

The Gaza Monologues

Yuta Hagiwara (JP), Kamome Machine (JP)



Project

Since theatres became unavailable during the COVID-19 pandemic, Yuta Hagiwara and his theatre company Kamome Machine have been creating and presenting the Telephone Theatre Series, in which the telephone itself functions as a “theatre.” Through the receiver, within a theatrical space constructed along telephone lines, they have presented some works include Samuel Beckett’s ‘Not I’ and a piece based on Simone Weil’s ‘Gravity and Grace’. This “theatre of voices alone,” developed in response to the pandemic, attracted significant attention within the Japanese theatre scene as a new form of theatrical practice. Premiered in 2024, The Gaza Monologues is a participatory performance created by applying the methods of telephone theatre. When audiences enter a telephone booth, they encounter a rotary telephone and a letter enclosed in an envelope. Inside the envelope is one text written by Palestinians and published by the Palestinian theatre company Ashtar Theatre as part of The Gaza Monologues. By dialing a designated number, participants are instructed to read the letter aloud and record their voice. In addition to recording, they can also listen to texts recorded by others through the same telephone. In this way, by reading and listening to the texts—and by exchanging not only their content but also their voices—participants come to share a tragedy unfolding far away. Through this circulation of voices, they also begin to delineate and imagine their own public sphere.

Type of the project: Performance

Year the project was created: 2024

URLs of the project: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zzv9dP6qC1U>
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1WdbK1Qo8bCEOEdHMnpyw5SN2UL6Vh3yoyNuBvkkvrXQ/edit?tab=t.0>

Credits: Creation Member: Yuta Hagiwara, Honami Shimizu, Shin Ito Telephone Device : Atsuhiro Tachihara
Produced by Theater Company Kamome Machine

Support received from: The Saison Foundation

Keywords: Participatory performance, Theater, Telephone

Use of AI: Yes

Use of AI: Description: Using OpenAI’s text-to-speech (TTS) for instructional audio

Software: Python

Hardware: Rotary Telephone, Raspberry Pi

Do you want to additionally submit your project for other Prizes?: No, I do not want this project to be additionally considered for other Prizes.

Artists

Yuta Hagiwara

Gender: Male

Pronouns: he/him

Date of Birth: October 01, 1983

Biography: Yuta Hagiwara is a Tokyo-based theater director and the founder of the performance company Kamome Machine. He began his theater practice while studying at Waseda University. In 2007, he founded Kamome Machine, a performance collective that explores the relationship between the individual body and the public sphere. His directing credits include *Waiting for Godot* in Fukushima, staged in the aftermath of the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant disaster; *OREGAYO* (2017), a performance using the Constitution of Japan as its text, which was also presented at the Temps D'Images Cluj festival in Romania; *HAPPY DAYS*, part of Theatre Commons Tokyo '18; and the Telephone Theatre Series, which developed during the COVID-19 pandemic using telephones as a medium of performance. Since 2022, he has also been developing The Nanjing Project, a series of research-based and work-in-progress performances that take the Nanjing Massacre as its subject matter. He received the 13th Aichi Arts Foundation Drama Award and the Excellence in Direction Award at the Toga Theater Competition. In 2018 he participated in Theatertreffen International Forum in Berlin. He has been a Saison Fellow I (2022–2023, 2024–2025). In 2024, he co-founded the Japan–China Contemporary Performance Exchange Project with Chinese dance director Mengfan WANG and independent curator Yuan Zhang. He was selected for the Asian Cultural Council New York Fellowship and The Laboratory For Global Performance and Politics Global Lab Fellows 2024-26.

Social media: https://www.instagram.com/yuta_hagiwara_/

Url: <https://www.kamomemachine.com/>

Artist groups

Kamome Machine Japan

History: Founded in 2007, Kamome Machine creates works with a central theme of exploring how the Western-imported concept of “publicness” can be embodied through the individual body. The current members are Yuta Hagiwara (artistic director), Honami Shimizu, and Shin Ito. Their major works include *Waiting for Godot* in Fukushima, performed on the streets of Fukushima Prefecture after the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant disaster in 2011, and later exhibited at the Theatre Museum in Rome and the Tsubouchi Memorial Theatre Museum at Waseda University. Another notable piece is *Oregayo*, a performance based on the Japanese Constitution, which was presented at the Temps D'Images Festival CLUJ (Romania, Artistic Director: Miki Braniste). The company also staged *Happy Days* by Samuel Beckett at Theater Commons Tokyo '18 (Director: Chiaki Soma). Since the COVID-19 pandemic, the group has been producing the Telephone Theater Series, which uses telephone lines as its stage. This includes one-on-one performances between actor and audience such as *Hello, It's Not Me*, *Hello, Simone*, and *Hello, In the Intervals*. They also presented *Gaza Monologues*, in which participants read personal testimonies by Palestinians using a disaster emergency messaging system as a motif. This was part of the contemporary art exhibition *SSS: Super Spectrum Specification* at MEET YOUR ART Festival in Tennozu Isle (Supervised by Junya Yamamine). Since 2022, the company has been conducting research on the Nanjing Massacre, with research activities, workshops, and works-in-progress held in Japan, Taiwan, and the UK.

Social media: facebook <https://www.facebook.com/kamomemachine>

Urls: <https://www.kamomemachine.com/>
