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“Sancho Panza”  
A Japanese Experiment

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An attractive contemporary Japanese play presented by the Lasenkan company will be showing today at the Universidad Catolica’s Eugenio Dittborn Hall as part of the “Teatro a Mil” Festival. The montage departs from traditional Japanese (Noh) art, to explore scenic codes of a different nature.

Divided into eight tableaux, “Sancho Panza”, inspired by the work of Cervantes, portrays Rocinante and Rucio as two women who, through a hallucinatory dialogue, comment about current issues such as the crisis of beliefs, the pain of war, the dangers of pollution, the place of women in the world, nuclear experiments and the distancing of human beings from culture and thought. In addition to literary references, the West is present through the projection of paintings, ancient Greek friezes and evocative music.

Mixing humorous social criticism and emotion, the texts appear to claim their birthright from the surrealist and absurd movements, an emphasis that is strengthened by the fact that the actresses, in a noteworthy effort, express themselves in Spanish and German. In a framework of fine plasticity and a subtle interplay of sound and light, the performers display inexhaustible dramatic energy and refined vocal and movement techniques.

(Translation from Spanish)

## A POETIC JAPANESE GAME

Norma Niurka

The painting is there, projected on scene, and becomes part of the whole experience. There are nine projections for each of the nine tableaux of the play. While the two actresses embody the images and create and re-create their doubles with amazing precision, a current of energy, a taste of adventure, assails the spectator.

They talk a lot and speak in Japanese, German and Spanish. One language follows another and the third continues as if it were a form of global Esperanto. They are speaking in tongues and we don't even notice. Such is the scenic force of this delicate and strong production brought by the Lasenkan Theatre to the International Festival of Hispanic Theater, representing Japan with a work inspired by Cervantes' Don Quixote.

Sancho Panza, the work of the Japanese-German poet, novelist and playwright Yoko Tawada, is not a story about don Quixote's vassal, but rather a search for the meaning of life, a bold concept of time, a form of universal expression.

What these artists offer us is a fantastic, high-risk adventure story which starts off when two women, both mothers of the Christ-child, ask the Virgin to take care of the boy because they're off to see the world. They roam through unknown lands 'in a fight against evil' in nine tableaux that are like links in a chain of events leading to the final destination, which is the certainty that the yearned-for trip is impossible; that dancing, reading and thinking are better alternatives.

Symbols and lessons are presented with both humor and seriousness. Don Quixote promises Sancho an islet if he helps him recover the Sun that has been stolen from them, as if it were the fight against the windmills. The place they arrive at is Hiroshima, the islet is America.

Both in the text and in the montage there is, not a fusion, but a very singular intermingling of cultures. Although the direction and acting are basically Oriental, both Oriental and Western characteristics are shown in a parallel manner in all aspects of the staging. The language is doubly de-structured: by the break in the rhythm of the words and by the emphasis placed on the Spanish accent.

The director, Saburo Shimada, is also a musician and is present to mark the rhythm of the action, the tempos and certain major nuances with different music forms and sound. He worked the nine tableaux separately with extraordinary rigor, which the two actresses follow in a concentrated and creative fashion.

Kei Ichikawa (Sancho) and Kana Torino (don Quixote) possess notable technical expertise and seem to be expert in Kabuki theater methods. The agility of their movements, their voice training and scenic concentration all contribute to achieving perfection in the performance.

They sing, dance, twirl, leap, dress, undress, warble, and Kana even plays the accordion. The bathing scene, where they drink water, sniff at each other, bathe (and where don Quixote declares that women's skin is the hardest armor in the world: "if you wear the skin of a naked woman, you have nothing to fear"), is impressively intense.

In front of the projection of a Gauguin painting, the characters note the big feet that the artist painted on the Tahitian women, and the actresses, lying on the floor, lift up their legs and speak to their feet, showing that dialogue is possible in the most diverse ways.

This *mise en scène* is a class in theater - a theater of sound and rhythm, gesture and word.

Together, the brilliant author, the sensitive director-musician and the two outstanding actresses have created a work of art worthy of remaining in our theaters for a longer period of time. Up to now, without any doubt, the Lasenkan Theatre's *Sancho Panza* is the surprise of the festival. A wonderful, enchanting and lovely surprise.

(Translation from Spanish)