



Hideaki Hirai, Conductor/Composer



Asako Tamura, Soprano



Ryoichi Nakai, Tenor



Yuichi Toyoshima, Baritone



Kyo Kasumi, Fight Director

OPERA, "THE WHITE FOX" Showcase

in 3 Acts/in Japanese (with English supertitles)

- New York / U. S. premiere

Original Libretto: Tenshin (Kakuzo) OKAKURA

Japanese Translation, Libretto and Music: Hideaki HIRAI

Friday, May 2, 2025 at 7:00 pm
Merkin Hall, Kaufman Music Center



Motomi Tanaka, Soprano

129 West 67th Street (Bet. Broadway & Amsterdam)

New York, NY 10023

Conductor & Stage Director: Hideaki Hirai

Stage Art: Atsuki Settangeli

Fight Director/Choreographer: Kyo Kasumi

Kolha/Kuzunoha: Asako Tamura, Soprano

Yasuna: Ryoichi Nakai, Tenor

Ackeimon: Yuichi Toyoshima, Baritone

Damsel/Fox Maiden/Pilgrim: Motomi Tanaka, Soprano

Huntsman/Soldier/Pilgrim: Shoji Nagatomi, Baritone

Supporting Actors: Kyo Kasumi, Milai Taguchi
and Norihiro Maruta

Chorus: New York Festival Chorus & Children's Chorus
Members from Circle Wind Boys & Girls Choir

Orchestra: New York Festival Orchestra

Produced by New York Festival Orchestra (FORTE 90, Inc.) / ARIOSO LLC

Presented by BV Artists International (New York)

Tickets:

Prime \$70

Regular \$50

Senior/Child \$40

Box Office: 212-501-3330

www.MerkinHall.org

NYFO Office: 718-232-3712

E-mail: info@NYFO.org

www.NYFO.org



Shoji Nagatomi, Baritone

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BV Artists International

TENSHIN (KAKUZO) OKAKURA (1863-1913) Emphasis on an international sense of stressing the cultural self was one of "THE WHITE FOX" writer Tenshin Okakura's main principles. Regarded as the father of the Modern Japanese art movement, Okakura made a lasting impression on Japanese 'mental perception culture', he is chiefly remembered as the author of "The Book of Tea", a discourse linking teaism with aesthetic and cultural aspects in Japanese life. An accomplished academic, Okakura helped to begin the periodical on Japanese and Eastern art, *Kokka* (1889), the Tokyo School of Fine Arts (1889) and the Japan Art Institute (1898). He served as head of the Asian art division at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston (1904-1911). During his life, Okakura traveled frequently between Asia, Europe, and the United States and researched Japanese traditional art extensively. His writings reflect a desire for Asian and Western culture to influence rather than dominate each other.

OPERA, "THE WHITE FOX" The elusive and beguiling opera libretto, "THE WHITE FOX", was the last piece written by renowned Japanese scholar Tenshin (Kakuzo) Okakura (1863-1913). Okakura was a high-profile urbanite with an acute international sense of self who contributed to the development of contemporary art in Japan at the turn of the 20th century. He wrote "THE WHITE FOX" in English as a means of increasing the influence of Asian culture upon the wider modern world. At the time he wrote "THE WHITE FOX", Okakura was the head of the Asian art division at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, and THE WHITE FOX was intended to be premiered at the Boston Opera Company with a score composed by the German-born American composer Charles Martin Loeffler, but circumstances prevented its completion, leaving "THE WHITE FOX" as a phantom opera for nearly a century. Finally, the Myoko Culture Promotion Agency commissioned Hideaki Hirai to serve as translator, librettist, composer and conductor for the World Premiere performance of "THE WHITE FOX" on December 1, 2013 to commemorate Tenshin Okakura's death centenary.

The first New York City presentation of "THE WHITE FOX" will take place on May 2, 2025 at the Merkin Hall. "THE WHITE FOX" will debut under the baton of Hideaki Hirai, supported by Atsuki Settangeli's outstanding set design. Asako Tamura, a prominent soprano based in New York, is planning to take on the role of Kolha, the heroine and queen of fox maidens in the opera. Additionally, Kyo Kasumi, a stellar 'Tate' sword master, joins the Opera as fight director to instigate a top character contributing to a superb, unforgettable fight scene.

This unique collaboration between extraordinary Japanese virtuosos at the prestigious venue in the U.S. aims to realize a "Fusion of the East and West," in order to honor Tenshin Okakura's diligent work in reinforcing cultural ties between Japan and the rest of the world. This goal will be bolstered by the launch of a large-scale donation program and promotional effort spanning the U. S. and Japan with the expectation that contributions from business communities and interest from the international art scene will advance existing collaborations and create an enriching environment for sustained creative participation between Japan and New York City.

HIDEAKI HIRAI, Conductor/Composer A highly gifted Japanese Conductor and Composer based in both Tokyo and New York. In 2013, "Maestro Hirai made a remarkable Carnegie Hall debut" (The New York Culture Examiner), conducting the Beethoven 9th Symphony, followed by his appointment as Music Director of the New York Festival Orchestra. Acclaimed for his own Operas, "Princess from the Moon (KAGUYA-HIME)", "True Love of Komachi" and "The White Fox", which has been performed over 50 times in Salzburg, Prague, Canberra, Los Angeles and many cities in Japan. The Myoko Culture Promotion Agency (Niigata, Japan) commissioned him to serve as translator, libretto editor, composer and conductor for the World Premiere performance of the Opera, "The White Fox" in 2013 commemorating Tenshin Okakura's death centenary. In 2017, he was appointed Principal Guest Conductor of the Ensemble Wien Klang as a result of his successful debut at Konzerthaus in Vienna. <https://www.hideaki-hirai.com>

ATSUKI SETTANGELI, Painter A Japanese painter who has been active mainly in Europe and the NYC since 1995. In 2010, he visited Yoko Ono in New York, who advised him and this was the impetus for the series of works "THE SAMURAI SPIRIT". He has presented a solo exhibition at the "Former Prime Minister Hatoyama's Residence," and has also given 100 exhibitions at the French Embassy, Tokugawa Museum of Art, Foreign Correspondents Club, Consulate General of Japan in New York, and many others. He has held more than 100 exhibitions. In 2022, he became an artist certified by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Japan. His works are owned by royalty and diplomats around the world.

KYO KASUMI, Fight Director/Choreographer The first female Japanese stunt coordinator and fight director in America specializing in TATE: Japanese sword fighting and other Japanese combat styles. In 2014, she opened her own TATE and stage combat training dojo in NY. Kyo works as a fight director for off-broadway and feature film productions with any other country productions. She also performed at the official residence of the Azerbaijani Ambassador of Japan for the Emperor's Birthday Commemorative Ceremony. She is also the action director of "MEXICO 86" (starring Berenice Bejo) scheduled for release in 2025.

ASAKO TAMURA, Soprano Acclaimed as a First-class singing actress, Brilliant jewel of a voice, she gained prominence after her solo performance with the Three Tenors Concert at the World Cup 2002. Since then, she has performed across Europe, the United States, and Japan, winning numerous international competitions and delivering notable performances, including the National Anthem at the Yankees vs. Nationals Exhibition Game in 2015. With a repertoire spanning leading roles in esteemed opera companies worldwide and collaborations with prestigious orchestras such as the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra. Currently based in New York, she also serves as a goodwill ambassador for Kyoto-Joyo. <https://www.asakotamura.com>

RYOICHI NAKAI, Tenor Graduated from Nagoya University of Arts (BM/MM) and La Scala Academy of Music Opera Training Center. Performed in various parts of Italy, including La Scala, Teatro La Fenice, and Rossini Opera Festival, and after returning to Japan, appeared in many operas as a leading tenor with the Fujiwara Opera Company, including "The Magic Flute", "The Barber of Seville", "The Elixir of Love" and "Falstaff". He is particularly highly regarded for his singing of Rossini's bel canto works, including virtuoso techniques. He is the recipient of the Yamaguchi Prefecture Arts and Culture Promotion Encouragement Award and the tourism ambassador for Hirao Town. He is a lecturer at Showa University of Music and J. F. Oberlin University. He is a member of the Japan Opera Association and a member of the Fujiwara Opera Company.

YUICHI TOYOSHIMA, Baritone Graduated from the Musashino Academia Musicae (BM/MM). In 1999, he made his opera debut in Fujiwara Opera Company's "La Boheme" (with Mirella Freni and Nikolai Ghiaurov), followed by "Carmen" with Vesselina Kasarova. His opera appearances include "Madame Butterfly", "Turandot", "Rigoletto", as well as Hideaki Hirai's "Princess from the Moon" (in Salzburg), "True Love of Komachi" and "The White Fox" (World premiere). In 2013, he received the Asahikawa Nanakamado Cultural Award. He is a member of the Fujiwara Opera Company, a member of the Japan-Italy Music Association, and a lecturer at Musashino Academia Musicae.

Motomi Tanaka, Soprano, embraces a broad repertoire with a particular focus on early and contemporary music. Her recent solo performances include Vivaldi's Magnificat, Bach's Cantata Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland, Schubert's Mass in G, and Fauré's Requiem. Her recent operatic roles include Giulietta (Les contes d'Hoffman) and Miss Wordsworth (Albert Herring) with Opera Theater Rutgers. She was a finalist for the Linn Maxwell Keller Distinguished Bach Musician Award. As an avid ensemble singer, she often performs with Musica Sacra, Handel and Haydn Society Chorus, the Clarion Choir, and has collaborated with VOCES8 and the New York Philharmonic.

SHOJI NAGATOMI, Baritone Born in Yamaguchi Prefecture. Graduated with top honors from Aichi Prefectural University of the Arts (BM/MM), awarded the Kuwabara Prize. Completed the 24th term of the New National Theatre Opera Studio. Studied voice under Chishio Omori, Takashi Tsugami, Yoshiaki Kimura, Kazuko Nagai, and Toshiki Toyama. Received the Excellence Award at the 37th New Artist Competition of the Ichikawa City Cultural Promotion Foundation. Attended the Palazzo Ricci International Master Class (Italy) by U. Sonntag and obtained a diploma. He won the 2nd prize (highest ranking) at the 4th Kozaburo Hirai Vocal Competition in 2024.