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| Tsukiji Shōgekijō [Tsukiji Little Theatre] |
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| The Tsukiji Shōgekijō (Tsukiji Little Theatre), Japan’s first successful professional theatre, was a performance space and company inaugurated by Osanai Kaoru (1881-1928) and Hijikata Yoshi (1898-1959) on June 13, 1924. The theatre was pivotal for development of modern, *shingeki* (‘new theatre’) style realism in Japan. The 1923 Great Kantō Earthquake opened an opportunity for new construction in Tokyo. Osanai and Hijikata purchased land in Tokyo’s Tsukiji district to build a small proscenium theatre with the latest theatrical innovations from Europe such as a plaster cyclorama. The main impact of the new company, however, came from Osanai’s agenda of developing a new, modernized style of acting and production in Japan.  Osanai shocked many in the Japanese theatre world by asserting that the company would produce Western plays exclusively. He believed this was vital for establishing a new approach to theatre and acting. The Tsukiji Little Theatre would be a ‘laboratory’ where performers and spectators alike would study theatre. After productions of forty-four Western plays, the theatre produced its first Japanese play in 1926 after Osanai bowed to Hijikata’s persuasion and audience demand. After Osanai’s sudden death in December 1928, ideological divisions led to the theatre’s dissolution. |
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