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TAKARAZUKA REVUE: INFLUENCE ON JAPANESE SOCIETY

Final thesis

Pula, October 2019

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Final thesis

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1. INTRODUCTION

"Modesty, fairness and grace"

- Ichizō Kobayashi, Father of the Takarazuka Revue

The Takarazuka Revue (宝塚歌劇団 *Takarazuka Kagekidan*) is a Japanese all-female theater company that was founded in 1914 by Kobayashi Ichizō. The Revue performs traditional Japanese plays and dance recitals, but its emphasis lies with its Western-style musicals. For the ease of reading "Takarazuka" will be used to refer the Revue.

The Revue is divided into six troupes: "Flower," "Moon," "Snow," "Star" and the youngest – "Cosmos." There are also superior members called the Senka and they belong to no one troupe. They are a group of specialists who appear in any of the troupes' productions as needed and help to instruct their junior Takarasienne and add a new twist.

The hypothesis of this work is that Takarazuka had a great influence on Japanese society, specifically women and their emancipation and interpersonal relationships but also on Japanese culture.

The methodology includes the research of the already existing written material describing the Revue and viewing the documentary exploring the Revue behind the scenes. Research also included watching some of the Revue's performances to better understand the aesthetics and themes of the Revue.

Text is divided into two main parts. The first part focuses on Revue's history and aesthetics, while the second part focuses on the influence that the Revue had on women, human relationships and popular culture.

2. HISTORY

2.1. DEVELOPMENT OF THE TAKARAZUKA REVUE

The Takarazuka Revue Company was founded not by an impoverished, passionate theater artist, but by an industrialist and entrepreneur who loved theater - Kobayashi Ichizō. Around 1910, Kobayashi was working for Hankaku Tetsudō, a firm that had constructed a commuter railroad line from Osaka to the small hot springs town of Takarazuka. To build ridership on the line at off-peak hours, the company developed the town into a resort.¹

The spa was named “Paradise” and was intended to give its customers a semi-rural natural haven from the polluted metropolitan areas. The venture, however, was a failure and Kobayashi was forced to find another way of attracting the public to the area², and therefore traveling on his railway line. He was inspired by the Mitsukoshi Department store in Tokyo, where one of his acquaintances had created a boys' musical band to attract potential customers.³ Also Western music was popular around this time and in response Kobayashi decided to feature an all girls' chorus singing Western music as a sideshow attraction for his now Paradise Theater at Takarazuka.⁴

In 1912 Kobayashi gathered sixteen young girls between the ages of thirteen and fifteen under the *kazoedoshi* (数え年) system⁵ of counting and named the group Takarazuka Shōkantai (宝塚唱歌隊, The Takarazuka Choir). In December 1913 he added four more girls to the group and gave it the name Takarazuka Shōjo Kageki Yoseikai (宝塚少女歌劇養成会, The Takarazuka Girl's Opera Training Association). The first Takarazuka prototype performance took place on 1st of April 1914 in Kobayashi's “Paradise” spa resort, where one of the pools had been boarded over and converted into a stage. The program was described as a mix of dance and musical

¹ Brau, Lorie. 1990. “The Women's Theatre of Takarazuka.” *TDR* 34 (4): 79-95., 83.

² Yamanashi, Makiko. 2012. *A History of the Takarazuka Revue Since 1914*. Kent: Global Oriental, 20.

³ Stickland, Leonie R. 2008. *Takarazuka Gender Gymnastics: Performing and Consuming Japan's Takarazuka Revue*. Melbourne: Trans Pacific Press, 50.

⁴ Brau. “The Women's Theatre of Takarazuka,” 83.

⁵ The *kazoedoshi* system counts the first year of life as 1 instead of 0. Essentially this made the girls twelve to fourteen years of age under the Western counting system.

items, or *otogi kageki* (御伽歌劇, fairy tale opera).⁶

Kobayashi's philosophies were not only directed toward the masses whose entertainment needs he aimed to serve but also toward the girls he hired to meet those needs. Women had been banned from the Japanese stage in the early 17th century; in the early 1900s the greatest number of women performers (dancers and singers), with the exception of folk performers, were probably geisha. Kobayashi set out to make performing with Takarazuka respectable, as, in many circles, being a geisha was not. He did not believe that performing with Takarazuka was detrimental to a girl's prospects; in fact, he saw his theater as a tool for her education. In 1919, he founded a school to train his company in wifely as well as performing arts.⁷

In conclusion Takarazuka was intended to be a means for girls who wanted to perform to do so without damaging their chances of getting married or tarnishing the reputation of their families. Takarazuka was thus exemplary in its early years because it gave women financial independence at a time where women were expected to be financially dependent on men. It is also important to note that irrespective of Kobayashi's original intentions, Takarazuka created an alternative to the traditional path of marrying early and having children.⁸



Figure 1: 1927: Performance of *Mon Paris*

Source: <https://kageki.hankyu.co.jp/english/history/index.html> (accessed July 28, 2019.)

⁶ Mageanu, Daniela F. 2015. *The Aesthetics of Takarazuka: a case study on Erizabēto – ai to shi no rondo*. Christchurch: University of Canterbury Press, 30.

⁷ Brau. "The Women's Theatre of Takarazuka," 84.

⁸ Mageanu, *The Aesthetics of Takarazuka*, 33.

2.2. EARLY BEGINNINGS AND PERFORMANCES

As mentioned already, the first performances of the (then) Takarazuka Opera Training Company were Japanese *otogi kageki*. They took place on a make-shift stage at Kobayashi's spa, Paradise. It was split into three parts: an opera *Donburako*; a comedy opera *Ukare Daruma*; and a Japanese style dance entitled *Kochō*. The show lasted for a total of 30 minutes and was re-staged 3 to 5 times a day depending on the demand.⁹

Success was not immediate, although the response was positive enough to allow performances to continue. For the first few years audiences were relatively small despite there being no admission fee; however, Kobayashi persisted. Performances were not scheduled and would only happen when enough seats were filled. Despite this, planning for a new performance began almost immediately, and in August of the first year *Urashima Tarō (The Tale of Urashima Tarō)* was staged together with *Kokyō no Sora (Native Sky)*. Andō wrote these pieces in the *otogi kageki* style that was to become the style of early Takarazuka. Yet another program was scheduled for November and December of 1914.¹⁰

From as early as 1913 Andō had debated with Kobayashi and insisted on adding male performers to the troupe and increasing the age-range (previously only girls under the age of fifteen had been allowed to enter), to allow for a greater range of performance materials, that is, to allow for performing more than just childish, school-play style *otogi kageki*. Andō was also adamant that Takarazuka could not establish itself as a real theater without including male performers, since it was limited in terms of what it could perform. Kobayashi resisted, fearing that adding boys would destroy the moral standards that they had managed to establish and cause a backlash. The response from the attempt to introduce boys to the troupe confirmed this and on-going disagreements on the topic prompted Andō to quit in 1922.¹¹

In 1921 the existing performers were divided into two *gumi* (組, troupes) to allow for an increase in the demand for performances. The two troupes could perform at different

⁹ Mageanu, *The Aesthetics of Takarazuka*, 35.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 35.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 36.

venues simultaneously, thereby making Takarazuka more widely available. Kobayashi called the troupes *gumi* in keeping with the school image he had crafted. This image continues to the present day: actresses are referred to as *seito* (生徒, student), rehearsal rooms are called *kyōshitsu* (教室, classrooms), and supervisors are called *sensei* (先生, teacher). The actresses are said to “graduate” (卒業する *sotsugyō suru*) upon their retirement, still respecting the jargon that Kobayashi introduced in the early years of the theater.¹²

In 1925 Kobayashi arranged for the director Kishida Tatsuya to travel to America and Europe in the hope of finding new styles of performance that could be adapted to Takarazuka. The French Revue seemed to Kishida to be most suitable for Takarazuka and requested to make a show. On 1st of September 1927 Takarazuka was the first troupe to introduce the revue-style show to Japan with their performance of *Mon Paris* which was performed by the Flower troupe.¹³ The show presented sixteen different scenes in rapid succession and lasted one and a half hour. It also introduced a fifteen-step staircase and the high-kick which stayed the key elements of a Takarazuka performance to this day. It also started the traditions of romanticism, exoticism as part of “fantasy adventure”, although this specific term would not appear until the early 1970s. It was also the first show to create the dream-like atmosphere that Takarazuka is now recognized for. Rich backgrounds, representative of places most viewers had never visited were combined with sexually alluring costumes, as had never been seen in any of its previous productions.¹⁴

Mon Paris and subsequent shows were all staged in the newly built Takarazuka Daigekijō (宝塚大劇場, Takarazuka Grand Theatre) which was built in 1924. The golden age ushered in by *Mon Paris* allowed Kobayashi to build a Takarazuka theatre in Tokyo in 1934. This is important because it clearly shows that Takarazuka was anything but an “amateur” theater, since it now had two main places of performance in major cities.¹⁵ The next even longer and better production of *Parisetto* (1930) as well

¹² Stickland, *Takarazuka Gender Gymnastics*, 22.

¹³ <http://www.takawiki.com/tiki-index.php>. Accessed January 6th, 2017.

¹⁴ Stickland, *Takarazuka Gender Gymnastics*, 71.

¹⁵ Mageanu, *The Aesthetics of Takarazuka*, 41.

as the tour in Germany, Italy and Poland suggested that Takarazuka has distanced herself even more from its origins as an amateur theater.

2.3. TAKARAZUKA DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR AND ITS POSTWAR REVIVAL

Censorship during the war years led to a decrease in the creative freedom of Takarazuka and an increase in nationalist performances, which made the theater an instrument of political and military propaganda. The strict regulations forced Takarazuka to change its aesthetic to a more traditionally Japanese style of performance. The backgrounds changed from romanticized dream lands to battlefields and lavish costumes to uniforms or everyday clothing. This distancing from *shōjo* culture resulted in the removal of the word *shōjo* from the company's title in 1940 and resulted in the name Takarazuka Kagekidan which remains in use today.¹⁶ In 1944, 30 years after its first performance, both Takarazuka's venues, along with all large theaters in Japan's major cities, were closed under the Dai-ichiji Kessen Hijō Sochihō (第一次決戦非常措置法, First Emergency Measures Ordinance).¹⁷ The theaters remained closed until the war ended. Although the Takarazuka Grand Theater in Hyōgo prefecture was then, after Japan's defeat, occupied by American forces, it was allowed to open again in 1946. The Tokyo Takarazuka Theatre, however, remained under occupation and was not returned to the company until 1954.¹⁸

Takarazuka returned to its prewar style of performance with the combination of the operetta *Karumen* (*Carmen*, 1950) and the revue *Haru no Odori: Ai no Yume* (*Spring Dance: Reveries of Love*, 1946). This show attracted large audiences owing to its "passion and dreamy romance of the subject matter, the exquisite costumes and, above all, the return of the glamorous *otokoyaku* (男役, male role)."¹⁹ After the war slowly Takarazuka began changing its style from French revue to Broadway, owing to the influx of new, mainly American, directors. Takarazuka had always followed

¹⁶ Stickland, *Takarazuka Gender Gymnastics*, 37.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 86.

¹⁸ Mageanu, *The Aesthetics of Takarazuka*, 46.

¹⁹ Stickland, *Takarazuka Gender Gymnastics*, 42.

international trends of popularity, and post-war, America had become the new power in entertainment, not in part owing to its new political and economic advancements. Therefore, with the help of directors such as Gemze de Lappe (1922 -) and Sammy Bayes (1939 -) Takarazuka staged shows like *Oklahoma* (de Lappe; 1967) and *West Side Story* (Bayes; 1968).²⁰

2.4. THE *BERUSAIYU NO BARA* BOOM

Despite the positive effects of the economic growth that occurred in Japan at the beginning of the 1970s, Takarazuka's audiences once again began to dwindle. Takarazuka recovered from this in 1974 with the staging of *Berusaiyu no Bara*, the romance story set at the court of Marie Antoinette. The stage show was based on the best-selling Japanese manga of the same name by Ikeda Riyoko and it featured Oscar, a girl raised as a boy from birth in order to continue the patrilineal post of general in the Queen's guard. *Berusaiyu no Bara* was responsible for the dramatic increase in popularity for the company and established the top star system that is still the current model of performer hierarchy in the company. The show has come to be synonymous with the company due to its success and for reinforcing Takarazuka's image as a theater of extravagant visual elements and romance.²¹



Figure 2: 1974: First performance of *Berusaiyu no Bara*
Source: <https://kageki.hankyu.co.jp/english/history/index.html>
(accessed July 28, 2019.)

²⁰ Mageanu, *The Aesthetics of Takarazuka*, 48.

²¹ Yamanashi, *A History of the Takarazuka Revue Since 1914*, 139.

Another impact of Takarazuka's change of style was the adaptation of *Gone with the Wind* (*Kaze to Tomo ni Sarinu*). With this Takarazuka had slowly come to change its aesthetic to a more mature and at times darker one. In altering their style to include tragedy it was able to appeal more to the audience's emotions and make a bigger impact.²²

2.5. RECENT YEARS

The Revue continued to expand, adding a new performing troupe in 1998 named Sora gumi (the Cosmos Troupe) which allowed even more material to be performed by Takarazuka. Takarazuka continued to merge old musicals with new ones from Japan and abroad. They released their version of *Phantom in the Opera* and changed the Phantom into a hero and glosses over the grotesque of the original work. Apart from that they released a version of the Italian opera *Il trovatore* under the title *Honoo ni Kuchizuke wo*, a version of *Othello* entitled *Hakuchuu no Inazuma* and *Romeo and Juliette*.²³ They also staged some more SF themed shows like *Shangri-La no Shiro* and *Ginga Eiyuu Densetsu*. There was also a re-stage of *Berusaiyu no Bara* and *Kaze to Tomo ni Sarinu*.²⁴ From this we can deduce that Takarazuka continues to draw inspiration from shows from both old and new sources and constantly experiments with different elements to maintain its success and existence.

²² Stickland, *Takarazuka Gender Gymnastics*, 96.

²³ Mageanu, *The Aesthetics of Takarazuka*, 55.

²⁴ <http://www.takawiki.com/tiki-index.php>. Accessed January 6th, 2017.

3. AESTHETICS

3.1. MUSIC

The adaptation of Western music has always been important in Takarazuka ever since Kobayashi saw the possibility of popularizing the novel genre. His goal was to combine Japanese dance and Western music which would make Takarazuka be worthy of sitting alongside the European opera. Because of this, Takarazuka did not favor traditional instruments such as the *koto*, *shamisen* or *tsuzumi* as these instruments, particularly the *shamisen*, were associated with geishas. Western music was also considered to be sophisticated and more morally acceptable for girls to dance to. Accordingly, the Western instruments were used such as the violin and piano, even for playing Japanese songs accompanying dance. Soon, the Takarazuka Orchestra was formed, and it is considered as one of the first important institutions for promoting Western music. At the theatre, the musicians play in the narrow pit between the main stage and the *ginkyō* (銀橋, silver bridge).²⁵

3.2. DANCE

With the arrival of Western dance, the new standard of dancing was introduced which did not exist in traditional Japanese dance – body contact with partners. For Japanese people dancing closely and face-to-face was a cause of embarrassment and disgrace, but Takarazuka seemed to have mastered the risk of awkwardness relatively without problems, reason being that the dancers were of the same sex and that was regarded as innocent and unproblematic. Soon Takarazuka's choreographers and dancers worked hard to learn the high kicking line dance and classical ballet, especially the romantic form.²⁶

²⁵ Yamanashi, *A History of the Takarazuka Revue Since 1914*, 71-72.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 74.

The high-kick, one of the defining characteristics of the Takarazuka 'revue' style, became popular with the performance of *Mon Paris* which was directed by Kishida Tatsuya who, having studied the modern spectacles in France, wanted to realize his own version of the French revue. Its success established a permanent fixture for Takarazuka. When it came to line dancing, the great inspiration was a group of British girls called Les Jackson Girls which were appealing for Takarazuka as their dance was not erotic and seductive.²⁷

Takarazuka does not contain any acrobatic elements, however, they have had attempted ice-skating. This type of performance was popular during the 50s with shows that had a Walt Disney theme such as *Cinderella on Ice* and *Snow White on Ice*. Nowadays such performances are rare but held for special occasions.²⁸

3.3. SETS AND COSTUMES

In order to produce the fast, dynamic show it is said that a revue needs five 's': speed, spectacle, shock value, smoothness and stars. To achieve that, Takarazuka uses colorful, glamorous sets, elaborate lightning and striking costumes. The most striking stage feature of Takarazuka is a before mentioned grand staircase used in the finale. The staircase is called 'Jessnertreppen' after the actor-director Leopold Jessner. Jessner worked for the German expressionist theatre and became well-known for a number of theatrical innovations, such as the use of bare stages with graduated levels and flights of steps used as platforms.²⁹

Nowadays the staircase projects playful, complicated, or dazzling visual effects and simulates a sort of panoramic kaleidoscopic vision. Adding to that effect are the costumes with ostrich feathers. Today, a top star's costume with around one hundred and fifty ostrich feathers signifies her distinguished status.³⁰

²⁷ Ibid., 75.

²⁸ Ibid., 78.

²⁹ Ibid., 80.

³⁰ Ibid. 81.

Considering make-up, kabuki and Takarazuka have much in common as their make-up is as thick as that of geisha and their make-up is applied by the performers themselves. In the recent years, Takarazuka has increasingly pursued a more natural look, but at times the bright red lips and purple or blue eye shadow may evoke an image of kabuki. Furthermore, it can be said that the make-up resembles nō masks as a certain type of make-up represents a different type of character.³¹



Figure 3: Example of the final costume with ostrich feathers

Source:

<https://kageki.hankyu.co.jp/english/revue/2018/ponoichizoku/gallery.html>
(accessed July 28, 2019.)

4. TROUPES

4.1. FLOWER TROUPE

One of the two original troupes, it began performing in 1921. They are considered the “treasure chest” of *otokoyaku*. Their performances tend to have larger budgets, with lavish stage and costume designs, and are often derived from operatic material.³²



Figure 4: Flower troupe performing *Sekkasho* (2016)

Source: <https://kageki.hankyu.co.jp/english/revue/2016/konjiki/gallery.html> (accessed July 28, 2019.)

³¹ Ibid. 88.

³² <http://www.takawiki.com/tiki-index.php>. Accessed January 6th, 2017.

4.2. MOON TROUPE

Along with Flower, the Moon troupe was created in 1921. In addition to performing the first Japanese revue of *Mon Paris*, Moon was first to do *The Rose of Versailles* and *Gone with the Wind*. It is also considered to be a home for young performers, but also strong singers.³³

4.3. SNOW TROUPE

The Snow troupe was inaugurated in 1924, the year the Takarazuka Grand Theater opened. It was the first to perform *Elisabeth*, but has also done many Japanese works, as exemplified by the success of *The Treasury of Loyal Retainers*, *Jin* and *Ichimuanfuryuki Maeda Kenji*. It is considered the upholder of traditional dance and opera for the whole company, being the vanguard of traditional Japanese drama in company that tends towards Western material.³⁴



Figure 5: Snow troupe performing *Phantom* (2018)

Source: <https://kageki.hankyu.co.jp/english/revue/2018/phantom/gallery.html>
(accessed July 28, 2019.)

³³ <http://kageki.hankyu.co.jp/english/index.html>. Accessed January 6th, 2017.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

4.4. STAR TROUPE

The Star troupe came to be when the Tokyo Takarazuka Theater opened in 1933. They perform many works where the *otokoyaku* is particularly mesmerizing, such as *My Love Lies Over the Mountains* and *War and Peace*.³⁵ It tends to be home of Takarazuka's stars and both prominent *musumeyaku*³⁶ and *otokoyaku*.

4.5. COSMOS TROUPE

The theater company set out to create the Cosmos troupe when it decided to stage productions at the Tokyo Takarazuka Theater year-round. This was 65 years after the birth of the Star troupe and marked the beginning of the current five-troupe configuration. When it was first formed, it culled talent from the other troupes. It is less traditional and more experimental.³⁷

4.6. SUPERIOR MEMBERS

The Senka belong to no one troupe. They are a group of specialists who appear in any of the troupes' productions as needed. They add a new twist when they join a performance and help to instruct their junior Takarasienne.³⁸



Figure 6: Cosmos troupe performing *Elisabeth: Rondo of Love and Death* (2016)

Source: <https://kageki.hankyu.co.jp/english/revue/2016/elisabeth/gallery.html>

(accessed July 28, 2019.)

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ *Musumeyaku* (娘役) is the female role in Takarazuka.

³⁷ <http://kageki.hankyu.co.jp/english/index.html>. Accessed January 6th, 2017.

³⁸ Ibid.

5. ROLES

5.1. OTOKOYAKU

Takarazuka's masculine *otokoyaku kata* (男役形) involve imitating early Hollywood actors of the 1940s and 50s and more modern actors such as Alain Delon, Marlon Brando and Jack Nicholson, and singers such as James Dean, Elvis Presley and Michael Jackson.³⁹ Height is the main determinant in the performance of stereotypical gender, meaning that *otokoyaku* must be taller than their *musumeyaku* counterparts⁴⁰ and are known for their short hair and blue eyeshadow. As mentioned previously, the *otokoyaku* embody an ideal "man", who is passionate and romantic, unafraid of being sentimental. These "men" are often courageous, outspoken and ardently in love with the character of the lead *musumeyaku*. The starring *otokoyaku* are by far the most popular of the actresses in the Revue, so there are never enough spaces for all of the girls who would like to be *otokoyaku*. The decision is based on height, physique, voice, etc.

5.2. MUSUMEYAKU

Musumeyaku (娘役) are Takarasienne who portray exaggeratedly feminine women and practice an unnaturally high tones. They are more concentrated on their dance routine than on the singing. Unfortunately, they are not as famous, or fascinating to fans, as *otokoyaku*. In contrast of *otokoyaku*, female characters in Takarazuka are often docile, and humble. They contrast and temper the impetuosity and grandeur of the lead male character. This means, often they are impossibly kind, unselfish, forgiving and understanding.⁴¹ No matter the case, the main purpose of the *musumeyaku* is to put the *otokoyaku* in the most favorable light possible, so that "he" can gain the admiration of the audience. In many ways, she is like a mirror, reflecting the brilliance of *otokoyaku*. Thus, in everything she must come second to the

³⁹ Robertson, Jennifer. 1998. *Takarazuka: Sexual Politics and Popular Culture in Modern Japan*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 13.

⁴⁰ Stickland, *Takarazuka Gender Gymnastics*, 178.

⁴¹ Mageanu, *The Aesthetics of Takarazuka*, 68.

otokoyaku, often receiving fewer lines (both in dialogue and songs) and fewer appearances overall. In songs she will often receive the harmonies, and in dance she will be the more passive of the two, being danced with, rather than dancing.

This dynamic is slowly changing with stronger female roles coming through, particularly in the last decade. Beginning with *Berusaifu no Bara*, Takarazuka began introducing stronger female characters, who lived for more than just romance. The main character, Oscar, is focused more on saving France than discovering love.

6. INFLUENCE ON JAPANESE SOCIETY

6.1. MOGA AND WOMEN'S EMANCIPATION

With the beginning of westernization and modernization of Japanese society in Meiji period (1868-1912), women also moved towards a new, liberated image. In that period emerged the so-called *atarashii onna* (新しい女, new women) who were mostly women from the bourgeois class and could afford a higher education. They demanded for women to be seen as human beings and with that to reconsider their liberties and rights. They also questioned existing ideals of womanhood such as *ryōsai onna* (良妻女, good wives and wise mothers) and dominant parental surveillance.⁴²

In Taishō period (1912-1926) came *moga* (モガ), abbreviation of *modan gāru* (モダンガール), which means modern girl. Unlike *atarashii onna*, *moga* didn't fight to be seen as a human, but she was already one. *Moga* weren't only educated women, but any woman who worked in the public sphere, regardless of their education or financial background. This change came from the availability of various jobs for young women which gave them the opportunity to be more mobile and have higher aspirations than before. Now women weren't being kept in their household most of the time anymore and they suddenly became visible in public spheres such as streets, theatres, cafes,

⁴² Yamanashi, *A History of the Takarazuka Revue Since 1914*, 122.

restaurants, department stores and sports facilities. They followed Western fashion trends and it became usual to first find an opportunity to work and not to get married.⁴³

This image of women was both celebrated and feared of. Celebrated because of their independence and belief that they can “have it all.” *Moga* could have a job, fight for women’s rights and have a partner at the same time, but they were often feared of because of their sexuality.⁴⁴

Takarazuka benefited from this image of *moga* by representing new womanhood in the modern era, epitomizing radical new lifestyles but also preserving conventional morals. This way they were able to attract the widest possible audience.⁴⁵

Takarasiennes characterized *mogas* by a pliant tempo, freedom and rapidity of movement, and the coexistence of cuteness and strength. With that they became an artistic representation of *moga* with identical hairstyles, physical appearance, postures and evoking images of working women. Soon the Revue had become one of the attractive occupations for modern girls.⁴⁶

Probably the most distinguished feature of modern girls is bobbed hair, in Japan called *danpatsu* (断髪), and it was a totally new challenge as long black hair symbolized female virtue, chastity and beauty. In the beginning, as the hairstyle wasn’t as prevalent, women would be made fun of. However, as it was the symbol of liberty for women it also became popular among the Takarasiennes. First time a Takarasienne cut her hair in such a way it caused controversy, but it soon became a standard for male impersonators as well for many other girls who preferred practical short hair.⁴⁷

⁴³ Ibid., 122.

⁴⁴ Gordon, Andrew, *A Modern History of Japan: From Tokugawa Times to the Present*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2003., 157.

⁴⁵ Yamanashi, *A History of the Takarazuka Revue Since 1914*, 123.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 124.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 126.

Off stage, the Takarasiennes were showcased outside for public service and commercial activities. Women started practicing new kinds of sports like cycling, tennis, swimming, golfing and Takarasiennes were often photographed playing these kinds of sports which motivated readers to practice themselves.⁴⁸



Figure 7: Takarazuka Graph, August 1939

Source: <http://takarazukaforever.weebly.com/graph-1920--1955.html>
(accessed July 28, 2019.)

What's important to mention is that in the 1910s, *shōjo* meant more than girl, and it registered a particular identity at a particular moment. It implied privilege, attained through schooling and increased access to books and magazines. Another image of privileged girls is expressed in the word *otome* (乙女) which could be translated into English as 'maiden' or 'damsel.' The term evokes a positive and nostalgic image of a young woman and it was often applied to Takarasiennes.⁴⁹

As mentioned before, *moga* were notorious for free sex and the word *shōjo* conveys the reality of sexuality, sexual politics and biological categorization. On the other hand, the identity of *otome* remained a purely idealized image of a woman, a surreal representation of something more spiritual and sublime. The term does not indicate whether she is married or a virgin, but it implies an eternally child-like heart, that is, youth, beauty and purity. In the Heian period (794-1185), *otome* meant 'dancing princess', and was especially used for heavenly nymphs of paradise. This must be the reason why girls who are called *otome* have an unearthly aura, and thus

⁴⁸ Ibid., 129.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 131.

Takarasiennes have been regarded as such but not only as just *otome* but as an *otome* icon. Even to this day, Takarazuka has kept the example of *otome* alive.⁵⁰

This way, Takarasiennes became models of and for modern girls, contributing to advancing new looks and habits, fashion and a new model of womanhood as they were modern, but kept certain traditional values which possibly encouraged more women to embrace this new view of womanhood.

6.2. RELATIONSHIPS

6.2.1. ROMANTIC LOVE

Love is the most important ethos of Takarazuka, and it played a big part in popularizing *ren'ai* (恋愛, love, romance), term which came with modernity. The term first appeared in a French-Japanese dictionary in 1887 as a translation for '*amour*' and its concept was new in Japan. In pre-modern Japan, there were many terms for love such as *iro*, *jō*, *koi*, *ai*, though these expressions were primarily used to describe the relationships in licensed pleasure quarters where playful romance should not get too serious. However, *ren'ai* held the Western concept of love which could either represent the Christian's love of Christ and Mary or the chivalrous kind of platonic love based solely on sentimental desire, in which a man could devote his affection but with no sexual involvement. Meiji and Taishō intellectuals considered platonic love to be superior and more noble than previously existing Japanese love relations, and so the new term was invented, and it meant 'pure love' which included selfless, dedicated love, with or without sexual relations.⁵¹

Despite the fact that modern life brought more opportunity for men and women to meet in public places and fall in love, arranged marriage was still the general practice and it was not easy to engage in *ren'ai*. This was the social context within which

⁵⁰ Ibid., 132.

⁵¹ Ibid., 134-135.

Takarazuka was created, consisting of unmarried virgins only, and one of the reasons why Western music was preferred was to differentiate the girls' performance from the *geisha* and prostitutes' performances. Moreover, Takarazuka was portraying Western types of love dramas with one more vital condition which became an ideal: romantic plays in which the hero and heroine accomplish mutual love – *ren'ai*.⁵²

This kind of platonic love aiming at mutual caring for each other also indicates a possibility of placing a man and a woman at an equal level. This suggested a new relationship called *rabu* (ラブ, love) and it became particularly used by young people as a modern Japanese expression and was even made into a verb *rabu suru* (to love). By using and supporting this new notion of love we can surmise that young people began to distance themselves from the conventional Japanese love, which had consisted of marriage controlled by the dominant hierarchy and lust for women in the pleasure quarters. Saying 'I love you' is still an embarrassing expression for many Japanese people, but on the stage of Takarazuka it is frequently used without hesitation and such love became the essence of its theatrical ethos and continues to this day. For Takarasiennes, marriage for love was encouraged by Kobayashi Ichizō who insisted that not all *ren'ai* should lead to marriage, but that all marriages must be *ren'ai*.⁵³

Since marriage for love was still relatively rare compared to arranged marriage, it can be said that Takarazuka stars were realizing difficult ideals and must have simulated public admiration for *ren'ai* and marriage and through that promoted such way of living.⁵⁴

⁵² Ibid., 136.

⁵³ Ibid., 138.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 138.

6.2.2. S-KANKEI

An important part of *shōjo* culture is the girl bonding called *s-kankei* (エス関係, s-relationship). The 's' in *s-kankei* stands for sisters or sisterhood among schoolgirls and indicates close friendship, particularly relationships between senior and junior schoolgirls. In such a relationship, the senior girl is a protecting *oneesan* (お姉さん, elder sister) and the junior girl protected *imōto* (妹, younger sister). Takarazuka is one of the living representatives of this concept. This type of relationships is not only living among the Takarasiennes, but also fans and them. Fans consider Takarasiennes to be 'admirable elder sisters', or 'charming younger sisters', depending on whether a fan is older or younger than the star she supports.⁵⁵ The common attribute in such relationship is the adoration from junior to senior and in return, the senior's compassionate will to protect and nurture her junior. This type of friendship is a bond involving sympathy, adoration, respect, and shared interests. Girls often exchange letters (nowadays also e-mails and texts) and wear same hairstyle and fashion items.⁵⁶ Some suggest that this may be the sort of relationship women desire but rarely find with men. It is important to add that such relationships are not necessarily associated with lesbianism as *s-kankei* is interpreted as a strong form of friendship in the context of *yūai* (友愛, love between friends). It's also possible to read the term 's' as a sign of *moga* and modernity of the era.⁵⁷

This kind of relationship shaped a collective modern phenomenon as schoolgirls were generating an 'imagined community' of their own by sharing common interests and virtuous qualities. Therefore, the creation of such friendships among girls and women was inseparable from the social, cultural, economic and political liberation and independence of women.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 139.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 140.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 141.

6.2.2.1. FANCLUBS

As mentioned before, *s-kankei* can be observed through the relationship between a Takarasienne and her fans. Takarazuka is indeed its own, micromanaged world – or at least a subculture, with a unique vocabulary, customs and mores perpetuated by the company and its legions of fans. Perhaps no other theatrical company can claim fans as passionately devoted as those of Takarazuka.⁵⁸ Many of them belong to fan clubs that sprout up to support a single performer, and that make their operating revenues selling such goods as sweatshirts bearing the star's picture, and from *handai*, the small processing fees added to the cost of tickets, which they buy in bulk and resell to their members.⁵⁹ Fans usually line up in orderly rows and in matching clothes. The atmosphere appears more normal and relaxed and it's not unusual to meet three generations of the same family, elderly people and children, and even men and schoolboys with friends, sisters and wives joining the crowd.⁶⁰ Today's Takarazuka includes elderly fans as well as they've grown old together with Takarazuka and it's natural to see more elderly ladies sharing their love for the theatre, not only with friends of the same generation, but also with their children and grandchildren. They, in a sense, together protect the eternal sentiment of *otome*.⁶¹

Therefore, the sincere and industrious attitude of Takarasiennes is shared with their fans who encourage and support them, same as would two friends in a *s-kankei* type relationship. Fans cherish their role models for a long time and nurture the performers' confidence through support and adoration. Since performers develop their careers along with their peers and fans, they all experience the virtue of *ganbaru* – 'striving and never giving up'. Fans are also encouraged by the characters whom their idols play, who exude individuality, and strength to strive to fulfil their dreams. However,

58. Singer, Jane. 1996. "The Dream World of Takarazuka." *Japan Quarterly* 43 (2): 162-181., 177.

59. *Top Stars of Takarazuka: 100 Years of Entertaining*. Tokyo: NHK, 2015.

⁶⁰ Yamanashi, *A History of the Takarazuka Revue Since 1914*, 146.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 148.

fans are aware that Takarasiennes lead hard lives backstage and are enabled to sympathize with and support them even more.⁶²

Since the relationship between fans and Takarasiennes is more like that of a family, the most virtuous aspect of Takarazuka fandom is duration. Fans keep going to performances for years and grow old with Takarazuka, watching their 'daughters' grow and make progress. They say that they find joy in caring for Takarasiennes' and their future, just as a loving mother, sister or a friend.⁶³

When waiting for their idols, fans cluster in impressively well-organized lines along or around the theatre. When she arrives, they greet her with '*itterasha!*' (good luck), and when she leaves, they give her a compliment with '*otsukaresama deshita*' (well done) or '*arigato*' (thank you) and deliver letters and presents by hand. Some fans arrive at the theatre early in the morning, not only to obtain a ticket, but to see their stars arrive safely, and stay until late at night to see them off. In some fan clubs, club officials not only chauffeur the performers but they also clean their apartments, do their laundry, shop and select the vast array of flashy clothing a star needs for photo sessions and other appearances.⁶⁴ Wealthy older fans make up for their inability to offer their time, as the younger fan club officials do, by donating expensive gifts.⁶⁵ Even though their relationship seems close, both Takarasiennes and fans keep their distance out of mutual respect.

Fans' devotion is unrequited but compensated through Takarasiennes giving them good stage entertainment and making them feel invigorated and happy. The fans are also rewarded when their devotion and commitment is acknowledged and thanked and with that their devotion is never betrayed.⁶⁶

The fan club membership continues even after the 'graduation' of their star, though numbers may decline. Some members remain star's supporters and continue to keep

⁶² Ibid., 149.

⁶³ Ibid., 149.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 152

⁶⁵ Singer, *The Dream World of Takarazuka*, 178.

⁶⁶ Yamanashi, *A History of the Takarazuka Revue Since 1914*, 152.

an eye on her career and celebrate her birthday and other important occasions every year.⁶⁷

6.3. INFLUENCE ON POPULAR CULTURE

After the Second World War, young people began to seek their ideals and dreams in a new graphic media – manga, visual narrative which became a world-famous genre of Japanese popular culture. Like magazines and novels before, Japanese manga was classified as *shōjo* (少女, girls) and *shōnen* (少年, boys), depending on the target audience.⁶⁸

What characterizes *shōjo* manga is the art style: flowing hair, sparkling eyes, slender limbs, frilly dresses, but also a strong female lead character and romantic relationships.⁶⁹ When discussing the origins of *shōjo* manga, it's important to mention the professional manga writer, Tezuka Osamu. He is not only considered to be the father of the popular graphic narrative but also respected as the founder of *shōjo* manga. Alongside that it's likewise important to recognize the direct influence that



Figure 8: Tezuka Osamu and his brother with Takarasiennes

Source: <https://tezukaosamu.net/en/about/album01.html>
(accessed July 28, 2019.)

⁶⁷ Ibid., 153.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 170.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 171.

Takarazuka Revue has had on Tezuka and the way it has influenced the genre and had set the norms for the genre which can be observed to this day.

The first significant connection to Takarazuka Revue and Tezuka is his childhood as he grew up in the town of Takarazuka. His mother, who was a piano teacher and a longstanding fan of the Takarazuka Revue, would often take him to the theatre, even more frequently after moving there and by befriending the Takarasiennes.⁷⁰

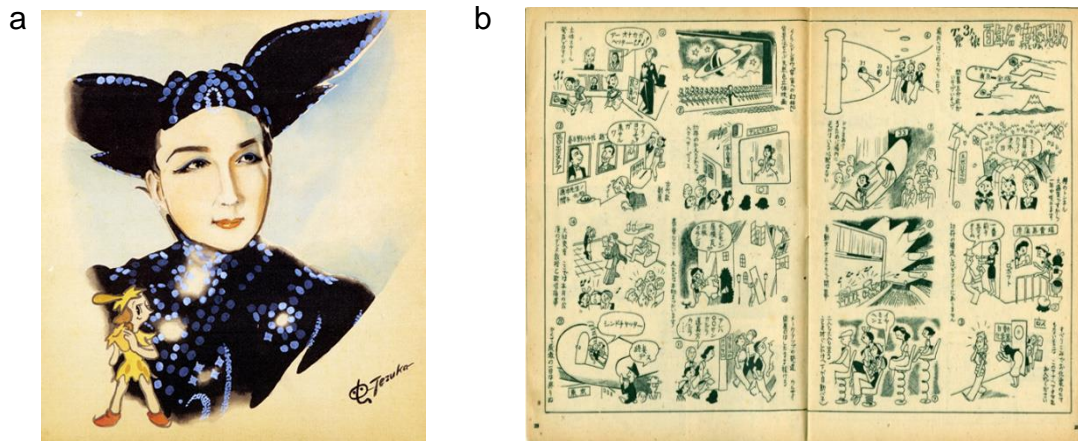


Figure 9: Portrait of Kasuga Yachuyo by Tezuka (a). Tezuka's illustration for the *Takarazuka Graph*, June 1954 (b)

Source: https://tezukaosamu.net/en/museum/permanent01_03.html (accessed July 28, 2019.)

The town itself inspired Tezuka, and in his manga we can notice some of the local townscapes such as Hankyū trains, stations, houses along the Hankyū line, the Takarazuka Hotel, Takarazuka Music School and Theatre.⁷¹

As for the Revue, Tezuka's manga were strongly influenced by a considerable number of Takarazuka productions. From Takarazuka he learned about the modern and the exotic through hybrid songs and costumes, Western manners, body movements and human relationships. This way Tezuka developed his *shōjo* manga style which featured heroines with big eyes and stories of love and adventure in foreign settings. One of his first significant works in a relation to Takarazuka is *Kami no Toride* (*Paper Fortress*) which depicts the tragedy of war through first love and friendship

⁷⁰ Ibid., 171.

⁷¹ Ibid., 172.

between a schoolboy modelled on Tezuka and a student of the Takarazuka Music School.⁷²

Tezuka Osamu began writing manga as soon as the restrictions of wartime were lifted, and he made his debut with a series for a children's newspaper. He was not only inspired by the theatre but started his career as a professional manga artist within the company as he drew portraits of the stars such as Kasugano Yachiyo, and his drawings for Takarazuka publications were one of the early media to present his comic skills as he frequently contributed illustrations for Takarazuka magazines.⁷³

His widely acclaimed debut *shōjo* manga was *Ribon no Kishi* (*Princess Knight*) which owes much to Takarazuka as it is dramatic, flowery and romantic as a Takarazuka play. He himself remarked that the manga was his homage to and sense of nostalgia for Takarazuka.⁷⁴



Figure 10: Panel from *Ribon no Kishi* where Sapphire sings *Sumire no hana saku koro*, the Takarazuka song

Source: <https://tezukaosamu.net/jp/mushi/201807/column.html> (accessed July 28, 2019.)

Ribon no Kishi tells the story of princess Sapphire who is the only child of the king of Silverland. She was born as a girl, but a mischievous fairy put a spell on her giving her the strength of a boy. Moreover, the kingdom requires a male successor to the throne and so the king decides to raise her as a boy in order to fight against a conspiracy to take over the land. Sapphire has little time to be her natural self as she's

⁷² Ibid., 173.

⁷³ Ibid., 174.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 174.

only able to wear dresses in secret for only one hour in the early morning. One day, she goes to a ball disguised as a lady and falls in love with the prince of a neighboring country and realizes that both her duty as a prince and her love as a princess can be maintained with a marriage and the union of two countries and the story ends with a happy ending.⁷⁵

The influence of Takarazuka can be observed in both the aesthetics and story. Settings are exotic, development is fast-paced, full of dynamic movement, characters' actions and speech are often exaggerated and there are many musical scenes with singing and dancing in revue fashion. In Tezuka's manga, every character, no matter their part, is valued, akin to the Takarazuka practice of valuing every student. Sapphire's impersonation of the prince immediately evokes the charm of an *otokoyaku* and other male heroes are also represented as slender and feminine, same as *otokoyaku*.⁷⁶

Another similarity with Takarazuka is the facial features which are depicted like stage make-up, especially big, shiny eyes, same as Takarasiennes who emphasize their eyes by wearing big false eyelashes and thick eye shadows, so their eyes shine and reflect the spotlight. Therefore, it can be said that it was Takarazuka's costumes and make-up that created the stereotype of Japanese *shōjo* manga – girls with big eyes, and stars sparkling in them.⁷⁷

Tezuka's Sapphire also represents a woman who is a fighter, not only heroic with the sword but also her strong will. She endures suffering and finds her own way in life and fights to defeat evil to obtain liberty and love not just as a woman, but a human being. Soon Tezuka Osamu received hundreds of fan letters from girls and it seems that both *Ribon no Kishi* and Takarazuka were enlightening as well as entertaining media for girls and women. It can be said that Sapphire shows what many girls aspire to do: girls also want adventure, to fight against injustice, to express their opinions and feelings, to choose how they will live and realize their ideals.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ Ibid., 174-175.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 175.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 176.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 177.

Tezuka's sequel of *Ribon no Kishi, Futago no Kishi (The Twin Knights)*, centers around the twin children of the main characters. This time, both narrative and visual construction imitate Takarazuka production and it consists of six acts. In the prologue, there is almost an exact replica of a Takarazuka stage-set, the grand staircase on which the dancers stand in line and three singers who introduce the story. In the same year, Tezuka wrote *Katen wa Kon'yamo Aoi (The Curtain is Blue Again Tonight)* modelled on Takarazuka and the ballet world.⁷⁹

Another important connection of *shōjo* manga and Takarazuka is the emphasis on self-development of the character. Therefore, Takarazuka students who train and discipline themselves to improve and attain their dreams provided as perfect subjects for a *shōjo* manga. From 1975 to 1976, four Takarazuka stars were created in *shōjo* manga, which depicted their search for identity and what is supposed to be 'happiness' and how to obtain it.⁸⁰

This way by reading manga or seeing manga adapted Takarazuka stages, not only girls were motivated to enter Takarazuka, but young men as well. As it wasn't possible for them to enter as performers, they were engaged as playwrights.⁸¹

Since then, starting in the mid-eighties, there has been a growing theme of beautiful aggressive girl warriors in Japanese anime and manga such as *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Winds* (1984), *Bubble Gum Crisis* (1985), *Ghost in the Shell* (1995), *Battle Angel Alita* (1994) and so forth. With lithe bodies often strengthened by exoskeletal armor, these young women replace the earlier generation of young male heroes fighting evil. Soon manga and anime with female protagonists didn't only interest girls, but it also managed to interest boys in what was happening in manga starring female protagonists and opened a new opportunity for works with female leads.⁸²

⁷⁹ Ibid., 177.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 185.

⁸¹ Ibid., 182.

⁸² Roberson, James and Nobue Suzuki. 2003. *Men and Masculinities in Contemporary Japan: Beyond the Salaryman Doxa*. New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 71.

Shortly, Takarazuka's influence also appeared in video games such as the *Sakura Wars* series⁸³ to the point where Takarazuka Revue nowadays has plays based on the plots of other video games such as the *Ace Attorney* series and *Sengoku Basara*.

7. CONCLUSION

Takarazuka Revue has had a performing history over 100 years, and it developed a distinct and hugely popular style throughout the years and kept on evolving since then, adapting various works in its own style. From the beginnings of imitating the French revue, to adapting foreign material and the darker period during the World War II to Takarazuka as we know it today. It kept on changing, but never forgetting its original fairy tale romantic setting.

What it also developed was the distinguished look of the actresses which keeps attracting and adding to the today's Takarazuka Revue huge number of devoted fans. Not only that, it inspired many young women towards modernity and fight for their rights and popularized the idea. Aside from that it also had a great influence on popular culture such as manga and anime as it had set a norm for such media intended for girls and women which inspired them to continue fighting for their dreams and individuality. In conclusion we can see that Takarazuka Revue's rise has been so successful because of its progressive ideas, openness to the Western culture and because of its goal to help women to get back on the stage and be more than just performers.

⁸³ <https://www.mbs.jp/sakura/Report1.html>. Accessed: 28th of July 2019.

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9. LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: 1927: Performance of *Mon Paris*. Source:

<https://kageki.hankyu.co.jp/english/history/index.html> (accessed July 28, 2019.)

Figure 2: 1974: First performance of *Berusaiyu no Bara*

Source: <https://kageki.hankyu.co.jp/english/history/index.html>

(accessed July 28, 2019.)

Figure 3: Example of the final costume with ostrich feathers

Source: <https://kageki.hankyu.co.jp/english/revue/2018/ponoichizoku/gallery.html>

(accessed July 28, 2019.)

Figure 4: Flower troupe performing *Sekkasho* (2016)

Source: <https://kageki.hankyu.co.jp/english/revue/2016/konjiki/gallery.html> (accessed

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Figure 5: Snow troupe performing *Phantom* (2018)

Source: <https://kageki.hankyu.co.jp/english/revue/2018/phantom/gallery.html>

(accessed July 28, 2019.)

Figure 6: Cosmos troupe performing *Elisabeth: Rondo of Love and Death* (2016)

Source: <https://kageki.hankyu.co.jp/english/revue/2016/elisabeth/gallery.html>

(accessed July 28, 2019.)

Figure 7: *Takarazuka Graph*, August 1939

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Figure 10: Panel from *Ribon no Kishi* where Sapphire sings *Sumire no hana saku koro*, the Takarazuka song

Source: <https://tezukaosamu.net/jp/mushi/201807/column.html> (accessed July 28, 2019.)

10. SUMMARY

The subject of this final thesis is the Takarazuka Revue; a Japanese all-female theatre with a history of over a hundred years. What differentiates this theatre from other types of Japanese traditional theatre, specifically *nō* and *kabuki*, is the “westernization” of traditional Japanese plays and the performance of Western-type plays in general, and the female cast which is non-existent in traditional Japanese theatre, with the exception being the early *kabuki*.

The goal of this research is to introduce Takarazuka Revue’s history and aesthetics, and to review the influence the Revue had on Japanese society, that is, women’s emancipation, human relationships and popular culture, particularly the *shōjo* genre of manga.

Key words: Takarazuka, revue, Japan, women, theatre, aesthetics, influence, women’s emancipation, relationships, popular culture, *shōjo*.

11. SAŽETAK

Tema ovog završnog rada je kazalište Takarazuka; japansko žensko kazalište s poviješću od preko sto godina. Ono što razlikuje ovo kazalište od drugih vrsta japanskog tradicionalnog kazališta, specifično nōa i kabukija, jest „pozapadnjačenje“ tradicionalnih japanskih predstava i općenito izvođenje predstava zapadnjačkog stila i ženska glumačka postava koja je nepostojeća u tradicionalnom japanskom kazalištu, s izuzetkom ranog kabukija.

Cilj ovog istraživanja je predstaviti povijest i estetiku kazališta Takarazuke te razmotriti utjecaj koje je ovo kazalište imalo na japansko društvo, tj. emancipaciju žena, ljudske odnose i popularnu kulturu, pogotovo *shōjo* žanr mange.

Ključne riječi: Takarazuka, kazalište, Japan, žene, estetika, utjecaj, emancipacija žena, odnosi, popularna kultura, *shōjo*.