japan 27).

While ASSITEJ Japan today aims to “develop further theatrical exchange with each country in the world to establish the peaceful society without wars for [the] wholesome growth of children” (1), JIENKYO’s focus is more domestic. The organization has, since its foundation, “worked with teachers to develop [the] ‘theatre in education’ style at school, and also with parents to enlarge [the] ‘Oyako-gekijo’ or ‘Kodomo-gekijo’ (family audience system) movements”. JIENKYO continues to produce works targeting parents, children, teachers, and the community at large under the principle that “It is important for children to access live theatre performances for their lively growth” (ASSITEJ Japan 34).

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

Underneath the imposition of democratic ideology during the Occupation years, Japanese society underwent enormous changes that impacted almost every facet of the community, from individuals to institutions, the education and economic systems, and the notion of the public sphere. The ideology of wartime militarism was strongly repudiated, and democratic ideology became one of the tenets of society. In her analysis of dominant ideologies in postwar Japanese thought, Carol Gluck makes some keen observations on the nature of postwar democracy and ideology that have special relevance to this study. She summarizes the core ideas as follows:

[Postwar thought] is considered to have been created quite purposefully by the occupation bureaucracy and perpetuated in its own image by the conservative Japanese establishment. Disallowing the revolutionary hopes of the left in the early postwar years, it admitted protest within the bounds it had placed on permissible political opposition. Indeed, postwar ideology is seen to stress the social values of democracy as much as, or perhaps more than, the political. The democratization of society, often expressed in terms of all Japanese mythically joining the middle class, is said to claim pride of place in the postwar value system. It is also clear that many writers consider this ideology, like the others, to have been effective, in that most Japanese identify themselves as middle class just as they support the Peace Constitution and continue to vote the Liberal Democratic Party to seemingly perpetual power. And...questions of continuity from earlier ideological formations draw particular attention, as historians link *senjo* [postwar] ideology with the abiding social and political values that necessarily underlie it. ("Meaning" 294)

Gluck then focuses on the way in which each of these ideas shapes the ideological space of postwar Japan:

The three hegemonic ideologies, as dominant as they appear, do not occupy the entire universe of ideological discourse presented in works on modern Japanese history. At least two other main ideological forms are found juxtaposed to the dominant ideology in each period: the ideology of opposition, and the ideology of society at large. Both exemplify the meaning of *shisō* [thought] in a society that is produced apart from the state. The ideology of opposition tends to be set squarely against the dominant ideology, whether in political contention, social protest, or alternative ideological production. (“Meaning” 294)

As an instrument of democratization efforts, political contention, grassroots movements, and public discourse, theatre for children and young people in postwar Japan reflects both these dominant and oppositional ideologies. Narratives of the modern postwar stage in Japan reflect a story strongly influenced by the persistent, lingering memory of the war, the political circumstances of its aftermath, and a strong desire to never repeat the mistakes of the past. In many ways, theatre for young audiences in postwar Japan is the manifestation of the project of democratization that began in the aftermath of the explosion experienced around the world. From promoting the democratic ideology imposed by the United States after the war to becoming a tool of grass roots movements and community groups, the evolution and growth of the field of theatre for children and young people in postwar Japan presents evidence of both democracy’s success and its problems. This is strongly connected to the shifting notions of childhood, the global and local community, and the individual’s role within the multiple political, cultural, and ideological contexts of this rapidly changing period of time.

Likewise, the field of theatre for children and young people in postwar Japan also clearly demonstrates a continuing artistic conversation with modernity and postmodernity, and is in many ways a living testament to both the global conversations and exchanges that have occurred on the stage in Japan since the Meiji Period, the era in which Japan was forcibly “opened” to communication and trade with the United States and the “West,” as well as more localized forms. Theatre in postwar Japan, like nearly all aspects of daily life, was strongly influenced not only by the temporal past and present, but also by increasing interest in “tradition” and the local community, as well as the accelerating global flows of information and ideas. This was plainly visible during the first three decades of the postwar period, among the wide variety of performances created for children and young people at the time.

Summary of Key Points

In the aftermath of World War II, as part of the project of democracy, the Occupation authorities, or the GHQ, began an assault not only on the institutions that it believed had led to the reproduction of a militaristic ideology, but it also summarily attacked the thought processes that it believed supported it. The autonomy of the individual became a key idea in this process. Over the following three decades, this resulted in a notion of childhood that largely shifted from one of the child as the subject of the emperor to “a modern and democratic image of the child, as a free and self-sufficient individual who has rights and to whom parents have duties” (Galan 189). This idea and this process had an enormous impact on theatre for children and young people in postwar Japan.

In chapter two, I outlined key tactics the GHQ used to disseminate the new official ideology of democracy, and discussed the ways in which censorship shaped works that could be produced on the stage. As the GHQ embarked on a mission to disseminate democratic ideology, public rhetoric began to center around the idea of Japan as a nation of peace and culture. The United States attempted to diffuse the concept of individual autonomy and authority, and propped up the *shingeki* form because of the presence of these ideals within the work and the absence of themes and ideas it considered “feudal.” Thus, by actively censoring works that could be performed, including works for children, the new democratic ideology began to be diffused. This also resulted in a type of self-censorship, as companies and individuals performing works for theatre for children and young people, as Suda Rintarō’s recollection makes clear, were obliged to perform works that adhered to this new ideology. This period was also a time of early organization of youth theatre companies and playwrights, including Gekidan Tōdō’s Nihon Jidō Engeki Kenkyūjo, or “Japan Children’s Theatre Research Institute,” which asserted that it was necessary to establish such an institute, as General MacArthur had said that children and youth especially had the capability or capacity to embrace democratization (280). At the same time, other organizations, such as the New Association of Children’s Theatre People and the Youth Theatre Research Association, sponsored by the more conservative Ministry of Education, began to advocate for and sponsor youth theatre performances, thus demonstrating a direct connection between institutions of power and the realm of theatre for children and young people.

A second important feature of theatre for children and young audiences that developed during the Occupation period was the practice of touring to schools, public halls, and other found

spaces. In addition to competing and often divergent ideological interests on behalf of educational authorities, the GHQ, and the companies themselves, this practice was in many ways a holdover from the wartime, when traveling performances were a common tactic used to stir up patriotic sensibilities. It was also a practical consideration due to the destruction of many performance facilities during the war, but has remained one of the key features in the field even today. The relationship between professional theatre companies and the educational system is therefore one that is fraught with often competing ideological concerns, such as the Ministry of Education's objectives, administrators' concerns, individual teachers' and teachers' unions' concerns, and those of the companies themselves.

The post-Occupation period of the 1950s I discuss in Chapter Three demonstrates the growing tension between *shingeki* troupes, one of the strongest advocates of theatre for children and young people in postwar Japan, and the political, economic, and educational establishment. While the *shingeki* genre and European and American works had been actively promoted during the Occupation period as a means of stressing the importance of the individual in place of works that "glorified the Japanese spirit." Due to its strong relationship to the Japan Communist Party and other leftist movements, the genre became increasingly under scrutiny as the Cold War grew more intense and the war in Korea erupted on Japan's doorstep. For example, in the first half of the decade, shortly after the end of the Occupation, the major *shingeki* companies were blocked from the stage at the Mitsukoshi Gekijō, while others, including select youth theatre companies backed by the Tokyo Metropolitan Board of Education, such as Gekidan Tōdō and the Shin Jidō Gekidan, who performed almost exclusively for young audiences, were allowed to continue to perform in the space.

Despite being forced from one of the major Tokyo stages, the Mitsukoshi Gekijō, shortly after the end of the Occupation in 1952, the major *shingeki* companies, including the Haiyū-za (Actors' Theatre), Gekidan Nakama (Friends Theatre), Tokyo Shōnen Gekidan (Tokyo Youth Theatre), Gekidan Shinjinkai (Newcomers' Association), and Gekidan Sankikai (now known as Tokyo Engeki Ansanburu, or the Tokyo Theatre Ensemble), became some of the most important producers of theatre for children and young people during the decade. Works that originated in Europe, such as Marshak's *Twelve Months*, Mikhalkov's *The Prince and the Pauper*, and Hans Christian Andersen's *The Tinderbox*, became landmark works of the decade and staples of the companies' repertoire. In both dramatic theory and content, these works continued the project of the founders of the modern theatre movement in Japan. Many of the artists associated with the major *shingeki* companies in the 1950s were associated with the Tsukiji Shōgekijō, or Tsukiji Small Theatre, one of the foundational spaces and one of the most important spaces of experimentation and innovation in the 1920s, the early days of the *shingeki* movement. The aesthetic of theatre and drama for children and young people in postwar Japan was influenced by artistic partners in the international community, and especially by Russia and the Soviet Union. Aoe Shunjirō's call to eliminate child actors from the professional stage, a call that most companies heeded, is one such example of this relationship. Against the backdrop of increasingly louder calls for children's rights, Aoe cites the work of Natalia Sats and Henriette Pascal as evidence that child actors should not be allowed on the stage. This influence demonstrates a growing sense of "solidarity" with the international left and the lingering mark of modernity, including a direct conversation with the international artistic communities, that has become prevalent in the youth theatre community in postwar Japan.

In Chapter Four, I discussed the explosion of new companies and works, and analyzed how a new generation of artists, most of whom were children during the war, became the new and emerging voices in the field in the 1960s. Many of these artists, including Fujita Asaya, Sanetō Akira, and Tada Tōru, maintained lingering distrust of adults and authority into their adulthood and wrestled with this idea in their works. Many in this generation also strongly rejected the Old Left politics, dogma, and form of the *shingeki* movement and instead embraced the *furusato* ideals of the spatial and temporal past in a period of rapidly increasing urbanization, spending power, media access, and disappointment in the manner in which democracy had taken root after the Anpo protests of 1960. These ideals were increasingly tinged with the ideology of the peace movement as dissatisfaction with the war in Vietnam grew, and glorified both “traditional” art forms such as *kyōgen*, *nō*, and *sekkyōbushi*, at the same time that the influence of media grew exponentially during this decade.

As television became one of the primary means of mass communication, companies that had struggled financially for more than a decade also embraced this new media. Large, consumer driven spectacles, such as those by the Mokuba-za, also defined this decade. This landscape, which was shaped by the dichotomies of the urban and rural, mass media and live performance, and global and local concerns, continues to define the field in many ways today.

The influences of this legacy were discussed in Chapter Five. As the Anpo protests of 1960 demonstrated, by the late 1950s, the conception of the public sphere had begun to shift drastically. As a whole, the nation no longer viewed itself as a community of the emperor’s subjects but as citizens of local communities with rights and responsibilities to engage in public discourse, including discourse surrounding children’s rights. This ideology of public dissent was

most apparent during the Anpo protests, but its legacy shaped citizens' movements for decades to come. In the realm of theatre for children and young people, groups in local communities across the nation took on the mantle of the activist and began to advocate for live performances in the community as a means of counterbalancing increasing academic pressure and a sense that the community was being lost in an age of growing consumerism and human isolation, as well as concerns that the media culture was a source of social decay. These concerns led to the formation of the *kodomo* and *oyako gekijō* movement and organization in Fukuoka in 1966.

At the same time that the Kodomo/Oyako Gekijō organization emerged, professional theatre companies and other education and community groups concerned with children and the arts began actively organizing on a national scale as well. The Western Japan Children's Theatre Conference, later known as Zenjien, formed in Osaka in 1960, and had members across the country by 1970. Likewise, the JIENKYO, now known as the Japan Union of Theatrical Companies for Children and Young People, became a national organization in 1972. As the Kodomo/Oyako Gekijō organization grew more powerful and spread into every prefecture in the country, both Zenjien and JIENKYO worked in tandem with it to produce work for the organization. In addition to the education system, while it no longer has the membership it did in the late 1970s and early 1980s, the relationship between the Kodomo/Oyako Gekijō organization and professional theatre for children and young people remains one of the key tenets of the field even today. Nevertheless, this relationship must be understood in the context of its birth. The organization grew from a local citizens' movement into a national institution, and this paved new financial possibilities for a chronically underfunded field. At the same time, its organizers desired to reconnect children with the local community through family partnerships and

performances. Kodomo/Oyako Gekijō performances must thus be understood as a social movement just as much as an artistic one.

Concluding Thoughts

This dissertation is predicated on the notion that we should consider theatrical performance, as Ric Knowles asserts, as “cultural productions which serve specific cultural and theatrical communities at particular historical moments as sites for the negotiation, transmission, and transformation of cultural values, the products of their own place and time that are nevertheless productive of social and historical reification or change” (10). Likewise, it is also informed by the idea that the concerns of the state toward its youth are “key indicator[s] of the state of the nation itself” (Griffin 149), and that performances for children, like children’s stories, reify the “cultural reproduction of the relationship between the adult and the child—determined as it is by the unconscious ideology harbored by the adult” (Zornado 4). During the course of the first three decades of the postwar period, as youth increasingly became seen as the future of the nation and the direct target of democratization efforts, the realm of theatre for children and young people in Japan became just such a space of negotiation, transmission, and transformation. As this study has demonstrated, first, theatre for children and young people in postwar Japan functioned as a space where democratic ideals, including the autonomy of the individual, were transmitted through official encouragement of works from the “West” that in some way communicated these ideals. Consequently, theatre for children and young people also became a space in which Japanese identity and culture after the war were negotiated and redefined, and the individual’s relationship to democracy, the state, and the local community, were questioned. In

essence, this space became one in which the major tenets of postwar ideology and thought such as democracy and high economic growth were debated, transmitted, and redefined. Likewise, this space was one in which oppositional ideologies, as Gluck argues, were also “set squarely against the dominant ideology, whether in political contention, social protest, or alternative ideological production” (“Meaning” 294). Driven by the same impulses, and often the same individuals, as the vibrant and politically engaged artistic community of the postwar era that has attracted the attention of a wide range of international scholars, the realm of theatre for children and young people in postwar Japan is an equally rich cultural space, shaped by artists’ responses to the material circumstances of the postwar period, and the shifting and challenged notions of youth and childhood left in the war’s wake.

Future Work

The first three decades of the postwar period were by no means a unit to themselves, and the developments during this period continue to shape the direction of the field. Many individuals, companies, and movements that first emerged during this time remain highly influential. For example, when asked in an interview what drew her to the field of theatre for children, Maeda Tomoko, a manager at Kaze no Ko in Tokyo, replied that when she was a child in the 1980s, she often saw the works of companies discussed in this study, including Gekidan Nakama, the Hitomi-za, and Kaze no Ko, together with her mother. Kaze no Ko’s performance of Tada Tōru’s *Takara no tsuruhashi* (“The Treasure Pickaxe”), based on a Korean folktale, inspired her to join the field. This is evidence that both the companies that emerged during this time remain some of the most prominent, and that the family theatre aesthetic advocated by the

Kodomo/Oyako Gekijō organization remained extraordinarily influential. The playwright and director Nishida Toyoko, whose works, including *A Little Flame Fantasy*, *The Cat Who Ran*, and *Looking for Yoghurt*, have become very popular internationally during the past fifteen years, got her start in the field by doing creative drama activities with children at a local community center during the early 1970s. Her work is also shaped by the memory of war. After interviewing bombing victims from Hiroshima, Nishida felt compelled to discuss what the lives of those who lived and died in Hiroshima meant for the future of humanity with the children with whom she worked, and decided to create a work that could communicate these difficult questions with children. This led to her first play, *A Little Flame Fantasy*, which was inspired by the question of where the people who had only been left as shadows in the aftermath of the bomb went (personal interview). The continuing impact of this work is an area begging for further research. Thus, during the course of this study, it has become clear that there are still many areas to be explored in the field of theatre for children and young people in postwar Japan. Furthermore, due to the necessity to keep this study within the focus of its research questions, this study omitted some important features of the field of theatre and drama with, by, and for young people in Japan. As such, I believe the following areas are ripe for further research, as sources are abundant, and there has been little to no research in English conducted in the following areas to date:

- 1) The drama in education (*engeki kyōiku*) movement that developed with renewed vigor shortly after the war. In addition to performances in schools on behalf of professional companies, there was an active classroom based drama in education movement that spanned several decades. This movement offers a provocative and intriguing counternarrative to the oft-cited

portrayal of postwar education in Japan as solely focused on rote memorization and examinations. This avenue has much to offer to education theorists and theatre researchers alike.

- 2) The work of puppet theatre companies. Puppet theatre companies comprise an integral part of the field of theatre for children and young people in postwar Japan, and I have referenced them frequently throughout the course of this study when discussing ideology and space. Nevertheless, I believe that the work of puppet theatre companies deserves its own study, as the depth of its history and theory was unable to be fully explored in this study due to its focus on live actors on stage.
- 3) The role of international exchange and intercultural performance in theatre for children and young people. Adaptation of works from other countries and cultures has been a feature of the field since its inception, but as noted in Chapter Five, Japan became a member of ASSITEJ in 1979, and international exchange projects with companies around the world have increasingly become commonplace in the years since. Kaze no Ko began touring internationally in the mid-1970s, and many artists such as Tada Tōru, Fujita Asaya, and Sekiya Yukio, have adapted Korean folktales and forms such as Madang theatre in their work. As international festivals, such as the annual Kijimuna Festival in Okinawa and the tri-annual international ASSITEJ Congresses, and intercultural projects, such as Nishida Toyoko, Mi Jeong Kim, and Peter Wynne-Wilson's recent piece *Looking for Yoghurt* (2008) demonstrate, these early exchanges are only becoming more frequent. Joohee Park notes the increasing importance of these projects in the field, but questions the role that "Asian"-ness takes on in these exchanges. She asks, "What is an 'Asian' identity? Is it fueled by a preference for

‘exotic’ aesthetics shown in international TCYP [Theatre for Children and Young People] festivals, where ‘traditionally Asian’ performances delight non-Asian audiences? Or is it a friendly gesture to overcome the conflict-laden past among East Asian nations and move forward toward the future?” (143). These questions are strongly reminiscent of Una Chaudhuri’s observation, “Well-meaning intercultural projects can unwittingly perpetuate a neo-colonialism in which the cultural clichés which underwrote imperialism survive more or less intact” (196). This is an area into which I believe more historical research and theorization is needed.

- 4) The role of disaster and traumatic experience in theatre for young audiences in Japan. While I have focused a considerable amount of time on the impact of the nuclear attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki on theory and content in the field, the Tohoku earthquake of 2011 and its aftermath have ushered in a new era of work, much of which builds on the work discussed in this study. In collaboration with the 2012 Kijimuna Festa and the ASSITEJ International meeting held in Okinawa City during the festival, the annual magazine of ASSITEJ published *Theatre: Medicine for Life* in 2012. Asking how theatre could be considered *nuchigusui*, a word from the Okinawan language meaning “medicine for life,” the first article, “Theatre as Nuchigusui: Medicine for Life,” was also Fujita Asaya’s keynote address at the festival’s opening ceremony. Fujita discusses a performance of the Seinen Gekijō’s production of *Illusion of Criticality 2011*, which he both wrote and directed, and explains that the production is a retelling of his 1981 work *Illusion of Criticality*, directed by Senda Koreya, during which Fujita warned of a possible nuclear disaster at the Fukushima Number One plant. Arguing that the production is “*nuchigusui* for society,” Fujita makes the

first of many appeals in the publication for continued engagement on behalf of artists with those affected by the disaster (10). In the same issue, Hase Tsuguo discusses performing for evacuated children after the disaster, and Ishii Michiko, a teacher at Iwaki High School in Fukushima Prefecture, shares the work of her drama club students who created a performance titled *Final Fantasy XI, III, MMXI* that discussed the disaster that has begun to be performed across the country. These works, to which ASSITEJ dedicated a significant portion of its yearly magazine in 2012, as well as performances of works in progress such as *Space Battleship SORA* by Shinōara Kumiko, have much to share with artists and researchers in the international community on the relationship between disaster, trauma, and the arts.

Each of these works continues a legacy of keen social engagement on behalf of artists and activists in postwar Japan that developed with a sense of urgency in the wake of the devastation of war. While this impulse was not the only one driving work for children and young people during the first three decades of the postwar period, it was most certainly one of its strongest. Whether due to the desire to never send young people to war again, growing interest in the children's rights movement, or engagement with public issues such as concern about the state of childhood in postwar Japan, discussion of these issues has often taken place in public within the realm of performance for children and young people, a space that played an outsized role in transmitting, transforming, and negotiating these new values and concerns. Due in large part to the ideology of democracy imposed in the aftermath of the war, and in part to disappointment, at times, with manifestations of it, Gekidan Tōdō's words thus still ring strangely true. There is democracy in theatre for children, and as the works cited here testify, this legacy continues to grow.

Appendix 1

The Imperial Rescript on Education (1890)

Know ye, Our Subjects:

Our Imperial Ancestors have founded Our Empire on a basis broad and everlasting, and have deeply and firmly implanted virtue; Our subjects ever united in loyalty and filial piety have from generation to generation illustrated the beauty thereof. This is the glory of the fundamental character of Our Empire, and herein also lies the source of Our education. Ye, Our subjects, be filial to your parents, affectionate to your brothers and sisters; as husbands and wives be harmonious, as friends true; bear yourselves in modesty and moderation; extend your benevolence to all; pursue learning and cultivate arts, and thereby develop intellectual faculties and perfect moral powers; furthermore, advance public good and promote common interests; always respect the Constitution and observe the laws; should emergency arise, offer yourselves courageously to the State; and thus guard and maintain the prosperity of Our Imperial state; and thus guard and maintain the prosperity of Our Imperial Throne coeval with heaven and earth. So shall ye not only be Our good and faithful subjects, but render illustrious the best traditions of your forefathers.

The way here set forth is indeed the teaching bequeathed by Our Imperial Ancestors, to be observed alike by Their Descendants and the subjects, infallible for all ages and true in all places. It is Our wish to lay it to heart in all reverence, in common with you, Our subjects, that we may all attain to the same virtue.

October 30, 1890

Appendix 2

The Fundamental Law of Education 1947 (Law No. 25)

Having established the Constitution of Japan (1946), we have shown our resolution to contribute to the peace of the world and welfare of humanity by building a democratic and cultural state. The realization of this ideal shall depend fundamentally on the power of education.

We shall esteem individual dignity and endeavor to bring up the people who love truth and peace, while education which aims at the creation of culture general and rich in individuality shall be spread far and wide.

We hereby enact this Law, in accordance with the spirit of the Constitution of Japan, with a view to clarifying the aim of education and establishing the foundation of education for a new Japan.

Article 1. Aim of Education

Education shall aim at the full development of personality, striving for the rearing of people, sound in mind and body, who shall love truth and justice, esteem individual value, respect labor, have a deep sense of responsibility, and be imbued with an independent spirit, as builders of the peaceful state and society.

Article 2. Educational Principle

The aim of education shall be realized on all occasions and in all places. In order to achieve the aim, we shall endeavor to contribute to the creation and development of culture by mutual esteem and cooperation, respecting academic freedom, having a regard for actual life and cultivating a spontaneous spirit.

Article 3. Equal Opportunity in Education

The people shall all be given equal opportunities of receiving education according to their ability, and they shall not be subject to educational discrimination on account of race, creed, sex, social status, economic position, or family origin. The state and local public bodies shall take measures to give financial assistance to those who have, with all their ability, difficulty in receiving education for economic reasons.

Article 4. Compulsory Education

The people shall be obligated to have boys and girls under their protection receive nine-year general education. No tuition fee shall be charged for compulsory education in schools established by the state and local public bodies.

Article 5. Co-Education

Men and women shall esteem and cooperate with each other. Co-education, therefore, shall be recognized in education.

[Appendix 2 continued]

Article 6. School Education

The schools prescribed by law shall be of public nature and, besides the state and local public bodies, only the juridical persons prescribed by law shall be entitled to establish such schools. Teachers of the schools prescribed by law shall be servants of the whole community. They shall be conscious of their mission and endeavor to discharge their duties. For this purpose, the status of teachers shall be respected and their fair and appropriate treatment shall be secured.

Article 7. Social Education

The state and local public bodies shall encourage education carried out at home, in places of work and elsewhere in society. The state and local public bodies shall endeavor to attain the aim of education by the establishment of such institutions as libraries, museums, citizens' public halls, etc., by the utilization of school institutions, and by other appropriate methods.

Article 8. Political Education

The political knowledge necessary for intelligent citizenship shall be valued in education. The schools prescribed by law shall refrain from political education or other political activities for or against any specific political party.

Article 9. Religious Education

The attitude of religious tolerance and the position of religion in social life shall be valued in education. The schools established by the state and local public bodies shall refrain from religious education or other activities for a specific religion.

Article 10. School Administration

Education shall not be subject to improper control, but it shall be directly responsible to the whole people. School administration shall, on the basis of this realization, aim at the adjustment and establishment of the various conditions required for the pursuit of the aim of education.

Article 11. Additional Rule

In case of necessity appropriate laws shall be enacted to carry the foregoing stipulations into effect.

Appendix 3

(Sources: *Theatre for Young Audiences in Japan, 2011*, JIENKYO, and affiliated companies and websites.)

<u>Company</u>	<u>English Name</u>	<u>Founded</u>	<u>Base</u>	<u>Website</u>	<u>Notes</u>
Engeki Shudan Mitō	Unexplored Theatre Group	1966	Tokyo	http://www1.biz.biglobe.ne.jp/~mitoh/sub1.html	
Gaishi Sokkyo Ningyo Gekijō	Guy's Improvisational Puppet Theatre	1963	Tokyo		
Gekidan Chōjugiga	Wildlife Cartoon Theatre	1975	Iruma, Saitama Pref.	http://www.chojugiga.co.jp/index.html	
Gekidan Choryu	Choryu Theatre Company	1960	Osaka	http://www.gekidan-choryu.co.jp/	
Gekidan Dōke	Douke (Clown) Theatre Company	1965	Fukuoka	http://www.douke.co.jp/	Kyushu's first professional theatre company.

Gekidan Enzeru	Angel Theatre Company	1966	Tokyo	http://www.gekidan-angel.co.jp/#id39	Makes works for young people "without strictly adhering to the genre of children's theatre," working together with artists who "cross over into the field of children's theatre" (Gekidan Enzeru).
Gekidan Erumu	ELM Theatre Company	1975	Tokyo	http://www.erumu.co.jp/	"Creative Chief" is playwright and director Fujita Asaya. With the motto, "The best possible culture for children," the company has "always been trying to create innovative styles such as modernizing our traditional <i>nō</i> and <i>kyōgen</i> plays." Major productions include Fujita and Sanetō's <i>Bekkanko Oni</i> .
Gekidan Fuji	Fuji Theatre Company	1960	Tokyo	http://www3.big.or.jp/~gekifuji/index.html	

Gekidan Geiyū-za	Geiyū (Performing Artists) Theatre Company	1972	Tokyo	http://www.geiyuza.com/	Aiming for "quality plays for only young audiences," the company creates work together with audiences.
Gekidan Gunma Chūgei	Gunma Central Art Theatre	1962	Maebashi, Gunma	http://www.gunmachugei.com/	

Gekidan Haikyo	Haikyo Repertory Theatre	1960	Tokyo	http://www.jade.dti.ne.jp/~ghaikyo/	
Gekidan Hikōsen	Airship Theatre	1966	Tokyo	http://www.hikosen.co.jp/	Produces large-scale musicals featuring animation-inspired characters with large masks able to be viewed from a distance in large venues. Characters enact and dance to taped dialogue and music.
Gekidan Himawari	Himawari Theatre Group, Inc.	1952	Tokyo	http://www.himawari.net/index.html	Established in 1952, now a major talent agency for stage, television, and film that specializes in child and adolescent actors. The company began producing work targeting children and young people in 1959.
Gekidan Ichou-za	Ichou Theatre Company	1956	Tokyo	http://www.ichouza.com/	

Gekidan Kagebōshi	Kageboushi (Shadow Figure) Theatre Company	1978	Tokyo	http://www.kageboushi.com/	Founded in order to "Break[] new ground in the field of performing art in order to create, present, and spread high-quality work performing art and mak[e] international collaborations in view of this rapidly globalizing society."
Gekidan Kakashi-za	Shadow Play Theatre Kakashi-za	1952	Yokohama	http://www.kakashiza.co.jp/	The first professional shadow play theatre in Japan. Produces work for stage, television, film, commercials, and printed publications.

Gekidan Kaze no Ko	Kaze no Ko (Children of the Wind)	1950	Tokyo	http://kazenoko.co.jp/	Originally based in Tokyo but now with regional companies throughout the country ranging from Hokkaido to Kyushu, Kaze no Ko was created by Tada Tōru under the premise that "to think of Japan's future is to think of children's future." Originally an amateur group but one that professionalized in 1960, Kaze no Ko aims to "make plays targeting children's growth and see things through the eyes of children." The company also incorporates children's play and games into its works, and frequently tours internationally.
Gekidan Koguma-za	Little Bear Theatre	1969	Matsudo, Chiba	http://www.kogumaza.co.jp/	<i>Nuigurumi</i> , or "large stuffed animal" theatre.

Gekidan Nakama	Friends Theatre	1953	Tokyo	http://www.gekidan-nakama.com/	Founded by graduates of the Haiyū-za, became one of the most successful and prominent companies producing works for children and young people by the late 1950s.
Gekidan Nigatsu	February Theatre Company	1961	Osaka	http://www.kisaragisha.com/ , http://koro.org/	Professionalized in 1966 and split into two companies, Gekidan Koro and Kisaragisha in 1985 and 1986.
Gekidan Nobara	Nobara (Wild Rose) Theatre Company	1970	Tokyo		Founded to share the "joy of life" with children. The targeted audience is school children and community groups.
Gekidan Popura	Poplar Theatre Company	1978	Tokyo	http://www.poplar21.jp/	Primary genre is musicals.

Gekidan Rakurin-za	Rakurin Theatre Company	1954	Tochigi	http://www1.odn.ne.jp/rakurinza/	
Gekidan Shin Jidō	New Children's Theatre Company	1941	Tokyo	http://www5b.biglobe.ne.jp/~shinjido/	Founded in 1941 by members of Gekidan Tōdō.
Gekidan Tanpopo	Tanpopo (Dandelion) Theatre Company	1946	Hamamatsu	http://www.gekidan-tanpopo.com/	After its formation in 1946, the company created the Educational Drama Research Association, Inc., which was granted status as a non-profit organization in 1955 and is dedicated to developing theatre in local, regional areas. The company performs mainly at elementary and junior high schools, and functions as a research institute for teachers' methodology in drama in education.

Gekidan Tōdō	Tōdō Theatre Company	1928			Formed by Miyatsu Hiroshi in 1928, the company became one of the most prominent and influential companies in the early postwar years, and is frequently cited as the company that produced the "first" production targeting children and young people in the postwar era, Maeterlinck's <i>Blue Bird</i> . The company disbanded in 1960, however. Many members of this company, including Miyatsu Hiroshi and Aoe Shunjiro, had ties to the early Tsukiji Shō gekijō, or Tsukiji Small Theatre, a major venue for experimentation with the European-inspired <i>shingeki</i> movement in the 1920s.
Gekidan Tokyo Geijutsu- za	Tokyo Art Theatre Company	1959	Tokyo	http://www.tokyogeijutsuza.co.jp/	

Gekidan Tōshō	Tōshō Theatre Company	1949	Tokyo	http://www.tohshou.jp/	
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Gekidan Tsunobue	Shadow Play Theatre Tsunobue (Horn)	1963	Tokyo	http://www.tsunobue.co.jp/	Since its foundation, the company has created more than fifty shadow plays for children, often based on Japanese folktales.
Gekidan Urinko	Urinko Theatre Company	1973	Nagoya	http://www.urinko.jp/	Aims to perform plays "with which children can identify themselves." Built Urinko Theatre in 1986, which also functions as a local community center.

Gekidan Warabi-za	Warabi Theatre	1951	Akita Prefecture	http://www.warabi.gr.jp/	Dedicated to large scale touring musicals and performances of stories from the Tohoku region. At the company's base in Akita Prefecture, Tazawako Art Village, the company also offers workshops on folk dances, drums, acting, and physical exercise (Warabi-za).
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Haiyū-za	Actors' Theatre	1944	Tokyo	http://www.haiyuza.net/	Formed by several <i>shingeki</i> actors, including the highly influential director Senda Koreya, in 1944. In the 1950s, many of the Haiyū-za's productions that targeted children and young people were considered milestones, including Samuil Marshak's <i>Twelve Months</i>. Graduates of the Haiyū-za's training school formed Gekidan Nakama and Tokyo Engeki Ensemble, even today two of the most influential companies performing works for young people.
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Kansai Geijutsu-za	Kansai Art Theatre	1957	Osaka	http://kangei.main.jp/	A <i>shingeki</i> company associated with the director and actor Michii Naotsugu that became a major producer and advocate for the genre of theatre for children and young people in the late 1950s, 1960s, and beyond.
Kio	The Kio Company	1971	Osaka	http://www.thekio.co.jp/	"Developing insightful and humane work on the themes of life and death, conceived under the notion of how to provide something better for child victims of war, the company has thus from first to last produced original works aimed at a younger audience." It embraces what it calls its "active" performance method, which encompasses music, visual images, dance, and other techniques (The Kio Company).
Minwa-za	Folklore Theatre	1968	Tokyo	http://www.minwaza.com/	

Minzoku Geinō Ansanburu Wakakoma	Wakakoma Folklore Arts Ensemble	1969	Osaka	http://www.wakakoma.co.jp/	
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Minzoku Kabudan Arauma-za	Arauma (Wild Horse) Folk Theatre	1966	Tokyo	http://www.araumaza.co.jp/	Formed under the premise of "blooming the flowers of folk culture in urban areas" (Arauma-za).
Mokuba-za (Jeune Pantoru)	Rocking Horse Theatre	1946	Tokyo		Originally called "Jeune Pantoru" (Young Painter), the Mokuba-za became well known for its genre of mass produced <i>nuigurumi</i> theatre and was one of the most successful commercial companies of the 1960s.
Ningyō Gekidan Hitomi-za	Puppet Theatre Hitomi-za	1948	Tokyo	http://hitomiza.com/	Founded in 1948, produces puppet theatre works today ranging from intimate classroom performances to large scale, mass spectacles for stage and television.

Ningyō Gekidan Kurarute	La Clarte Puppet Theatre	1948	Osaka	http://www.clarte-net.co.jp/	Formed by Yoshida Seiji as an amateur puppetry group shortly after the war's end, Gekidan Kurarute, the meaning of which is "Clarte" or "Clarity," grew to be one of the largest and influential professional puppet companies in the Kansai region and in Japan today.
Ningyō Gekidan Kyōgei	Kyōgei Puppet Theatre	1949	Kyoto	http://www.kyougei.com/	
Ningyō Gekidan Musubi-za	Musubi Puppet Theatre (United Puppet Theatre)	1967	Nagoya	http://www.mc.ccnw.ne.jp/musubiza/	Aiming to unite "children with children" and "people with people," the Musubi-za became one of two major theatre companies in Nagoya, a region that continues to be very active in the realm of theatre for children and young people.
Ningyō Gekidan Poporo	Poporo Puppet Theatre	1972	Tokyo	http://www.pup-popolo.co.jp/	

Ningyo Gekidan Pūku	PUK Puppet Theatre	1929	Tokyo	http://www.puk.jp/	Founded in 1929 as a company "based on free expression and anti-war ideals." After the war, the troupe grew into one of the major puppet theatre companies, with sections dedicated to puppet theatre, stage theatre, and television.
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Operetta Gekidan Tomoshihi	Operetta Theatre Tomoshihi (Torchlight)	1962	Tokyo	http://www.tomoshihi.co.jp/o_peretta/index.html	Primary genre is "folk operetta" and plays with live music. Under the direction of Sekiya Yukio, developed work for school gymnasiums. According to the company, "We have strived to make a humane, friendly ensemble, and to stand by the side of children. We work together with teachers and parents through theatre to have our children grow healthy in each community." The company is tied to the <i>utagoe kissa</i> movement, a singing pub/coffee shop tied to the anti-war movement and the left that was popular in the mid-1950s to mid-1970s.
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Ōru Sutaffu / Myūjikaru Kanpanī Ittsu Fuōrīsu	ALLSTAFF Co., Ltd. / Musical Company It's Follies	1962	Tokyo	http://www.allstaff.co.jp/	Founded by the late composer Izumi Taku. The Izumi Musical Academy was established in 1975 to create original Japanese musicals.
Seinen Gekijō	Youth Theatre	1964	Tokyo	http://seinengekijo.co.jp/	Founded in memory of Akita Ujaku and Hijikata Yoshi, the company developed works concerning "hot social issues" for audiences of all ages, but also specifically targets high school students.
Suwaraji Gekien	Swa-Raj Gekien	1931	Kyoto	http://www.swa-raj.com/	
Tokyo Engeki Ansanburu	Tokyo Engeki Ensemble	1954	Tokyo	http://www.tee.co.jp/	Also founded by graduates of the Haiyū-za, the company is heavily versed in Brecht's work. The company frequently performs internationally. Original name was Gekidan Sanki-kai.

Zenshin-za	Progressive Theatre	1931	Tokyo	http://zenshinza.com/	Formed by a group of dissatisfied young kabuki actors in 1931, the company created a drama and film institute along with a studio and housing site in Kichijōji, Tokyo in 1937. The company continues to perform a wide range of works, including kabuki, kyōgen, rakugo, historical plays, popular plays, and modern plays, for a wide range of audiences, including children and young people.
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