

jam. Her name is Kazue and you've got to meet her if you pass that way. My visit would have been an ordeal without her gracious and friendly assistance. On the first day, the exhibition hall was expertly transformed in four hours by an eager team from OISTT (Japan) to make a very pleasing show area for the British expo. The inclusion of costumed mannequins, made the venue infinitely more varied and interesting.

David Walker's *Man and Superman* from the National Theatre, Carl Thomas' *Mrs Tanqueray* and Maria Bjornson's *Don Giovanni* were a few of the costumes that really took the eye. *Die Soldaten* from Ralph Koltai, *Rigoletto* from Patrick Robertson and *Strife* from John Bury were some of the most talked of models. I had dared to show my own designs for *Madame Butterfly* from Opera North and fortunately there was no great scandal. (That reminds me, — I have to get to Belfast next week for it's revival).

I had met Ichiro Takada two years ago in Prague. He is the OISTT (Japan) chairman and the prime mover in organizing this event along with the commercial organization PARCO. It flowed extremely efficiently but between meetings and seminars throughout the week there just was not enough time to explore what I'd hoped would have been possible, apart from one magic morning.

Thursday a.m. was free and Sadahiko Tachiki (Technical Director, National Theatre Japan) invited me to visit the National Theatre Nougakudo. This handsome building in the centre of Tokyo was designed by Hiroshi Ohe Architect & Associates to house the Noh plays and has been completed now for just over one year.

Walking through the entrance hall was my first moment of tranquility all week. The space, the light and the vistas immediately made one feel at ease. I sat for a while enjoying the aspect of the courtyard garden before continuing through to the main foyer, savouring the traditional details which are incorporated into the warm wood structure. The filtered daylight from the slatted screens facing the courtyard gives a remarkably soothing effect.

One is now ready to enter the auditorium to concentrate on the drama. The traditional stage area is instantly the main focus. The surrounding walls and ceilings appear to blend into such harmonious textures that one is barely aware of them. The whole complex is undoubtedly a tremendous achievement; an experience I will never forget.

My visit to TOKYO was short but nevertheless, gave me time to become acquainted with many new friends and charming customs. A return trip is a necessity.

However, it is now another Thursday and mid May as I write this from my hotel room in ICELAND. It is almost midnight, the sun continues to shine but I'm somewhat tired after our first technical day on stage at the National Theatre with the musical *Chicago*. It's approximately 3 months since I started the design for it back in that hotel room in LYON.



*Delightful rendering of the approach facade to the National Theatre Nougakudo.*

*The Garden Courtyard echos the strong verticals of the wooded beamed interior.*

