

= Tetsuji Takechi =

Tetsuji Takechi (1912 - 1988) was a Japanese theatrical and film director , critic , and author . First coming to prominence for his theatrical criticism , in the 1940s and 1950s he produced influential and popular experimental kabuki plays . Beginning in the mid 1950s , he continued his innovative theatrical work in noh , kyogen and modern theater . In late 1956 and early 1957 he hosted a popular TV program , The Tetsuji Takechi Hour , which featured his reinterpretations of Japanese stage classics .

In the 1960s , Takechi entered the film industry by producing controversial soft core theatrical pornography . His 1964 film Daydream was the first big budget , mainstream pink film released in Japan . After the release of his 1965 film Black Snow , the government arrested him on indecency charges . The trial became a public battle over censorship between Japan 's intellectuals and the government . Takechi won the lawsuit , enabling the wave of softcore pink films which dominated Japan 's domestic cinema during the 1960s and 1970s . In the later 1960s , Takechi produced three more pink films .

Takechi did not work in film during most of the 1970s . In the 1980s , he remade Daydream twice , starring actress Kyoko Aizome in both films . The first Daydream remake (1981) is considered the first theatrical hardcore pornographic film in Japan . Though Takechi is largely unknown in Japan today , he was influential in both the cinema and the theater during his lifetime , and his innovations in kabuki were felt for decades . He also helped shape the future of the pink film in Japan through his battles against governmental censorship , earning him the titles , " The Father of Pink " and " The Father of Japanese Porn . "

= = Life and career = =

= = = Early life = = =

Tetsuji Takechi was born Tetsuji Kawaguchi in Osaka on 10 December 1912 to a family headed by a wealthy industrialist . He studied economics at Kyoto National University and graduated in 1936 . Takechi first became known for his criticism and theoretical writings on the theater . In 1939 he began publishing a journal , Stage Review in which he printed his writings on the theater . In the early 1940s , he began publishing collections of these writings in book form . When World War II came to an end , Takechi used his inheritance from his father to establish a theatrical troupe . Under his direction , the Takechi Kabuki , as the group was known , put Takechi 's theatrical ideas into practise by giving innovative and popular performances of kabuki classics in Osaka from 1945 to 1955 .

= = = Takechi Kabuki = = =

The immediate post World War II era was a difficult time for kabuki . Besides the devastation caused to major Japanese cities as a result of the war , the popular trend was to reject the styles and thoughts of the past , kabuki among them . Also , during the early years of the Allied Occupation of Japan , the occupying authorities banned kabuki as feudalistic and detrimental to the public morals , though by 1947 this ban was lifted . Other traditional forms of theater , such as noh and bunraku , seen as less flamboyant and violent than kabuki , received less attention from Occupation censors . Kabuki scholars credit Takechi 's innovative productions of the kabuki classics with bringing about a rebirth of interest in the kabuki in the Kansai region after this low point in kabuki history . Takechi revitalized kabuki by reaching out to the other theatrical forms ? noh , kyogen , and the modern theater and dance ? for new ideas and collaboration . He broke through long established barriers which existed between these theatrical forms , and even between kabuki schools , to create an energetic new form of kabuki . Despite his maverick nature , Takechi gave great attention to the classic kabuki texts , and emphasized to his actors the need to inhabit the

roles they played . His approach to a new interpretation of the old texts was to " psychologize " them . By bringing out the psychology already present in the classic texts , Takechi felt that actors could interpret their roles with vitality and energy which he felt was lacking in contemporary performances . Of the many popular young stars of the kabuki who performed under Takechi , Nakamura Ganjiro III (born 1931) was the leading figure . At first known as Nakamura Senjaku , this period in Osaka kabuki became known as the " Age of Senjaku " in his honor .

= = = Theater work after Takechi Kabuki = = =

Takechi 's innovations in kabuki brought him to the attention of the Shigeyama family , a longtime major force in comic ky?gen plays . With the Shigeyamas , Takechi created and directed the ky?gen , Susugigawa (The Washing River) , in 1953 . Based on a medieval French farce , this play became the first new ky?gen to enter the traditional repertoire in a century . Takechi saw in ky?gen a more direct link to a native Japanese folk theatrical tradition , and through the ky?gen wanted to link these folk traditions with the modern theater . As a Western analogy of his intentions , Takechi pointed to the works of Ibsen and Tennessee Williams which had their roots in the classical theater of Racine , Molière and Shakespeare .

In 1954 , Takechi followed Susugigawa with a noh @-@ ky?gen version of Junji Kinoshita 's Y?zuru . Y?zuru is one of the most successful Japanese post @-@ World War II plays , having received over a thousand performances at schools and theaters both within Japan and internationally since its debut in 1949 . Composer Ikuma Dan wrote an opera version of the play in 1952 . Since its premiere , Dan 's opera has been performed more than 550 times , making it possibly the most popular opera written in Japanese . Dan was recruited to write the original music for Takechi 's production of the play . Dan combined the noh @-@ style solo vocal lines with a Western orchestra and chorus . On the same program as Y?zuru was another Takechi @-@ directed ky?gen , Higashi wa Higashi (East is East) , a parody of the ky?gen style . Among the innovations Takechi made in this play was the inclusion of a former Takarazuka actress in the usually all @-@ male ky?gen cast . In the ultra @-@ conservative noh and ky?gen communities , simply appearing in a rival school 's production could result in an actor 's excommunication from the profession . Because of the public attention drawn through Takechi 's relentless publicity work and communication with the media , punitive actions against actors who worked with Takechi were avoided .

Besides his work as a theatrical theorist and director , Takechi occasionally appeared in acting roles on the stage and screen . In his series of essays , Chronicles of My Life in the 20th Century , American author and translator of Japanese literature , Donald Keene mentions his own study of ky?gen at this time . In 1956 , Keene appeared in a performance of the ky?gen play Chidori with Takechi in the role of the sake shop owner , before an audience including such prominent authors as Tanizaki , Yasunari Kawabata and Yukio Mishima .

Writing that " every form of art " should be popular with the public , Takechi next sought to rejuvenate noh in a similar manner with which he had kabuki and ky?gen . He worked with the avant @-@ garde group Jikken K?b? (Experimental Workshop) , which had been founded by composers T?ru Takemitsu , J?ji Yuasa and other artists in 1951 . One of Takechi 's more notable productions with the group was a 1955 noh version of Schoenberg 's Pierrot Lunaire (1912) .

In October 1955 he directed Mishima 's modern noh play , The Damask Drum in a theater @-@ in @-@ the @-@ round production at Osaka 's Sankei Hall . Mishima , dubious of Takechi 's experimental approach to classical theater , later commented that he felt like a father allowing a disreputable plastic surgeon to operate on his child . Also at Sankei Hall , Takechi directed Mishima 's Sotoba Komachi , set as an opera by composer Mareo Ishiketa , in 1956 .

The controversy created by Takechi 's experiments with noh made international headlines in 1956 . The International News Service reported that Takechi had introduced elements of burlesque and striptease into the slow , stylised artform . Confirming that Takechi 's methods did make the artform popular , his " Burlesque Noh " productions at Tokyo 's Nichigeki Music Hall played to a consistently full house . Again , however , the leaders of the conservative Noh Society of Tokyo threatened any performer who participated in Takechi 's productions with excommunication .

From 4 December 1956 to 26 February 1957 , Takechi served as the host of the Nippon Television program , The Tetsuji Takechi Hour . The show featured the Takechi Kabuki 's interpretations of such Japanese stage classics as Ch?shingura , and was also known for pushing the limits of the coverage of sexual subjects on television for its time . Takechi directed two more kabuki performances for the Nissei Theater in Tokyo , not long after it was opened in 1963 . Though these would be his last kabuki productions , Takechi 's influence on the art form continued to be felt for decades after his departure for the cinema .

= = = Entrance into the cinema = = =

In the early 1960s , Takechi turned from the stage to the cinema . Though the mainstream film industry considered Takechi an amateur and an outsider , he would continue to produce ground @-@ breaking films sporadically for the rest of his life . Some of the innovations and trends in Japanese erotic cinema which Takechi 's films pioneered include big @-@ budgets and releases , literary and artistic aspirations , fogging , political themes , and theatrical hardcore .

Takechi ran afoul of the government throughout his film career . The Weissers , in their Japanese Cinema Encyclopedia : The Sex Films , even characterize Takechi 's entire film career as " a personal war with Eirin " (the Japanese film @-@ rating board) . Turning from the Edo period art form of kabuki to another popular Edo period form of expression , pornography , Takechi decided to enter the film industry through the new genre of low @-@ budget , independent softcore sex @-@ films that were becoming popular in Japan . These films were called eroductions at this time , but are now more commonly referred to as pink films .

Takechi 's first film was A Night In Japan : Woman , Woman , Woman Story (Nihon no yoru : Onna onna onna monogatari , 1963) , a sex @-@ documentary in the mondo style popular at the time . The film focused on the women of Japan 's night life and included scenes of a nude noh performance , strippers , and geisha . Produced independently , Shochiku studios distributed the film , allowing it an international audience . It was released in West Germany on 6 March 1964 as Frauen unter nackter Sonne (alle Frauen Japans) . In the U.S. , it opened in Los Angeles under the title Women ... Oh , Women ! on 18 September 1964 . Later that year , Takechi appeared in an acting role in director Kaneto Shind? 's Mother (1963) .

= = = Daydream (1964) = = =

The first Japanese mainstream film with nudity was Seijun Suzuki 's Gate of Flesh , (1964) , and Takechi made the first big @-@ budget , mainstream pink film , Daydream (???) , the same year . Like Women ... Oh , Women ! , Daydream was produced independently but Shochiku studios distributed the film . This time , the studio gave Takechi 's film a major publicity campaign . Based on a 1926 short story by Jun 'ichir? Tanizaki , the film was a black comedy involving a series of sex scenes imagined by an artist under anesthesia in a dentist 's office . After being drugged , the artist watches helplessly from the other side of a window as the dentist tortures and performs a series of sexual acts on a female patient .

Though modest in comparison with pink films which would come soon after , Daydream did contain female nudity . The government refused to allow one controversial shot , which gave a brief glimpse of pubic hair . Takechi fought the government 's censorship of this shot , but lost . When the censors obscured the offending hair with a fuzzy white dot , Daydream became the first film in Japanese cinema to undergo " fogging " , a common element in Japanese erotic cinema for decades to come .

Despite the governmental tampering , Daydream became a major success in Japan , and was screened at the Venice Film Festival in September 1964 . The film was released in the U.S. later the same year , and in 1966 Joseph Green , director of the cult film The Brain that Wouldn 't Die (1962) re @-@ released Daydream in the U.S. with new American footage .

Takechi 's third film , The Dream of the Red Chamber or Crimson Dream (Kokeimu ? ??? ? , 1964) , was released less than two months after Daydream . Based on two short stories " Kasanka

Mangansui no Yume " and " Yanagiyu no Jiken " by Jun 'ichir? Tanizaki , the film depicts the lurid and violently erotic dreams of a writer , his wife and his sister , after having spent a night out drinking and visiting sex shows . The Dream of the Red Chamber underwent extensive censorship before the government would allow it to be released . About 20 % of the film 's original content was cut by Eirin , rendering the film virtually incoherent , and this footage is now considered lost .

= = = Black Snow (1965) = = =

Takechi 's Daydream had been considered a national embarrassment by the Japanese government because of its highly publicized release while the world was focused on the country for the 1964 Tokyo Olympics . Takechi 's third film had suffered heavily from the governmental censorship , yet no legal action had been taken . Takechi 's fourth film , the Nikkatsu @-@ produced Black Snow (1965) , was even more controversial than his previous work . David Desser credits Black Snow with bringing a political theme to the pink film . Politics would be featured in many later films in the pink genre , most notably those of K?ji Wakamatsu .

The story of Black Snow concerns a young man whose mother serves the U.S. military at Yokota Air Base as a prostitute . Impotent unless making love with a loaded gun , the young man shoots an American G.I. , and is then shot down by U.S. soldiers . The film contained multiple scenes of sexual intercourse , and a lengthy scene of a nude woman running outside Yokota Air Base . However , more than the sex and nudity , it was the political nature of the film which attracted governmental action . Released at a time of widespread demonstration against the renewal of the U.S. Security Treaty , Black Snow had a clear anti @-@ American theme . Film critic Tadao Sato says that the film uses sex to make a political statement . " In Black Snow ... the powerless position of Japan vis @-@ a @-@ vis America , and of the Japanese populace in relation to its rulers is represented by the outraged Japanese women and the G.I. rapists . "

Other critics accused the film of racism and ultra @-@ nationalism . Jasper Sharp writes that though Takechi 's films did criticize Japanese society , a theme they share with pink films , Takechi identified the problem as coming from foreign influences , rather than from within . This marks him as a reactionary rather than a revolutionary , as were many pink film directors . Takechi himself claimed to be a minzoku shugisha , or " ethnic nationalist " , throughout his life . Buruma points out that this ideological affiliation contains a strong racial aspect , and notes that the G.I. the main character murders in Black Snow is African American . Buruma comments further , " This , incidentally , has become a standard cliché : whenever G.I.s are shown in Japanese porno films , invariably in the act of outrageously raping Japanese maidens , they are very often blacks to make the outrage seem even worse . "

Though the government had accused earlier films of obscenity , Black Snow became the first film after World War II to be prosecuted by the government on obscenity charges . All copies of the film were confiscated from Nikkatsu and from Takechi 's own home , and Takechi was arrested . The controversy gained international attention with The New York Times reporting that even the two censors who had passed the film were considered for prosecution , and that the government had announced plans to strictly censor the pink film movement . Japan 's intellectual and artistic community came to Takechi 's defense . Film directors Nagisa Oshima and Seijun Suzuki and authors Yukio Mishima and K?b? Abe testified in Takechi 's defense at the trial . Takechi took advantage of every opportunity to publicly speak out against censorship , and one Eirin official later admitted to being " terrified by the man . " .

Explicitly linking his interests in kabuki and pornography as forms of expression , in the July 1965 issue of the film journal Eiga Geijutsu , Takechi wrote :

By shutting down Black Snow and prosecuting Takechi , Eirin had intended to suppress the new pink film genre , but the trial had the exact opposite outcome . The publicity surrounding the trial brought the pink film genre to the attention of the general public , and helped inspire the wave of pink films which dominated Japan 's domestic cinema for the next two decades .

= = = After Black Snow = = =

During the legal battles of the trial , Takechi filmed a pink film re @-@ telling of The Tale of Genji , which , like Tanizaki 's work , contains eroticism in the original , though not of a sexually @-@ explicit nature . On 17 September 1967 , Takechi won the Black Snow case . He also successfully countersued the government claiming that the accusation of indecency was politically motivated , due to the film 's anti @-@ American and anti @-@ capitalist themes .

Takechi 's next film after the trial was Ukiyo @-@ e Cruel Story (1968) , starring the current " Queen " of Pink films , Noriko Tatsumi . The Weissers call this film , about a painter of erotic pictures who is persecuted by the government , " Takechi 's personal message to Eirin . " Though still containing significant erotic content , this is one of Takechi 's few films to pass the censor relatively un @-@ edited , perhaps because Eirin saw the obvious anti @-@ governmental censorship message in the film , and did not wish to be provoked into another embarrassing public confrontation with the outspoken director .

Though he had won his court case , Takechi had become known as a risky and dangerous entity in the film world . Newspapers refused to advertise his films , and Takechi spent the next decade concentrating on writing projects . After his friend , the writer Yukio Mishima , committed hara @-@ kiri in 1970 , Takechi wrote The Head Of Yukio Mishima , a best @-@ selling , fictionalized version of the incident . In 1972 , he again appeared in an acting role for director Kaneto Shind? in his Art Theatre Guild film based on a Tanizaki novel , Sanka .

= = = Return to film = = =

In 1981 , the then 68 @-@ year @-@ old Takechi decided to return to film with a series of theatrical hardcore films , beginning with a remake of his 1964 Daydream , also titled Daydream . Noticing actress Ky?ko Aizome in one of her nude photo magazine appearances , Takechi chose her to star in the film . Japan 's first theatrically released film featuring hardcore sex , Aizome added to the controversy surrounding the film by admitting to having performed actual sexual intercourse on camera . Though , as Japanese law required , sexual organs and pubic hair were fogged on screen , the Asahi Shimbun called it a breakthrough film , and Japan 's first hardcore pornographic movie . Takechi took a novel , yet traditional approach to the fogging by covering the forbidden areas with floating images of topless female shamisen players . Unlike Takechi 's earlier Dream of the Red Chamber , the full , uncensored version of Daydream 1981 did survive , and circulated underground in Japan . This uncensored version of the film was released on video at one time in the Netherlands .

Takechi 's next film , Courtesan (Oiran , 1983) , like his Daydream films , was based on a Tanizaki novel . Three studios were involved in the production : Fujii Movies , Ogawa Productions , and Takechi Film . The film is set at the end of the 19th century , and tells the story of a Yokohama prostitute who services American sailors . The woman is possessed by the spirit of her dead lover , who , in erotic scenes echoing The Exorcist (1973) , makes his presence known whenever she is sexually aroused . Because of the large budget involved in the production , the distributing studio submitted Courtesan to Eirin repeatedly , and agreed to every cut the reviewing board recommended . The heavy cutting the film received reduced it from near @-@ hardcore to a very softcore historical drama . Takechi again took advantage of the situation to fight Eirin , and complained publicly about the censorship . When he noticed that the censors had painted over a penis with colors , he ridiculed them by promoting his film with the line , " See the first multicolored penis in Japanese Cinema ! " .

After this bout with the censors , Takechi vowed to produce a true , hardcore film for Japanese audiences . The result was Sacred Koya (Koya Hijiri) , based on a work by Ky?ka Izumi . He refused to allow the film to be censored in any way , either through cutting or fogging . Refusing to release the film in Japan , he did not submit it for Eirin 's approval . Instead , he released it in Guam , where it played primarily to Japanese tourist audiences for several years under the U.S. ' s more liberal pornography laws . Takechi 's last film was another remake of Daydream in 1987 , again starring Ky?ko Aizome . Though it was a low @-@ budget , independent production which again

underwent censorship in Japan , it became very popular in its uncensored form in France .

Takechi 's come @-@ back films of the 1980s were all in a theatrical hardcore style . Released during the dawn of the AV , or adult video , and the height of Nikkatsu 's softcore Roman porno films , his films fit into neither style . Jasper Sharp writes , " His big @-@ budget pornos came from a different world to that of the pink and Roman Porno films . There was nothing else like them at the time , and consequently they had little influence on domestically @-@ produced sex films . Takechi died of pancreatic cancer the following year , on 26 July 1988 . Without a major studio 's backing or interest from the general pink film community , Takechi 's name and films faded into obscurity in Japan . In 2006 his career was the subject of a full retrospective showing in Tokyo 's Image Forum in 2006 .

= = Legacy = =

Jasper Sharp points out that the Japanese and western views of Takechi 's legacy are quite different . While western sources assess him as a major figure in the early development of the pink film , many current Japanese sources on the subject ignore his work . Sharp notes , however , that during his lifetime , he was covered prominently in Japanese sources . He speculates that his legacy has been largely forgotten in his homeland partly because of his status as an outsider in the Japanese film communities ? both mainstream and pink . Since his films were self @-@ produced and distributed by major film companies rather than through the eroduction circuit , they are not technically pink films . Also , his right @-@ wing political background conflicts with the generally revolutionary stance more often associated with the pink film . Since his death in 1988 , the lack of a studio or other publicist , or coverage by writers on the pink film has kept his work out of the public 's eye in Japan . In the west , however , some of Takechi 's films , such as Daydream were shown during their first runs , reviewed by major publications such as Variety , and have been preserved and remained available to genre audiences on home video releases .

During his lifetime , Takechi 's innovations and contributions to Japanese theater in general and to kabuki specifically were influential for decades . His theoretical work , as well as his mentoring of several important stars , helped bring about a rebirth in kabuki after World War II . His contributions to cinema were much more controversial . Considered a dilettante outsider by much of the film industry , and suspected of racism and nationalism by others , his work was nevertheless defended by the younger generation of filmmakers such as Seijun Suzuki and Nagisa Oshima . Though his films are today unknown to most Japanese filmgoers , through his career @-@ long fight against censorship , the taboos which his films helped break , and the creative freedom which he helped enable , he remains an important figure in Japanese cinema .

= = Filmography = =

= = Selected writings = =