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BASIL TWIST'S *Dogugaeshi*

FRI-SUNDAY, APRIL 24-26, 2009

THE CURTIS R. PRIEM EXPERIMENTAL MEDIA AND PERFORMING ARTS CENTER



Photo: Richard Termine



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Basil Twist's *Dogugaeshi*

with musical direction and live shamisen music by Yumiko Tanaka.

Basil Twist's Dogugaeshi was originally commissioned by The Japan Society. The world premiere production at Japan Society in November 2004 was co-produced with Tandem Otter Productions, and made possible by funding from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation and Creative Capital.

Company

PERFORMERS:

Kate Brehm, Oliver Dalzell, Jessica Scott & Basil Twist
with **Yumiko Tanaka**

DIRECTION: **Basil Twist**

MUSICAL DIRECTION,
SHAMISEN IMPROVISATION
& SOUND DESIGN: **Yumiko Tanka**

LIGHTING DESIGN: **Andrew Hill**

SOUND DESIGN: **Greg Duffin**

SOUND COMPOSITION & DESIGN: **Yasuhiro Otani**

PROJECTION DESIGN: **Peter Flaherty**

LIGHTING SUPERVISOR: **Ayuma "Poe" Saegusa**

DRAMATURG: **Mariko Kojima**

PRODUCTION STAGE MANAGER: **Neelam Vaswani**

TECHNICAL DIRECTOR: **Chelsea Mylett**

PRODUCER: **Barbara Busackino**

About *Dogugaeshi*

Dogugaeshi is a stage mechanism that serves as a backdrop to traditional Japanese folk puppet theater. Comprised of a series of intricately painted scenes that slide open to reveal image after image in rapid succession, *dogugaeshi* developed in Awaji Island and Tokushima prefecture over the centuries. Its history is inextricable linked to that of Japanese puppetry.

About

The history of Japanese puppet theater, or *ningyo joruri*, began sometime in the 16th century when puppet manipulation, the tradition of oral narrative, and the music of the three-stringed *shamisen* were combined in a dramatic form that came to be one of the most popular forms of entertainment in Japan. The 17th and 18th centuries in Japan saw the flourishing of a merchant class who greatly valued entertainment. During that period, puppet troupes were formed and professional theater developed at a rapid pace in major cities such as Kyoto, Osaka and Edo. In rural areas, popular folk puppet theater traditions also continued to flourish.

Rural puppetry theaters on Awaji Island and regions in Tokushima prefecture developed intricate backdrops for their productions called *fusuma-e* (painted sliding screens). The screens are set up on several tracks along the top and bottom edges and layered, so that opening one set of screens reveals another set behind, and so on. As the show progresses, the *fusuma-e* are opened one by one from downstage to upstage, each revealing the gorgeous *fusuma-e* behind. There are variations no this system of transforming images as well. For example, in a play set inside a palace, the *fusuma-e* are drawn in perspective, revealing room after room with thousands of tatami mats. This elaborate technique with *fusuma-e* is known as *fufuma karakuri*, or more commonly, *dogugaeshi*. This complex and advanced stage mechanism developed with such intricacy that it became an independent attraction in its own right.

Though the Awaji Puppet Theater is the only existing professional puppet theater troupe that continues to give public performances using the *dogugaeshi* technique today, the *dogugaeshi* tradition is still present in several other rural folk theaters, mainly in Tokushima prefecture.

The best known of such theaters stands in Inukai Village. This thatch-roofed theater still maintains 132 *fusuma-e* allegedly dating back over 100 years that portray 42 different kinds of colorful landscapes and nature, including sparrows on bamboo, tigers, elephants, wild eagles, carp, chrysanthemums, Japanese maples and cherry blossoms. The theater also houses several sophisticated mechanisms to manipulate the screens, so that they can be moved in many different variations: opening from the center of the stage to the wings; crossing the stage in front of one another; pivoting to reveal new images on the back side; and lifted offstage toward the grid. The Inukai Theater, designated as an Important Tangible Folk Asset by the Japanese government in 1998, holds a large annual performance festival in early November, in which the final portion of the performance is dedicated to *dogugaeshi*.

Artist's Note From Basil Twist

I first encountered the dogugaeshi in 1997. I was in France, wandering through an exhibition of puppets from Awaji at a festival, when something caught my eye. On a small black-and-white monitor flashed a sequence of sliding screen doors. It was brief and mysterious, and then it was gone as the film changed to footage of traditional Japanese puppets. The puppets I was familiar with, but those sliding screens—I'd never seen anything like them, except, actually, in my own work. Similar gestures had appeared in my *The Araneidae Show*, and at that very moment I was preparing *Symphonie Fantastique*, filling out my vision of what a non-narrative, non-representational, and therefore, in my mind non-traditional, puppet show might be. But here in this clip of a film loop was evidence of these very ideas—except for the nontraditional part. There was clearly a tradition of puppeteer in this part of Japan doing exactly what I was “inventing” in my own work.

I stayed hunched by the monitor to catch the film clip a few more times. Those screens remained a compelling memory through the time Japan Society commissioned me to create a piece. Jane Marie Law, a scholar of Awaji puppetry, confirmed for me that I hadn't been dreaming. This tradition was called the dogugaeshi, and with this first piece of the puzzle in place, my journey was underway. With the assistance of many individuals and organizations, I was able to visit Japan twice, specifically the region where the dogugaeshi once thrived—Awaji and Tokushima, two bits of land straddling the swirling whirlpools of the Naruto Straits.

I had wanted to keep the show small and perform it myself. But in the mountains of Tokushima, at a site called Kawamata, the piece I had been creating took on new dimensions. Inspired by the memories of elderly Japanese people who had reveled in the magic of this art form in their youth, I felt the ghost of a tradition demanding to be revealed, regardless of my original plans. And so I've needed a lot more help in the process—and I've received it in great part due to Japan Society and Creative Capital, who have remained passionately committed to my insistence that this work be presented in the intimate setting we welcome you into today.

The sound of dogugaeshi has an exoticism for me that reflects the mystery in this art form. But the word is in fact a very utilitarian term for “set change” and I found that the mystery of the dogugaeshi was lost upon some modern Japanese, who saw it as plain and boring: “We see those sliding screens on all the samurai soap operas.” It is, after all, to the Japanese, simply a door.

Artist's Note From Basil Twist

To me, there is something gorgeous in it that is perhaps easier to see as an outsider: this sliding, gliding, horizontal game of suspense, concealment, revelation and transformation. I know I heard that same fascination in the voices of the old women in the mountains of Tokushima, who recalled the candlelit visions of the dogugaeshi from the distant past.

I extend my heartfelt thanks to my collaborator Yumiko Tanaka (introduced to me by Japan Society), whose contributions to the process were essential, the staff at Japan Society for devotedly seeing this project to its fruition, and my friend Barbara Busackino for her tireless support and guidance.

About the Performers

BASIL TWIST (Creator & Director/Puppeteer) originally from San Francisco, is a third generation puppeteer who lives and works in New York City and is the sole American graduate of the *Ecole Supérieure Nationale des Arts de la Marionnette* in France. Original creations include *The Araneidae Show*, *Symphonie Fantastique*, *Petrushka*, *Master Peter's Puppet Show*, *Dogugaeshi* and *La Bella Dormiente Nel Bosco*. Since 1998 Twist has continually expanded the realm of puppetry by creating and touring new works that integrate live music. He has partnered with such premiere institutions as *The Spoleto Festival*, *Lincoln Center Festival*, *Lincoln Center's Voice and Vision Series*, *The Los Angeles's Philharmonic*, *Japan Society* and *Gotham Chamber Opera*. Last December, he made his formal opera house debut at the *Houston Grand Opera* directing *Hansel and Gretel*. His work has been recognized with an *OBIE Award*, three *UNIMA Awards* for Excellence in Puppetry, two *Bessie Awards* (one of which was for *Dogugaeshi* in 2004), a *New York Innovative Theatre Award* and an *American Theatre Wing/Henry Hewes Design Award*. Twist is a 2006 *Guggenheim Fellow* and an inaugural *United States Artist Ford Fellow*. Twist is the Director of the *Dream Music Puppetry Program* at *HERE Arts Center*.

YUMIKO TANAKA (Musical Direction/Shamisen Improvisation/Sound Design) was born in Fukuoka prefecture and received an MA in Musicology from *Tokyo University of Fine Arts and Music*. In 1979, she began studying with *gidayu* recitation artist and *Living National Treasure* *Komanosuke Takemoto*, and the following year, she became a disciple of the late *Kinshi Nozawa*, the *gidayu shamisen* master who was also a *Living National Treasure* in *bunraku*. Since her debut performance in December 1981 at

About the Performers

the Honmoku-tei in Tokyo, Tanaka has been very active as a shamisen player and vocalist, not only in the world of traditional Japanese music, where she performs under the name of Yumi Tsuruzawa, but also in contemporary music, improvised music, opera, dance and musical theater. Her credits range from performing with orchestras, such as Tokyo Metropolitan Symphony Orchestra and the New York Philharmonic, to collaborating with pioneers in the world of jazz and experimental improvisation, including guitarists Kazumi Wantanabe and Kazuhisa Uchihashi; saxophonists Akira Sakata and Kazutoki Umezu; percussionist Kiyohiko Semba; violinist Asuka Kaneko; drummers Sam Bennett and David Moss; computer musician Carl Stone; sax player Ned Rothenberg; John Zorn; Elliott Sharp; and Butch Morris.

Tanaka has founded and participated in several contemporary music groups, including the traditional Japanese instrumental ensemble Pro Musica Nipponia, led by composer Minoru Miki; the Kitchen Drinkers, with vocalist Mikako Mihashi; the all-Japanese-classical-instruments group ITO, formed by composed Yuji Takahashi; and the band Ground-Zero, led by turntable and guitar player Yoshihide Otomo. She has performed in numerous notable venues, including Avery Fisher and Carnegie Halls, and has toured all over the world, including Korea, Italy, Serbia, Austria, Scotland, Belgium, Taiwan, Australia, Oman, Iraq, Turkey and England. She has soloed at a number of international festivals and has performed in the critically acclaimed musical theatrical spectacle Hashirigaki, directed by Heiner Goebels. Since its premiere in 2000 at Theatre-Vidy in Lausanne, Switzerland, this work has been performed all over the world, including the Edinburgh International Festival and BAM in 2003. She received the Education Minister's Art Encouragement Prize for Young Musicians in 1990, and a fellowship from the Asian Cultural Council, which supported her residency in New York City in 2006-07. She is an Associate Professor at Hyogo University of Teacher Education, where she teaches Japanese music history.

KATE BREHM (Puppeteer, Puppet Builder) Puppetry credits include Petrushka, Hansel and Gretel, Master Peter's Puppet Show (Basil Twist), The Golden Legend, Virgo Genetrix (Christopher Williams), Savage Nursery (Erin Orr), The Sorcerer's Apprentice (Kazzum). She has taught puppetry at Royal Holloway University and Central School of Speech and Drama in London. She develops wordless abstract puppetry and events through *imnotlost*. Including Dark Space, Do You Copy?, and A Seemingly Unified Spectacle. www.imnotlost.net

About the Performers

OLIVER DALZELL is a recipient of 2 Jim Henson Foundation grants for his upcoming production of *Ice Cream for Diablo*. Other credits: *Madama Butterfly* (The Metropolitan Opera), Erik Sanko's *The Fourtune Teller*, Symphonie Fantastique (North & South America, Europe), Paula Vogel's *The Long Christmas Ride Home* (Vineyard Theater, Long Wharf Theater), *Master Peter's Puppet Show* (LA Philharmonic), *La bella dormente nel bosco* (Spoleto Festival, Lincoln Center), *Dogugaeshi* (Japan, NYC), *Hansel and Gretel* (Houston Grand Opera, Atlanta Opera), *Petrushka* (The Ravinia Festival), *Arias with a Twist* (NYC, France), Comedy Central's *Puppet Vignettes*.

JESSICA SCOTT (Puppeteer) Ms. Scott is a puppeteer and puppet designer living in Brooklyn, NY. Credits with Basil Twist include *Arias With A Twist*, *Dogugaeshi* (original commission), *Hansel and Gretel*, and *La Bella Dormente nel Bosco*. She's also puppeteered in *Mabou Mines Porco Morto*, Lee Breuer's *Prelude to a Death in Venice*, *Mabou Mines Peter and Wendy*, and *Red Beads*. Jessica Scott's puppet design can be seen on film in The Juan Maclean's "Give Me Every Little Thing", Teague Films "Love Suicides" and in theater for *Porco Morto* by Mabou Mines, and *Cart Cycles* by Terra Incognita Theater. Puppeteering credits on film include *Flight of the Conchords* "Demon Woman", Bjork's "Wanderlust", and commercials for the Outside Lands Music Festival.

About the Artists

GREG DUFFIN (Sound Designer) is a record producer/engineer and production manager as well as resident sound designer for The Japan Society NYC ('03-'08). He is also Production Manager and Touring Engineer for Regina Spektor. Greg's past shows with Basil include; *Symphonie Fantastique* (Off-Broadway), *Dogugaeshi* (NYC '03 and Japan), and *Arias with a Twist* (NYC and France)

PETER FLAHERTY (Projection Design) designs video projections and constructs interactive video systems for performances and installations internationally. He has designed video projections and interactive software for: *Complicite's The Elephant Vanishes*, *The Builders Association's Aladdin* and *Savant*, and *The Gotham Chamber Opera's Die Schwartz Spine*.

About the Artists

Other designs include Bang on a Can's Lost Objects at BAM, TheatreMovement Bazaar's Dry Cleaning in LA, and Big Dance Theater's The Other Here, which premiered at Japan Society in February 2007. His theatrical video designs and interactive software work have been seen on five continents. He has also created video installations have been shown at Fleisher-Ollman Gallery (Philadelphia), the home of Agnes Gund (President Emerita of MoMA), Rosenwald-Wolf Gallery (Philadelphia), The Church Gallery (Minneapolis), Collision Festival at MIT Media Lab (Cambridge) and Oni Gallery (Boston). In 2000-01 he was a Harvard University Artist-in-Residence in new media performance.

ANDREW HILL (Lighting Designer) Previous collaborations with Basil Twist include Symphonie Fantastique, Petrushka, Master Peter's Puppet Show and The Araneidae Show. Other works include Gale Gates et al's So Long Ago I Can't Remember, Big Dance Theater's Shunkin, The Flea Theater's Benten Kozo, Len Jenkin's Like I say and GEVA's production of John Beluso's Pyretown.

MASAKO KATAOKA (Assistant Sound Designer) began her sound design career in 1995 at Tokyo Disneyland in Japan. She worked with many forms of New traditional dance, Japanese traditional dance, Ceremony, various symposiums, and film showings for 5 years at the Sagami-hara Citizens Hall in Japan. From 2007, she became residence engineer at HERE Arts Center in NY and worked on projects such as *Arias With a Twist* by Basil Twist, HERE Arts Center (2008). *Honer* by Cara Reichel, Hudson Guild Theatre (2008). *The Blue Flower* by Cara Reichel, The West End Theatre (2008). *CULTUREMART 2008*, HERE Arts Center (2008). *10 Plates* by Gleissner, Helena (2007). *Behind The Lid* by Basil Twist, Silver Whale Gallery (2007). *RUS* by Kristin Marting, HERE Arts Center. (2007).

CHELSEA MYLETT (Technical Director) is a Clemson University graduate who currently resides in Charleston, SC. In addition to this tour, she works for Technical Theater Solutions, which provides project management for Spoleto Festival USA, Disney Cruise Lines and Worklight Productions' tours, including the upcoming National Tour of Avenue Q.

About the Artists

AYUMU "Poe" SAEGUSA (Associate Lighting Designer) began his lighting design career in 1996 in Tokyo. In May 2005, he became the resident lighting designer at HERE ARTS CENTER in NYC. He designed HERE's *CULTUREMART* Festivals 2006, 2007, 2008 & 2009 and *AMERICAN LIVING ROOM* Festival 2006 & 2007; *Arias With A Twist* by Basil Twist (2008). *Reframe the framework DDD* by Yasuko Yokoshi at the Kitchen (2008), *AOI!* by The South Wing at JAPAN Society (2007). Recent design credits in Tokyo include *Mountains* by Kamimuramegumi Company at AGORA Theater (2007). *Hyakka Houyou* by ARM at Yorozu Studio (2008).

NEELAM VASWANI (Production Stage Manager) Previous work with Basil Twist include; *Arias With A Twist* (HERE Arts Center, France); Master Peter's Puppet Show (Disney Concert Hall, LA), ASM: La Bella (Spoleto, Lincoln Center); NY Credits: PSM: Voice 4 Vision Puppet Festival (4 yrs, TFNC), Song for New York (Mabou Mines); Ghosts (Juilliard School), Peter & Wendy (Arena Stage, Mabou Mines); The Adventures of Charcoal Boy (TFNC and HERE) Uncle Vanya (Juilliard School); ASM: The Beard of Avon (NYTW) and Don Juan (TFNA), La Cenerentola, Venice (Juilliard School).

BARBARA BUSACKINO (Producer) joined HOME for Contemporary Theatre and Art as Producing Director in 1992, seeing hundreds of new artists and original works to the New York stage, including world premieres by Eve Ensler, Camryn Manheim, Craig Lucas, David Greenspan, Paul Bernstein, Alan Ball and Todd Alcott. As HOME's producing director she originally produced Eve Ensler's *The Vagina Monologues*, which received an OBIE Award in 1997. In 1998 she joined Ensler as a Coordinating Producer for the just formed V-Day Fund, which produced its first all-star evening of *The Vagina Monologues* with a host of extraordinary women at the Hammerstein Ballroom. She is a co-founder of HERE Arts Center, where she originally produced Basil Twist's *Symphonie Fantastique*, the inaugural production of the Dream Music Puppetry Program for which she remains the producer. She is the producer for Twist's Tandem Otter Productions, which is an independent production company based in New York City dedicated to the development, creation, touring and presentation of new work created by Basil Twist among other puppetry artists. Credits include *Symphonie Fantastique*, *The Long Christmas Ride Home* by Paula Vogel, *Petrushka*, *Master Peter's Puppet Show*, *Dogugaeshi*, *La Bella Dormente Nel Bosco* and *Hansel and Gretel*.

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Photo: Richard Termine

About

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Tandem Otter Productions:

Basil Twist, Artistic Director
Barbara Busackino, Producer
Aaron Diaz, Office Manager
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