SHIMAMURA Hōgetsu (1871-1918)  
  
Shingeki director, playwright, translator, critic, and leader in modernist movement of Japanese theatre in 1910s.  
  
Born Sasayama Takitarō , he was adopted and became Shimamura Hōgetsu at age eighteen. In 1890, with the support of his adoptive father, he became Tsubouchi Shōyō’s student in the newly created Literature Department at Waseda University. Upon graduation in 1894, as Shōyō’s most promising disciple, he was hired as a journalist for *Waseda Bungaku*, a literary magazine. From1899 to 1901, he was first the Local News director for Yomiuri Newspaper, and then an instructor of rhetoric, art history and Chinese literature at Waseda University. In 1902, he was selected to study in Europe as a Waseda visiting scholar, determined to gain a thorough understanding of Western theatre. While studying drama, literature and aesthetics in Oxford and Berlin, he continued to publish in Japan as an established critic including a thesis on Tolstoy. Along with these activities were his frequent visits to theatres watching Western plays including more than one productions of Tolstoy’s Resurrection. Returning to Japan in late 1905, he became the manager of Bungei Kyōkai , a theatre company launched in February 1906 out of a drama club. From 1909, when Shōyō took direct charge of the company, he became an instructor at the newly completed Bungei Kyōkai Academy, as well as serving as translator and director. Bungei Kyōkai ’s productions of Ibsen’s *A Doll’s House* (1911) and Sudermann’s *Heimat* (1912), both translated and directed by Hōgetsu, were big successes establishing Matsui Sumako as a leading actress. The sensational affair between the two, however, led to Sumako’s dismissal and Hōgetsu’s resignation, both in May 1913, leaving Shōyō greatly disappointed.  
  
In September 1913, with Sumako, Hōgetsu launched the Geijutsu-za (Art Theatre). For its first production, Geijutsu-za staged Maeterlinck’s *Monna Vanna*, attracting a large audience perceiving commonalities between the Hōgetsu-Sumako scandal and the play’s weird but passionate love story. The choice of the piece reflects Hōgetsu’s philosophy of love as well as his monistic approach to modernism regarding perfection of art as Geijutsu-za’s sole raison d'être. After the failure of Geijutsu-za’s second production (short plays by Ibsen and Chekhov) in January 1914, however, Hōgetsu readopted a dualistic approach he had believed in earlier to strike a balance between artistic modernity and popular reception. This change led to the enormous success of Tolstoy’s *Resurrection*, Geijutsu-za’s third production, in March 1914. The ensuing nationwide popularity of its theme song and fashion still remains a phenomenon in shingeki history, unparalleled before or since. This was followed by more successes, for both translated and created pieces, including Nakamura Kichizō’s *Kamisori* (Razor, 1914), Wilde’s *Salome* (1915) featuring Sumako in the title role, and Tolstoy’s *The Power of Darkness* (1916), creating the miracle of shingeki as a financially viable profession. With sound financial backing, Hōgetsu built in August 1915 Geijutsu Club, a compound housing a 300-seat theatre, dressing rooms, a library, a rehearsal stage and living quarters, representing Hōgetsu’s ambition to establish an integrated system of research, training and production. In April 1916, Geijutsu-za launched “popular productions” in Asakusa, Tokyo’s working class district. Hōgetsu’ s success, however, was criticized as “shingeki’s degeneration” by purists including Osanai Kaoru to which Hōgetsu responded with his theory of “theatre as people’s art”: “attracting as many people as possible and retaining as much art as possible.” This theory explains why Hōgetsu agreed to collaborate with Shõchiku, a commercial entertainment giant, but did not follow its rules when directing, as seen in the production of Gerhart Hauptmann Sunken Bell, in September 1918. On November 4, 1918, with Geijutsu-za’s rehearsal of Gabriele D'Annunzio’s *Dream of a Spring* *Morning* going on, Hōgetsu suddenly died, a victim of the Spanish flu. The public blamed Sumako for his death and she subsequently committed suicide as a result.

GUOHE ZHENG