

PRESS RELEASE

# WORLD THEATRE FESTIVAL SHIZUOKA

**24 April – 5 May 2021**

at Shizuoka Performing Arts Park, Sumpu Castel Park and more



Main visual of Guide brochure  
HONDA Maki (SPAC), photo by KATO Takashi

<https://festival-shizuoka.jp>

**SPAC-Shizuoka Performing Arts Center**

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**World Theatre Festival Shizuoka 2021**

Organized by SPAC-Shizuoka Performing Arts Center

Approved by Fujinokuni Arts Festival

Supported by the Agency for Cultural Affairs Government of Japan in the fiscal 2021

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## It's time to enjoy unique and wonderful arts experiences once again at open-air venues across the Shizuoka City area during Golden Week.

Because of Covid-19, the World Theatre Festival Shizuoka, which SPAC (Shizuoka Performing Arts Center) had held annually for 20 years, was restricted last year to an online-only format titled the World Theatre Festival on the Cloud 2020.

In line with its slogan of “Fujinokuni (the Mt. Fuji region) and the world are connected through the performing arts,” SPAC is renowned for presenting a wide and diverse range of cutting-edge programs from Japan and abroad at venues in Shizuoka City.

So, when the regular weeklong festival had to be canceled for the first time ever, SPAC instead streamed 49 different programs in its World Theatre Festival on the Cloud 2020.

Among the lineup were talks between SPAC's General Artistic Director, MIYAGI Satoshi, and several foreign dramatists who had been scheduled to present works but were unable to come to Japan due to the pandemic.

In addition, a piece titled “*Theatre absence of Mary Poppins with her Upside-down Umbrella*” aimed to highlight the loss of live productions as SPAC live-streamed its deserted open-air UDO theatre in the hills for each of the three, two-hour periods when KARA Juro's play “*Mary Poppins with her Upside-down Umbrella*” ought to have been presented there.

Now, though, things have changed and SPAC is all set and delighted to be welcoming audiences and artists back again during Golden Week in 2021 to its annual World Theatre Festival Shizuoka after what has seemed to be such a long wait.

### Have a “real” theatre experience at open-air venues

With Covid-19 safety in mind, all the programs in this year's festival are being presented at open-air venues

First, SPAC will perform “*Mary Poppins with her Upside-down Umbrella*” by KARA Juro, a leading dramatist in Japan's underground theatre genre. Directed by MIYAGI Satoshi, and set to be staged at the UDO theatre, this had to be canceled last year just before the first performance, so the upcoming world premiere has been eagerly awaited by theatre lovers far and wide.

Secondly, the Italian director Giorgio Barberio Corsetti will recreate his “*The Threepenny Opera*,” which had its world premiere at the Tokyo Festival 2018 in Ikebukuro, Tokyo. This time, Bertolt Brecht's masterpiece will be performed in Sumpu Castel Park in Shizuoka City.

Finally, MIYAGI and SPAC's internationally acclaimed “*Antigone*” will return in triumph to Sumpu Castel Park after its outstanding success with audiences, critics and the wider media at the Festival d'Avignon in France in 2017 and during its 2019 New York run.

Meanwhile, another popular feature of SPAC's annual Golden Week event is its Strange Seed festival comprising fringe arts and crafts activities happening on the streets and in open spaces around the city-center Sumpu Castel Park — along with a wealth of theatre and dance programs that are sure to put even more Spring in everyone's step.

## What is SPAC ?

**Shizuoka Performing Arts Center SPAC** was founded in 1995 by the Shizuoka prefectural government and commenced its full-fledged activities in 1997 under the direction of SUZUKI Tadashi, its first General Artistic Director. As a pioneer of publicly funded performing-arts organizations in Japan, SPAC retains its own staff of actors, technical and production staff, who are based at its own venues and facilities. The mission of SPAC is not only to create original pieces, but also to invite progressive artistic companies and creators to Shizuoka and to develop human resources seeking expression through the performing arts. Since April 2007, when he was appointed as the General Artistic Director, MIYAGI Satoshi has led SPAC in a buoyant new phase of development and expansion.

## MIYAGI Satoshi

### General Artistic Director of Shizuoka Performing Arts Center (SPAC)



Born in Tokyo in 1959, after studying aesthetics at Tokyo University under ODASHIMA Yushi, WATANABE Moriaki and HIDAKA Hachiro, he founded the KU NA' UKA theater company in 1990 and soon began staging plays overseas as well as in Japan. As a result, MIYAGI's work — in which he often fuses contemporary textual interpretations with physical techniques and patterns of Asian theatre — has long been acclaimed both at home and far beyond. Indeed, in 2004 he received the 3rd Asahi Performing Arts Award, and the next year the 2nd Asahi Beer Art Award. Since taking up his position with SPAC in April 2007, MIYAGI has staged many of his own works — including *“Medea”*, the Hindu epic *“Mahabharata”*, and *“Peer Gynt”* — and has invited artists from abroad to present pieces casting a keen eye on the modern world as they see it. In line with his aim to make theatre “a window to the world,” he has also started a new SPAC-based project aimed at the youth of Shizuoka. In 2014, MIYAGI was invited to the Festival d'Avignon, where he received excellent reviews for his open-air version of the Hindu epic *“Mahabharata”* staged in La Carrière de Bourbon. Following that landmark achievement, the festival extended the honor of inviting MIYAGI to present a

Buddhist interpretation he created of the ancient Greek mythological tragedy *“Antigone”* as its super-prestigious opening program for 2017. On that occasion, which was the first time an Asian play had ever been selected to launch the festival, MIYAGI's exalted “stage” was the open-air Cour d'honneur du Palais des papes (the Honor Court of the Palace of Popes). By the play's end, those towering medieval stone walls were ringing out with long and splendid standing ovations welcoming the work's director and creator along with SPAC's actors and staff — while more than 60 European media all gave great reviews. In 2018, he received the 68th Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology's Art Encouragement Prize of Drama

## Corporeal communication is key — people, in person, are what really count

**MIYAGI Satoshi / General Artistic Director of SPAC**



Which information sources do you trust?

These days I imagine fewer people than before believe what's put out by the conventional mass media.

Is that because their output isn't as clear as it used to be?

Or in this country in particular is it because, since the Great East Japan Earthquake in 2011, people have become much more suspicious about the reliability of those news providers?

Well, yes and no.

I believe the real reason is that though information provided by the conventional media still comes with the stamp of authority, people have become more skeptical about that authority itself and the powers behind it.

Hence it's an unpleasant whiff of suspicion about the conventional media's role that is turning people off nowadays — not any particular content to which they may feel opposed.

But where is that bad smell coming from?

I think it emanates from those individuals and vested interests that are profiting massively from their positions of power and authority in society.

Essentially, of course, the credibility of any media, its standing and the authority it is accorded ought not to be related to support, or otherwise, from such quarters. It must depend on the ways in which information is gathered, rigorous fact-checking, and editorial independence — all of which are affected by the media's distance from the above-mentioned "malodorous" influences.

Instead, the conventional mass media now appears to be mainly concerned with those in positions of power and authority, and the circumstances of others who are influential in society.

In Japan and many other countries, in fact, it's as if there is now a dichotomy between a small group of winners relentlessly adding to their gains, and a growing majority of losers who are getting poorer.

So, if the conventional media is perceived to be focused on the winners and those in authority in society, others are left looking elsewhere for views and information relevant to them — which may lead them to sources provided anonymously or by dubious people. After all, if someone wants to be an opinion leader today, the chances are they'd prefer not to be exposed to the full glare, and power, of authority. And that's a very ironical — and rather dangerous — point to be at in society.

To prevent this, we need to develop ways to not divide people into "winners" and "losers" — and also let everyone have access to enrichment for the spirit, if not actual material riches.

In practice, of course, it's difficult not to divide individuals into friends or foes on SNS, though it's far easier to avoid that when dealing with people in person.

So today perhaps more than ever we all need real people in our lives, not online — people like those found on the stages of our theatres, in the auditoriums, open-air venues, foyers and places we gather to share the joy of the performing arts and our place in that most human, inclusive world.

## Lineups

At Open Air Theatre “UDO”, Shizuoka Performing Arts Park

# ***Mary Poppins with her Upside-down Umbrella***

**28, 29, 30 April at 18:00**

**Directed : MIYAGI Satoshi**

**Text : KARA Juro**

**Set design : KAMIKE Takuya**

**Costume design : KOMAI Yumiko**

**Lighting design : KOBAYAKAWA Hiroya**

**Hair & Makeup design : KAJITA Kyoko**

Performed by SPAC / IZUMI Yoji, OKUNO Akihito, KASUGAI Ippei, KATAOKA Sachiko  
KAWAMURA Wakana, KIUCHI Kotoko, SUGIYAMA Ken, SUZUKI Haruyo  
SEKINE Junko, TAKII Miki, NAGAI Sayako, WAKAMIYA Yoichi

**As the popularity of underground drama in Japan is still high, this keenly anticipated work by playwright and director KARA Juro, directed by MIYAGI Satoshi, will finally be staged at SPAC’s popular open-air UDO theatre following its last-minute postponement in 2020.**

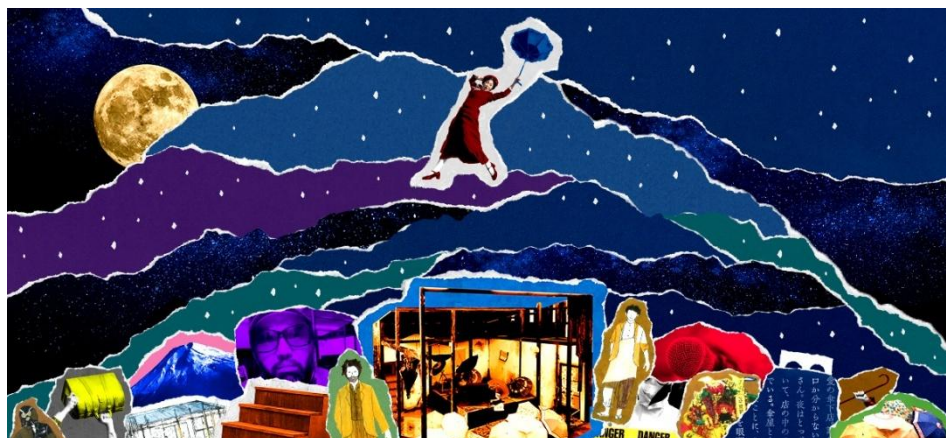
In this drama, a mysterious girl named Kana Ishikawa appears as if from nowhere in front of two young men — Ochoko, who runs an umbrella shop, and his friend Higaki. Her arrival is just like a movie scene from “*Mary Poppins*” — but is she an angel or a demon in disguise?

A standard-bearer of the radical, 1960s and '70s so-called small-scale theatre movement in Japan, KARA wrote this absurd but heartbreaking tragedy in 1976.

Then, aiming to stage it at SPAC’s UDO theatre against the natural green backdrop of the Nihondaira Plateau, the company’s General Artistic Director, MIYAGI Satoshi, freshened up the masterpiece and slated it to be included in last year’s Shizuoka World Theatre Festival.

When that sadly had to be postponed due to Covid-19, SPAC instead decided to present three, two-hour live streamings of the deserted venue titled “*Theatre absence of Mary Poppins with her Upside-down Umbrella.*”

Afterward, that surprising attempt to represent the effect of “absence” in theatre was well-received and much discussed among theatregoers.



Main visual of “*Mary Poppins with her Upside-down Umbrella*”

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At Higashigomon Square, Sumpujo Park

## ***The Threepenny Opera* /24, 25 April at 18:00**

**Direction: Giorgio Barberio Corsetti, Text: Bertolt Brecht**

**Music: Kurt Weill, Translation: OOKA Jun**

**Music direction and arrangement: HARADA Keiko**

**Costume design: SAWATAISHI Kazuhiro**

**Media direction: Igor Renzetti, Lorenzo Bruno**

Performed by Jonathan Jeremiah Peachum: HIROKAWA Mitsunori, Filch/Ede: YAMAZAKI Koji  
Celia Peachum: KATSURA Takakiyo, Matthias: MIYASHITA Yasuyuki  
Macheath: GOTO Hideki, Polly Peachum: MORIYAMA Fuyuko  
Jacob: KONAGAYA Katsuhiko, Robert/constable: AYADA Shoichi  
Smith/Jimmie: NUMATA Seima, Walter/constable: KIKUZAWA Masanori  
Brown: YANAI Yusuke, Jenny/prostitute: SAKAKIBARA Yuumi  
Jenny/prostitute: SUZUKI Mariko, Jenny/prostitute: SHINOHARA Kazumi

Musicians Piano:MEGURI Yumiko, Synthesizer: ABE Daiki (Accordion part) TANAKA Ichiyu  
Conducting and Percussion: HARADA Keiko

### **Let's laugh at humans' stupidity and unending desires! A knockabout musical comedy of life in this chaotic society**

One of the most influential modern plays, "*The Threepenny Opera*" by the German playwright Bertolt Brecht (1898–1956), is among the most frequently staged works worldwide. Set in a slum where the anti-hero, a violent criminal named Macheath, is trying to get married to the daughter of a crooked merchant, Mr. Peachum, the play shows the men repeatedly cheating each other until, in a reversal of fortunes, the drama arrives at an unexpected happy ending.

In the literature department at SPAC, OOKA Jun translated the play using a mix of the traditional Japanese seven-and-five-syllable poetry style and occasional rap to refashion the original 1928 German play-with-music into this exciting contemporary Japanese-language drama.

In addition, the great Italian theatre and opera director Giorgio Barberio Corsetti superbly added comedy elements to help create what is now a truly remarkable and unforgettable entertainment work — even though its standout musical ingredient remains the familiar "*Mac the Knife*" tune by Kurt Weill.

The production had its world premiere — with actors selected by open audition — at the Tokyo Festival 2018 in Ikebukuro outside the Tokyo Metropolitan Theatre. This time it will be performed — as the "2021 Shizuoka version" — on a special open-air stage in Sumpu Castel Park in Shizuoka City.

Just don't be too surprised if you find all kinds of absurdities from contemporary life here, too — including humans' insatiable desire, hunger for power and social divisions..



Main visual of "*The Threepenny Opera*", illustration: IWABUCHI Ryuko

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## What's going on alongside the Festival...

At Momijiyama Garden Square, Sumpu Castel Park

**TOKYO 2020 NIPPON FESTIVAL Co-hosted Programme**  
**Mt. Fuji World Theatre Festival Shizuoka, featuring SPAC/MIYAGI Satoshi**

# *Antigone* / 2 - 5 May at 18:45

Conceived and directed by MIYAGI Satoshi, Written by Sophocles, Translated by YAGINUMA Shigetaka  
Composed by TANAKAWA Hiroko, Space design: KIZ Junpei, Costume design: TAKAHASHI Kayo  
Lighting design: OSAKO Koji, Hair and makeup: KAJITA Kyoko

Performed by SPAC

Honored at Festival d'Avignon in 2017; lauded as part of Japan 2019 in New York.  
Selected by TIME magazine as 2019's sixth-best play production worldwide.

MIYAGI Satoshi and SPAC's "*Antigone*" masterpiece will finally return in triumph to Sumpu Castel Park in Shizuoka City in May 2021 following the tremendous worldwide acclaim that greeted its performances at the prestigious Festival d'Avignon and in New York.

Over 2,500 years, the prayer voice by Antigone has touched our hearts strongly.

★More information: [https://spac.or.jp/en/antigone\\_2021](https://spac.or.jp/en/antigone_2021)

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**TICKETS** Advance Tickets Sale begins: 27 March at 10:00

### Prices [Non-reserved seating]

- Individual ticket: 4,200 yen (for regular adult)
- Pair Discount: 3,700 yen per person
- Senior Discount: 3,500 yen for seniors over 60
- Student Discount: 2,000 yen (University), 1,000 yen (High School and under)

### How to Purchase

- Phone reservations from 10:00-18:00 at SPAC ticket center TEL: +81 (0)54-202-3399
- Online reservations can be made at <https://spac.or.jp/>
- Purchase at BOX Office SPAC ticket center (10:00-18:00)

### Location of Venues

#### Shizuoka Performing Arts Park

100-1 Hirasawa, Suruga-ku Shizuoka City  
Tel. (+81)54-208-4008 / Fax (+81)54-208-4014

#### Sumpu Castel Park

1 Sumpujoko, Aoi-ku Shizuoka City

## Events and more...

In Shizuoka performing Arts Park

### Try tea-picking in Shizuoka Performing Arts Park! /3 May, 9:30-12:00

Join SPAC staffs enjoying tea-picking in these vast tea fields. Later, we will process the famous Shizuoka tea leaves you pick, parcel them up and send them to you ready to drink.

¥700 (under-18s: ¥500), free for under 7s. \*Please make reservations in advance.

At Higashigomon Square, Sumpu Castel Park

### Festival garden (Café) /2 - 5 May, 11:00-18:00

The Festival garden in the Sumpu Castel Park is produced by “snd Café” owner YUNOKI Yasuhiro. The venue will serve local beers, home-roast coffee.

### Symposium /4 May, 16:30-17:30

At an open-air symposium being held in the city-center Sumpu Castel Park as part of the festival, SPAC's General Artistic Director MIYAGI Satoshi, along with various artists and theatre experts, will hold a discussion about the performing arts in Japan and the world. **Admission free, no reservation required**

Panelists: KOKUBUN Koichiro (Philosopher)  
SHIMIZU Kasumi (Mezzo-Soprano singer)  
MIYAGI Satoshi (General artistic director of SPAC)

MC: ISHIGAMI Natsuki (Play writer)

### Shizuoka Street Theatre Festival STRANGE SEED SHIZUOKA

With its multi-genre attractions spanning theatre, dance and street artists, the STRANGE SEED project will see the whole of central Shizuoka transform into a stunning performance area that will form the vibrant backdrop for this year's World Theatre Festival Shizuoka. Thanks to colorful and original events in Sumpu Castel Park and on the streets, the project will ensure that performing arts become part of residents' and visitors' daily lives alike — and will also allow everyone to discover a new Shizuoka for themselves in the process. The STRANGE SEED project runs from 2 to 5 May at Sumpu Castel Park and at several locations in the central area. **No reservations are required. Admission is free**

<http://www.strangeseed.info/>



**More information** <https://festival-shizuoka.jp>

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Press release translation: TANAKA Nobuko