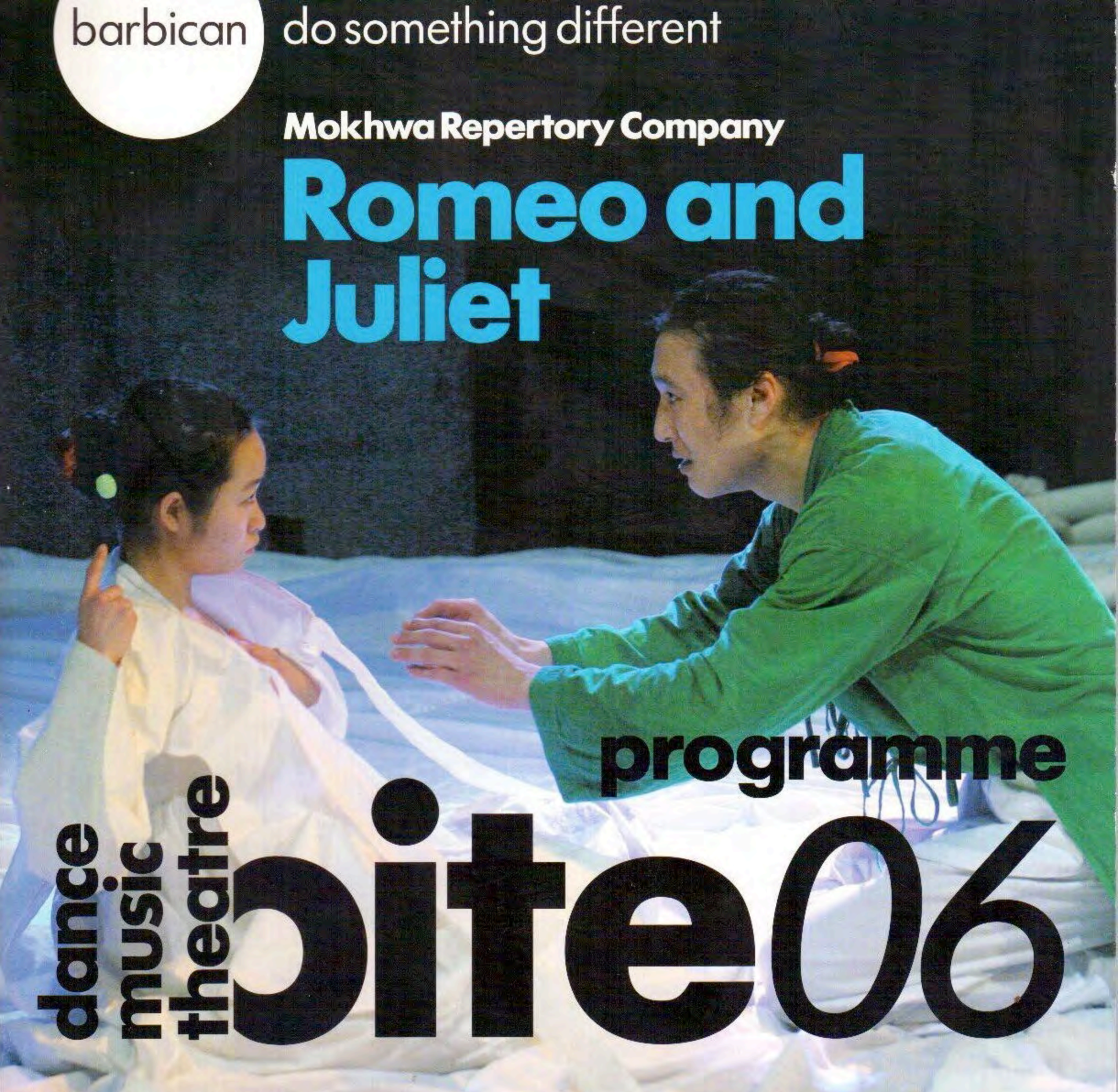
barbican do something different

Mokhwa Repertory Company

Romeo and Juliet



programme

dance
music
theatre

bite06

Welcome to bite06

I am delighted to welcome the Mokhwa Repertory Company to bite on this, their first visit to the UK. It is an honour to present a production by Oh Tae-Suk. For many years Master Oh has been one of Korea's leading theatre artists. He holds a professorial Chair at Seoul Institute of the Arts, and this year he was made Artistic Director of the National Drama Company of Korea.

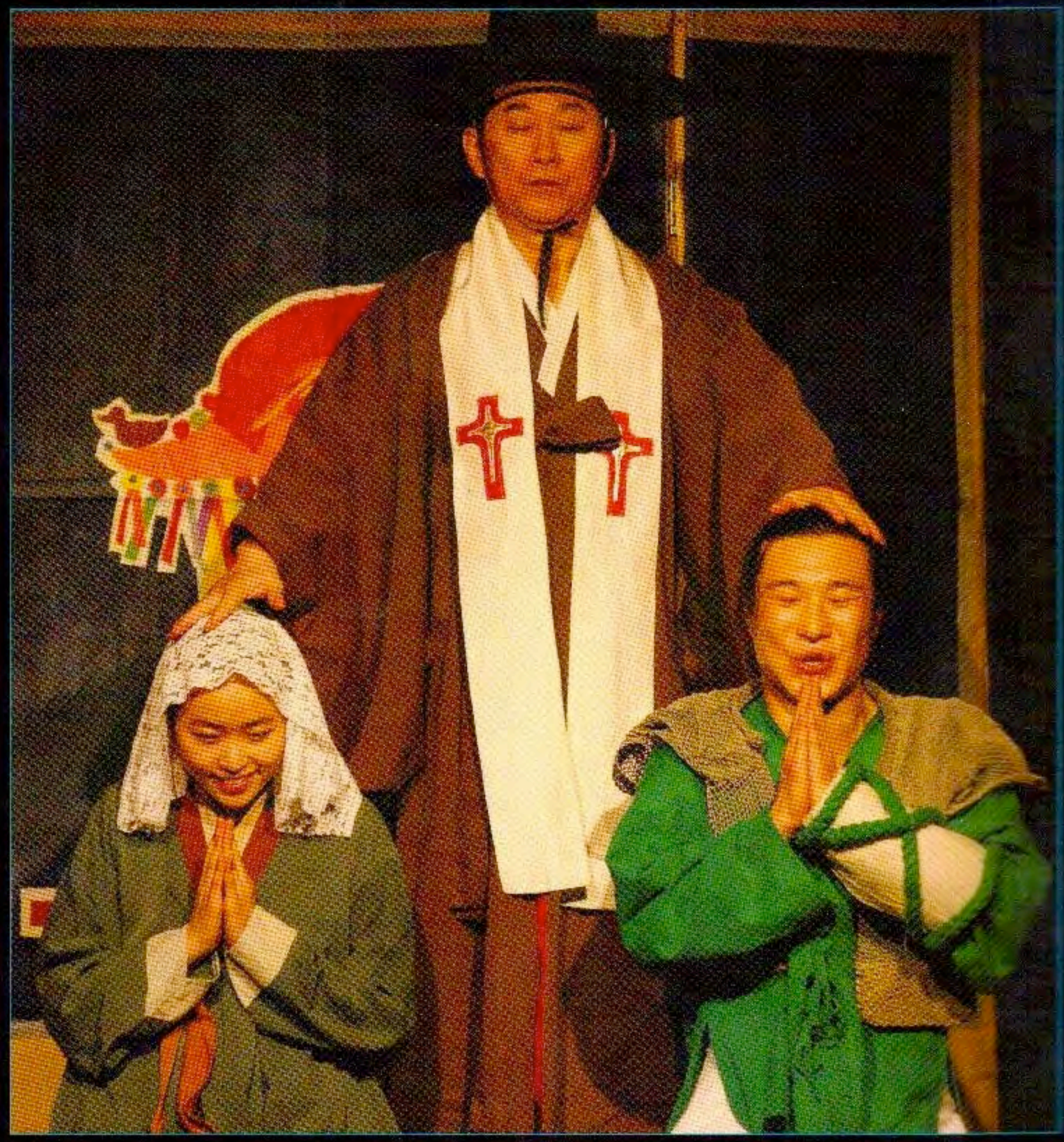
Many people helped us to bring this *Romeo and Juliet* to the Barbican and I would like to extend my thanks to all of them. Nicolas Barter, the Principal of RADA, sent me a video and introduced me to the production. Myung-joo Chung organised a trip to South Korea so that I could experience this beautiful, joyful and exuberant performance live. Betty Yao and all at Asia House have provided invaluable assistance in presenting the project, always with great enthusiasm. Finally, special thanks to the Korea Foundation, without whose generous support the project would simply not have been possible.

I hope you will enjoy the performance.

Louise Jeffreys
Head of Theatre, Barbican

In this production of *Romeo and Juliet*, we are once again reminded of the durability of theatre and how our endeavours must continue to capture the ever elusive truth on the stage, no matter how difficult and challenging that process may be.

Ah-jeong Kim
Dramaturg and Professor in the Department of Theatre at California State University



The Theatre of Oh Tae-Suk

Oh Tae-Suk, or Master Oh as his company and Korean audiences call him, was a dramatist before becoming a director. Given this approach to directing it is no surprise that words are crucial to the life of his productions but it has also meant that, in rehearsal, words are still at his disposal, along with everything else. For Oh Tae-Suk the story and the persons involved are a continuous challenge to his imagination, along with the performances he has conjured into existence. Theatre, he believes, only exists in the present and the present is always making new demands.

Performances and rehearsals develop together as the director-dramatist seeks to entertain his audiences and alert their consciousness. The Mokhwa Repertory Company's *Romeo and Juliet* that I saw in Seoul in 1995 was very different from the one I saw in Bremen in 2001; this production, re-created for the Barbican, will be different again and have its own unprecedented life.

Memorable from the first performance I saw were the young men of the streets of Verona, acting in the disciplined and athletic manner of a martial folk-dance that can still be seen in town squares today: by this traditional Korean means, the feuding of Montagues and Capulets had a seemingly unstoppable energy and an awareness of danger. In contrast, very slow and ritualistic movements, using all the space of a large empty stage, gave an uncommon concentration to the passions of the young lovers. Yet strangely, when most caught up in what was happening, they seemed unaware of each other and, even, of themselves. At other times, especially when the Nurse was on stage, the production came close to caricature.

In Germany, the impact of the ensemble made the greatest impression on me and, evidently, on the entire audience. The skills and commitment of each member of the company had produced an abundant life on stage and yet, at times, the story was driven forward swiftly, with single-minded aim, towards its conclusion. In this version, the irreconcilable feud and consequent deaths were seemingly unavoidable and a communal responsibility. On reflection, the little I knew of the events that have divided Korea and the multiple hardships and deaths endured seemed

to lurk insistently behind this play about Verona staged with set and costumes that reflected both renaissance Europe and traditional Korea.

The contribution of the Mokhwa ensemble reaches all aspects of a production. Its collaborative and multi-competent participation became very obvious when I watched preparations for performing one of Oh Tae-Suk's own plays in California. Out of cheap plastic, very perishable cardboard boxes, and other readily available material the actors had made the properties and much of the set for *Why did Shim Ch'ong Plunge into the Sea Twice?* and now, in an unfamiliar city, they were making them again. The staging was simple – Mokhwa means *raw* cotton – and yet the scene changes frequently and includes a TV song-contest and a journey to the Dragon King's palace under the sea, for which the front rows of an audience are provided with a water-proof covering. I was told that the actors had also made the contemporary costumes for this play that tells a fantastic, improbable and arcane story dating from centuries ago.

By reflecting everyday life and using the language and rhythms of street talk Oh Tae-Suk can show the dangers facing contemporary Korean society while, in plays set in the past, he reminds his audiences of what they might forget. The traditional narrative form that he uses emphasises process and consequence, rather than crisis and climax. The stories have multiple strands, strong contrasts, and unexplained events that are intended to set audiences thinking. His actors face the audience rather than engage with each other, and speak of the moment rather than reveal how thoughts and feelings have arisen.

This style of theatre is indebted to the theory and dialectical plays of Bertolt Brecht, topped up with influences from twentieth-century absurdist theatre that challenge Oh's audience's imagination further and more outrageously. When Korean theatre turned to Europe for inspiration these were the dominant models; Aristotle's influence was not obvious when few dramatists were writing about a single remarkable hero involved in an action that concludes with a comprehensive reappraisal or judgement. For some years Korean writers and directors ignored their own

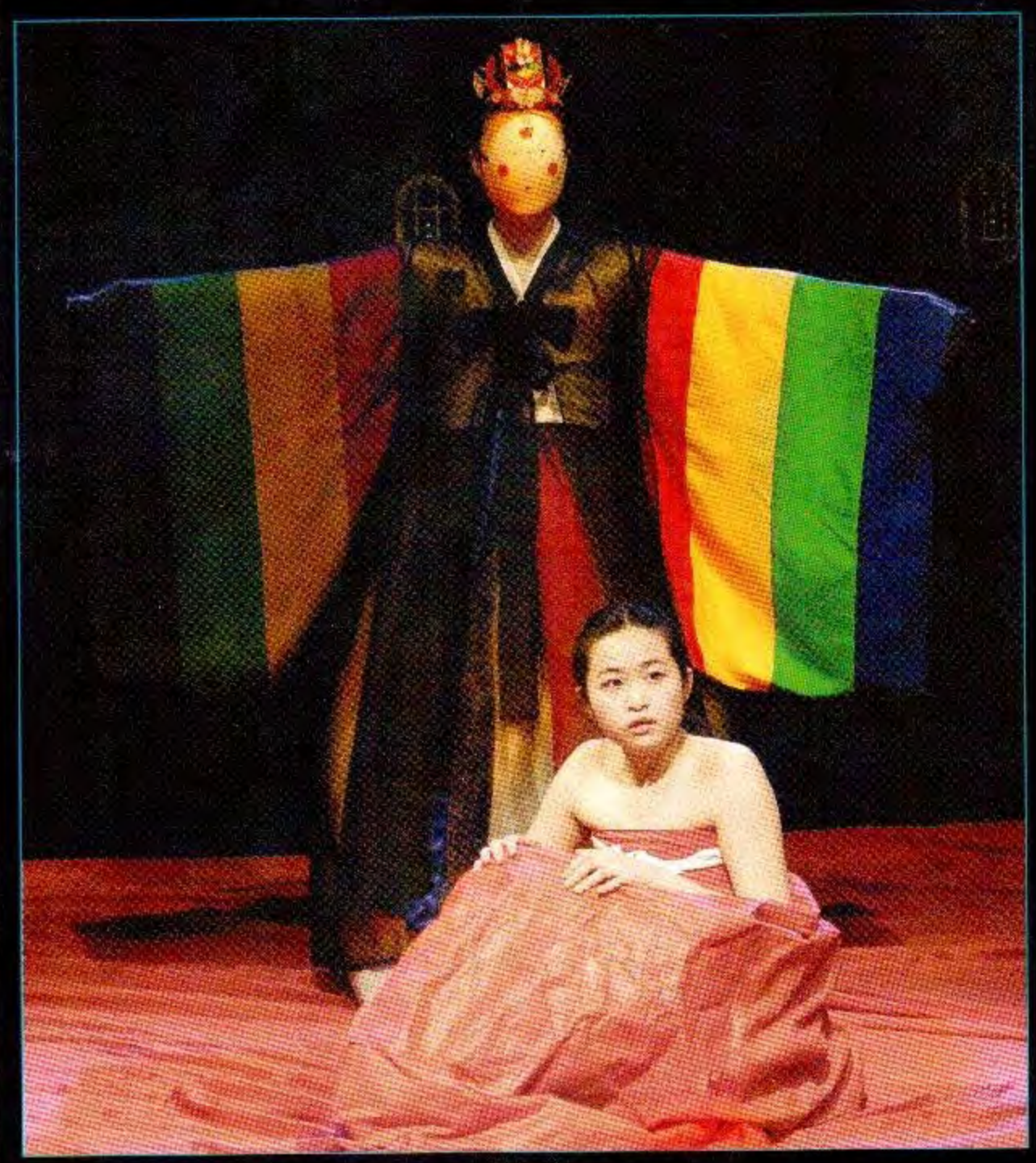
traditions in favour of what was new from Europe; the old forms were studied and protected as if they only belonged in a museum.

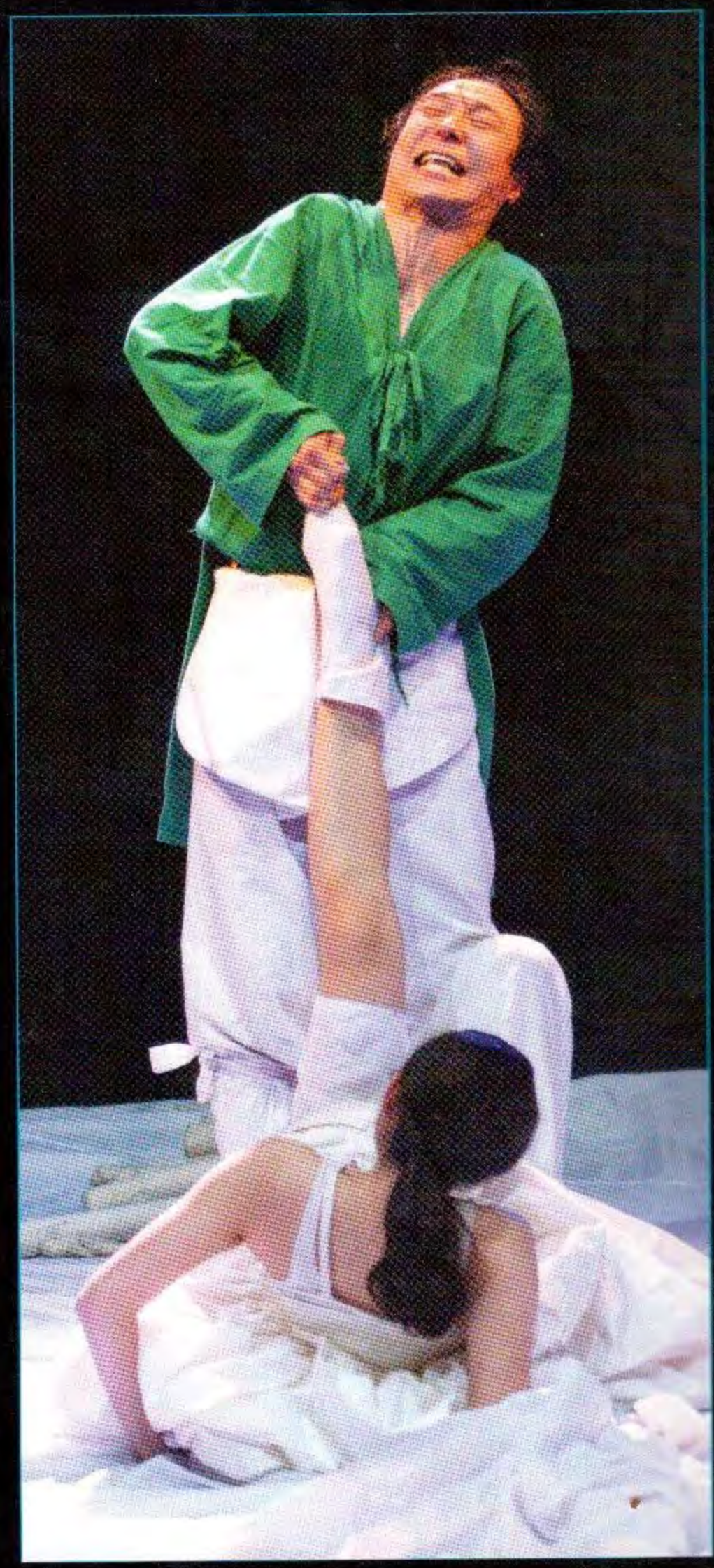
More recently theatre has become multi-cultural and in Oh Tae-Suk's work, as both dramatist and director, the streams are combined, the new European meeting the traditional Korean. When he relies on complex and lengthy narratives his plays derive from an ancient tradition of solo storytelling using many voices and musical accompaniment. Satirical clarity and broad comedy he borrows from small-scale masked performances that in rural areas are alive to local and topical concerns and may feature both type characters and recognizable impersonations. Oh Tae-Suk's re-creation of past times is indebted to forms of performance by which shamans draw forth the spirits of the dead to bless new endeavours, reduce conflict, pay reverence, or foretell the future.

With past and present cohering or competing in one production and in plays that occasionally are outrageous or puzzling, Master Oh is both Brechtian and, I think, Shakespearian. Although translation, omissions, additions, and rearrangements are entirely in his hands, he cares about Shakespeare's words and turns back to the original text repeatedly. On stage the very different rhythms natural to Korean speech and

the physical energy and confident presence of his actors make their own immediately effective and carefully considered effect, whatever the language and culture of an audience.

John Russell Brown
Visiting Professor of Theatre at Middlesex University and author of *New Sites for Shakespeare: theatre, the audience and Asia* (Routledge, 1999).





Recovering lost virtues

Oh Tae-Suk's troubled past

Oh's plays are bound to the past. The past may be something he wants to forget and erase. It is the experience and memory of war and death Oh underwent in his childhood and exemplified in his masterpieces *Sansuyu*, *Bicycle* and *Woonsangak*. He was given the keen eyes of a realist by the deaths he witnessed as a child. Those experiences made him a dreamer, a psychoanalyst, a philosopher who looks into life and death and a clown who crosses the borders between these roles.

Kim Bang Ok

A father abducted

When I was 11, the Korean War broke out. One day a car stopped in front of our house and my father was forced to get into it and he was abducted. After that, everything in my life changed. On rainy days, my mother no longer came to collect me from school with an umbrella. Yellow became red; red became black; and black became white overnight. That's when I realized that living in this world is not easy. While following the frontline at the age of 11, I learned how horrible death is.

Oh Tae-Suk

Lost virtues

In the old days we were more sympathetic. When we met a stranger travelling late at night we would invite him to our house and offer him the best room to stay in overnight and served him a good meal – even if our food was running out. When we saw a teacher in the distance, we would stop whatever we were doing and run to him and say 'hello' and ask him if he had eaten. We never stepped on our teacher's shadow. These were our manners. There are other examples. We left food out for the birds, and we didn't dig up all the potatoes, leaving some for the moles and saying 'Eat this potato and have many baby moles'. Progress, which has moved too fast, has made us lose these virtues, and modern people consider such things worthless and useless, but we should have kept them. They are needed in everyday life, and might be recovered if we stopped thinking only about ourselves and showed a bit more care and a true heart.

Oh Tae-Suk

The consolation of an ancient past

Looking back over our past in the last 100 years, it is dark and depressing. What hope can we find there? But if we go back 4000 years, or even just 500, it's very different... In some respects, compared to 4000 years, 100 years means nothing. We Koreans don't need to get obsessed by the events of the last 100 years. What we need to do is learn the wisdom of that time to give us insight

into how we're doing right now. Then, perhaps, we will find a way of restoring our sapped energy.
Oh Tae-Suk

P'ansori
In P'ansori, all that is needed is a simple mat. On it, the P'ansori singer can perform for nine straight hours. In just two steps he can travel from a village on the island of Jeju at Korea's southern tip to a district in Seoul. This way we can use the space freely, divide and reorganize it. We can make it big and then small again. I find this use of space and time remarkable. The fast can go slowly, the slow fast... Everyday experiences can be reversed, turned inside out and presented in unexpected ways.
Oh Tae-Suk

Biographies

Oh Tae-Suk (Writer and Director)

Since co-founding his first ensemble in 1963, Oh Tae-Suk has written and directed over sixty plays. He is one of the most outstanding playwrights, directors, and executive producers in Korea. He has pioneered developments in the Korean theatre by using traditional Korean sources and theatrical methods to create a new theatrical methodology. He has broken up and rearranged the components of many theatrical traditions – including those of ancient Greece, Shakespeare, Brecht, traditional Korean theatre, and the theatrical traditions of other Asian countries – into a new artistic order, and so helped Koreans to rediscover and restore the identity of the Korean theatre. He has also retrieved otherwise extinct Korean words by collecting local accents from every district of Korea and from those Korean dialects used in China and Japan to develop a systematic Korean theatrical language.

His most celebrated works include *Lifecord* (1974), *Ch'un-p'ung's Wife* (1976), *Bicycle* (1984), *Intimacy Between Father and Son* (1989), *Why did Shim-Chong Plunge into the Sea Twice?* (1990), *By The Moonlit Baekma River* (1993), *Corsica* (1996), *A Prisoner of a Thousand Years* (1998), *My Love DMZ* (2002), and *Yonghosangbak* (2005). More than twenty collections of his works have been published in Korean, English, German, Japanese, and Polish. As well as being the Artistic Director of the Mokhwa Repertory Company, Oh Tae-Suk is the Artistic Director of the National Drama Company of Korea and holds a professorial chair at the Seoul Institute of the Arts.

Awards include Hyundai Munhak Literary Prize for New Writers for *Birnam Forest* (1970), First Prize, Joongang Cultural Awards for *Grass Tomb* (1973), Grand Prix, The National Theatre Awards, Korea and Best Production, Seoul Critics Group's Awards (1987), Dongrang Theater Awards for *Intimacy Between Father and Son* (1989), Grand Prix, Donga Theatre Awards (1991), Best Play, Daesan Literary Awards (1993) and First Prize, Joongang Cultural Awards for *Why Did Sim-Chong Plunge Into the Sea Twice?* (1994), Best Play, Backsang Arts Awards for *By the Moonlit Baekma River* (1993), Korean Theatre Critics Awards and Donga Theater Awards for *Corsica* (1996), Korean Theater Critics Awards and Best Production of the Year, The National Theater Association of Korea, for *Birds Don't Use Crosswalk* (1998), Best Play, Backsang Arts Awards for *A Prisoner of a Thousand Years* (1998), The 14th Hoam Arts Awards (2005), Grand Prix, Best Director, Best Actor, Donga Theater Awards, for *Yonghosangbak* (2005).

Chung Jin Gak (Friar Laurence)

Theatre credits include *Africa* (1984), *Ch'un-P'ung's Wife* (1985), *Lifecord* (1986), *Bicycle, Ch'un-P'ung's Wife, Intimacy Between Father and Son* (1987), *Vinyl House* (1989), *Why Did Sim-Chong Plunge into the Sea Twice?* (1990), *Backgu, Do Not Hop Off* (1991), *Intimacy Between Father and Son, Bellflower* (1992), *By the Moonlit Baekma River* (1993), *Romeo and Juliet, Fry Friday* (1995), *By the Moonlit Baekma River, Man's Impulse* (1997), *A Prisoner of a Thousand Years, Who Am I?* (1998), *My Love DMZ* (2002), *Why Did Sim-Chong Plunge into The Sea Twice?, Bicycle, By the Moonlit Baekma River, Man's Impulse* (2004), *The Flute That Calmed Ten Thousand Waves, A Prisoner of a Thousand Years, Romeo and Juliet, Yonghosangbak* (2005), *Romeo and Juliet* (2006). Film and Television credits include *The Era of the Warrior* (2003-4), *Undying Lee Soonsin Etc* (2004-5). Awards include Dongah Ilbo Star Prize (1993), First Prize For Acting, Seoul Theatre Festival (1997).

Hwang Jong Min (Lady Capulet)

Theatre credits include Oh Tae-Suk Theatre Festival – 4plays: *Why Did Sim-Chong Plunge into the Sea Twice?, Africa, Bicycle, Bellflower*

(1994), *By the Moonlit Baekma River, Romeo and Juliet* (1995), *Threepenny Opera* (1996), *Lifecord, Corsica, Man's Impulse* (1997), *A Prisoner of a Thousand Years, Birds Don't Use Crosswalk* (1998), *4plays: Ch'un-P'ung's Wife, Intimacy Between Father and Son, Kosovo and Wandering, Corsica* (1999), *Ch'un-P'ung's Wife, Snow or Rain in the Morning, The Lost River* (2000), *Dressing Room* (2001), *Romeo and Juliet, The Centipede and the Worm* (2002), *My Love DMZ, Front Mountain, Pull! Ogeum, Push!* (2003), *Why Did Sim-Chong Plunge into the Sea Twice?, Bicycle, By the Moonlit Baekma River, Man's Impulse* (2004), *The Flute That Calmed Ten Thousand Waves, A Prisoner of a Thousand Years, Romeo and Juliet, Yonghosangbak* (2005), *Romeo and Juliet* (2006).

Film credits include *Gynecology* (1997), *Save the Green Planet!* (2003), *Leave with Applause* (2004). Awards include The Backsang Arts First Prize for a New Actress (Hankook Ilbo and Daily Sports), First Prize For Acting (Dongah Ilbo) (1998), The Backsang Arts First Prize for Best Actress (2000), The First Prize for Acting (Chunsa Film Arts Festival) (2003), The Award for Best Actress (Buenos Aires International Independent Film Festival) (2004).

Cho Eun A (Nurse/Props and Set Design)

Theatre credits include *By the Moonlit Baekma River, Snow or Rain in the Morning* (1993), *Oh Tae-Suk Theatre Festival, Why Did Sim-Chong Plunge into the Sea Twice?, Africa, Bicycle, Bellflower* (1994), *By the Moonlit Baekma River, Romeo and Juliet* (1995), *Threepenny Opera* (1996), *Lifecord, Corsica* (1997), *A Prisoner of a Thousand Years, Birds Don't Use Crosswalk* (1998), 4plays: *Ch'un-P'ung's Wife, Intimacy Between Father and Son, Kosovo and Wandering, Corsica* (1999), *Ch'un-P'ung's Wife, Snow or Rain in the Morning, The Lost River* (2000), *Dressing Room* (2001), *The Centipede and the Worm, Romeo and Juliet* (2002), *My Love DMZ, Front Mountain, Pull! Ogeum, Push!, Why Did Sim-Chong Plunge into The Sea Twice?, Bicycle, By the Moonlit Baekma River, Man's Impulse* (2003), *The Flute That Calmed Ten Thousand Waves, A Prisoner of a Thousand Years, Romeo and Juliet, Yonghosangbak* (2005), *Romeo and Juliet* (2006).

Kang Hyun Sik (Capulet)

Theatre credits include *Romeo and Juliet* (1995), *Threepenny Opera* (1996), *Lifecord, Corsica* (1997), *A Prisoner of a Thousand Years, Birds Don't Use Crosswalk* (1998), (4plays: *Ch'un-P'ung's Wife, Intimacy Between Father and Son, Kosovo and Wandering, Corsica*) (1999), *Ch'un-P'ung's Wife, Snow or Rain in the Morning, The Lost River* (2000), *Dressing Room, Romeo and Juliet, The Centipede and the Worm* (2001), *Romeo and Juliet, My Love DMZ, Front Mountain, Pull! Ogeum, Push!* (2002), *My Love DMZ, Front Mountain, Pull! Ogeum, Push!* (2003), *Why Did Sim-Chong Plunge into The Sea Twice?, Bicycle, By the Moonlit Baekma River* (2004), *The Flute That Calmed Ten Thousand Waves, A Prisoner of a Thousand Years, Romeo and Juliet, Yonghosangbak* (2005), *Romeo and Juliet* (2006).

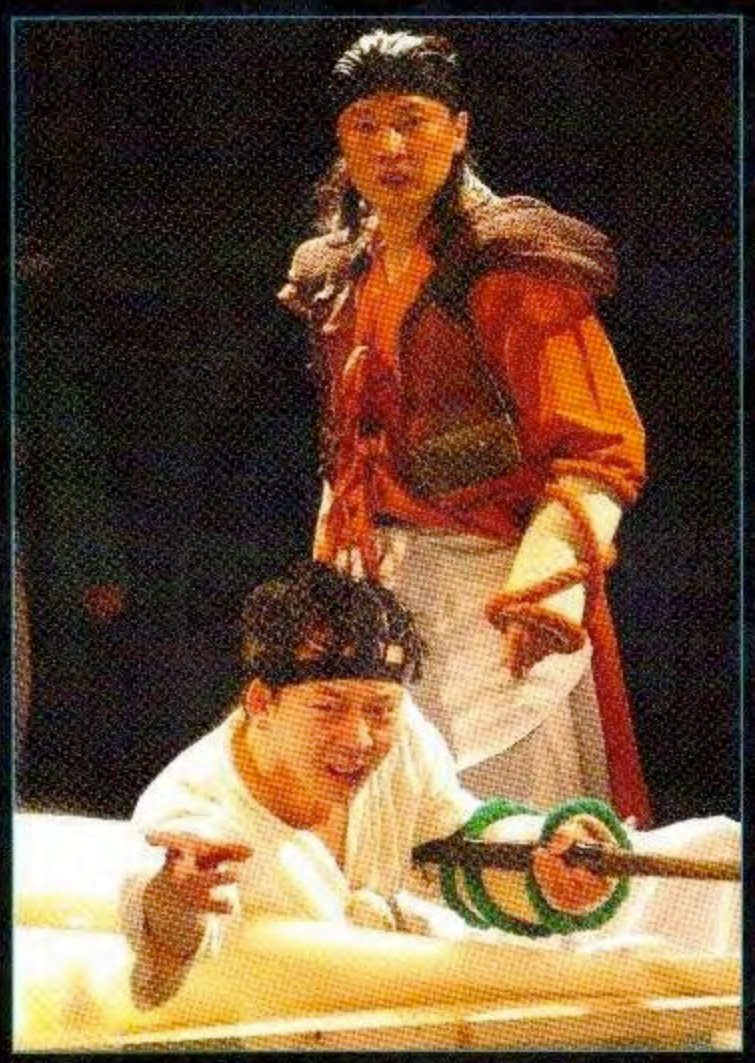
Lee Boung Sun (Prince Escalus/Sound)

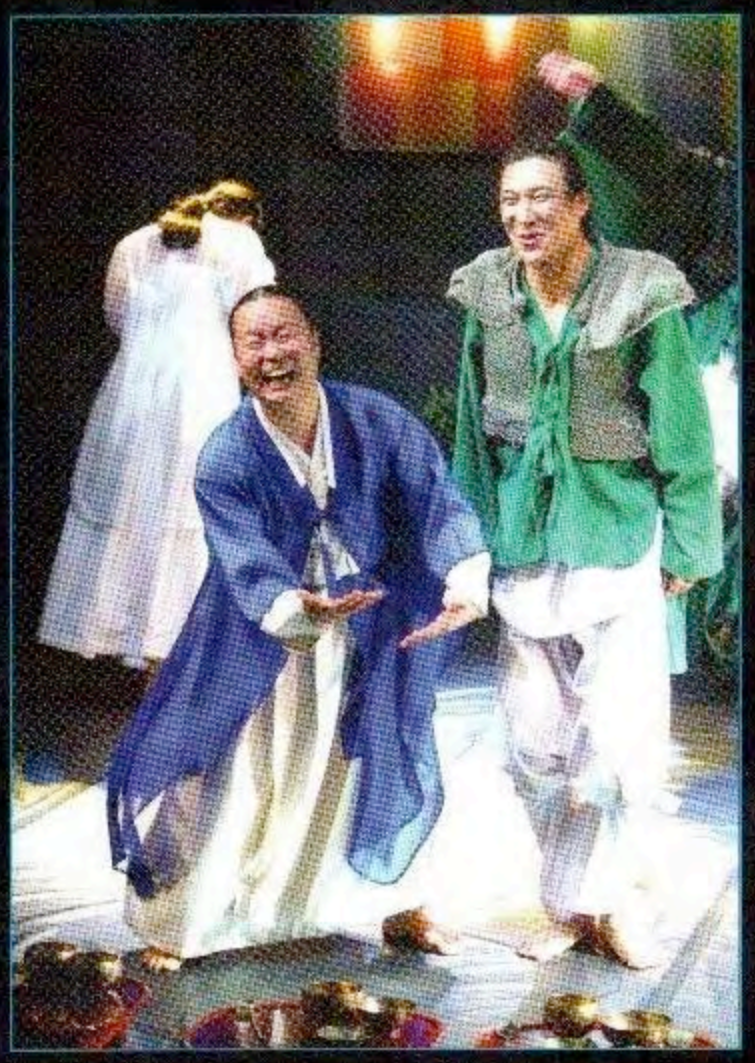
Theatre credits include *A Prisoner of a Thousand Years, Birds Don't Use Crosswalk* (1998), 4plays: *Ch'un-P'ung's Wife, Intimacy Between Father and Son, Kosovo and Wandering, Corsica,* (1999) *Ch'un-P'ung's Wife, Snow or Rain in the Morning, The Lost River* (2000), *Dressing Room, Romeo and Juliet, The Centipede and the Worm,* (2001) *Romeo and Juliet,*

Mokhwa Repertory Company

Romeo and Juliet

Directed by Oh Tae-Suk





We would like to remind you that in the foyer we have a range of quality ice creams, chocolate and other confectionery available for purchase this evening.

Please make sure that all digital watch alarms and mobile phones are switched off during the performance. Sitting or standing in any gangway is not permitted.

Smoking is not allowed in the auditorium. No cameras or any other recording equipment may be taken into the auditorium.

My Love DMZ, Front Mountain, Pull! Ogeum, Push! (2002), *My Love DMZ, Front Mountain, Pull! Ogeum, Push!* (2003), *Why Did Sim-Chong Plunge into the Sea Twice?, Bicycle, By the Moonlit Baekma River* (2004), *The Flute That Calmed Ten Thousand Waves, A Prisoner of a Thousand Years, Romeo and Juliet, Yonghosangbak* (2005), *Romeo and Juliet* (2006). Film credits include *The Man at That Time* (2004).

Lee Soo Mi (Romeo's Friend, Apothecary)
Theatre credits include *Birds Don't Use Crosswalk* (1998), 4plays: *Ch'un-P'ung's Wife, Intimacy Between Father and Son, Kosovo and Wandering, Corsica* (1999), *Ch'un-P'ung's Wife, Snow or Rain in the Morning, The Lost River* (2000), *Dressing Room, Romeo and Juliet, The Centipede and the Worm* (2001), *Romeo and Juliet, My Love DMZ, Front Mountain, Pull! Ogeum, Push!* (2002), *My Love DMZ, Front Mountain, Pull! Ogeum, Push!* (2003), *Why Did Sim-Chong Plunge Into The Sea Twice?, Bicycle, By the Moolit Baekma River* (2004), *The Flute That Calmed Ten Thousand Waves, A Prisoner of a Thousand Years, Romeo and Juliet, Yonghosangbak* (2005), *Romeo and Juliet* (2006). Film credits include *The Man at That Time* (2004).

Kim Hye Young (Lady Montague)
Theatre credits include 4plays: *Ch'un-P'ung's Wife, Intimacy Between Father and Son, Kosovo and Wandering, Corsica* (1999), *Ch'un-P'ung's Wife, Snow Or Rain in the Morning, The Lost River* (2000), *Dressing Room, Romeo and Juliet, The Centipede and the Worm* (2001), *Romeo and Juliet, My Love DMZ, Front Mountain, Pull! Ogeum, Push!* (2002), *My Love DMZ, Front Mountain, Pull! Ogeum, Push!* (2003), *Why Did Sim-Chong Plunge into the Sea Twice?, Bicycle, By the Moonlit Baekma River* (2004), *The Flute That Calmed Ten Thousand Waves, A Prisoner of a Thousand Years, Romeo and Juliet, Yonghosangbak* (2005), *Romeo and Juliet* (2006).

Lee Do Hyun (Mercutio)
Theatre credits include 4plays: *Ch'un-P'ung's Wife, Intimacy Between Father and Son, Kosovo and Wandering, Corsica* (1999), *Ch'un-P'ung's Wife, Snow or Rain in the Morning, The Lost River* (2000), *Dressing Room, Romeo and Juliet, The Centipede and the Worm* (2001), *Romeo and Juliet, My Love DMZ, Front Mountain, Pull! Ogeum, Push!* (2002), *My Love DMZ, Front Mountain, Pull! Ogeum, Push!* (2003), *Why Did Sim-Chong Plunge into the Sea Twice?, Bicycle, By the Moonlit Baekma River* (2004), *The Flute That Calmed Ten Thousand Waves, A Prisoner of a Thousand Years, Romeo and Juliet, Yonghosangbak* (2005), *Romeo and Juliet* (2006). Film credits include *The Man at that Time* (2004).

Ju Hyuk Jun (Friar John)
Theatre credits include *The Centipede and the Worm* (2001), *My Love DMZ, Front Mountain, Pull! Ogeum, Push!* (2002), *My Love DMZ, Front Mountain, Pull! Ogeum, Push!* (2003), *Why Did Sim-Chong Plunge Into the Sea Twice?, Bicycle, By the Moon-Lit Baekma River* (2004), *The Flute That Calmed Ten Thousand Waves, A Prisoner of a Thousand Years, Romeo and Juliet, Yonghosangbak* (2005), *Romeo and Juliet* (2006).

Park Se Yong (Count Paris, Pallbearer)
Theatre credits include *The Centipede and the Worm* (2001), *Romeo and Juliet, My Love DMZ, Front Mountain, Pull! Ogeum, Push!* (2002), *My Love DMZ, Front Mountain, Pull! Ogeum, Push!* (2003), *Why Did Sim-Chong Plunge into the Sea Twice?, Bicycle, By the Moonlit Baekma River* (2004), *The Flute That Calmed Ten Thousand Waves, A Prisoner of a Thousand Years, Romeo and Juliet, Yonghosangbak* (2005), *Romeo and*

Juliet (2006). Film credits *include The Man at That Time* (2004).

Lee Dong Yong (Benvolio/Lighting)
Theatre credits include *My Love DMZ, Front Mountain, Pull! Ogeum, Push!* (2002), *My Love DMZ, Front Mountain, Pull! Ogeum, Push!* (2003), *Why Did Sim-Chong Plunge into the Sea Twice?, Bicycle, By the Moonlit Baekma River* (2004), *The Flute That Calmed Ten Thousand Waves, A Prisoner of a Thousand Years, Romeo and Juliet, Yonghosangbak* (2005), *Romeo and Juliet* (2006). Film credits include *Memories of Murder* (2003), *The Man at That Time* (2005).

Kim Byung Cheol (Romeo)
Theatre credits include *Romeo and Juliet, My Love DMZ, Front Mountain, Pull! Ogeum, Push!* (2002), *My Love DMZ, Front Mountain, Pull! Ogeum, Push!* (2003), *Why Did Sim-Chong Plunge into the Sea Twice?, Bicycle, By the Moonlit Baekma River* (2004), *The Flute That Calmed Ten Thousand Waves, A Prisoner of a Thousand Years, Romeo and Juliet, Yonghosangbak* (2005), *Romeo and Juliet* (2006). Film credits include *The Man at That Time* (2004).

Lee Hae Young (Maiden)
Theatre credits include *My Love DMZ, Front Mountain, Pull! Ogeum, Push!* (2002), *My Love DMZ, Front Mountain, Pull! Ogeum, Push!* (2003), *Why Did Sim-Chong Plunge into the Sea Twice?, Bicycle, By the Moonlit Baekma River* (2004), *The Flute That Calmed Ten Thousand Waves, A Prisoner of a Thousand Years, Romeo and Juliet, Yonghosangbak* (2005), *Romeo and Juliet* (2006).

Kim Mun Jung (Juliet)
Theatre credits include *My Love DMZ, Front Mountain, Pull! Ogeum, Push!* (2002), *My Love DMZ, Front Mountain, Pull! Ogeum, Push!* (2003), *Why Did Sim-Chong Plunge into the Sea Twice?, Bicycle, By the Moonlit Baekma River* (2004), *The Flute That Calmed Ten Thousand Waves, A Prisoner of a Thousand Years, Romeo and Juliet, Yonghosangbak* (2005), *Romeo and Juliet* (2006).

Nam Jung Won (Romeo's Friend, Maiden)
Theatre credits include *The Centipede and the Worm* (2001), *Romeo and Juliet, My Love DMZ, Front Mountain, Pull! Ogeum, Push!* (2002), *My Love DMZ, Front Mountain, Pull! Ogeum, Push!* (2003), *Why Did Sim-Chong Plunge into the Sea Twice?, Bicycle, By the Moonlit Baekma River* (2004), *The Flute That Calmed Ten Thousand Waves, A Prisoner of a Thousand Years, Romeo and Juliet, Yonghosangbak* (2005), *Romeo and Juliet* (2006).

Oh Joo Hwan (Montague, Tybalt's Friend)
Theatre credits include *The Centipede and the Worm* (2001), *Front Mountain, Pull! Ogeum, Push!* (2002), *My Love DMZ, Front Mountain, Pull! Ogeum, Push!* (2003), *Why Did Sim-Chong Plunge into the Sea Twice?, Bicycle, By the Moonlit Baekma River, Man's Impulse* (2004), *The Flute That Calmed Ten Thousand Waves, A Prisoner of a Thousand Years, Romeo and Juliet, Yonghosangbak* (2005), *Romeo and Juliet* (2006). Film credits include *The Man at That Time* (2004).

Jang Eun Jin (Tybalt's Friend, Maiden)
Theatre credits include *Front Mountain, Pull! Ogeum, Push!* (2002), *My Love DMZ, Front Mountain, Pull! Ogeum, Push!* (2003), *Why Did Sim-Chong Plunge into the Sea Twice?, Bicycle, By the Moonlit Baekma River* (2004), *The Flute That Calmed Ten Thousand Waves, A Prisoner of a Thousand Years, Romeo and Juliet, Yonghosangbak* (2005), *Romeo and Juliet* (2006).

Lee Youn Ju (Maiden)
Theatre credits include *Front Mountain, Pull! Ogeum, Push!* (2002), *My Love DMZ, Front Mountain, Pull! Ogeum, Push!* (2003), *Why Did Sim-Chong Plunge into the Sea Twice?, Bicycle, By the Moonlit Baekma River* (2004), *The Flute That Calmed Ten Thousand Waves, A Prisoner of a Thousand Years, Romeo and Juliet, Yonghosangbak* (2005), *Romeo and Juliet* (2006).

Lee Ha Rim (Romeo's Friend)
Theatre credits include *Why Did Sim-Chong Plunge Into the Sea Twice?, Bicycle, By the Moonlit Baekma River, Man's Impulse* (2004), *The Flute That Calmed Ten Thousand Waves, A Prisoner of a Thousand Years, Romeo and Juliet, Yonghosangbak* (2005), *Romeo and Juliet, My Love DMZ* (2006).

Choi Sun Ho (Tybalt's Friend / Lighting Operator)
Theatre credits include *Why Did Sim-Chong Plunge Into the Sea Twice?, Bicycle, By the Moonlit Baekma River, Man's Impulse* (2004), *The Flute That Calmed Ten Thousand Waves, A Prisoner of a Thousand Years, Romeo and Juliet, Yonghosangbak* (2005), *Romeo and Juliet, My Love DMZ* (2006).

Song Kyung Hwa (Tybalt's Friend, Maiden)
Theatre credits include *Why Did Sim-Chong Plunge into the Sea Twice?, Bicycle, By the Moonlit Baekma River* (2004), *The Flute That Calmed Ten Thousand Waves, A Prisoner of a Thousand Years, Romeo and Juliet, Yonghosangbak* (2005), *Romeo and Juliet, My Love DMZ* (2006).

Lee Tae Hyung (Tybalt)
Theatre credits include *The Enemy of the People, The Merchant of Venice, Othello, King Henry IV, The Crucible, The Good Woman of Setzuan, King Lear, See You Again, Ttooki, The Loo, Seduction, The Trojan Women* (1997-2003), *By the Moonlit Baekma River* (2004), *The Flute That Calmed Ten Thousand Waves, A Prisoner of a Thousand Years, Romeo and Juliet, Yonghosangbak* (2005), *Romeo and Juliet, My Love DMZ* (2006).

Park Jung Hyun (Maiden, Health Official)
Theatre credits include *My Love DMZ, Front Mountain, Pull! Ogeum, Push!* (2002), *My Love DMZ, Front Mountain, Pull! Ogeum, Push!* (2003), *Why Did Sim-Chong Plunge into the Sea Twice?, Bicycle* (2004), *Romeo and Juliet, Yonghosangbak* (2005), *Romeo and Juliet* (2006).

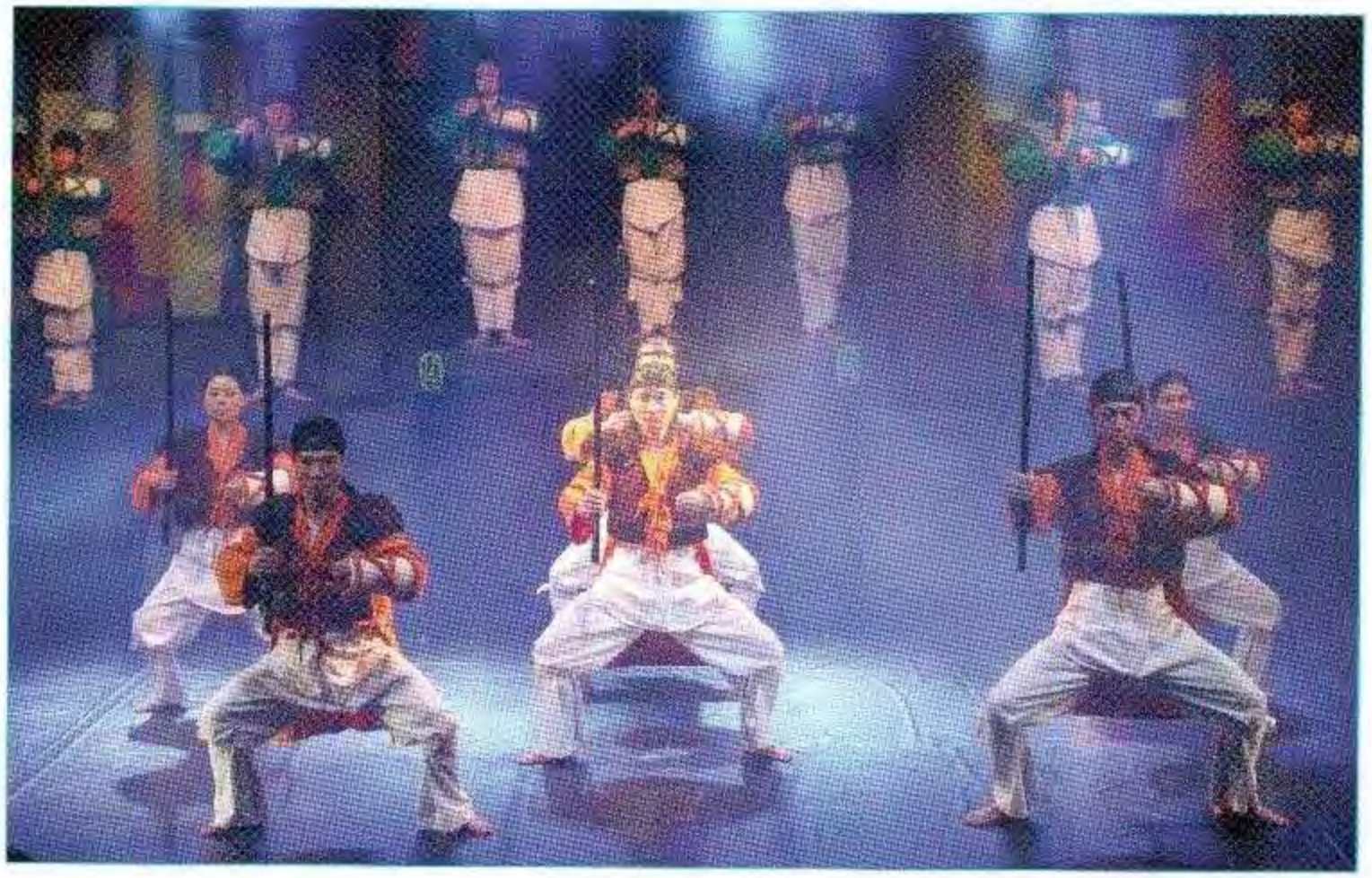
Kim Eun Kyoung (Romeo's Friend, Maiden)
Theatre credits include *My Love DMZ, Front Mountain, Pull! Ogeum, Push!* (2002), *Why Did Sim-Chong Plunge into the Sea Twice?, Romeo and Juliet, Yonghosangbak* (2003), *Romeo and Juliet* (2006).

Yun Hee Kyung (Maiden)
Theatre credits include *Romeo and Juliet*, *Yonghosangbak* (2005), *Romeo and Juliet, My Love DMZ* (2006).

Lim Se Un (Tybalt's Friend)
Theatre credits include *Romeo and Juliet, My Love DMZ* (2006).

Jung Woo Keun (Romeo's Friend)
Theatre credits include *Romeo and Juliet, My Love DMZ* (2006).

Song Young Kwang (Romeo's Friend)
Theatre credits include *Romeo and Juliet, My Love DMZ* (2006).



23 November–9 December

The performance lasts 90 minutes without interval

In Korean with English surtitles

Presented in association with
Asia House and Korea Foundation

Supported by Sung Joo Group

With thanks to the Korean Ministry of Culture and Tourism, the Korean Cultural Centre, the Embassy of the Republic of Korea, the Seoul Institute of the Arts, Hanjin Travel and Lee Jong Wook at Baejko Sink.

www.thinkkorea.org.uk

Photography by Yi Do Hee and Shin Gui Man

Romeo and Juliet

Friar Laurence Chung Jin Gak
Lady Capulet Hwang Jong Min
Nurse Cho Eun A
Capulet Kang Hyun Sik
Prince Escalus Lee Boung Sun
Romeo's Friend, Apothecary Lee Soo Mi
Lady Montague Kim Hye Young
Mercutio Lee Do Hyun
Friar John Ju Hyuk Jun
Count Paris, Pallbearer Park Se Yong
Benvolio Lee Dong Yong
Romeo Kim Byung Cheol
Maiden Lee Hae Young
Juliet Kim Mun Jung
Romeo's Friend, Maiden Nam Jung Won
Montague, Tybalt's Friend Oh Joo Hwan
Tybalt's Friend, Maiden Jang Eun Jin
Maiden Lee Youn Ju
Romeo's Friend Lee Ha Rim
Tybalt's Friend Choi Sun Ho
Tybalt's Friend, Maiden Song Kyung Hwa
Tybalt Lee Tae Hyung
Maiden, Health Official Park Jung Hyun
Romeo's Friend, Maiden Kim Eun Kyoung
Maiden Yun Hee Kyung
Tybalt's Friend Lim Se Un
Romeo's Friend Jung Woo Keun
Romeo's Friend Song Young Kwang

Director Oh Tae-Suk
Dramaturg Ah-jeong Kim
Lighting Design Aikawa Masaaki
Costume Design Lee Seung Moo
Make up Son Jin Sook
Choreographer Bae Jung Hae
Korean Traditional Dance Teaching Kim Hyun Mi
P'ansori Teaching Kim Hyoung Cheol
Music Hwang Gang Rok
Set Design Cho Eun A
Lighting Operators Lee Dong Yong, Choi Sun Ho
Sound Design Kim Byung Cheol
Technical Assistant/Surtitle Operator Paul Matthews
Production Manager Choi Ran Sun
International Production Co-ordinator Myung Joo Chung
Production Assistants Zuck-Geuk, Yang Yoon Jung, Lee Hyun Hee

The world has gone mad like an unbridled horse running wild.

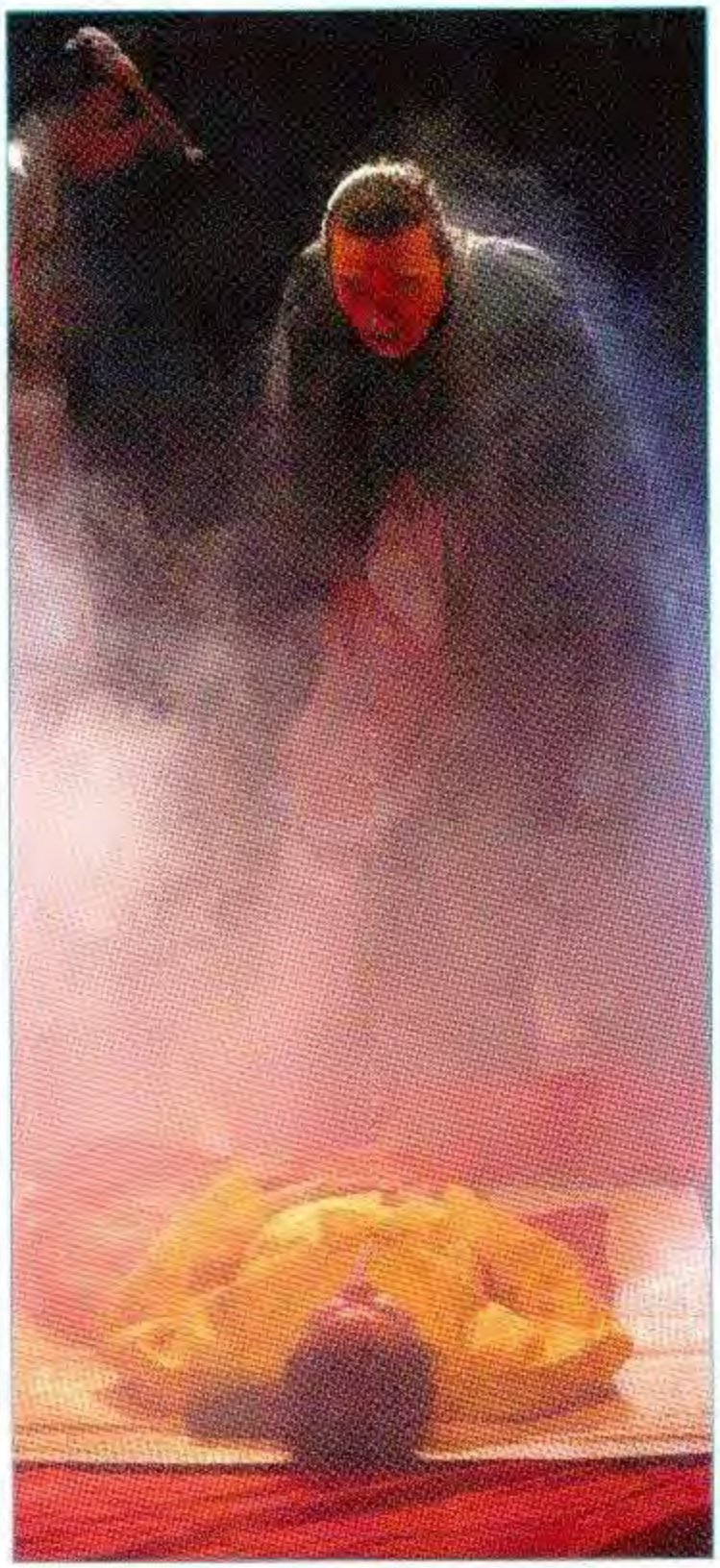
Suspicions, hatred, slander and screaming run rampant among generations and regions. Vulgarity spreads like a fever, an epidemic and a plague. These flames of anger are constantly stoked without any sign of subsiding.

In the past, we used to have an expression, 'Neighbours as close as cousins.'

We all used to have a grandmother who, during the harvest, would leave a few persimmons on the treetops for crows to eat and leave behind potatoes for moles to eat.

Like the sky clears after rain, I hope that seeing this play will make your inside glow.

Oh Tae-Suk

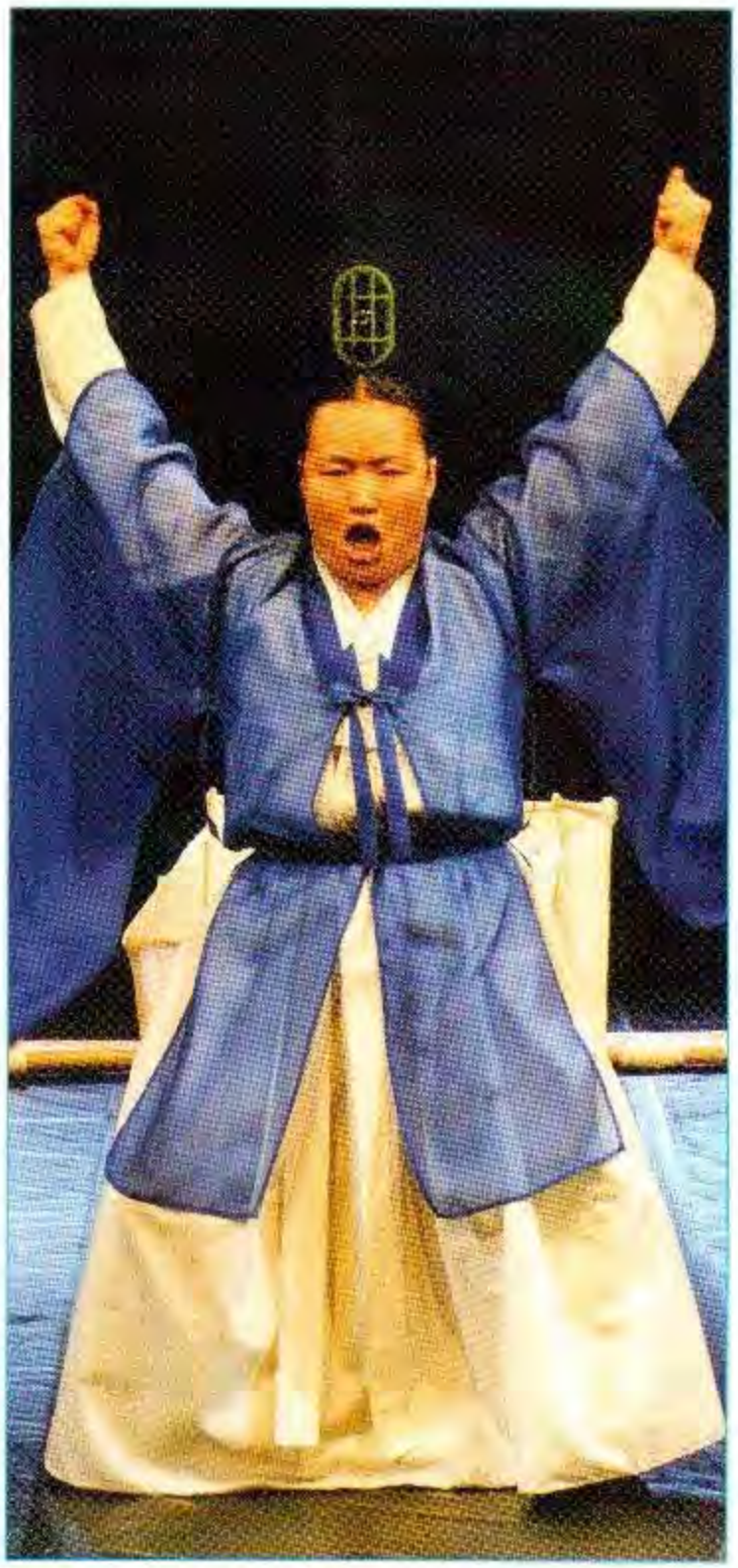


A stimulus to the imagination

It is said that there are only two periods in the history of modern theatre in France: before and after Jacques Copeau. The history of modern Korean theatre (1902-2006) can also be divided into two periods: before and after Oh Tae-Suk.

The playwright, director and acting teacher Oh Tae-Suk (b.1940) emerged as an avant-garde theatre artist in the 1960s, opposing the then dominant *shinguk*, a generic term referring to modern Korean theatre modeled after realistic European and American drama. While 'Western' in its framework, Oh's theatre is decidedly Korean in sentiment and spirit and the result of forty years of relentless experimentation in search of a new theatre aesthetic that merges Western dramaturgy with Korean traditions. Oh's original plays, over sixty and still counting, and his unique directing methods have made his name virtually synonymous with the post-*shinguk* in Korea. 'One of the most significant playwrights/directors since the time of Bertolt Brecht,' (*Choice* magazine), Oh's influence reaches far beyond the borders of his nation.

Shakespeare was introduced to Korea in the 20th century. To most Koreans Shakespeare was a prominent yet distant literary figure, and during the first half of the 20th century his plays were only sporadically performed by amateur actors. Shakespeare became known not through theatrical productions but movies. For example, Korean audiences were enthralled by a Hollywood silent film version of *Romeo and Juliet* in 1922, in which a narrator spoke in an artificial and exaggerated style familiar from the so-called *shinp aguk* (new school of drama), the then dominant commercial melodramas imported from Japan.



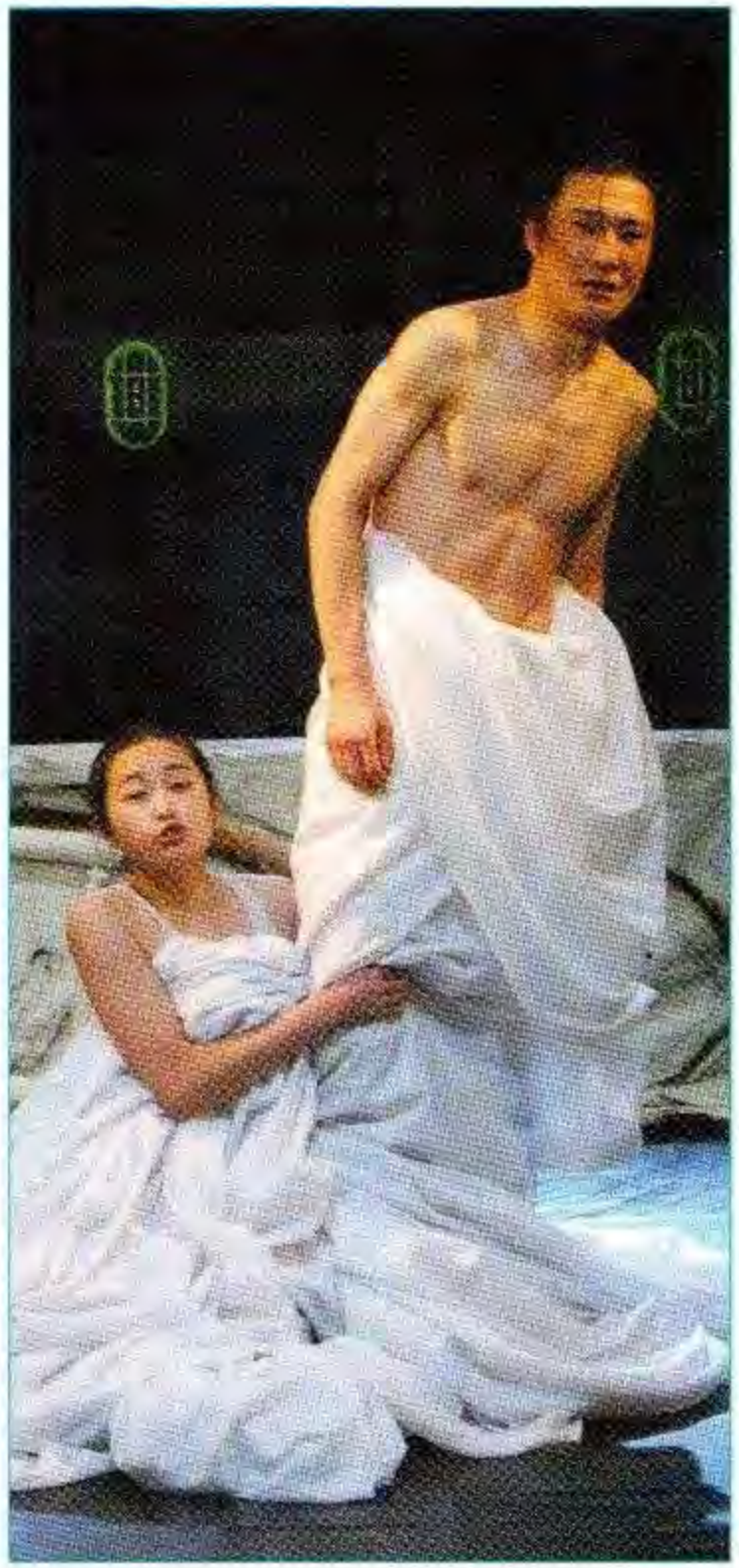
Korean scholarly research on Shakespeare advanced in the 1930s, but Shakespeare still remained largely a subject for academic research in the field of English literature. This limited exposure of Shakespeare was due, in large part, to poor cultural and social conditions, the results of a tumultuous modern Korean history. Nevertheless it is interesting to note that one of the most successful productions of *Hamlet* was staged in the midst of the Korean War (1950-1953). A theatrical group known as *Shinhyop* staged the tragedy in the southern port city of Busan, which became the last shelter from the communist North. Director Lee Hae-rang, actor Kim Dong-won, and translator Han Roh-dan all became leaders of modern Korean theatre after this historic production of *Hamlet*.

During the latter half of the 20th century, Shakespeare studies made considerable progress, but the theatrical development of Shakespeare lagged behind. In fact, it has only been in recent decades that

Shakespeare adaptations have become popular in contemporary Korean theatre.

Mokhwa's adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet* has been critically acclaimed both in and outside Korea and has been extremely well received by audiences as well. To bring Shakespeare to life in a different time and place requires an unusual level of understanding and mastery of theatre art. Haphazard adaptations often mangle Shakespeare's original text usually in the name of 'deconstruction' and reduce his brilliant characters into mere caricatures. Oh Tae-Suk is one of the few theatre directors working in the world today who can do justice to the genius of Shakespeare.

Oh uses simple and direct Korean language, rhythm, dance and colours that are authentic to Korean culture. In this production, his transposition is so skillful and complete that it seems to obliterate any artistic and cultural discrepancies that exist between the original and its adaptation.

There are four distinct principles in the directing methodology of Oh Tae-Suk; namely, unexpectedness, spontaneity, omissions and skips. For each and every performance, Oh makes changes to the text in order to bring the language closer to our constantly evolving reality. Oh resists theatre manufactured factory-style for mass consumption. In his view, theatre must always be in a constant state of flux. He demands active audience participation to fill in what has been omitted and to connect what has been skipped. He even goes as far as to say that the audience should interfere, in a way, with what happens on the stage as a director, author, and actor.

Oh's theatre methodology breaks down the 'fourth-wall,' which he believes blocks the circulation of energy. Notoriously, actors in the Mokhwa Repertory Theatre Company do not converse face to face. Oh imagines that his audience should serve as a mirror, bouncing the lines back to the actors on stage. Driven by these four principles – unexpectedness, spontaneity, skips, and omissions – Oh's theatre seems confusing or difficult to comprehend at times. However, he never uses abstract notions for the sake of ambiguity. His abstraction is to incite the audience to use their imaginations to make them active participants in the work. That way, he seems to believe, the abstract elements remain as after-images in the minds of the audience long after the play is over. Oh's philosophy of theatre is clearly reflected in his motto, 'Theatre for slow and deep breathing'.
In an age of instant text-messaging, internet and mobile phones, when advanced technology seems to push people to a state of perpetual motion and frenzy, Master Oh reminds us of the virtue of 'slow and deep breathing.'