

Feature 3: Producer Amon Miyamoto One-on-One with President

PARCO Corporate Culture: Entertainment

Leading the Culture Scene

Makiyama: You have had a long relationship with PARCO Theater. How would you describe PARCO?

Miyamoto: We have a long history. My relationship with PARCO began as a simple spectator in the audience when I was in high school. It has since evolved into a major influence in my life that cannot be described

in simple terms. Toru Takemitsu's MUSIC TODAY and the world-renowned artist Jan Fabre, among others, made their Japanese debuts at PARCO. Tadeusz Kantor's *The Dead Class* and other new trend-setting works also came to PARCO Theater. Harumi Yamaguchi and Eiko Ishioka were genuine innovators in advertising and consistently ahead of their time, in my view. PARCO has been at

the center of a new culture melding art with entertainment. Culture with its roots in Shibuya has established a global presence, with PARCO at its center. I sincerely hope that the fundamental spirit embodied there will remain unchanged.

Makiyama: People and what they bring to the company are key at PARCO. Through each of our employees, human connections grow and evolve. Shibuya PARCO was quite an innovative place, in the commerce sector at least, when it first opened. Rather than focusing primarily on



President and Representative
Executive Officer
Kouzou Makiyama

and Representative Executive Officer Kouzou Makiyama

generating profits, the emphasis was on creating a pleasurable experience for people. That has remained our focus to this day.



PARCO Theater Shibuya PARCO PART 1 9F
Photo: Jun Nishimura

Currently, Shibuya PARCO includes the PARCO Theater, CINE QUINTO, PARCO FACTORY, and other venues. People drawn to these venues are fashion-conscious and keen to be the setter of the next big trend. Other customers take notice and say to themselves, "PARCO is the place

to be!" PARCO is a stage, a gathering-point for people coming to look at other people, a place where they are constantly assessing their needs based on their surrounding conditions. It has a fast-changing metabolism based on changes tailored to the times.

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Amon Miyamoto

Producer
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1989 "Ich Bin Weill" at PARCO SPACE PART 3
Conceived and directed by Amon Miyamoto
Starring: Michiko Otsuka, Eisuke Sasai

Miyamoto: Ich Bin Weill at PARCO PART 3, which I had the pleasure of directing, was already a bold experimental piece. However, PARCO created a challenging environment that encouraged me to experiment further. Being able to bring people together to participate in and view such exploratory works is pretty rare.

PARCO provided a space through which we could bring together the right people and take our art to the world.

Changing the subject somewhat, I was in Milan last year and found myself at a cafe with the same logo used by PARCO. I was actually in front of a park and therefore didn't feel anything strange about the cafe having the same "park" logo as PARCO in Tokyo. There were children playing in the park, people reading, animals, street performers. The very picture of freedom. It was the same feeling you find at Shibuya PARCO. A place where you sense the promise that the future holds.

Makiyama: The true character of PARCO's is there for all to see. I studied it when Ikebukuro PARCO was opened in 1969, and it's exactly

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"LOVE HUMAN."

Miyamoto: If you look at fast fashion stores and large stores today, don't most of them look the same? How is PARCO's own corporate culture different from those of other companies?

Makiyama: Since our founding, we have emphasized breaking away from merely providing merchandise.

Instead, we integrate merchandise, activities, and services. Our thinking is to furnish not only fashion, but culture. To create commercial spaces where people will spend time enjoying themselves. Shibuya is a town that never sleeps, and PARCO offers a convivial atmosphere like no other. This is the stage we have built there. Occasional failure is par for the course, but our focus remains on creative destruction, you have to destroy something to build something better.

Miyamoto: Shedding long-held conservative practices takes courage.

Makiyama: Without scrapping and rebuilding, rapid aging makes it difficult to keep on track. When one task is completed, we immediately consider the next move. This instinct is our DNA. Of course, some things must remain unchanged. PARCO will never be swept away by passing fads nor shall we tolerate anti-social behavior.

as you say. Working to bring people together in an atmosphere of freedom is our message. When the Shibuya store opened, it was close to Yoyogi Park. In making PARCO like a park itself, we were abiding by our founder's message to "create culture on the hilltop."

Miyamoto: Culture on the hilltop. An interesting concept.

Makiyama: It's true. That was 40 years ago, and there are now 20 PARCO stores in Japan. Staying faithful to the same founding concepts, all of these stores have different exteriors and interiors. They are completely distinct, reflecting their location and the customers they serve. This adheres to the concept of creating stores with their own identities.

Bearing these things in mind, change will continue.

Miyamoto: For me, I want PARCO to always be a place where new life is infused into old practices, where human creativity is sustained, even after 40 years. The theater is seeing a succession of new ideas emanating from Europe. There is documentary theater, and cases in which amateur actors are preferred over professionals for certain roles. The free flow of ideas never fails to amaze. At PARCO, stores have been receptive to new ideas since the beginning. I believe their receptiveness to new trends from around the world will help them move forward in the future.

Makiyama: Thank you for saying so. In the arts and sports worlds, many young people operate on the global stage. PARCO believes their talent

think PARCO, working hand-in-hand with talented youth as they develop their skills, can invigorate their careers in many ways. Ideally, we would help them grow and evolve as they make that transition to the big time. Regarding tenants, our aim is not for them to merely open stores, but to work with us in building and revolutionizing the PARCO stage, in enhancing PARCO in its entirety. This is the format we want to use.

Miyamoto: Do you confer with tenants and exchange ideas?

Makiyama: Yes. PARCO has a tenant organization with an executive council appointed by tenant representatives. I believe such a format is largely nonexistent in the specialty retailing sector. Thanks to this organization, market requests from customers arrive directly to us through

our tenants. Then, we can formulate bigger plans than tenants could achieve on their own. It is much clearer to see when you are out of touch with customer views. We believe tenants are our equal partners. This leads to some vigorous exchanges of ideas as well as some frank requests and demands, usually from us! (laughs)

Miyamoto: This is important. If you worry about hurting feelings and sugar-coat everything you say, nothing will ever change. I have directed a number of plays at PARCO. When I work for other companies, I am often reminded of the freedom I have enjoyed with PARCO (laughs).

Future Initiatives

Makiyama: You have been active overseas. Your play *The Temple of the Golden Pavilion* is being performed in New York. PARCO has been spreading the word about Japanese culture overseas through your work and would like to continue this role in the future. Now, we are truly in an age without borders. So much so that we were recently able to quickly arrange a Jane Birkin concert at PARCO in April, only one week after it was proposed. This free live performance raised money for earthquake and tsunami relief in East Japan. I think she felt she could rely on PARCO because of the latent energy we could bring to the fundraising effort. We would like to work in other genres as well as musicals and theater to spread overseas culture to Japan and Japanese culture overseas.

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should be supported and nurtured. Our "LOVE HUMAN." message adopted last year is aimed at enriching hearts and minds and increasing opportunities for everyone to realize their potential.

Miyamoto: What exactly does that mean?

Makiyama: We mean to support and nurture young talent. Last year, for example, we used Maïa Barouh, a rising young flautist and vocalist, to lead our "LOVE HUMAN." project. We





Miyamoto: In handling performances overseas, I often hear that Japan doesn't convey much information about its art and art scene. In China, South Korea, Singapore, and other Asian countries they actively promote their art and theater works, whereas information is lacking in Japan. So, I think the sense among foreigners is that Japan is still a closed country. They are interested in Japanese works, but in reality, the information is still insufficient. Now, with the world paying closer attention to Japan after the earthquake and subsequent events at nuclear power plants, I feel now is the time to seize the moment and convey our ideas, our message through our work.



Kanagawa Arts Theater
Photo: Hideo Mori

Makiyama: Your play *The Temple of the Golden Pavilion* will travel from Japan to America, and *The Hunting Gun* is being directed by François Girard in a joint Japanese and Canadian production. I think conveying messages from Japan should be a priority. Also, our lives and ideas have been transformed in large and small ways by the recent disaster. Japanese society is in a transitional phase. During this transition, I feel we have to think about what PARCO and the entertainment business can do.



Co-production between PARCO and USINE C
—*The Hunting Gun*.

Stage adaptation of a romance novel by prolific Japanese author Yasushi Inoue directed by Canadian director François Girard.

Dates: September 7 to 10 at USINE C, Montreal,
October 3 to 23 at PARCO Theater, Tokyo

Miyamoto: The Internet is becoming a more powerful medium. Young people freely communicate over the Internet, Twitter for example. From their random talk and chatter, some interesting creativity and expression can emerge. It serves as a source of inspiration for me as I explore what kind of forms my work can take right now.

Makiyama: You have been made artistic director of the Kanagawa Arts Theater (KAAT), where PARCO operates in connection with its programs. This sounds like a very challenging job. What are your plans for the future?



Miyamoto: The concept of an artistic director itself is still new in Japan, so there are no rights or wrongs. Since the earthquake, everyone has been wondering what the role and the meaning of theater really are, and I want to explore this. Instead of just waiting for people to come to the theater, to come to us, we need to reach out to them. As a positive thinker, I find we are living in interesting times in spite of, or perhaps because of, the challenges we face.

Everybody, especially young creative people, wants to start talking about Japan in terms of their own lifestyles and self-expression. I feel this offers a great deal of hope.

Makiyama: I would like to support such people both in Japan and overseas. It might be an exaggeration, but I think PARCO, by its very nature and what it wants to do, can make this a reality and thereby further strengthen its image. I'm convinced that this will further enhance our growth and development as a company.



Stage photography: Shoji Abe



—The Temple of the Golden Pavilion—

World-renowned author Yukio Mishima's masterpiece "The Temple of the Golden Pavilion," the gold standard of Japanese literature, adapted for the stage.

Original work by: Yukio Mishima

Director: Amon Miyamoto

Adapted for the stage by: Serge Lamothe

Playwrights: Chihiro Ito and Amon Miyamoto

Cast: Go Morita, Sosuke Takaoka, Shunsuke Daito, Noriko Nakagoshi, Choei Takahashi, Rei Okamoto, Osamu Kao, Fuyuki Yamakawa, Tetsuro Sagawa

After its highly successful world premiere at the Kanagawa Arts Theater (KAAT), the first performance at this new theater, the show is now heading to New York.

This play brings Mishima's classic novel to life, through a variety of media including video, in an intensely personal portrayal. The main theme of this tale is the fixation of the main character, the Buddhist acolyte, Mizoguchi, and his two friends on both the true meaning of life and the true meaning of beauty—two themes as relevant for the youth of today as they were when this story was first written. The stuttering, alienated Mizoguchi is played by Go Morita. His friend, and chief provocateur despite his physical frailty, Kashiwagi, is played by Sosuke Takaoka. His second friend and fellow acolyte at the temple, the cheerful yet ultimately suicidal Tsurukawa, is played by Shunsuke Daito. This triumvirate, all rising young stars of film and television in Japan, play their respective parts with every ounce of their being.



Lincoln Center Festival
The Temple of the Golden Pavilion
July 21 to July 24, 2011



Amon Miyamoto

Born on January 4, 1958 in Tokyo, Japan.

Beginning his life in theater as an actor and choreographer, Amon Miyamoto went to study in London and New York for two years. He made his directorial debut in 1987 with his own original musical, "I Got Merman," winning the National Arts Festival Prize the following year. Not limited to musicals, Amon Miyamoto has directed plays and operas, attracting attention not just in Japan but also from overseas. In 2004 he became the first Asian national to direct a Broadway musical with his direction of *Pacific Overtures*, which received four Tony Award nominations. This year, he was named the first artistic director of Kanagawa Arts Theater (KAAT) when it opened in January 2011. His first project in this role will be a stage adaptation of Yukio Mishima's "The Temple of the Golden Pavilion" starring Go Morita. The play, already a hit in Japan, will be performed in New York in July as part of the Lincoln Center Festival.