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| Osanai Kaoru (1881-1928) |
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| Osanai Kaoru (1881-1928) was a Japanese director, playwright, critic, teacher, theatre manager, and translator. One of the key figures in the shingeki movement, Osanai is credited with moving the Japanese stage towards modernist realism and naturalism. The founder of several key shingeki companies, Osanai was heavily involved in actor training and the move towards a Stanislavskian based realistic form of theatre.  Osanai was born in Hiroshima in 1881. He graduated from Tokyo Imperial University in 1909 with a degree in English Literature. After graduation, he assisted Tanizaki Jun’ichirō in starting and producing the literary journal Shinshicho (New Trends of Thought); he also translated western drama for the journal. In 1909 he formed the Jiyū Gekijō (Free Theatre) with kabuki actor Ichikawa Sadanji II. Rejecting both kabuki and shimpa conventions, the Free Theatre’s first production was Ibsen’s John Gabriel Borkman. From that point onward the Free Theatre staged productions of modern realist plays, including works by Wedekind, Gorki and Chekhov. Osanai and Ichikawa also made the decision to use professional kabuki actors in Free Theatre productions; this did, however, result in confusion of acting and performance styles, especially as Osanai pushed for an end to declamatory forms of kabuki performance in favor of more naturalistic modes of speech and action. |
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