

Title	Triadic Relationship of Theatre Performance : From the Viewpoint of Bunraku
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Citation	演劇学論叢. 2001, 4, p. 210-216
Version Type	VoR
URL	https://doi.org/10.18910/97567
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Shamisen accompanies narration, but it is no usual accompanying music. The playing of the Shamisen leads the whole performance, setting the rhythm, giving the cues to the narrator and the puppeteer, making the atmosphere of the scene and making a melody when needed. The Shamisen player may remind one of the Polish director, Tadeuz Kantor, who appears on the stage and gives the actors various instructions for movements. The Shamisen player bears in a way the role of directing the performance, which I take as making a proper relationship between the basic elements of theatre performance.

§ 5.1. Now we return to our formula of the triadic, or tetradic, relationship of a theatre performance, which was shown at the beginning of our argument.

Usually the triadic elements are regarded to be Actor, Character and Audience, but I added the Play element between the Actor and the Character. If we conclude from the view of Bunraku, the immediate perceptive object for Audience is Play. Play hides Actor behind itself from the Audience and forms Character for Audience. In other words, Play tends to be torn between the two directions, one toward the reality of Actor and another toward the abstraction of Character. The line toward Actor could be extended further to what is hidden behind the theatre walls, that is, the real world outside, where this specific actor lives (his or her gossips). The line toward Character also could be extended to the fictitious world and even further to the theme and the very idea of the drama.

Historically, Play has developed from stylized presentation to realistic representation. This means that Actor and Character come closer to each other to draw more attention of Audience so that the Play element is pushed into obscurity. Brecht and Artaud tried to rescue Play, but it is significant that they did it as directors, for they in a way projected the element of Play toward Audience and even further to the world outside where Audience lives.

Theatre essentially expands in each direction of triadic elements beyond the limits of them to the world outside. Or we could say that when an art form expands itself toward the world outside, it comes close to theatre. We have many examples of this case today.

inseparable. But in Bunraku the puppet does not tell us the story, nor does the puppeteer. It is the narrator who tells and explains the whole story of the drama.

§ 4.2. The narrator, together with the Shamisen player, takes the leading part in Bunraku performance. Until pre-war times the narrators had held higher positions than the puppeteers in the Bunraku company. This fact suggests that the story or plot are more important than the playing of puppets. As is well known, Aristotle regarded *mythos* as the most important element of the six in dramatic performance.

Mythos is usually rendered as plot in English, and it is something that can be described with words. But in dramatic performance the characters utter only lines and it is left to us to weave the plot out of them. When we cannot make a plot out of them, we say we don't understand the play. So, it would be much easier if the whole story were described for us from the outset. Even most of the primitive societies have narrative arts but not always drama.

§ 4.3. Aristotle also puts the character in the second rank, saying that *mythos* could be formed without characters, but not vice versa. Aristotle may be right or wrong, but it is certainly true that a playing puppet comes to be understood as a dramatic character only through the narration. This is symbolized by the convention that each puppet on stage is given life by the introductory narration of each character at the very beginning of the drama.

§ 4.4. The narrator, who is facing the audience, does not see the puppet's movement. We understand the character bit by bit and get the whole personality at the end of the story. A dramatic character does not exist at the outset. We do not know anything about the person when he first comes onto the stage. His action reveals his situation step by step and we get the idea of this character accordingly. Until the very end of the whole action when the curtain falls, we do not get the whole picture of this fictitious character.

An action consists of small movements, which are real objects for our perception, but the image of the character, which we grasp through actions, is fictitious.

§ 4.5. We can conclude, therefore, that as regards the three parts carrying a Bunraku performance, one enjoys the puppet's movement, senses the presence of the puppeteer behind the puppet, and forms a character through the narrator's telling of the story. This formula can be applied to a usual theatre performance, in which the three parts are carried out by one and the same person on the stage.

But in Bunraku there is another part, which we briefly mentioned before, namely the instrument player, *Shamisen-hiki*.

(6)

stage together with puppets. In other words, the puppeteer came to appear in front of the audience when the puppet's movement became realistic.

§ 3.2. The primitive puppet must have the operator hidden behind the curtain. Only a human-like puppet could stand having a real human being beside itself. As is already stated, in dramatic scenes the puppeteer even reveals his face and shows us his relation with the puppet.

Perhaps the situation is the other way around. When the puppet became realistic, it needed to have the visible figure of the puppeteer beside it in order to assure that it is nothing but a puppet after all.

In pre-modern theatre, the actor was hidden behind either the mask or exaggerated make-up or heavy costume. The movement was stylized so that the audience would never mistake that for the actor's own. Only in the second half of the 18th century when realistic acting began to be seriously pursued, the question whether the person on the stage was the actor or the character was raised. It was at first an issue of the actor's psychology: total empathy or self control. I suppose that the question whether we see actor or character on the stage was only asked in the late 19th century, in the age of realism. For realistic acting contains an obvious paradox. It makes the fictitious person on the stage look so real that we believe the character is there. But it also makes the actor's movement look so natural that we cannot but think this is the actor himself.

§ 3.3. Now we can partially return to the question of Hamlet's face. In Greek Theatre, Agamemnon's face, that is, his mask, is the same regardless of the actor who plays the role. The actor's face is hidden behind the mask. One may say that this corresponds to the stage of the puppeteer's hiding himself behind the curtain. In Elizabethan Theatre, Richard Burbage showed his face, playing Hamlet. But they still had a lot of conventions of acting such as cross-gender casting. Even though Shakespeare seems to advocate natural acting, Burbage's acting of Hamlet must look much stylized to our eyes. And Hamlet does have the same face all the time, that is Burbage's face. This is in a sense the stage of the puppeteer's shadowy presence beside the puppet in Bunraku. In Modern Times different faces of Hamlet are given by different actors in different productions. They are indications of Hamlet's fictionality, which is minimized by realistic acting, just as the puppeteer's appearance assures the puppet's fictionality.

§ 4.1. The puppeteer of Bunraku is a real person and the puppet is not; this is obvious. But when the puppet is operated by the puppeteer, it looks like a real person. But we come to theatre not to see a human-like puppet but to enjoy the drama which the character unfolds. In usual theatre the character and the drama are

(5)

watch. The actor is conceived separately not only from the character he is playing but also from the playing movement he is making. We do not see his face nor his movement. He is a bad actor if we do.

However, one may make an objection here again. If we watch Hamlet, for example, and only sense the presence of the actor behind it, just like watching a puppet's playing and sensing the presence of the puppeteer beside it, Hamlet's outer feature must be the same regardless of the actor, as the puppet is the same regardless of the puppeteer. This question should be answered from a different direction.

§ 2.3. In some scenes of Bunraku the main puppeteer operates the puppet with his head uncovered. In this case he is dressed in formal kimono style, though subordinate puppeteers are still wholly in black.

It is true that our attention to the puppet is inevitably bothered by the appearance of the puppeteer, but we easily become accustomed to this and begin to enjoy the puppet's playing all the same.

The puppeteer who is allowed to show himself is high ranking and the scene where he appears is an important and dramatic part of the play. This means that the audience is made conscious of the puppeteering when he tends to get most involved in the character and the story. We enjoy watching both the puppet and the puppeteer, even though much more weight is put on the puppet. It is only natural that the handsome look of a puppeteer attracts us and influences our enjoyment of his puppeteering, that is, the puppet's playing. But some puppeteers operate their puppets, looking totally indifferent to what they are doing, and others looking somehow as if they were sympathizing with the puppets' situation. We enjoy the delicate communication between the puppeteer and the puppet.

[This may be thought of as wonderfully demonstrating Brecht's idea of *Verfremdungseffekt* in acting. But the puppeteer's attitude is never hostile toward the puppet. I have never seen a puppeteer who appears critical about the movement of the puppet he himself is making!]

§ 3.1. The Bunraku puppet underwent a great improvement of operating mechanics early in the 18th century. The most notable innovation, made in 1734, was a puppet's being operated by three puppeteers. The main puppeteer handles the head and the right hand, the second one the left hand and the third one the feet. Until then, a puppet had been manipulated by one operator, who stood behind the curtain and so out of sight of the audience. A puppeteer lifted up a puppet above the curtain and manipulated it with simple and primitive technique; a puppet was far from human-like. It was by the method of using three men for manipulation that a puppet was made to move like a human being and, then, it became usual that puppeteers appeared on

(4)

and dogs since no big snakes existed in Japan.

§ 2.1. In usual theatre performance we are watching an actor playing a character on stage. But in actuality we are seeing an actor's bodily movement and hearing the words he is uttering at the same time. Seeing and hearing are perceptions through different organs and so we can sensibly distinguish between them. The actor's bodily movements put more weight on "playing" and words he or she utters on "a character." Of course, bodily movements alone could present a certain character, as in the case of pantomime, and how to utter words involves a kind of playing, too. But in pantomime we mostly enjoy watching not the character shown on the stage but the pantomimist's playing that character. Most dramatic pantomimes are adaptations of well-known dramas or stories. This can be said in the case of ballet drama, too.

The question here is whether or not we can distinguish between actor himself and his playing movement, and if we can, how. Professor Sauter notes in his paper printed in *TRI* (Spring Supplement, 1997) that we perceive the outer features of the person and respond to them immediately at the moment of his or her appearance onto the stage. But, do these outer features belong to the actor? We assume that if the actor is really good, he must transform himself into the fictitious character and behave so right from the moment of his appearance. And if we recognize his behavior as the character's, not the actor's, we must be sensing the actor's own presence somewhere behind. Otherwise the bodily movements we watch on the stage would be real movements and not playing.

The same thing might be said about the outer features of the person. We may unexpectedly have a round face for Hamlet, but this is Hamlet's face, not the actor's. Perhaps the sensory level of the audience perception which Professor Sauter points out is a matter of different dimension. The round face is Hamlet's, but to perceive that face could be on the sensory level all the same.

§ 2.2. In Bunraku the puppeteer is dressed in black from top to toe when operating a puppet. In principle his head is wholly covered by black clothes, and so he looks like a shadow of the puppet. The audience cannot recognize which puppeteer is operating the puppet, unless by relying on the program. This helps the audience to ignore the puppeteer's presence and pay attention only to the puppet's appearances and movements.

Nevertheless, the black figures beside the puppet are never out of sight and the audience never loses its consciousness of them, however deeply absorbed in a beautiful puppet which is operated to look like a human being. We enjoy the playing of puppet without being bothered by our consciousness of the shadowy figures beside it. We can do so, perhaps because we already have a ready-made idea of acting in which a human movement is hidden behind or underneath the movement on the stage we

(3)

Brecht and Artaud.

§ 1.1. The traditional Puppet Theatre in Japan, Bunraku, is unique both as a puppet play and as a sort of theatre. Its puppets are huge; one puppet is operated by three puppeteers and its movements look like those of human beings. A puppet is operated on stage in accordance with the narration which is told in most cases by one narrator, accompanied by the music of Shamisen, a string instrument. Both Narrator and Shamisen player sit on knees on the narrow and elevated floor at the left side of the stage.

§ 1.2. Thus, the Bunraku performance consists of three parts: Puppeteer, Puppet and Narration. These three parts bear the above-mentioned three basic elements of theatre performance.

The puppeteer does not play by himself but manipulates a puppet. And the puppet's movement is in accordance to the lines the narrator speaks.

In usual theatre performance these three elements are one and the same object on stage, but in Bunraku, they are all physically separate, so that we can see in more detail the relationship between them.

§ 1.3. One may object, however, to the formulation above, arguing that the narrator's narrating a story also contains the three elements of performance in itself.

It is true, and this is why the Bunraku narration is regarded as an art form by itself; it can be independently taught and enjoyed, as is the Noh chanting. But in most cases one narrator narrates all the characters by himself; he does not play but presents characters. Or one should say, he bears the lines of the character, for which the puppet is playing.

Actually we have four parts in Bunraku performance: Puppeteer, Puppet, Narrator and Shamisen Player. But narrating and Shamisen-playing are usually regarded to be one part of performance, Gidayu. It is like singing a song accompanied by piano playing, though the relational function of narrating and Shamisen-playing is more complicated. We shall return to this point later.

§ 1.4. The fact that each element of performance stands by itself in Bunraku can be explained by the historical process of formation as a new performing art. It was created around the end of the 16th century as a result of the combination of two traditional entertainment, which hitherto had independently developed: Narrative chanting and Puppet show. The narrative chanting had recently been accompanied by a new musical instrument, Shamisen, which had been imported from Ryukyu Islands, or Okinawa, the southernmost islands of Japan today, and adapted for Japanese usage; the snake skin covering the main body, for example, was replaced by the skins of cats

(2)

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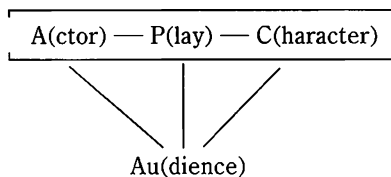
Mori Mitsuya

[This paper was presented at the International Colloquium of Theatre Studies in Stockholm in November 1996. It was accompanied by some video scenes of Bunraku performance.]

§ 0.1. I take up here the traditional Puppet Theatre in Japan, called Bunraku, as an example to clarify the basic structure of theatre performance.

§ 0.2. In my paper, "Intercultural Problems of Modern Theatre," presented at the FIRT Congress in Moscow 1994 and printed in *Theatre Research International* (Summer issue of 1995), I made, in passing, a distinction between the 'drama' and the 'play' aspect in theatre performance. The 'drama' aspect of my concept should not be confused with the written text. It is an aspect of performance to make us grasp the character, the plot or the story. The play aspect, on the other hand, means the actor's playing itself, which is similar to a musician's playing music or an athlete's playing sports.

§ 0.3. In my paper at the International Colloquium of Theatre Studies in Tokyo in November 1995 and printed in *TRI* (Spring Supplement 1997), I drew attention to this 'play' aspect, which is usually neglected in the triadic relationship of basic elements in theatre performance, the relationship between Actor, Character and Audience. I put the Play aspect between them and made a diagram like this:



A, P and C are enclosed in a square because those three are one and the same object for Au to watch. The relationship between two elements can be different in different types of theatre, for example, Kabuki, Noh, Western drama of realism,

(1)