

Shades of Japonisme in Hungarian Set and Costume Design Around the Turn of the 20th Century

Mirjam Dénes

The effect of Japanese art on European modern art movements from the second half of the 19th century is already a well-known phenomenon.¹ After the official cease of the isolation of Japan in 1853, the resumption of political and commercial connections between Japan and the West made way to a broad scale of possibilities in cultural and technological exchange. The main aim of cultural policy in the Meiji era was to show an open-minded attitude towards Western culture and as a consequence, Japanese culture became one of the central interests of Western people. Japan was a regular and ever-popular guest of European World Exhibitions, collecting Japanese artefacts was en vogue, not to mention the popularity of salons decorated with Buddhas and colourful fans.²

Admiration of Japan was present in dramatic art and in the entertainment industry as well. Japanese acrobats and ballet-pantomimes were on repertoire at the Parisian Folies-Bergère and at Teatro Eldorado in Barcelona, while operettas and musical comedies were written by English, French, Italian, and Spanish composers, all set in the exotic Japan.³ *La Princesse Jaune* by Saint-Saëns (1872), *Madame Chrysanthème* by Messager (1893), *Iris* by Mascagni (1898), *The Mikado* by Gilbert and Sullivan (1885), and *The Geisha* by Sidney Jones (1896) presented the same colourful and fairytale-like vision that was so familiar to European eyes. Since most Westerners had hardly ever seen an actual Japanese person, they readily accepted the authenticity of the figures depicted on screens and ceramics.⁴

“Visit any contemporary art gallery or exhibition, the studio of any artist, sculptor or decorator and you will see, as clear as day, the influence of Japonism [...]”⁵ The citation above can be read in the Catalan magazine *La Ilustración Artística* in 1896. In works of many contemporary artists the touch of Japanese art can be discovered in two ways: through the stylistic characteristics that derive from the Japanese tradition of woodblock prints and through using symbols and objects that have a special iconographic value in traditional Japanese art. A few examples to the former are the appearance of truncated objects on paintings, using vertical, pillar-like picture formats, the popularity of silhouettes and linearity, the common use of diagonal composition, and the lack of perspective. Examples of iconography are the appearance of cranes, herons, carps, insects, butterflies, dragonflies, bamboo, peonies, and chrysanthemum, and the stylised or not stylised wave motif on either paintings and graphics, or as decoration on

artefacts. Japanese art influenced not only Western artists like Monet, Manet, Degas, Whistler, van Gogh, Picasso, Toulouse-Lautrec, Bredsley, Klimt, Mucha, Munch, Lalique, Tiffany and Gallé, but also many Hungarians like Székely, Rippl-Rónai, Vaszary, Körösfői, Jaschik, Karlovsky and Zsolnay. The art-historical term to describe this phenomenon which started its journey at the 1867 Paris World Exhibition and lasted more than 50 years was coined as Japonisme, either referring to fine and applied arts or to a general interest of the public towards Japanese culture.

In my paper, I will distinguish among different terms used in connection with Japanese influence on European art. I will concentrate on a specific genre and a specific time and place: Japonisme in Hungarian theatrical set and costume designs between 1886 and 1936. In most texts, Japonisme was used as a generic/all-encompassing term, or the terms Japonisme, Japonaiserie and Japonerie were used interchangeably. Only Michael Sullivan gives a clear definition of each notion in his book, *The Meeting of Eastern and Western Art*, where he writes:

“On Japanese influence on the Impressionists I have used three terms that sound similar but mean very different things. Japonaiserie has to do with the creation of a Japanese effect in a picture by adding fans, kimonos, vases, screens and other oriental paraphernalia; Monet’s *La Japonaise* is a good example. Japonisme involves serious concern with Japanese pictorial techniques and may or may not include Japanese accessories; Manet’s *Zola* is a fairly primitive example, van Gogh’s *Bedroom in Arles* is a very advanced one. Japonerie is a word applied chiefly to rather frivolous objects made in the Japanese manner.”⁶

Although Sullivan uses the terms only for describing visual arts and only for the period of French Impressionism and Post-impressionism, Amanda Steadman argues that the same notions can be used equally for describing musical pieces.⁷ She not only changes the genre in discussion from visual arts to music, but also applies Michael Sullivan’s terms to a much longer period, beginning with Gilbert and Sullivan’s musical comedy, *The Mikado* (premiered in 1885) and finishing with Olivier Messiaen’s *Sept Haïkaï* (written in 1962).

Steadman, contrary to Sullivan, does not categorise each work by one of the three terms, but she shows the different characteristics of Japonerie, Japonaiserie and Japonisme found in these works.⁸ Although the majority of the discussed works are not composed for stage, she dedicates the category of Japonerie only to visual elements, thus using it only when examining *The Mikado* and *Madama Butterfly*. In doing so, she has created a rigid and (considering the slight difference in signification of Japo-terms) superficial categorisation.

When summarising the characteristics of Japonerie, she writes: “Visual elements such as props, costumes and sets are an audience’s first clue toward an exotic location, and as such do not necessarily need to be from that location, but merely suggestive of that place. The same holds true for an opera attempting to recreate a different time. It is unnecessary to use antique furniture or costumes, one only needs to have things which look old.”⁹ In Steadman’s reasoning, all theatrical works that contain elements that look like a Japanese fan, a kimono, or a branch of a blossoming cherry tree should be named Japonerie without observing their aim, quality, or authenticity.

This paper aims to be an antithesis of Steadman's, showing that all theatrical plays planted in Japanese ambience can be categorised by the three terms of Sullivan by examining the particulars of sets and costumes and overall ambience that designers were to suggest. I concentrate on a certain period, between 1886 and 1936, when several theatrical plays set in Japanese environment were on stage in Hungary. The Budapest premiere of *The Mikado* by Gilbert and Sullivan marks the beginning of the period, and *A roninok kincse* (*The Ronins' Treasure*), a dramatic play by the Hungarian playwright Miklós Kállay finishes this "Japonist" era. Both of the Hungarian and non-Hungarian plays were presented on Hungarian stages with great success. In addition, the plays in discussion were shown abroad too, so a wider range of reviews are available for us to qualify these works.

On the one hand, my purpose is to demonstrate that the history of Hungarian theatre indeed had a period that can be described as Japonisme (generic term). On the other hand, by examining dramatic works, both Hungarian and international, set on stage in Hungary, I will demonstrate that a clear classification of Japan-related plays is possible through the examination of sets and costumes, by using the triad of notions offered by Sullivan.

Japonerie

Following Sullivan's thread, one can define Japonerie in theatrical works as: usage of costumes, objects, and elements of scenery on stage, which tend to follow Japanese originals but with no urge for authenticity (in fabric, technique, size, style, structure, etc.), in order to reach a general image that evokes the sensation of Japan in the viewer's fantasy.

Although Sullivan does not show examples for Japonerie in Impressionism and Post-impressionism, Steadman finds an example: "Van Gogh's copies of woodcuts might also be considered under this category, as they are not unique objects, but instead created after Japanese models."¹⁰ The pieces of the series got the titles *Japonaiserie: Bridge in the Rain*, *Japonaiserie: Flowering Plum Tree*, *Japonaiserie: Oiran*, the first two of which are copies of woodblock prints by Hiroshige, and the third one by Keisai Eisen.¹¹ In our case, the word Japonaiserie in the title gives a ground to confusion, as van Gogh used it in another sense, which can be traced through his letters written to his brother in 1888.¹² By examining the contexts, one can see that he uses the expression in most cases for Japanese woodblock print. Thus it can be assumed that in pictures, where he intentionally copied Japanese woodblock prints, the word Japonaiserie in the title simply refers to the source, the original artwork, and has no suggestions with regard to the style or the manner in which it was made. The artworks get closer to van Gogh and at the same time more distant from being "Japanese" by adding painted frames, using different technique, material (oil on canvas), style and format. They create a Japanese sensation without the slightest intention of authenticity, thus they are objects of Japonerie.

Among theatrical works discussed here, two fit my definition of Japonerie: *The Mikado* by Gilbert and Sullivan and *The Geisha* by Sidney Jones. Both come from England originally and both are members of a generation of plays in which Japanese people are considered as funny, exotic, operetta-like, and unreal figures surrounded by colourful, decorative objects of the East.

According to the legend, *The Mikado* was inspired by a Japanese sword that fell on the ground from the wall of Gilbert's study. Although the original source of the story is unknown, it has become part of the literature on the birth of *The Mikado*. However, considering the enthusiasm for everything Japanese in Victorian England, a Japanese sword on a study's wall seems quite natural: as natural as the idea in a playwright's mind to write a Japanese-themed piece to take advantage of a current fashion.¹³ Interest in Japan was at its highest peak in Britain when the 'Japanese village' of Knightsbridge (exhibition and theme park with a population of ca. 100 native Japanese) was opened in 1885.¹⁴ The playbill from 1885 says: "The management desires to acknowledge the valuable assistance afforded by the directors and native inhabitants of the Japanese village, Knightsbridge."¹⁵ To give actors a more Japanese-like character, Gilbert hired some of the villagers to teach them appropriate posture, gestures, mimics, and movements with fans.¹⁶ His act could be seen as a will of authenticity, had he not written the lyrics of the opening choir in a totally different manner: "If you want to know who we are,/We are gentlemen of Japan;/On many a vase and jar,/On many a screen and fan,/We figure in



Fig. 1. Hawes Craven: Set design for *The Mikado* by Gilbert & Sullivan. Act I. Savoy Theatre, London, 1885. London, Victoria&Albert Museum. Inv. no. S.252-1999. Watercolour on paper. 1885.
© Victoria & Albert Museum, London

lively paint:/Our attitude's queer and quaint,/You're wrong if you think it ain't, oh!"¹⁷ Most critics and researchers agree on *The Mikado* being a parody of Victorian British society and its rigid manners, and Gilbert's insisting on the authenticity of the play is a mere effort to put a gloss on the truth: the play is about the English.

The original set design of Act I by Hawes Craven is preserved in the Victoria & Albert Museum and, as indicated in the libretto, it takes place in "The courtyard of Ko-Ko's Palace in Titipu."¹⁸ (Fig. 1) The set shows us a place framed by trees in pink blossoms on the left, a facade of a decorated house with a big terrace on the right and a lake in the background with a five-storey pagoda on the other shore. Regarding architectural elements, the view can be freely considered as Japanese or Chinese. The structure of the palace of Ko-Ko can be identified with that of gates surrounding shrines in Japan around 1700. A similar building was the main gate of the Yusho-in mausoleum at Shibapark, Tokyo, where shogun Tokugawa Ietsugu was buried after his death in 1716. The building can be known from archive photos taken around 1870.¹⁹ The structure of the roof and that of the facade are similar to those of the gate building, but the structure used by Craven is clearly non-functional for its purpose. Chinese elements of the picture are the geometrically shaped wooden fences, the continental structure of the palace (differing from the usual Japanese structures, the floor of which are held by timbers several inches over the ground), and the pagoda by the other side of the lake. Although pagodas are present in Japanese sacral architecture (mainly in a Buddhist milieu) they are also widespread in Nepal, India, Korea, Vietnam or Burma, so they are not the proper elements to articulate the "Japaneseness" of a landscape. Even more confusing is the presence of two Toriis (shintoist wooden gates) in the garden. As Toriis are traditional and official entrances of shinto shrines they should hardly appear in a private garden of a high-ranking officer (Lord High Executioner).

The same superficial approach can be traced when examining the costumes. Charles Ricketts, costume designer for the play's revival in London in 1926 describes these costumes as "...nothing but a dready dressing-gown style unlike anything Japanese..."²⁰ In fact, almost every character appeared in a costume that showed resemblance to kimonos in general, but their tailoring was much closer to female dressing-gowns and their abundant floral patterns to brocade with lace. Artificial flowers were added to female costumes and the inevitable large paper fans were stuck in every character's hands, as it can be seen in most archived pictures.²¹ *The Mikado* premiered in Hungary on 10 December 1886, in Népszínház (Folk Theatre) with a Hungarian cast, but it followed English patterns.²²

Another play with a Japanese venue premiered in Hungary after its general success in London, New York, and Berlin. *The Geisha* by Sidney Jones debuted in Daly's Theatre, London on 25 April 1896, and on 16 October 1897 in Budapest as the opening piece for the inauguration of Magyar Színház (Hungarian Theatre).²³ It seems to have been a coincidence that the same play debuted in Vienna's Karlstheater on the very same day. But considering its enormous popularity wherever it had been shown before, the premier of *The Geisha* must have been rather a matter of prestige in the bi-centred Austro-Hungarian Empire.²⁴ A review in The New York Times says about the sets: "The piece was tastefully mounted, with two purely ideal views of Japan, in which the roses and chrysanthemums bloom as naturally as possible."²⁵ It also states that "of course, is



Fig. 2. Unknown Photographer: *The Geisha* by Sidney Jones. Király Színház, Budapest, 1912. Budapest, OSZMI. Inv. no. A247.1/10. Photograph. 1912. © OSZMI, Budapest

not a bit Japanese, except in a Western and frivolous way.” Yoko Kawaguchi, in his book *Serene Gardens: Creating Japanese Design and Detail in the Western Garden* explains how unnatural this set was indeed: “The curtains opened on a view of the Tea-house of Ten Thousand Joys, with geishas posing on a humpbacked red bridge spanning a carp-pond. Flowers were used to establish the “Japanese” setting: in the first act, wisteria dripped from the eaves of the tea-house (though wisteria is never grown against a house in Japan); in the second, the stage was overflowing with chrysanthemums, which flowers much later (though no time was supposed to have passed between the acts).”²⁶

Although I have not found visual sources of the sets used in Magyar Színház, archives of the play in Király Színház (King Theatre) 15 years later may refer to the original scenery.²⁷ (Fig. 2) The stage was covered by a tent of blossoming tree branches with an arsenal of paper lanterns hanging from them. The background reveals the contours of pagoda-like buildings and the silhouette of a humpbacked wooden bridge. On other photographs even details of buildings are visible: a timber framed construction rich in ogee arches decorated with bright (possibly gold) motifs.²⁸ This type of building exists only in the imagination of Western people but not in Japan.

Even less authentic is the presence of the Gaiety Girls during the play in London. These elegant ladies, wearing haut couture in accordance with the very latest fashion, often showed up in musical comedies beginning in the 1890s at the Gaiety Theatre and also at Daly’s to make shows more spectacular by their dancing and singing, also, to advertise the latest fashion.²⁹ The Gaiety Girls playing English ladies visiting Japan in spectacular western dresses resulted in a striking contrast to the other part of the cast in Japanese costumes. Also, the Hungarian audience could observe something very non-Japanese and

unexpected. The main characters (Sári Fedák and Márton Rátkay) performed the Hungarian version of Alexander's Ragtime Band, hit of the time by Irving Berlin in kimonos.³⁰

To summarize the above, musical plays of the late 19th century set in Japan tried to create an atmosphere on stage that resembled Japan but with small attention to details. The addition of extra show elements that had nothing to do with Japan but were parts of the musical comedy tradition, sacrificed authenticity in order to become fashionable. By doing so, they corresponded with the rather frivolous character of what was originally defined as Japonerie by Sullivan.

Japonaiserie

When describing Japonaiserie, Sullivan mentions *La Japonese*, a picture by Claude Monet depicting his wife in a large red kimono surrounded by fans on the walls.³¹ The picture corresponds with his definition: "creation of a Japanese effect in a picture by adding fans, kimonos, vases, screens and other oriental paraphernalia." Steadman adds: "in the context of an otherwise western painting."³² Following our parallel example of fine arts, the shades of Japonisme in van Gogh's paintings, we can mention another good example, the portrait of Père Tanguy.³³ In the portrait of the old colour-dealer, the background is totally covered with Japanese woodcut prints, but neither in Monet's nor in van Gogh's picture can we trace the intention of using Japanese pictorial traditions (e.g. linearity or two-dimensional depiction), and both have European subjects.

Talking about theatrical plays planted in Japan, a search for Western context is irrelevant, so another point of view is needed. This viewpoint must be in relation to the aspects used when defining Japonerie, that is, constructing the Japanese effect. We summarised Japonerie in sets and costumes, as a construction made of unauthentic or hardly authentic objects and other ones not Japanese at all, to evoke the sensation of Japan. In comparison, those plays which I call works of Japonaiserie urge to represent Japan as authentically as possible through elements of set and costume, designed in detail and with special attention to following Japanese cultural tradition. Works of such a genre are often based on pictorial and/or literal sources and a careful research by set designers. By this studious approach, the scenery becomes authentic in its details, but the general sensation is rather a hybrid.

Two representations of the same story on Hungarian stage correspond to our definition. The story of a temporary marriage between the American naval officer and the Japanese geisha is well known since the novel *Madame Chrysanthème* by Pierre Loti. The story, based on historical facts, was a source of inspiration for André Messager's opera with the same title and for John Luther Long's short story, *Madame Butterfly*.³⁴ The two plays that were staged in Hungary in the first years of the 20th century derive from Long's story: *Madame Butterfly*, a one-act drama by the American playwright David Belasco, and *Madama Butterfly*, tragedia giapponese by the Italian opera composer Giacomo Puccini.³⁵

Belasco's drama debuted at Vígszínház on 15 October 1901.³⁶ Until now, I have found only one picture in relation to the performance. (Fig. 3) It shows the protagonist,



Fig. 3. Strelisky: Ilka Pálmay as the main character in *Madame Butterfly* by David Belasco. Vígyszínház, Budapest, 1901. Budapest, OSZK Színháztörténeti Tár. Inv. no. 932/1955 (DKA-002974) Photograph. 1901. © OSZK Színháztörténeti Tár, Budapest

screen, Buddhist altar, and smaller personal objects like mirror and boxes in Japanese style) the atmosphere resembles more of a salon of a European collector of oriental objects than a traditional Japanese house.³⁹ Not only do the sets have attempts of authenticity but also do the costumes and the on-stage appearance of *Butterfly*. Pálmay, who played the main role, insisted on being trained to move and dance in a Japanese way by none other than Sadayakko, the famous Japanese actress and ex-geisha touring Europe at that time, and that her costumes are copies of kimonos worn by Sadayakko.⁴⁰

Puccini's *Madama Butterfly* premiered at Hungarian State Opera House on 12 May 1906.⁴¹ The sets and costumes follow the scheme of those used in Teatro alla Scala, but with several changes. By 1906, the superintendent of the Opera House was Jenő Kéméndy, but both the lack of any sign in his legacy regarding *Madama Butterfly* and the undeniable similarity between the sets of Teatro alla Scala and those of Budapest confirm that the setting of the production was more like a "Puccini-franchise" (or better to say "Ricordi-franchise" considering that publisher Giulio Ricordi owned all rights of the production) than an individual artwork of a Hungarian set designer. (Fig. 4) The spatial arrangement remains the same and the Japanese furniture and decorative elements can also

Ilka Pálmay, in a kimono-like costume seated by a round-shaped window. The background is decorated with bamboo motifs. Even though only small parts of the settings are visible, they are sufficient to make deductions. The round-shaped window and the bamboo-patterned wall are characteristic elements of the set used at the premier of *Madama Butterfly* at Teatro alla Scala in 1904. However, the pictorial source of the interior depicted in the Milan production does not derive directly from Japan, but from New York. Numerous photos are preserved in Archivio Storico Ricordi (publisher of Puccini's works), that show the scenes used at the New York premier of Belasco's *Madame Butterfly*.³⁷ Mercedes Viale Ferrero, in her paper: *Riflessioni sulle scenografie pucciniane*, says the following about the sets of Belasco: "La costruzione di Belasco era in effetti abbastanza esatta quanto alle strutture della «casa a soffitto», sommaria invece quanto agli arredi e agli ornamenti, vera paccottiglia."³⁸ With its colourful and decorated walls (as if the whole surface was covered with kakemonos and woodcut prints) and a rich collection of Japanese objects (vases,

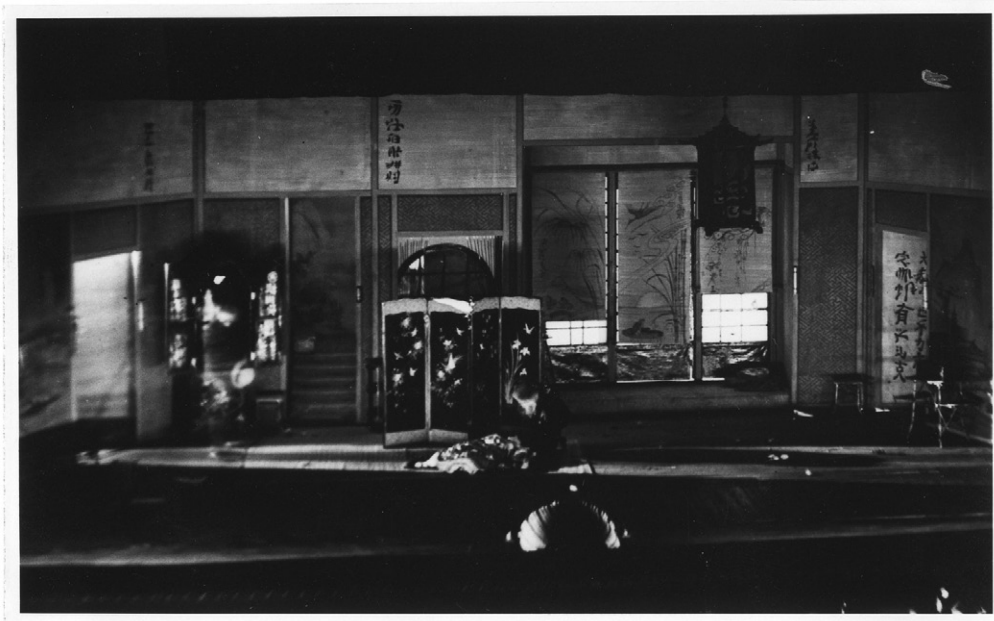


Fig. 4. Unknown Photographer: Act II. of *Madama Butterfly* by Giacomo Puccini. Magyar Királyi Operaház (Hungarian Royal Opera), Budapest, 1906. Budapest, Magyar Állami Operaház Archívuma. Photograph. 1931. © Magyar Állami Operaház Archívuma, Budapest

be found in the same arrangement as on the Milanese or New York stages. No trace can be found, however, of the objects designed in art nouveau style that were seen in sketches for the Milanese sets. The painted bamboo forests and kakemono imitations disappeared; instead, geometrical patterns were used (often applied to ornate Japanese cloths, porcelains, swords and other objects of applied arts, but never walls), which can be seen as a certain tendency towards purism. At the upper part of the walls, black characters were painted to imitate Japanese calligraphy but have no meaning. Even the *Sudare* (bamboo blinds) by the windows facing the garden were decorated following Japanese traditions. These particulars created a much simpler, purer, less bazaar-like interior than the previous stage productions did, but as a whole it was still far from Japanese aesthetic forms.

The Premier of *Madama Butterfly* in the Opéra-Comique, Paris in December 1906 brought a very different approach in terms of staging. The structure of the house got simpler and more authentic with the elevated floor and the cancellation of the staircase; its walls became white framed by undecorated timbers, the floor was covered with *tatami*. The *mise-en-scène* of director Albert Carré used accurate expressions to describe Japanese objects used on stage (*shoji*, *kakemono*, *hibachi*) and gave sufficient description of those, whose names he did not know.⁴² Mercedes Viale Ferrero comments on a letter of Luigi Illica, librettist of Puccini, typifying the new sets as a Japanese woodcut print: “Perché se Illica intendeva che la scena sembrava veramente una stampa giapponese, aveva ragione; ma le stampe giapponesi non hanno nulla di vero [emphasis added by Viale Ferrero] in senso fotografico, sono immagini traslate, cifrate, stilizzate.”⁴³ So the sets of Paris act as a link between Japonaiserie and Japonisme. In

their minucious accuracy on details they still stick to the former one, but the attempt of stylisation and translation described above shows the way towards Japonisme.

Japonisme

Linearity, strong contours, application of the same shade of colour on large surfaces, neglect of perspective or depicting such objects that do not correspond with the laws of perspective, depiction of truncated objects, an attempt of decorativeness: these are some characteristics of Japonisme in visual arts that can also be found when beholding *The bedroom in Arles* by van Gogh. The works carried out in 1888-89 were Sullivan's advanced example on Japonisme in modern art, and correspond to the author's definition in terms of not containing any special Japanese elements or objects but applying stylistic and compositional elements of traditional Japanese art.⁴⁴

Just like when discussing the previous categories, we cannot neglect the Japanese theme in the case of Japonisme in theatre. Discussion can not even be based on our Japanese pictorial techniques when defining Japonisme, instead, we must regard traditional and contemporary Japanese architecture, theatre and attire, and a certain knowledge of history and politics. As an example, I wish to show two very different pieces in attempt of creating a Japanese ambience. Both are works by Hungarian playwrights, *Taifun* by Menyhért (or Melchior) Lengyel from 1909 and *A roninok kincse* (*The ronins' treasure*) by Miklós Kállay from 1936.

Taifun tells the story of a colony of Japanese people living in Berlin at the turn of the century. The main character, Dr. Tokeramo's mission is to study European innovations of economy, engineering, law, and medicine in secret, so as to be able to use them in Japan later. As the story is set in Berlin, the actors wear European clothes and the stage is set in European style. Japanese objects only occur at the moments of nostalgia or when a traditional Japanese act is performed (e.g. tea ceremony). These objects are extremely authentic (as a photo depicting Gyula Hegedűs as Tokeramo shows it), but it is worth mentioning that the tie visible under his kimono shows his assimilation to the West and that the use of the kimono is mere traditionalism.⁴⁵ (Fig. 5) A new and modern Japan is being presented in this play, a country that develops more quickly than any other country at the beginning of the 20th century, a growth which results in the war with the Russian Empire for land. The country that is thought to be well known from woodcut prints does not exist anymore. "Recognizing that in thirty or forty years the Japanese had «passed from Asiatic barbarism to the most advanced European civilisation» and now possessed an army and navy as good as their own, some saw this as «the yellow race threatening the white race for the first time since Genghis Khan» [...]"⁴⁶ The premier of the play in Copenhagen (uniquely in Europe) was a great fiasco. The audience complained about spoiling the idea of the romantic Japan existing in their imagination caused by the actors wearing western pieces of clothing and by the lack of oriental paraphernalia.⁴⁷ It was successful, however, in Berlin, Vienna, London, and Paris, which fact confirms that the romantic image of Japan was not interesting anymore in most parts of Europe.⁴⁸



Fig. 5. Unknown Photographer: Gyula Hegedűs as Dr. Tokeramo Nitope in *Taifun* by Menyhért Lengyel. Vígszínház, Budapest, 1909. Budapest, OSZMI. Inv. no. B67.1/2. Photograph. 1909. © OSZMI, Budapest



Fig. 6. Álmos Jaschik: Main hall of the Kira castle. Set design for *The Ronins' Treasure* (A roninok kincse by Miklós Kállay). Nemzeti Színház (National Theatre), Budapest, 1936. Budapest, OSZK Színháztörténeti Tár. Inv. no. KE 4295 (DKA-003248). Tempera on paper. 1936. © OSZK Színháztörténeti Tár, Budapest

The Ronin's Treasure premiered at Nemzeti Színház (National Theatre) on 24 May 1936. The set and costume designer Álmos Jaschik made an enormous effort to guarantee the highest level of possible authenticity to illustrate the history-based story, Chūshingura. He didn't even call the working process 'designing' but rather 'collecting'.⁴⁹ His research covers a selection of pieces of clothing in period, with adequate colours, patterns and accessories, and the name of each one in Japanese. According to Jaschik's notebook (today in the National Museum and Institute of Theatre History - Országos Színháztörténeti Múzeum és Intézet) he used the images from Julius Kurth's *The Japanese Woodcut - Der Japanische Holzschnitt* as pictorial sources.⁵⁰ In order to focus the audience's attention on the characters (as traditional Japanese theatre also focuses mainly on performing abilities and not on settings), he tried to create a set as simple and modest as possible.⁵¹ (Fig. 6) He didn't stage furniture or decorative objects and the background was under-tinted. In contrast, though he tried to stay loyal to his antitypes, he used abstraction and stylization to favour the public, by enlarging patterns and tailoring and by intensifying colours on costumes.⁵² These forms of stylization derived either from traditional kabuki theatre, or from Jaschik's direct scenic source, the performance of the Tsutsui Troup in Budapest in 1930.⁵³ He used the same structure of set as the Japanese troupe did, and applied many characteristics used in the foreign production: large, wide, slow movements of actors that corresponded to the abstraction of Japanese theatre. By applying these scenic characteristics, Jaschik succeeded in exceeding naturalism, and creating abstraction on Hungarian stage by means of Japonisme.

By examining both performances, we can conclude that Japonisme always derives from profound knowledge of several segments of Japanese culture, and only after the application of this scientific approach can stylistic elements of Japonisme be used in order to create a new work of art inspired by Japan.

After examining stage productions within a period of fifty years in Hungary, it may seem that Japonerie, Japonaiserie and Japonisme followed each other chronologically, but this is not the case. I used paintings by van Gogh as examples of fine art, in order to show that all the three notions can exist parallel, even in works executed at the same time by the same artist. Van Gogh painted the series Japonaiserie shortly before leaving Paris, ca. 1886-1888, *Portrait of Pére Tanguy* was one of the last works executed before he moved to Provence in 1887, and the first version of *Bedroom in Arles* was created shortly after he arrived there. Therefore, it can be seen that creating Japonerie, Japonaiserie or Japonisme is not a question of time, but rather a question of attitude.

In the case of theatrical plays, it is true that there is a chronological line regarding their premier dates, but these plays were not put on stage only for the premiere: they were performed night by night, sometimes even for years. *Taifun*, our example for Japonisme, premiered in 1909, the version of *Madama Butterfly* following the scenic scheme of Teatro alla Scala (Japonaiserie) was performed without changes until 1931, and the revival of *The Geisha* (Japonerie) was showed both at Király Színház (King Theatre) in 1912, and at Fővárosi Operettszínház (Central Music Theatre) in 1925.⁵⁴ A new tendency's arrival does not cancel the previous one. A demand on the part of the public for the old shows does not cease to exist. Therefore, the three notions of Japonisme (generic term) existed beside each other.

Notes

- 1 Siegfried Wichmann, *Japonisme. The Japanese Influence on Western Art Since 1858* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2007); Katalin Gellér, "Japanizmus a magyar festészetben és grafikában," (*Japonism in Hungarian Painting and Graphics*), *Ars Hungarica* XVII (1989) Nr. 2: 179–190; Michael Sullivan, *The Meeting of Eastern and Western Art* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989); Gabriel P. Weisbert et al., *Japonisme: Japanese Influence on French Art 1854–1910* (London: Robert G. Sawyers Publications, 1975); Lionel Lambourne, *Japonisme: Cultural Crossings Between Japan and the West* (London – New York: Phaidon, 2005.)
- 2 Theo Hirsbrunner, "Madame Chrysanthème: An operetta by André Messager," in *Madama Butterfly – l'orientalismo di fine secolo, l'approccio pucciniano, la ricezione*, ed. Arthur Groos and Virgilio Bernardoni (Firenze: Leo S. Olshicki Editore, 2008), 75.
- 3 Jann Pasler, "Japonisme and the Problem of Assimilation," in Groos – Bernardoni, 2008. 40; Ricard Bru, "Ukiyo-e and Japonisme in the Young Picasso's Circle," in *Secret Images: Picasso and the Japanese Erotic Print*, ed. Monta Hayakawa et al. (London – New York: Thames & Hudson; Barcelona: Museu Picasso, 2010), 183.
- 4 Michela Niccolai, "Aspetti della ricezione del mito-Butterfly nella canzone e nell'operetta," in Groos – Bernardoni, 2008, 376; Arthur Groos, "Cio-Cio-San and Sadayakko: Japanese Music-Theater in Madama Butterfly," *Monumenta Nipponica* 54 (1999) Nr. 1: 41–73.
- 5 Bru, 2010, 183.
- 6 Michael Sullivan, *The Meeting of Eastern and Western Art* (Berkeley – Los Angeles – London: University of California Press, 1989), 209.
- 7 Amanda Steadman, *Images of Japonisme. The Portrayal of Japan in Select Musical Works*, a Thesis Submitted to the Graduate College of Bowling Green State University, Master of Music, 2009.
- 8 Ibid.
- 9 Steadman, 2009, 25.
- 10 Steadman, 2009, 8.
- 11 All three works were painted in 1887 (Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam).
- 12 „Je ne l'ai pas lu mais enfin – le chef du petit Boulevard est sans aucun doute Seurat et dans la japonaiserie le petit Bernard a été plus loin peut être qu'Anquetin." Translation: „I haven't read it, but after all — the leader of the Petit Boulevard is without any doubt Seurat, and young Bernard has perhaps gone further than Anquetin in the Japanese style." Letter 620 from Vincert to Theo van Gogh, Arles, on or about 5 June 1888.

„Ah c'est donc comme ça qu'il faut regarder une japonaiserie – dans une pièce bien claire, toute nue, ouverte sur le paysage." Translation: „Ah, so that's how you have to look at a japonaiserie — in a nice bright room, completely bare, open to the landscape." Letter 639 from Vincert to Theo van Gogh, Arles, on or about 13 July, 1888.

„Or un mois plus tard avant mon départ je n'avais plus l'argent et j'avais encore donné pas mal de japonaiseries à Bernard alors que j'ai fait les échanges avec lui." Translation: „Then a month later, before I left, I no longer had the money and I'd

also given a good many Japanese prints to Bernard, when I made the exchanges with him." Letter 640 from Vincert to Theo van Gogh, Arles, 15 July, 1888.

„C'est que nous ne savons pas assez en japonaiserie." and „Donc la japonaiserie proprement dite, déjà casée dans les collections, déjà introuvable au Japon même, devient secondaire d'intérêt." Translation: „The fact is, we don't know enough about Japanese art." and „So Japanese art, properly speaking, already with its place in collections, already impossible to find in Japan itself, is becoming of secondary interest." Letter 642 from Vincert to Theo van Gogh, Arles, 15 July, 1888.

„J'ai arrangé dans l'atelier toutes japonaiseries et les Daumier et les Delacroix et le Gericault." Translation: „I've arranged all the Japanese prints in the studio, and the Daumiers and the Delacroixs and the Géricault." Letter 686 from Vincent to Theo van Gogh, Arles, 23 or 24 July, 1888.

- 13 Michael Beckerman, "The Sword on the Wall: Japanese Elements and Their Significance in *The Mikado*," *The Musical Quarterly* 73 (1989) Nr. 3: 303–304.
- 14 Lee Jackson, "Victorian London. Exhibitions – The Japanese Village," in *The Dictionary of Victorian London*,
<http://www.victorianlondon.org/entertainment/japanesevillage.htm>, last modified August 11, 2013.
- 15 <http://www.flickr.com/photos/andytakersdad/4428176346/>, last modified August 11, 2013.
- 16 Brian Jones, "Japan in London 1885," *W. S. Gilbert Society Journal* 22 (2007): 688–693.
- 17 William Schwenk Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan, "The Mikado or the Town of Titipu," in *Martyn Green's Treasury of Gilbert and Sullivan*, ed. Martyn Green (London: Michael Joseph Ltd., 1961), 411.
- 18 Green, 1961, 411.
- 19 John Whitney Hall, *The Cambridge History of Japan. Early Modern Japan*, Vol. 4. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 20–21; Felice Beato's *Japan: Places. An Album by the Pioneer Foreign Photographer in Yokohama ca. 1869*, description of Image 31.
http://ocw.mit.edu/ans7870/21f/21f.027/beato_places/fb1_essay05.html#text, last modified August 11, 2013.
- 20 Green, 1961, 410.
- 21 See images B904.3/1, B904.5/1, B904.6/1. B904.7/1 in Országos Színháztörténeti Múzeum és Intézet (OSzMI).
- 22 *Vasárnapi Újság* 33 (19 December 1886.) Nr. 51: 828.
- 23 *Vasárnapi Újság* 44 (24 October 1897.) Nr. 43: 716; Stanley Green, *Encyclopedia of the Musical Theatre* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1980), 146.
- 24 Ya. M. Polyanovskaya, "The English Operetta and Musical Comedy in German Guest Performances in St. Petersburg," in *Musikgeschichte in Mittel- und Osteuropa. Mitteilungen der internationalen Arbeitsgemeinschaft an der Universität Leipzig*, Vol. 8., ed. Helmut Loos and Eberhard Möller (Gudrun Schröder Verlag, 2002), 141.
- 25 „*The Geisha* at Daly's – The New Musical Comedy from London Recieved with Ap- probation," *The New York Times* 10. September 1896.

- 26 Yoko Kawaguchi, *Serene Gardens: Creating Japanese Design and Detail in the Western Garden* (London: New Holland Publishers, 2008), 10.
- 27 See image A247.1/10 in OSzMI.
- 28 See image A247.1/9 in OSzMI.
- 29 See the article about Gaiety Girls on the website of Victoria & Albert Museum: <http://www.vam.ac.uk/users/node/9009>, last modified August 11, 2013.
- 30 Gergely Thuróczy, „Ha jó az éjszaka, mulatni kell! Kuplékavalkád,” *Napút* (2007) Nr. 1: 3–19.
- 31 Sullivan, 1989, 209. Claude Monet: Le Japonaise. Madame Monet in kimono. 1875. Boston, Museum of Fine Arts.
- 32 Sullivan, 1989, 209; Steadman, 2009, 8.
- 33 Vincent van Gogh: Le Père Tanguy, 1887. Paris, Musée Rodin.
- 34 On the research for the person on whom the story is based see: Jan van Rij, *Madame Butterfly: Japonisme, Puccini, and the Search for the Real Cho–Cho–San* (Berkeley: Stone Bridge Press, 2001).
- 35 David Belasco, *Six plays* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1928), 11. The first official libretto of Puccini's *Madama Butterfly* in 1904 was published with the following title: *Madama Butterfly* (da John L. Long e David Belasco) Tragedia Giapponese di L. Illica e G. Giacosa, musica di Giacomo Puccini. http://opera.stanford.edu/Puccini/Butterfly/libretto_m.html, last modified August 11, 2013.
- 36 *Vasárnapi Újság* 48 (20 October 1901.) Nr. 42: 683.
- 37 Mercedes Viale Ferrero in her paper *Riflessioni sulle scenografie pucciniane* identifies these photos with the help of those published as illustrations for John Luther Long's *Madame Butterfly* in *La Lettura* IV, February, 1904, Nr. 2: 97–109, and IV/3, March 1904. 193–204. Mercedes Viale Ferrero, “Riflessioni sulle scenografie pucciniane,” *Studi Pucciniani* 1 (1998): 19–39.
- 38 „Belasco's construction was in fact quite exact regarding the structure of the “foldable house”, but considering its furniture and ornaments, it was a real junk.” Viale Ferrero, 1998, 25.
- 39 Helen M. Greenwald, “Picturing Cio–Cio–San: House, Screen, and Ceremony in Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*,” *Cambridge Opera Journal* 12 (2000) Nr. 3: 242–243.
- 40 Mihály Pásztor, “Pálmay Ilka mint Pillangókisasszony,” (Ilka Pálmay as *Madama Butterfly*) *Vasárnapi Újság* 48 (27 October 1901.) Nr. 43: 698.
- 41 K. I., “Puccini új operája,” (Puccini's New Opera) *Vasárnapi Újság* 53 (20 May 1906.) Nr. 20: 322.
- 42 Gabriella Olivero, “I nomi delle «piccole cose». Vocaboli giapponesi nella Mise en scène di Albert Carré per *Madame Butterfly*,” *Studi Pucciniani* 1 (1998): 40–42.
- 43 „Because if Illica meant that the scene looked really like a Japanese print, he was right; but there is nothing real in Japanese prints in a photographic sense, they are translated, encrypted and stylized images.” Viale Ferrero, 1998, 31.
- 44 Sullivan, 1989, 209.
- 45 See image B67.1/2 in OSzMI. Today the notebook is in the National Institute and Museum of the History of Theatre, referred in the text as OSzMI.
- 46 Jann Pasler, “Political Anxieties and Musical Reception: Japonisme and the Problem of Assimilation,” in Groos and Bernardoni, 2008, 20.

- 47 Zsolt Varga, “Magyar színművek a skandináv színpadokon a XX. század első évtizedeiben,” (Hungarian Pieces on Scandinavian Stages in the First Decades of the 20th Century) *Ághegy* (2007) Nr. 18–19: 2368.
- 48 Gergely Tóth, *Bírodalmak asztalánál. A monarchiabeli Magyarország és Japán kapcsolattörténete 1869–től 1913–ig, korabeli és új források alapján* (At the Table of Empires. The History of Hungary and Japan from 1869 to 1913 in the Mirror of Old and New Sources) (Budapest: Ad Librum, 2010), 167.
- 49 Álmos Jaschik, “A „Roninok kincsének” színpadképei,” (Stage Designs for The Ronins’ Treasure) *Magyar Iparművészet* (1936), 113–114. Reprinted in: *Jaschik Álmos tervezőiskolája* (The Design School of Álmos Jaschik), Vol. 1., ed. Ottó Mezei, (Budapest, 1980), 137–141.
- 50 Julius Kurth, *Der Japanische Holzschnitt* (München: R. Piper&Co. Verlag, 1922, 3rd, corrected ed.).
- 51 Mária István, “A japán klasszikus csúsingura két magyarországi előadása,” (Two Presentations of the Classic Japanese Chūshingura in Hungary) *Criticai Lapok* 19. (2010) Nr. 3: 33–36.
- 52 Jaschik, 1936, 113–114.
- 53 István, 2010.
- 54 See images A247.1/8, 9, 10 (Király Színház, 1912) and B247/4Gy828 (Fővárosi operettszínház, 1925) OSZMI. The archive photos of Madama Butterfly at Operaház were taken in 1931. After the revival of 1934 a new design was used, which is close to the set of the Paris premiere in 1906, and so it is closer to Japonisme than to Japonaiserie.