

SŌGETSU ART CENTER (SAC)

(1985)

Akiyama Kuniharu

Some keywords in the 1960s were modern jazz, experimental contemporary music, John Cage, Merce Cunningham Dance Company, animation, underground films, events, and happenings. These words also encompassed the various activities at Sōgetsu Art Center (SAC). In fact, the name “Sōgetsu” signified avant-garde art activities in the 1960s. SAC was brimming with passionate and amorphous energy.

1

The Epicenter of Avant-Garde Art in the 1960s

THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE new Sōgetsu Kaikan building, designed by Tange Kenzō and built on the same land as the former one, was completed at the end of December 1977. The inaugural ceremony occurred on January 20 of the following year, 1978, and the Sōgetsu Hall in the basement opened on the 27th.

The eleven-story building is clad with half-mirrored glass. Upon entering the first floor, one encounters Isamu Noguchi’s sculptural garden—a plaza of stones, water, and flowers. Noguchi employed a large amount of Shikoku’s Aji-stone to construct the simple and dynamic space. The intricate design of lights that reflect on the water—a result of Noguchi’s handiwork—gives life to nature and the universe, creating a splendid spatial experience.

The basement hall has a pentagon-shaped apron stage and walls adorned with Teshigahara Hiroshi's unusual ceramic tiles. It seats 530 people.

The inaugural ceremony turned out to be an exciting banquet: Kishida Kyōko emceed; musicians from Tokyo Gakuso [a place for playing traditional Japanese instruments] played Takemitsu Tōru's gagaku composition titled "In an Autumn Garden" (1973); and eight musicians and Katsu Shintarō, who played the shamisen, performed Katsu's shamisen concerto composition titled "The Water Flow."

Teshigahara Sōfu, the *iemoto* [master of a school of traditional art] of the Sōgetsu Ikebana School, who at the time was still healthy, gave a speech. I strongly remember his statement about the aim of the hall. In addition to the ikebana school's events, he wanted the hall to host various programs featuring the latest artistic trends, just like the former Sōgetsu Hall. He said, "Hiroshi is the person in charge of this hall, so I leave it all in his hands."

Immediately after this opening ceremony, the art critic Tōno Yoshiaki published an article titled "SAC reopens: Will it become a new epicenter for 1980s avant-garde art?" in the culture column of the *Asahi Shimbun*. The article was a retrospective of the former SAC and conveyed the critic's hopes for its future.

Tōno wrote, "The former SAC was one of the major epicenters of avant-garde art in the 1960s. I visited that theater with just under four hundred seats countless times. Murals by Sam Francis and George Mathieu adorned the walls. My experiences there are deeply connected to the messy and exuberant panoply of sweet memories of my youthful days."

In retrospect, numerous notable events did indeed take place at the hall. In particular, SAC's activities explored various issues and significantly impacted artistic developments.

SAC was established in June 1958, immediately after the Sōgetsu

Kaikan Hall opened. However, Tōno and I only became directly involved with the art center after 1960. With Teshigahara Hiroshi as its director, SAC “was founded with the goal to become a space for cultural exchange that contributed to the development of the arts.”¹

¹ Quote from “About the Sōgetsu Art Center.”

Document 1

Sōgetsu Kaikan Finishes Construction

The equipment installation at the newly constructed Sōgetsu Hall in Akasaka, Tokyo, is finished. This small hall, with a 13-meter-wide and 5-meter-deep stage and a sound recording facility, seats 370 people. A celebratory banquet will be held on the evening of September 13.

The hall will be managed by an art advisory board comprised of individuals such as Itō Michio, Okamoto Tarō, Tange Kenzō, Kamekura Yūsaku, Abe Kōbō, Mayuzumi Toshirō, and Moroi Makoto. Together, they will bring forth the hall’s unique character.

Tokyo Shimbun, September 10, 1958

Even though some media stated that artists such as Itō Michio, Okamoto Tarō, Kamekura Yūsaku, and Abe Kōbō were serving on the advisory board, they were not actually managing the art center. Instead, they were only involved in brainstorming administrative and policy-related issues before the opening.

In the beginning, SAC was managed by a team centered around Teshigahara Hiroshi and included Igawa Kōzō, who runs a patent company; Nara Yoshimi, who owns a publishing house called Film Art, Inc.; Okuyama Jyūnosuke, who manages a creative electronics video studio called TEA; and several female office workers. They organized events for the Sōgetsu Kyōyō [Nurturing Culture] Club and coordinated renting the hall.

SAC properly began its activities in 1959, starting with a summer concert to showcase a grand piano in the latest style purchased for the hall.

The vermillion red Bösendorfer piano with a distinct shape was revolutionary. Apparently only three of its kind exists in the world. The concert was unconventional: Sonoda Takahiro, based in West Berlin, played modern compositions by Schönberg, Webern, Moroi Makoto, and Yuasa Jōji on the Bösendorfer piano. Thinking back now, this modern piano and the concert inaugurated SAC's activities.

In November, a preparatory meeting was held to discuss starting the Modern Jazz Club (provisional name) centered around Miho Keitarō, Yagi Masao, and the composer Takemitsu Tōru. A screening of Teshigahara Hiroshi's first film, a documentary titled *Jose Torres* (1959), took place at the Sōgetsu Hall that month. On December 3, Michel Tapié, an art critic and an advocate of Art Informel, gave a lecture at SAC while visiting Japan. The Sōgetsu Kyōyō Club's first event, *Special Feature on Laughing*, was organized by Abe Kōbō. Individuals such as Mishima Masao and Yano Sen participated. Furthermore, Ars Nova, a group founded by Mayuzumi Toshirō and Moroi Makoto, held a concert featuring its latest works.

Document 2

The Revolutionary Piano

Norbert Schlesinger (designer) was the first person to revitalize the classical grand piano into a modern twentieth-century instrument. In 1956, Vienna's Industrial Design Committee invited the public to submit innovative piano designs and asked Bösendorfer to manufacture the best design. The piano Bösendorfer made shocked the world when exhibited in the musical instruments section at the 1958 World Expo in Brussels, Belgium. This was the design submitted by Norbert Schlesinger.

The piano is precious because the company is known to produce only a limited number per model. The third edition of

the model was recently imported to Japan for the first time and placed in the Sōgetsu Kaikan. Its dynamic form that eliminates all ornamental elements and focuses on the total effect as an instrument conveys assertiveness.

Kenmochi Isamu, “Design Research”
Asahi Graph, August 23, 1959 issue

Document 3

My Personal History by Teshigahara Sōfu

The Sōgetsu School, with apparently over a million students and teachers, came to be called one of the “Big Three,” along with the Ikenobō School and Ohara School. In 1956, the Sōgetsu School decided to reconstruct its headquarters that burned down during the war.

The groundbreaking ceremony for the building took place in June of that year on a suitable land in Akasaka. Construction, which began in 1957, was completed in June 1958.

The building, designed by Tange Kenzō, gained international prominence. It won the highest prize at a competition for contemporary architecture in Paris in 1959. I communicated my aspirations to Tange in an itemized list when he began working on the building and told him, “I leave everything else up to you, so please do as you please.” With his innovative mind, Tange created a magnificent structure. Always conceiving radical and experimental designs, he attempted to hold the entire structure with four pillars. It was a challenge to get the permission of the Building Council due to concerns regarding earthquake resistance. After making models and conducting numerous experiments, the council finally gave permission. I take pride in this building as a one-of-a-kind architectural masterpiece.

I approached Tange to design the Sōgetsu Kaikan upon seeing his Peace Memorial Museum in Hiroshima. I instantly knew that he was the only architect in the world who would be able to realize the building I had in mind.

Employees at the Sōgetsu School's headquarters use the building for meetings and other administrative work while advanced ikebana instructors conduct research and workshops. Similar to the Sōgetsu School's space before the war, there is only one tatami-floored exhibition room.

The basement hall opens up to showcase outstanding and innovative art when not being used for lectures. SAC, directed by Hiroshi, will organize the artistic activities.

Nikkei Shimbun, July 7, 1965

A Roster of Diverse and Original Composers

I LIVED IN BERLIN FOR ten months, from 1959 to the spring of 1960. Only a few days after I returned to Japan, Igawa Kōzō, whom I had never met, suddenly came knocking on the door of my humble abode. He told me about SAC and its goals and then asked if I could help organize concerts for a soon-to-be-established group of composers. In addition to holding the recitals for individual composers as part of a program called the Sōgetsu Contemporary Series, he wanted to encourage collaboration between various artistic genres by showcasing the latest avant-garde trends in film, dance, and theater.

His aspirations resonated with me, as I had just directly experienced the most groundbreaking and fervent experimental music, film, and theater scene in Germany, Italy, and France. I was interested in creating vibrant artistic activities in Japan, similar to those I encountered abroad.

The group of composers that Igawa spoke of was founded under the

name Composers Group. Its first recital, which featured Hayashi Hikaru's compositions, was held at the Sōgetsu Hall on March 31, 1960.

The recital pamphlet included a statement that read like a manifesto with a list of signatures by nine composers.

“We have gathered in response to a call from SAC. Our shared goal transcends differences to advance contemporary music in Japan by raising questions about creativity and energetically engaging in a wide array of activities in collaboration with SAC. We hereby name ourselves the Composers Group.

“Composers Group members: Akutagawa Yasushi, Iwaki Hiroyuki, Takemitsu Tōru, Hayashi Hikaru, Matsudaira Yoriaki, Mamiya Michio, Mayuzumi Toshirō, Miyoshi Akira, Moroi Makoto”

The roster of the group may seem surprising from today's perspective. However, in the context of 1960, the composers must have felt a certain sense of significance in this seemingly random gathering of individuals.

In other words, the situation of the time was as follows:

Composers in Japan devised innovative expressions in the early 1950s as they sought a new direction and came in contact with international trends. They experimented with various methods and styles, such as twelve-tone music, serialism, electronic music, and musique concrète. Some also tried to form new Japanese folk music along the line of Béla Bartók's sonic expression and the Soviet Union's Socialist Realism. The world of music compositions in Japan made great strides in the early 1950s by adopting various movements and methods from Euro-America.

After absorbing such Euro-American influences, the composers began formulating individual styles in the late 1950s. Mayuzumi Toshirō created a grand symphony, “Nirvana Symphony” (1958), based on Buddhist temple bells that he electronically analyzed. Mayuzumi apportioned the tones to instruments in the orchestra and resynthesized the instrumental sounds into what he called “the

campanology effect.” The work also included a men’s chorus chanting Buddhist hymns and reciting sutras. Mamiya Michio continued to work on his Composition for Chorus series by combining various sounds such as traditional folk calls [*kakegoe*], rhythmically recited meaningless words [*hayashikotoba*], street vendors’ voices, and Japanese folk songs. Starting with the composition “The Calligraphy Sound” (1958-60), Takemitsu Tōru also established his style around this time. Distinct from the early 1950s, the interest of composers in the late 1950s shifted toward Japanese tradition. They criticized Western-centric modernism and focused on producing original compositions based on their perspectives disparate from the West.

Collaborative spirit emerged among various musicians with original styles to “advance contemporary music in Japan by raising questions about creativity,” as stated in the manifesto-like statement above. Thus, the diversity of the group members that comprised the Composers Group’s members were not as random as it may seem today.

However, the assemblage of talented young individuals with varied dispositions did raise some issues: Akutagawa Yasushi, Mayuzumi Toshirō, and Miyoshi Akira were already media stars at the time; Takemitsu Tōru and Matsudaira Yoriaki were pushing toward an experimental direction; Hayashi Hikaru and Mamiya Michio were exploring new Japanese lyrics and the connection between society and music. Those observing the group from the outside, such as myself, certainly felt some apprehension toward such a conglomeration of individuals.

As mentioned above, Hayashi Hikaru’s March 31, 1960, recital marked the Composers Group’s first event. The recital showcased Hayashi’s latest works: a musical projection titled “I am God” (1960, script by Abe Kōbō and image by Manabe Hiroshi), “Song about Bone Fragments” (1960, poem by Kaneko Mitsuharu), and “Requiem” (1960, poem by Kihara Kōichi). The Philharmonic Chorus of Tokyo and a chamber orchestra with Iwaki Hiroyuki as the conductor played the compositions while Kishida Kyōko and Mizushima Hiroshi recited verses.

Document 4

SAC brought nine musicians on board to create and develop contemporary art in Japan. . . . We plan to make the art center a place of artistic synthesis by encouraging artists to freely exchange and debate ideas and strengthen connections between them and the audience.

(Flyer from SAC)

Meanwhile, an audience group called SAC Club was created in conjunction with the founding of the Composers Group and its first recital.

Document 5

SAC Club

SAC Club is a membership-based group that enjoys and supports SAC's monthly events. SAC's regular programs are as follows:

- 1) Sōgetsu Music Inn (modern jazz), events held at the end of every month
- 2) Sōgetsu Contemporary Series (contemporary music and experimental theater), events held at the end of every month
- 3) Sōgetsu Cinémathèque (film screenings), expected to start in May.

Members will receive a monthly newsletter.

The monthly newsletter *SAC*, mentioned in Document 5, was a small square booklet (17.5 centimeters) designed in collaboration with graphic designers Sugiura Kōhei, Kanda Akio, and Shimura Kazunobu. The publication was influential despite its small size. It not only introduced SAC's monthly events but also featured essays about contemporary art and information on artistic and cultural trends from abroad.

The film critic Uekusa Jin'ichi's reports on news from abroad were superb. I enjoyed reading his wide-ranging topics that encompassed jazz, contemporary art, and film. Some examples include "Emergence of the Newcomer Ornette Coleman" and "French Film and Modern Jazz" from issue 1, "Salvador Dalí's Interview Banned from Broadcasting" from issue 24, "Hitchcock, This Time is the Scariest" from issue 27, and "Man Ray's Autobiography" from issue 34.

Tōno Yoshiaki (art), Ōoka Makoto (film and theater), Akiyama Kuniharu (music and broadcasting), and Nakahara Yūsuke (design and film) were editors of the column on current events called the "Monthly Review." They explored various themes along with other frequent contributors Matsumoto Toshio, Hani Susumu, Iijima Kōichi, Masaki Kyōsuke, and Asakura Setsu.

SAC also had a section on the inside front cover called the "jacket corner," which showcased experimental record jackets designed by various artists. For example, issues 1 and 2 featured Narahara Ikkō's incredible photographs as jackets titled *Cloudy* and *Bandage/Blue* for jazz (?) records. Wada Makoto also used his unique illustration style to design jackets. All the designs were impressive enough to have been used for actual vinyl records.

The newsletter also featured the composer Takemitsu Tōru's unique essay series, "A Manifesto on Stuttering." Manabe Hiroshi's elaborate illustrations always accompanied Takemitsu's texts.

I also recall the "Letter to Readers" section, which featured Takahashi Yūji's insightful "meta-art"² essay series that broadly discussed art and Wada Makoto's very artistic (?) and humorous line drawings. I don't think that this kind of unique essay series would have appeared in other publications at the time.

SAC changed its name to *SAC Journal* from issue 14 (April 1961) and added the subtitle, "Booklet for Creating and Critiquing Contemporary Art." SAC published thirty-four issues through 1963 (issue 13 is missing for some reason). It also created special issues for some of the events.

² [Author employs the word "meta-art" to suggest that Takahashi Yūji's essay series, similar to metafiction, is itself an artwork that self-consciously addresses art.]

SAC also asked artists to design posters for its events: Sugiura Kōhei made posters for the Sōgetsu Contemporary Series; Wada Makoto made posters for events related to modern jazz and Sōgetsu Cinémathèque; graphic designers such as Awazu Kiyoshi and Hosoya Gan also contributed original posters to concerts and musicals by foreign artists. These silkscreen posters, made using three to four ink colors and colored papers such as red, black, brown, and gray, gained prominence for their groundbreaking designs. Even though posters were not popularly considered as an art form then, SAC's posters were in great demand. I often encountered them hanging on office walls.

Creative Engineers and Composers

THE COMPOSERS GROUP featured Takemitsu Tōru's works for its second recital, followed by recitals showcasing Matsudaira Yoriaki, the conductor Iwaki Hiroyuki, and then Moroi Makoto.

In preparation for his recital, Takemitsu Tōru shut himself in the Sōgetsu Hall's recording room every night and created tape music titled "Water Music" (1960) with the help of a technician named Okuyama Jūnosuke. As the title indicates, the piece uses sounds produced by water droplets and absolutely no musical instruments.

Takemitsu consumed himself in collecting various source materials. He recorded the sounds of droplets from faucets and water dribbling from a kettle into a bucket in the middle of the hall's stage. He even made a long trip to an old well in Nerima, Tokyo that he had heard about. He took a device to record the sound of the droplets using a microphone that he carefully lowered into the well. Back in the studio, he sorted through the recordings, droplet by droplet, and used recorders and modulators to alter the sounds. The modest beats of the droplets were transformed into strong sounds that, at times, resembled a traditional hand drum called *tsuzumi* and beautiful bird calls.

The transformed sounds were next configured one-by-one onto a

tape at 1-centimeter increments, creating a rhythm of steady beats. Takemitsu slowly created “Water Music” by using the tape recorder to make a montage of sounds. It took him over a month of countless sleepless nights.

Okuyama Jūnosuke, who used to work as an audio engineer at Daiei Film, met Teshigahara Hiroshi while working on Kamei Fumio’s documentary film. When the Sōgetsu Hall was built, Hiroshi recruited Okuyama to join the SAC staff.

Okuyama was a magnificent, exceptionally creative audio engineer. Composers such as Mayuzumi, Takemitsu, Moroi, Takahashi Yūji, Yuasa Jōji, and myself would not have been able to make tape music without his assistance.

He often helped us realize challenging projects by making original recording devices. The Sōgetsu Hall’s studio was always full of these remarkable devices randomly lying around.

The extraordinary American composer John Cage and the American pianist David Tudor were mesmerized by Okuyama when they visited SAC—a story I will elaborate on later. Cage kept saying he couldn’t believe that there is as creative of an engineer as Okuyama, envying the Japanese composers.

“Water Music” was created in collaboration with Okuyama and presented for the first time on April 28, 1960, at the Composers Group’s first recital showcasing Takemitsu Tōru.

The recital’s program framed “Water Music” as a noh theater dance and listed the noh dancer Kanze Hisao as the performer, Teshigahara Hiroshi as the set designer, and Imai Naoji as the lighting technician. The sounds of water droplets reverberated from the speakers like *tsuzumi* in a noh play, creating a time and space filled with tense serenity.

Moroi Makoto’s recital took place in December 1960. Along with instrumental works, the recital showcased a music drama based on

Abe Kōbō's short story *The Red Cocoon* (1950). Shiose Hiroshi, who had just returned from France where he studied avant-garde theater such as Eugène Ionesco and Antonin Artaud's works, produced the drama. Manabe Hiroshi was in charge of the set design, Imai Naoji did the lighting, and Takeichi Yoshifuru was the stage director. For the music, tape recordings of the Philharmonic Chorus of Tokyo and a chamber orchestra with Wakasugi Hiroshi as the conductor were played. Yoneyama Mamako performed a pantomime dance on the stage.

Upon Moroi's request to contribute a piece to his recital to present before the *Red Cocoon* performance, I premiered "Arcana 19" (1960), to which Moroi added the subtitle, "Experiment of voice and music." The program stated that Gotō Yoshiko, Akiyama Kuniharu, Iwaki Hiroyuki, and Takahashi Yūji performed "Arcana 19" while Yamaguchi Katsuhiko made the art. However, Iwaki had declined to play the percussion when I originally asked him. Therefore, I approached the vibraphone player, Sugiura Ryōzō, to play a percussion instrument made of glass jars.

"Arcana 19," with a mixture of graphic and staff notations, turned out to be an indeterminate music piece. The jazz singer, Gotō Yoshiko, sang a tone poem I had written that sounded like an incantation, Takahashi Yūji played the piano, and I tapped on objects such as a wooden box. I was attempting to experiment with language and music by focusing on the tension between voice and sound that magical chants often encapsulate. Created half a year before Ichiyanagi Toshi, the master of indeterminate music, returned to Japan from the US, "Arcana 19" was most likely the first attempt at music indeterminacy in Japan. I recall the critic Tōno Yoshiaki kindly praising the performance in the *Yomiuri Shimbun*.

Mamiya's recital took place in 1961, and then Miyoshi Akira's recital the following year. However, Akutagawa Yasushi and Mayuzumi Toshirō's recitals planned to take place next were postponed and ultimately cancelled. Perhaps the recitals were halted because the two composers became too busy being media darlings. Their works were presented only once at the Composers Group's group concert in April 1961.

I wrote a review of this concert in the *Yomiuri Shimbun*:

“Composers Group, with eight composers³ representing the young generation, held a group concert (April 28, Sōgetsu Hall) two years after its founding.

“The group has been focused on organizing events featuring one composer at a time to carefully study their individual approaches and themes. Therefore, this group performance exposed the indefinite character as a collective.

“While the group’s discord can easily be explained as the result of bringing together musicians with diverging tendencies, I think the problem lies elsewhere.

“There has to be a shared conviction for a group to be a collective. Even if the group involves various tendencies, its diversity and the colliding of multiple perspectives must become the force that creates a strong cohesive identity. In short, I think the concert felt like a bazaar, where works are typically presented in individual stalls, because the Composers Group is only an assortment of prominent players.

“The concert featured various older works, such as Moroi Makoto’s ‘Partita for Flute’ (1952), and five recent works that were all very dull. Fresh and lively musical utterances were extremely sparse.

“Mayuzumi Toshirō irresponsibly presented ‘Bunraku’ (1960) as a music with an odd mixture of melancholy and exoticism. This piece for a solo cello player has sounds that evoke *futozao* shamisen played in *gidayū* style.⁴

“Mamiya Michio’s ‘Grandma’s Sake’ (1961), in which the singer Takemoto Masanori humorously told a story while wearing traditional men’s clothing [haori hakama], was well received. However, the music was weak. I was only impressed by Takemitsu Tōru’s work and Matsudaira Yoriaki’s ‘Orbits’ (1960) because they had a sense of artistic assertiveness.

“Takemitsu’s new composition, ‘Piano Distance’ (1961) (piano played by

³ Although the group actually had nine members, I must have written eight because Iwaki Hiroyuki was a conductor.

⁴ [Shamisen come in three sizes, the biggest being *futozao*, literally “thick neck size.” There are several styles of playing the *futozao* shamisen, one of which is called *gidayū*, named after Takemoto Gidayū (1651–1714). *Gidayū* style typically accompanies dramatic performances.]

Takahashi Yūji), used moments of silence as energy to create a unique world of intense spontaneity.

“At any rate, the Composers Group should not just be a trade show of talented contemporary musicians with individualistic styles. Instead, the members should lively exchange their competing ideas about music and actively develop new musical movements together.” (*Yomiuri Shimbun*, evening edition, May 3, 1961).

The Composers Group’s activities received much public attention. However, as I had feared, its activities naturally dissipated after the 1961 group show. Only two more events took place afterwards. One was a recital featuring Mamiya Michio and the other, which took place on April 1962 after a long interval, was a recital featuring Miyoshi Akira.

Unique Activities of Modern Jazz

AS INDICATED IN Document 5, Composers Group’s recitals were not the only events held under the Sōgetsu Contemporary Series. SAC’s unique modern jazz endeavors, such as Sōgetsu Music Inn and Etcetera and Jazz Circle, were also already underway.

The popularity of modern jazz music increased suddenly in our country from the late 1950s to the early 1960s. Youths crowded jazz cafes late into the night. The weekly news magazine *Shūkan Asahi* featured a six-page spread titled “Popularity of Modern Jazz: Analysis of its Appeal.” Screenings of the film *Jazz on a Summer’s Day* were packed, and French New Wave films with Miles Davis’ modern jazz soundtracks became a popular topic of conversation among the public.

SAC organized various events under the Sōgetsu Contemporary Series, with Composers Group on the one hand and Music Inn on the other. Music Inn’s concerts began in January 1960, two months before the founding of the Composers Group.

Music Inn events were a “new form of jazz meetings.” The concerts,

which were uniquely programmed under ambitious themes every month, invited prominent and young modern jazz musicians to participate.

In its first event, *SHQ Plays MJQ*, the Seiji Hiraoka Quintet carefully studied and mimicked performances by John Lewis's Modern Jazz Quartet (MJQ).

An enthusiastic crowd filled the hall. I could not attend of course, because I was still in Europe at the time. However, the Sōgetsu library has an enormous collection of audio tapes forming a valuable record of that time. The recording of the Music Inn's first event is fascinating as it includes a candid discussion between the jazz critic Maki Yoshio, Uekusa Jun'ichi, and Hiraoka on MJQ. The warm and homey atmosphere of the event is felt as the jazz pianist Yagi Masao interrupts the conversation saying, "We should start playing some music soon instead of talking." Another participant responds, "OK then, why don't we get started?" Then the musicians start the music.⁵

Hiraoka was initially supposed to take the lead in organizing monthly concerts for the Sōgetsu Music Inn. However, Yagi Masao and another jazz pianist named Miho Keitarō started to take charge of organizing the events as they became more actively involved. Thinking back on it now, Yagi's comment, as mentioned earlier in the audio recording of *SHQ Plays MJQ*, seems like foreshadowing.

Document 6

Sōgetsu Music Inn is a new kind of monthly jazz concert. Every month, exemplary musicians at the vanguard gather to choose an ambitious theme and present their research findings. Performances in the modern Sōgetsu Kaikan dissolve the boundary between the audience and the stage.

Sōgetsu Music Inn is a jazz movement that discovers today's vitality.

5 Sōgetsu Contemporary Series

1960

1. **Mar 31** Composers Group: Hayashi Hikaru
 2. **Apr 28** Composers Group: Takemitsu Tōru
 3. **May 31** Composers Group: Matsudaira Yoriaki
 4. **Jul 8-9** Composers Group: Iwaki Hiroyuki
 5. **Nov 26, Dec 3, 10, 17** Three-Person Animation Circle
 6. **Dec 8** Composers Group: Moroi Makoto
- 1961
7. **Apr 28** Composers Group: Group Concert 1
 8. **Jun 19** Composers Group: Mamiya Michio
 9. **Oct 30** Takahashi Yūji Piano Recital 1
 10. **Nov 30** Works by Ichiyanagi Toshi

1962

11. **Feb 23** Takahashi Yūji Piano Recital 2
12. **Feb 27-28** Théo Lésoualc'h Experimental Mime
13. **Apr 2** Composers Group: Miyoshi Akira
14. **May 28** Kobayashi Kenji and Ichiyanagi Toshi Duo Recital
15. **May 24** Works by Yoko Ono
16. **Jul 24** Dance Activity 1
17. **Oct 9-10** John Cage and David Tudor at Tokyo Bunka Kaikan's Recital Hall
18. **Oct 12, 17** John Cage and David Tudor at Kyoto Kaikan's Hall no. 2 and Osaka Mido Kaikan

1963

20. **May 26** Composers Group Concert

(Comments from the Sōgetsu Music Inn's second event pamphlet, February 1960)

Document 7

SAC will be holding a workshop-like modern jazz concert every month.

This series, in which cutting-edge jazz musicians devise monthly concerts under specific themes, is called the Sōgetsu Music Inn.

The name was inspired by a venue in Massachusetts called Music Inn, where jazz musicians gather, especially during the summer, to explore and discuss music.

Sōgetsu Music Inn will hold its first concert on October 28. Under the title, *SHQ Plays MJQ*, the Seiji Hiraoka Quintet and a tenor saxophonist named Miyazawa Akira will perform. Future events are also planned, such as *Influence of Blues on Modern Jazz* by Yagi Masao and Mizushima Sanae in February and *Song Album* by the Seiji Hiraoka Quintet and Peggy Hayama in March.

Mainichi Shimbun, evening edition, January 1960⁶

Document 8

The first concert of the Sōgetsu Music Inn, a modern jazz series that is one of Sōgetsu Kaikan's latest ventures, took place on the evening of the 28th. It was very well attended: the crowd was as big as the one that gathered for the Sōgetsu Kaikan's opening ceremony.

Per the theme of the concert, the vibraphone player Hiraoka Seiji and his quintet played the repertoire of songs by the Modern Jazz Quartet (MJQ), a group from the US that Hiraoka revered, as closely as possible to the original recording.

Series 1 (abbreviated as "concert" below)

21. Jul 3 Concert 2

22. Oct 12 Concert 3

23. Dec 19 Concert 4

1964

24. Apr 8 Concert 5

1964 (Other significant events)

May 23 Collective Music 1, Takemitsu Tōru, Kosugi Takehisa, and others

May 29 Works by Nam June Paik

⁶ [Original text erroneously states that the article was published in the *Asahi Shimbun*.]

The concert was divided into three parts: “emphasis on arrangement,” “emphasis on improvisation,” and “featuring Miyazawa Akira (tenor saxophone player).” While attempting to emulate the revered master’s music may arouse criticism, Hiraoka’s goal was not to copy. I think that there is something to be learned from his attitude to reexamine MJQ’s jazz music by going back to the foundation through the act of copying.

In any case, the first half of the concert was weak. The musicians appeared very tense, perhaps because they were preoccupied by MJQ’s delicate musicality and the fact that the concert marked Sōgetsu Music Inn’s first event.

However, the atmosphere relaxed in the latter half, and they magnificently performed “Minor Conception” and “Bag’s Groove.”

Also, a discussion about MJQ among critics Maki Yoshio and Uekusa Jin’ichi and Hiraoka took place at the beginning. Their intimate conversation was very fitting for the workshop-like small gathering. I look forward to future events.

Fukuda Ichirō

Tokyo Shimbun, January 29, 1960

Sōgetsu Music Inn continued to produce events under various themes: the second recital on February 25 was titled *Influence of Blues on Modern Jazz* (Contemporary Jazz Association), the third recital on March 21 was titled *With the Brass Choir* (Toshiyuki Miyama and His New Herd Orchestra); and the fourth recital on April 20 was titled *Research for Vibration* (Sugiura Ryōzō and Contemporary Jazz Association).

I think that Igawa Kōzō was in charge of classical music events, while Nara Yoshimi took care of jazz-related concerts and the forthcoming film, animation, and theater events. Through discussions with jazz

musicians, Nara realized various events, such as workshop-like concerts showcasing the latest tendencies. He also devised prominent events inviting guest participants. For example, *Influence of Blues on Modern Jazz* and *Modern Jazz Insists*, in which Yukimura Izumi sang modern jazz for the first time, attracted much attention.

Influence of Blues on Modern Jazz, which put together Cyrus Mosley, a black singer and an assistant professor of English literature at International Christian University in Tokyo, with Mizushima Sanae and Gotō Yoshiko, made headlines. *Shūkan Asahi* dedicated four of its color pages at the beginning of the magazine to this unusual event under the title, “A Professor who Sings the Blues.” Many newspapers also featured Yukimura Izumi enthusiastically singing funk songs at the *Modern Jazz Insists*. Both events were highly popular and won the Japanese government’s Art Encouragement Prize.

Experiments in New Animation

Besides influencing music, SAC also contributed significantly to the development of film. The first screening of underground films in Japan took place at the Sōgetsu Hall, and the art center also showcased many experimental films. SAC began screening underground films from the latter half of the '60s. At first, the screenings focused on classic silent films, such as those starring Charlie Chaplin and Harold Lloyd, and animation.

Kuri Yōji, Yanagihara Ryōhei, and Manabe Hiroshi, all famous illustrators and manga artists at the time, created the Three-Person Animation Circle. The group held screenings on Saturday evenings—November 26, December 3, 10, and 17, 1960—as the 5th Sōgetsu Contemporary Series event.

The three illustrators met through participating in the fervid movement against the Japan-US Security Treaty.

Many young artists such as Hani Susumu, Ōe Kenzaburō, Ishihara

Shintarō, Asari Keita, Tanikawa Shuntarō, and Etō Jun, and the composers Takemitsu Tōru, Hayashi Hikaru, Mamiya Michio, and myself created the Society for Young Japan to protest the treaty. The three illustrators were also part of this group.

The newly launched NET Nihon Education Television Co. (today's TV Asahi) solicited the Society for Young Japan to create content for a thirty-minute TV segment titled *Eye that Slightly Lacks Common Sense*. The show aired every evening at 10pm for one week. If I recall correctly, it was Natori Yōnosuke's project. We stayed up many nights scrambling to work on this unfamiliar task. Even those working full-time in the television industry found the job taxing. The film crew often shot us behind the scenes working in the control room. However, this fried the audio mixer, and an interview once aired without sound for ten minutes. We got a flood of phone call complaints. I think it will be a very interesting project for someone to compile a complete account of this TV show project.

Returning to the topic, Kuri Yōji, Yanagihara Ryōhei, and Manabe Hiroshi each took charge of making a 10-minute animation. They also participated in a discussion about "new animation" with Hani Susumu as the moderator. During this conversation, Kuri Yōji revealed that this was his first time making animation.

Interested in continuing to make animation even after the TV show, the three illustrators established the Three-Person Animation Circle with Nara Yoshimi's assistance.

They made a pamphlet with "Three-Person Animation Circle's Manifesto," which stated the group's determination to "continually conduct diverse experiments for animation to truly be able to exist in the contemporary" and a youthful spirit that "always stands on the side of reform."

Document 9

“Three-Person Animation Circle’s Manifesto in Search for a New Image”

As members of the Three-Person Animation Circle, we hope that our animation using new methods and technology leads to creating a new consciousness. This will be a truly new image.

We are interested in breaking down our boundaries and, to put it a bit extremely, exchanging dissonant ideas and methods among those working in different genres, such as painters, manga artists, and designers, rather than the trendy “synthesis of genres.”

For the future of animation, we need to continually conduct diverse experiments for animation to truly exist in the “contemporary” along with other genres such as film, painting, and design.

The Three-Person Animation Circle always stands on the side of reform.

Three-Person Animation Circle

Kuri Yōji

Manabe Hiroshi

Yanagihara Ryōhei

Three-Person Animation Circle screened four animation works at the 5th Sōgetsu Contemporary Series.

Kuri Yōji

Stamp Fantasy (16mm color film)

Music: Hayashi Hikaru

Assistant: Adachi Tomie

Two Grilled Fish (16mm black and white film)

Music: Akiyama Kuniharu

Drawing/painting: Adachi Tomie

Yanagihara Ryōhei

Sea Battle (16mm black and white film)

Music: Yagi Masao

Editor: Shuzui Fusako

Voice: Kumakura Kazuo

Manabe Hiroshi

Marine Snow

Music: Hayashi Hikari

Poem: Kajima Hajime

Stage director: Kanze Hideo

Lighting: Imai Naoji

Voice: Kishida Kyōko, Ozawa Shōichi, and others

The audience filled the Sōgetsu Hall. The screened works were certainly experimental animations.

For example, Manabe presented *Marine Snow*, subtitled “An animation for the stage,” together with lights and projection of photographs taken during the shoot of a documentary called *Marine Snow* by Tokyo Cinema. Kanze Hideo performed in front of the screen while Kajima Hajime’s broadcast poem was recited. The images, such as an octopus collaged with human faces and a stingfish with a Japanese flag, were very peculiar.

Meanwhile, Yanagihara Ryōhei, known for his Suntory Whisky’s Uncle Tors commercials, made an animation about the British and German sea battle during World War II. Yanagihara, a big fan of ships, depicted distorted battleships in great detail.

Nara Yoshimi asked me to make the soundtrack for *Two Grilled Fish* by Kuri Yōji, whom I had just met. I drew on modern jazz methods and music concrète in which raw sounds are recorded, modified, and arranged together using tape music technology. For example, I modified the sounds of chimpanzees crying for the scene of the

couple fighting and included a weather forecaster's voice for the scene in which a satellite flies over the urbanized island. I also added electronically modified humorous sounds of American bullfrogs and frogs that live on trees for the scene where strange fish-shaped bombs are flying.

The engineer Okuyama Jūnosuke and I spent many sleepless nights in the Sōgetsu Hall's recording studio. I recall rushing to Yokohama Cinema's processing laboratory early one morning with the finished tape recording in hand as Okuyama drove the car. We needed to get the tape to the post-production lab by that morning so that the animation could air as scheduled. For some reason, I vividly remember the dawn mist covering the cityscape as we turned in front of Sakuragichō Station.

This tape recording was the first music concrète soundtrack ever made for animation work in Japan.

Kuri Yōji was a difficult person to please. He muttered unintelligibly while his eyes were half-smiling. He gave me complete freedom in making the soundtrack.

I think the Three-Person Animation Circle was a form of resistance against Toei Animation in the 1950s. The animations created by Toei's commercialized system were essentially a Japanese version of Disney. Kuri, Yanagihara, and Manabe pushed against the commercialized Toei Animation's use of elaborate technology, equipment, time, and expense by attempting new experiments that infinitely expanded one's imagination.

The Three-Person Animation Circle's second screening event in January 1962 showcased 35mm color films such as Kuri Yōji's *This Way and That Way* (1962) and *Human Zoo* (1962) and Yanagihara Ryōhei's *Commotion at Ikedaya* (1961). The third screening in March 1963 presented eleven animation films such as Kuri's *Love* (1963) and *Chair* (1963) and Manabe's *Time* (1963).

The fourth screening event, held in September 1963, was renamed the

Animation Festival and included works submitted by various artists and amateurs. The event also expanded its scope by holding screenings in cities such as Nagoya, Osaka, Kyoto, and Fukuoka.

7 [The original text erroneously states that the title of Yokoo Tadanori's animation work is *Kiss Kiss*.]

As stated in its pamphlet, the Three-Person Animation Circle believed in breaking “away from the coterie mentality of a three-person group to develop animation further.” However, the group’s expansion would not have been possible without Nara Yoshimi’s guidance and administrative support.

The 1964 Animation Festival also received submissions from the US and France and screened 17 works. In particular, the special screening of Alexandre Alexeïeff’s unreleased animation, *A Night on Bald Mountain* (1933), received attention. The work used a technique called pinscreen, in which images are created by the shadows from light shining onto thousands of headless pins.

The 1964 festival premiered masterpieces such as Kuri Yōji’s *Man, Woman, and Dog* (1963) and *AOS* (1964), Manabe Hiroshi’s *Submarine Cassiopea* (1964), Yanagihara Ryōhei’s *A Story about the Moon* (1964). Moreover, the festival was notable for recruiting graphic designers such as Uno Akira, Yokoo Tadanori, and Wada Makoto to make animation works. Kuri Yōji had enlisted them by saying, “I will lend you my studio facilities so try making something.”

Uno’s *White Festival* (1964) depicts a metamorphosis of his unique and gorgeous illustrations by overlaying them against a white background along with a soundtrack of baroque music. The magnificent animation evokes elegance and a world of highbrow imagination. Yokoo Tadanori presented *Anthology No.1* (1964), a montage of his graphic design works, and *Kiss Kiss Kiss* (1964),⁷ in which images of couples kissing from American cartoons are enlarged and made into collages.

Wada Makoto employed his sensible and poetic line work to make a mystery animation titled *Murder* (1964), a humorous portrayal of various detective caricatures and mundane individuals. This sophisticated parody by a poetic artist won the Ōfuji Noburō Award at

the 1964 Mainichi Film Awards. The soundtrack made by Yagi Masao was also brilliant. His orthodox and straightforwardly expressive music was amusing as it ironically became part of the parody.

The next Animation Festival in 1965 featured thirty-one works, including Kuri Yōji's masterpieces, such as *The Man Next Door* (1965) and *Window* (1965). The graphic designers Katsui Mitsuo and Tanaami Kei'ichi and the painter Asakura Setsu also presented animation for the first time. Furthermore, Nakajima Kō's cine-calligraphic work and Tsukioka Sadao's war satire animation also premiered.

The organizers established an open-call section for the general public to submit from the 1966 festival held in late October, while the members of the Three-Person Animation Circle presented their works to the invitation-only section. In other words, the three illustrators had stepped back from actively organizing the festival. Kuri Yōji seemed to be the only one out of the three who continued to demonstrate a strong drive to create experimental and humorous animation. By this time, he had gained international recognition as "Kuri Yōji in the East," winning many awards at film festivals, including the bronze award at the Venice Biennale. Meanwhile, Manabe and Yanagihara seemed to be losing their animation fever.

Fourteen animation films were selected for the 1966 festival, including Shimamura Tatsuo's *The Moonlight and the Glasses* (1966) and *Story of a Man* (1966). The Suntory award for the best idea went to *National Flag* (1966), a partially color film produced by Yokoyama Ryūichi's younger brother, Ryūji, and directed by Imai Kazuya.

At the time, the Sōgetsu Animation Festival was taking place as part of the Sōgetsu Cinémathèque's program. However, SAC seemed to be gradually planning to shift gears toward focusing on experimental underground films rather than organizing film festivals exclusive to animation.

In the fall of 1967, SAC held a festival titled Invitation to Animation, which featured the latest animation works from abroad, Disney films,

and Paul Grimault's works. Kuri Yōji's four works were the only ones by a Japanese artist.

In November of the same year, SAC held another film festival titled the 1st Experimental Film Festival, which included animation as part of the open-call section. Notable works included Shimamura Tatsuo's *Illusion City* (1967), which satirized the mass media, and *The Art of Fugue*⁸ (1967) by Yamada Manabu and Tsukio Yoshio, who were both not part of the animation industry. The latter work was most likely the first computer animation in Japan.

When SAC founded the Three-Animation Circle, *animation* was still an unfamiliar term in Japan. The phrase *manga eiga* [film] was commonly used instead to refer to moving images. However, by the mid-1960s, animation was a flourishing genre, full of experimentation and diversity. Within this context, SAC tried to position the various animation works under the category of film, comparable to experimental films.

SAC's screening events only featured new and experimental animation films. The art center always focused on the latest trends across all genres. Even the most minor and minute works had to be experimental.

⁸ [The creators of the animation translated the Japanese title 風雅の技法 (Fūga no Gihou) to *The Art of Fugue*. They chose *fugue* as the translation of 風雅 (fūga) despite the difference in the meaning most likely because it is a near homonym of the Japanese word, which in English means "elegance" or "refinement."]

2

Etcetera and Jazz Circle was the Point of Departure

AS AFOREMENTIONED, preparatory meetings to start the Modern Jazz Club (provisional name) were already underway in November 1959, soon after the establishment of SAC. This club eventually became the Etcetera and Jazz Circle, founded in January 1960.

Document 10

“January Notice on Etcetera and Jazz Circle”

The Modern Jazz Club (provisional name), which we have been planning since last fall, has been realized now with the participation of passionate artists from various genres. Its activities will start this year under the new name, Etcetera and Jazz Circle.

We hope to create a platform for extensive research and artistic exchange to establish modern jazz, an expression of today’s vitality, as “contemporary music.” Please join our January gathering as detailed below.

Information to the right:

Etcetera and Jazz Circle (January 5)

Organizers: Miho Keitarō, Yagi Masao, Takemitsu Tōru, Uekusa Jin'ichi, Tanikawa Shuntarō, Imai Hisae, Yamaguchi Katsuhiro, and SAC

January 22 (Friday), 6 pm

Sōgetsu Kaikan Hall (Get off at Akasaka Omotechō)

Fee: 100 yen

Program

1) *Thelonious Monk Research*

Record Listening and Discussion

Uekusa Jin'ichi and Yagi Masao

2) *Experiments by Etcetera and Jazz Circle*

a. Works by Miho Keitarō, Terayama Shūji, and by Imai Hisae

b. Collage by Tanikawa Shuntarō

c. Others

(January 1960, SAC)

In retrospect, the Etcetera and Jazz Circle was SAC's actual point of departure.

In the summer of 1959, Teshigahara Hiroshi was busy filming in New York to make his film *José Torres* (1959), which documents the life of an unknown Puerto Rican boxer. Takemitsu Tōru, who was working on the film's soundtrack, frequented SAC for meetings.

Takemitsu was engrossed in jazz at the time. For the film, he created fascinating compositions incorporating blues and jazz-like rhythms played by a string orchestra.

Takemitsu's passion for jazz (see Document 11) spread to Igawa Kōzō and Nara Yoshimi at the art center. Eventually, they began to think that jazz surely must have an authentic real relationship with contemporary art if Takemitsu is so enamored by it, and that SAC should focus on jazz

for a while.

With this, the individuals mentioned in Document 10 (see also Document 12) established the Etcetera and Jazz Circle, a name given by the poet Tankiawa Shuntarō. “Etcetera” conveyed the group’s perspective to involve jazz musicians and artists working in other genres.

Every month we gathered to listen to and discuss the latest modern jazz records from abroad provided by Uekusa Jin’ichi and others. At some point, someone suggested making experimental films to go along with the jazz. We started going to Fuji Film every month to get approximately ten rolls of 16mm reversal films. Those who wanted to make experimental films borrowed Teshighara Hiroshi’s Bolex Film Camera.

They either created films to accompany the modern jazz records or created the films first and then asked musicians such as Yagi Masao and Miho Keitarō to perform improvisational music along with the films. Individuals such as the photographer Imai Hisae and the designer Manabe Hiroshi contributed film works. These developments were part of what led to the creation of the Three-Person Animation Circle.

Document 11

I have recently become obsessed with jazz, which is outside my expertise. I even shock myself with the extent I’ve become engrossed in the jazz world. As you of course know, I love jazz.

“To Hayashi Hikaru” written by Takemitsu Tōru
(SAC issue 1, March 1960)

Document 12

Modern jazz is extremely popular these days. Jazz fans from various genres, including musicians and graphic designers, gather at Sōgetsu Kaikan’s Music Inn and Etcetera and Jazz

Circle events to create and present works collaboratively.

They make jazz accessible by combining modern jazz with experimental films and slides.

I do not think that people are drawn to modern jazz these days as an escape or anesthesia from the current sociopolitical conflicts and contradictions. Instead, I want to underscore the fact that modern jazz was born out of primitive vitality that pushed against contemporary society, in contrast to primitive art that was a product of an enclosed primitive society.

Our creativity—music and art that must arise from Japan’s contemporary reality—should not just be a shadow cast upon a void. “Humans” need to exist in a space filled with energetic clapping and cheering like black people’s spontaneous and ingenuous expressive power.

Yamaguchi Katsuhiro “Exploring Jazz of Midsummer Nights”
Yomiuri Shimbun, evening edition, August 10, 1960

As illustrated, Etcetera and Jazz Circle was the first step toward realizing Teshigahara Hiroshi’s vision for SAC as a place for artistic exchange that generated new movements.

Document 13

Many names were considered before settling on Etcetera and Jazz Circle. Uekusa Jin’ichi mentioned several of the candidates, as listed below, during his welcome speech at the opening of the Etcetera and Jazz Circle’s first regular meeting.

Jazz and Art Circle, Experimental Jazz Center, Modern Jazz Club, Modern Jazz Corner, Jazz ’60, etc.

Sōgetsu Music Inn was also certainly connected to the Etcetera and Jazz Circle.

For example, Miho Keitarō and Yagi Masao, who partook in the Etcetera and Jazz Circle from its early stages, also actively participated in the Sōgetsu Music Inn's events.

In August 1961, Sōgetsu Music Inn organized an event centered around Miho and Yagi in Karuizawa.

In the mid-1950s, Mayuzumi Toshirō, Irino Yoshiro, Minao Shibata, and others founded the Twentieth Century Music Research Center, which held a contemporary music festival every summer in Karuizawa to introduce avant-garde music from Europe and the US. The festival was essentially the Japanese version of the Darmstadt Summer Course in West Germany. Karuizawa Music Inn tried to compete with this Twentieth Century Music Research Center by focusing on modern jazz.

SAC organized a festival called the Karuizawa Music Inn on August 18 and 19 at Karuizawa Seizan Hotel. Musicians such as Kazuo Yashiro Quartet, Norio Maeda & The West Liners, Miho Keitarō All Stars, Yagi Masao All Stars, and Yamaya Kiyoshi All Stars participated.

The culture section of the Tokyo Shimbun published the music critic Yokomizo Ryōichi's review of the event. The headline read, "The Successful Jazz Festival in Karuizawa" and "A Big Crowd at the Festival which Includes Foreigners and Gray-Haired Gentlemen Blew Our Worries Away." Yokomizo wrote, "It was successful despite the SAC's lack of preparation and publicity. They are thinking about chartering a bus with air conditioning to drive people from Tokyo to the venue next year." However, the festival did not happen again due to financial roadblocks.

*Document 14***Karuizawa Music Inn**

The original Music Inn took place in Lenox, Massachusetts, a popular summering destination on the foot of a mountain, just like Karuizawa in Japan. The Music Inn in Lenox functioned like a music school and had a significant impact on the development of jazz.

We shamelessly hope to imitate this school in Lenox because creating such a space is vital for the establishment of modern jazz in Japan.

We hope you have a fulfilling concert experience listening to a lineup of songs we selected after carefully considering various issues in jazz, such as composition and performance, and developing new ideas.

(From the Karuizawa Music Inn pamphlet)

The Sōgetsu Music Inn's activities suddenly dwindled after this Karuizawa event. This is evident in the chronological table in the footnote.⁹

In 1962, the Sōgetsu Music Inn organized two regular events and a special event by Miho Keitarō titled *Modern Jazz Seminar*. The recital *Yagi Masao Trio* held the following year in June 1963 marked the last event.

Why did Sōgetsu Music Inn, which was very popular and active, end?

To grasp the situation better I spoke with Nara Yoshimi, who was in charge back then. I visited him at Film Art while he was busily cleaning in preparation for the New Year.

Q: What was the biggest reason for the dissolution?

9 Sōgetsu Music Inn

1960

1. Jan 28: *SHQ Plays MJQ*, Seiji Hiraoka Quintet
2. Feb 25: *Influence of Blues on Modern Jazz*, Contemporary Jazz Association
3. Mar 21: *With the Brass Choir*, Toshiyuki Miyama & The New Herd Orchestra, and others
4. Apr 20: *Research for Vibration*, Sugiura Ryōzō, Contemporary Jazz Association
5. May 27: *Multifaceted Application of Modern Jazz*, Tanikawa Shuntarō, Terayama Shūji, Miho Keitarō
6. Jul 1: *A Study of Modern Jazz Idiom*, Yamaya Kiyoshi, Nobuo Hara and His Sharps & Flats
7. Jul 20: *Soul of Jazz*, Yashiro Kazuo, Hideo Shiraki Quintet
8. Sep 22: *A Study of Miles Davis*, Seiji Hiraoka Quintet, Ōhashi Kyosen
9. Oct 24: *A Pianist's Role in Modern Jazz*, Yagi Masao, Miho Keitarō, Maeda Norio, Sadao Watanabe
10. Nov 12: *Influence of Blues on Modern Jazz* as part of an arts festival at Toshi Center Hotel in Tokyo, Mizushima Sanae, Gotō Yoshiko, Cyrus Mosley, Billy Banks, Masao Yagi & His Group

1961

11. Jan 25: *Etcetera and Jam Session*, Kubota Jirō, Yagi Masao, Sadao Watanabe, Maeda Norio, and others
12. Feb 27: *The Dixieland Revival*, Yui Shōichi, Saitō Takashi and The Dixie Dukes, and others
13. Mar 25: *Transforming Modern Jazz*, Miyazawa Akira, Yagi Masao, and others
14. May 25: *The Allure of Group Sound*, Kazuo Yashiro Quartet, and others
15. Jul 17: *Three Jazz Vocalists*, Gotō Yoshiko, Kowaki Masae, Furuya Takashi, and Nakano Akira
Special Event. Aug 18-19: *Karuizawa Music Inn* at Karuizawa Seizan Hotel, Kazuo Yashiro Quartet, Norio Maeda & The West Liners, Miho Keitarō All Stars, Yagi Masao All Stars, and Yamaya Kiyoshi & His All Stars.
16. Nov 21: *Modern Jazz Insists* (participation in arts festival), Yukimura Izumi, Modern Jazz All Stars

1962

17. Mar 29-30: *Modern Jazz and Folk Songs*, The West Liners, Kowaki Masae, and Gotō Yoshiko
Special Event. Jun 3: Sōgetsu Music Inn Special Event "Jazz Seminar," Miho Keitarō, Yagi Masao
18. Nov 29: *Work of Modern Jazz*, Yagi Masao, Miho Keitarō, Miyazawa Akira, and others

1963

19. Jun 18: *Yagi Masao Trio*, Yagi Masao, Inaba Kunimitsu, Inagaki Jirō, and Nakano Akira

*The following are special concerts sponsored by Sōgetsu Art Center that were held after the Sōgetsu Music Inn ended.

Dec 16-17, 1965 *Yagi Masao Modern Jazz Concert 1965 "Jazz New Thing,"* Yagi Masao, Togashi Masahiko, Takimoto Kunio, Sadao Watanabe, Miyazawa Akira, Matsumoto Hidehiko

Sep 3, 1966: *Modern Jazz Demonstration, Farewell Party for Satō Masahiko Leaving for the US,* Sadao Watanabe, Miyazawa Akira, Hino Terumasa, Harada Masanaga, Ishikawa Akira, Inagaki Jirō, Matsumoto Hidehiko, Gotō Yoshiko

May 25, 1968: *from Jazz, Rock, Relax, Rhythm & Blues to Jazz Rock,* Ishikawa Akira, The Midnight Sounds

Nara: I think that the highly feverish excitement that once existed toward modern jazz gradually dissipated. The Sōgetsu Music Inn's jazz musicians, except for Yagi and Miho Keitarō, also seemed to lose motivation by the end.

Q: Is that why there was no longer a significance in continuing the Sōgetsu Music Inn?

Nara: Yes, that's right. It could have also been because modern jazz critics, who were not a part of the Music Inn at the start, began participating. When projects they participated in won awards at international art festivals, they bragged that the success came from them.

This made many of us reluctant to participate. Even though Sōgetsu Music Inn was supposed to be distinct from the established jazz industry and focus on exploring new practices with the audience, our activities started to become part of the industry. We regretted having developed our activities up to the level of the industry. Given this situation, we began to feel that we were better off abandoning modern jazz and pouring energy into other artistic genres. In fact, we had been interested in experimental films for a while.

Certainly Miho Keitarō was a very passionate creator. He believed that modern jazz, like contemporary music, needed to be theorized and imbued with contemporaneous consciousness. This attitude was exemplified in the aforementioned *Modern Jazz Seminar* that he organized.

Document 15

Sōgetsu Music Inn Special Event: *Modern Jazz Seminar*

June 3, 1962 (Sun), 4pm, Sōgetsu Hall

- 1) Articulation and Memory: Ear Training
- 2) Varieties of Improvisation: Music Minus One
- 3) Discussion
- 4) Performance organized by Miho Keitarō and performed by Miho Keitarō, Miyazawa Akira, Inagaki Jirō, and the West Liners

Document 16

“From the Experience at the Jazz Seminar”

The history of jazz is brief compared to literature, painting, and classical music, and even more so in Japan, where jazz is only at its primitive stage. If we continue to neglect the state of rivalry between the local barons, jazz will soon vanish.

The Sōgetsu Music Inn held a jazz seminar for musicians in June of last year to even minimally help the current state of jazz.

The seminar employed a very fundamental and easy method. To summarize, we began by gathering and transcribing various musical improvisations from the past into music scores. Next, we took similar phrases from the scores and created templates like french curves. Then we analyzed the musical phrases and sounds that intuitively sounded like jazz to understand musical intervals unique to jazz.

Finally, we identified the problems in basic performance methods across jazz musicians and tried to break down jazz's tendency to create repetitive rhythms.

We discussed various issues such as the difference in the timing of notes between jazz and classical music. I came out with an understanding that these issues were too immense to resolve in just one or two seminars.

Miho Keitarō

Yomiuri Shimbun, January 1963

Yagi Masao, another driving force behind many of the Sōgetsu Music Inn's activities, was also a talented and prominent musician. While a Thelonious Monk devotee, he collaborated with contemporary music composers such as Takemitsu Tōru and Akutagawa Yasushi to create

works for orchestra. The antithesis of Miho's optimistic and passionate attitude, Yagi was quite shy, cynical, and individualistic.

I cannot help but think that the Sōgetsu Music Inn could have continued to become lively if Yagi had pushed himself to collaborate more with Miho. It could also have had a more significant impact on the development of modern jazz in Japan.

“John Cage Shock”

SAC'S OFFICE WAS ABOUT thirty-five square meters in size and located in the Sōgetsu Kaikan's southwest corner, directly above the basement hall.

If I am not mistaken, a wooden mailbox was on the concrete wall to the left of the entrance. The office stored many letters sent to Japanese artists from abroad because senders always addressed Sōgetsu when they did not know the recipient's address.

SAC served as a window of cultural exchange between Japan and abroad. It undeniably functioned as a genuinely international space.

For example, the art center was known for inviting prominent foreign avant-garde artists and providing a venue to present their works.

In the spring of 1960, Teshigahara Hiroshi first sent a letter to Edgar Varèse, an experimental composer living in New York, inviting him to Japan.

Hiroshi visited Varèse's home in 1959 while accompanying his father Sōfu's trip to New York for his solo exhibition. Varèse's music deeply moved Hiroshi. Soon after returning home, he consulted with Takemitsu Tōru and Mayuzumi Toshirō and took the initiative in starting the process to host the influential composer and the pioneer of twentieth-century music.

Varèse showed great interest in coming to Japan, exchanging several

letters with Hiroshi. Furthermore, in August of the same year Varèse's close friend, the artist Alfred Copley, visited Japan and relayed messages from Varèse that he wanted to come in the spring of 1961.

SAC began planning events for his visit, such as the Varèse Festival, lectures, and a concert by the NHK Symphony Orchestra showcasing his work.

Varèse would have been SAC's first avant-garde artist from abroad if the visit had been realized. However, being over seventy years old, he became sick with thrombosis and had to cancel. He died of the disease in November 1965 at the age of 81.

While planning for Varèse's trip, SAC was also making arrangements for the San Francisco-based distinctive audiovisual group called Vortex to visit. The group had been creating technologically progressive shows at the Morrison Planetarium in San Francisco. The whirling light and sound shows included composer Henry Jacob's tape music and Jordan Belson's cosmic-like light created using two projectors. What a pity that the group's visit was abandoned due to issues concerning equipment, especially because SAC was nearly done with all the work that involved preparing to welcome them; we were in the midst of negotiating with planetariums in Tokyo and Osaka. Belson only came to be known in Japan as a prominent "cosmic cinema" artist later in the 1970s.

John Cage, an experimental composer from the US, and the American pianist David Tudor who accompanied Cage, became the first foreign artists to visit Japan under SAC's sponsorship.

They traveled through Japan, holding concerts in various cities, including Tokyo, Osaka, and Sapporo. The concert at the Sogetsu Kaikan was arguably the most impactful concert to have ever taken place in Japan.

David Tudor connected several contact microphones to the piano and blasted harsh sounds through the speakers. He also crawled under the piano and banged the instrument with a wood hammer like a carpenter.

Cage brought various kitchen items, such as a rice cooker, frying pan, electric stove, and an empty can of Yamamotoyama seaweed, and laid them out on a desk on the stage. The noises made from these mundane objects echoed throughout the hall. The audience was astonished by this very odd concert of loud jarring noises and silences. The show even threw composers and musicians into disarray.

The sensation Cage caused in 1960 came to be called the “John Cage Shock.” His concerts demonstrated a concept that he continued to practice called “chance music,” which incorporates spontaneity and blurs the boundary between art and everyday life.

The John Cage Shock significantly transformed Japan’s music world.

The mainstream music world developed an “avant-garde allergy.” More concretely, composers truly practicing avant-garde music were discerned, while those who were simply mimicking Euro-American techniques fell behind. It was only a matter of time before the boundary between the conservative and the vanguard camps became distinct on the map of Japan’s music world.

John Cage and David Tudor visited again in November 1964 with the Merce Cunningham Dance Company under SAC’s sponsorship. They held an event at the Sōgetsu Hall.

Document 17

One afternoon in the fall of 1962 the American composer John Cage and the pianist David Tudor, who were nearing the end of a six-week concert tour of Japan, attended a special service in their honor at the Grand Shinto Shrine of Ise, near the seacoast about seventy miles south of Nagoya. The service had been ordered by their official host, Mr. Sofu Teshigahara, a well-to-do Japanese art patron and master of the art of flower arrangement, and it included the music and dances of the ancient ritual of *gagaku*. The purpose of the ceremony, as

requested by Mr. Teshigahara and expressed in the prayers of the officiating priests, was to bring blessings upon the avant-garde activities of Mr. Cage and Mr. Tudor, and to cause the sun to shine favorably upon the flowering of all such avant-garde activities throughout the world.

¹⁰ Teiji died young in the fall of 1982.

The Bride and the Bachelors by Calvin Tomkins

The Coach with the Six Insides *and* *Merce Cunningham*

FOLLOWING JOHN CAGE'S VISIT, SAC invited the Jean Erdman Dance Company to perform *The Coach with the Six Insides*, which had just won a 1963 Obie Award for off-Broadway theater in New York.

The Coach with the Six Insides is an experimental musical play based on James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* (1939), an apogee of experimental literature. Erdman wrote, directed, choreographed, and played the leading role in this dance, pantomime, and music drama. Itō Teiji,¹⁰ a composer based in New York and the dancer Itō Michio's nephew, created the music. Teiji, Kawazoe Shōtarō (Shōrō at present), and Jose Ricci improvisationally played the composition while observing the stage. Including these three musicians, SAC invited approximately a dozen artists from the US for this performance.

This development felt like a sea change for SAC, which had been organizing smaller-scale events. Teshigahara Hiroshi markedly claimed his role as a producer of this event. He appointed Ōno Tadashi as the producer of Teshigahara Productions and devised a well-planned system to welcome the visitors and manage the long-running performance from May 1 to 24, 1964. This off-Broadway experimental play presented in Japan for the first time was a success.

*Document 18***The Coach with the Six Insides**

I was drawn into the stage and deeply moved. I completely surrendered and took my hat off. I experienced something beyond just admiration for the newness and the boldness. I felt an authentically deep empathy because the play realized a kind of theater that I had been dreaming of.

The Coach with the Six Insides is much more persuasive than the usual live theater performed in Japanese. The performance touches on the essence of theatrical expression by defying categorization as a play, concert, or dance: it is at once all three and not. The performance conveys the true impact of theater that will never happen under the conventional modernist perspective that associates drama simply with a dramatic plot.

Review by Abe Kōbō

Asahi Journal, May 11, 1964 issue

Document 19

The play, an original off-Broadway avant-garde musical imported directly to Japan and the first long-run performance at the Sōgetsu Hall, was truly Sōgetsu in character. In other words, it epitomized SAC as a self-professed and widely recognized spiritual base and a driving force of avant-garde arts. The art center provided us with a rare opportunity to come in contact with the frivolous solemnity of American culture. We witnessed the lightness of the US exerting itself to the fullest in the form of “play,” free of any specific genres like drama and musical and from any intricate tradition of theater.

Review by Dōmoto Masaki

Engeki Kai, June 1964 issue

Document 20

SAC's invitation of the avant-garde theatre troupe was significant. It demonstrated the US's ability to produce critical performances that went beyond frivolous and shallow shows. Furthermore, the performance was immensely thrilling because it flaunted the grandness of a total work of art to the infantile Japanese artists.

We must learn from Erdman's attitude to think vigorously.

Okamoto Yoshihiko

Kinema Junpō, late May 1964 issue

Q: Did you know how successful *The Coach with the Six Insides* was going to be?

Nara: Igawa and I actually presented a pessimistic estimation at the beginning. We believed that the Sōgetsu Hall was too small of a space for such a performance and that the limited number of seats would not yield a profit. However, Hiroshi took a firm stance on hosting it and it turned out to be very successful. The performance had a significant cultural impact on a wide range of individuals beyond those directly involved in theater and music. I was very impressed by Hiroshi's ability to decipher the real thing.

We asked Maruya Saiichi to translate the notoriously challenging English text and projected the Japanese text onto the side of the stage.

Following *The Coach with the Six Insides* in 1964, SAC invited the experimental modern dance group Merce Cunningham Dance Company in November of the same year. SAC fully funded the visit even though *Yomiuri Shimbun* was a joint sponsor under the direction of Kaidō Hideo, the deputy editor of the newspaper's culture department.

The dance group performed for four consecutive days at Sankei Hall in Tokyo, followed by one night each in Kobe and Osaka. The performance attracted substantial attention.

The Dance Company's visit involved a large number of people: seventeen or eighteen individuals including Merce Cunningham and his ten dancers, the music director John Cage, the pianist David Tudor, the famous Pop artist Robert Rauschenberg who was in charge of set design and lighting, and several managers and staff.

Document 21

“Merce Cunningham Dance Company's Performance in Japan”

I returned from New York after the private preview screening of *Woman in the Dunes* (1964) at Lincoln Center. Despite the shortness of the trip, I witnessed the rapidly transforming New York with my own eyes.

Luckily the film was well received. I spoke to many artists, critics, and journalists at the reception. They were envious of Merce Cunningham upon hearing that his dance company was performing in Japan under my production. They immediately inquired if I already had plans for future events. I was struck by their longing and passion for Japan.

I am confident that the performances by contemporary American artists leading the international art world will give a fresh stimulus to Japanese arts.

Teshigahara Hiroshi
Shinjuku Hyakusen, November 1964 issue

Document 22

Merce Cunningham and his dance company unfolded a shocking and curious spectacle on the biggest stage in Tokyo. However, the unrest was not the kind of wildness that calls for an ambulance. Instead, it was a subtle and humorous kind of shock.

The dancers' efforts to free themselves from archaic conventions and connotations were profoundly moving. It was also liberating to watch their truly free movements on stage.

A sense of freedom and liberation is the ultimate effect of art.

Ōe Kenzaburo

Yomiuri Shimbun, November 16, 1964

Document 23

Merce Cunningham's ensemble presented a "purified form" of theater, which resists everyday life full of regulated control. Their performance demonstrated the power of theater in creating deep and massive entities within itself.

What is meant by "purified form" is an increased sense of awareness and formalization.

Dance, light, and music filled the stage, the auditorium, and the time that passed through the entire space. Cunningham's genius lies in the ability to turn theater into an experience of freedom with order.

Yoshida Hidekazu

Yomiuri Shimbun, December 11, 1964

The Merce Cunningham Dance Company created a remarkable dance space on the stage. Under Cage's music direction and Rauschenberg's set and lighting design, the stage became an experimental space of radical contemporary music, cutting-edge contemporary art, and sensational contemporary dance. Cunningham, influenced by Cage, incorporated chance elements in the choreography. For example, he used the toss of a coin or Chinese fortune-telling to determine the dance sequences. The movements that focused on extemporaneity were astounding. The splendid space filled with beautiful and pristine

motions sparked viewers' imagination.

The performance also significantly influenced Japan's dance world.

The term "postmodern dance" began to appear frequently in the late 1960s, and Merce Cunningham became an increasingly influential figure as trends continued to shift.

All the famous postmodern dancers, such as Yvonne Rainer, Trisha Brown, Steve Paxton, Barbara Lloyd, and Deborah Hay, trained with Cunningham. The latter three came to Japan as part of his dance company in 1964.

While I can't say for sure, I believe that Merce Cunningham's performance sponsored by SAC changed the course of dance history. It marked a significant turning point from modern to postmodern dance.

On November 9, 1964, at 8:30pm, the Merce Cunningham Dance Company flew in from Europe to Haneda Airport on Japan Airlines. I joined Teshigahara Hiroshi and the SAC staff to welcome them at the airport because Cage and Tudor were also going to be there, marking their second visit to Japan.

However, I ended up having to look after the dancers. On the car ride from Haneda to the International House in Roppongi, where they were staying, the painter Rauschenberg, male dancer Paxton, and female dancer Hay consulted with me. They asked if I could take the young dancers to a quiet restaurant after checking in at the guesthouse because they needed to have an important meeting.

As soon as they put their luggage into the rooms, I took a total of six—those mentioned in the above paragraph and three more, including Lloyd and Alex Hay—to a restaurant (the name starts with an "S") in Roppongi. I learned about the group's grim internal dynamic. They discussed the difference in their artistic perspective from Cunningham's which became visible toward the end of their time performing in Europe. After a heated exchange of opinions, they decided to withdraw

from the dance company. They asked me to keep their secret to leave after returning to the US.

As a resolution, I proposed an idea to organize a workshop while they were in Japan to facilitate interaction with like-minded young experimental dancers in Japan. Starting with Rauschenberg, they all sounded enthusiastic about this idea and made a toast to what they said was a secret start to a new beginning.

Thus, an event titled *Modern Dance Workshop: An Exchange Between Japanese and American Dancers in Association with Merce Cunningham Dance Company's Performance in Japan* was held at Sōgetsu Hall in the evening of November 20, toward the end of the dance company's two-week stay in Japan. We felt a new dance trend emerging through their lively exchange of youthful energy.

The Japanese participants, who the organizers had to hastily gather, were Atsugi Bonjin, Kimura Yuriko, Kuni Chiya, Kosugi Takehisa, Sanjō Mariko, Takahashi Hyō, Hijikata Tatsumi, 20th Century Dance Society [20 Seiki Buyō no Kai], and Wakamatsu Miki. Five participated from the US side: Rauschenberg, Paxton, Alex Hay, Deborah Hay, and Lloyd. The five left the Merce Cunningham Dance Company soon after returning to the US and continued to independently pursue vanguard careers in postmodern dance.

An event titled *Twenty Questions to Bob Rauschenberg* also took place during the dance company's visit. Organized by Tōno Yoshiaki, a six-panel golden screen prepared by Sōfu was placed on Sōgetsu Hall's stage. Rauschenberg listened in silence as the audience asked him questions translated into English by Takashina Shūji. Instead of answering, Rauschenberg painted and attached waste objects onto the screen as if they were his responses. The finished work, *Gold Standard* (1964), was very peculiar: a figure of the RCA Victor dog, a gift from a record shop he found in the city, and worn-out combat boots were attached to the screen.

*Document 24***Interview with Rauschenberg**

A man shines a flashlight and pops out onto a pitch-black stage as if slipping through a corridor.

As he dances, or more like crawls, the flashlight attached to his right foot illuminates the walls like a lighthouse. The light flickers in the darkness, and the voice of someone speaking in Swedish plays in the background. Eventually, the dancer drags his feet and disappears into the left of the stage.

Titled *Shot Put*, the vanguard modern dance from the US was performed at the Sōgetsu Kaikan in Aoyama. The dancer was Mr. Robert Rauschenberg, known in the American art world as a genius.

Q: What is the work trying to express?

Rauschenberg: There is no fixed story. Put differently, I want the audience to see the beauty in the movements themselves.

Q: How does the title relate to the movements?

Rauschenberg: The title does not explain the content but is an inseparable scene within the dance, just like a title for a painting.

“Crossroad,” *Mainichi Shimbun*, November 23, 1964

Formation of The Musicians Group New Direction

AS I ALREADY MENTIONED, Cage’s first visit had a rippling effect in Japan, known as the John Cage Shock. This defined the previously ambiguous boundary between the conservative and the avant-garde camps in Japan’s art world.

SAC's activities also intensified after Cage's visit, becoming a significant hub of avant-garde art activities. However, in retrospect, the activities at the art center had already been moving toward a more vigorous direction from around 1961, a year before Cage's visit.

For example, the composer Ichianagi Toshi returned to Japan from the US for the first time in nine years and presented works that left a powerful impression at the 10th Sōgetsu Contemporary Series event. Ichianagi had studied with John Cage toward the end of his time in the US and learned the philosophy and technique of his chance music.

I wrote a six- to seven-page review of Ichianagi's recital for the *Yomiuri Shimbun's* culture column under the title "Freedom and Adventure of Contemporary Music." It read, "Ichianagi Toshi's fierce performance at Sōgetsu Kaikan splendidly destroyed the dream of music as something aesthetically beautiful." The musicians matter-of-factly played unsynchronized sounds based on the graphic notations to unfold the drama. Deeply moved by this dynamic experience, I concluded that "this was an 'incident' discontinuously and restrictedly created by matter and humans."

"Ichianagi very clearly thrust contemporary music upon us. His recital materialized one possible answer to the question: What is today's freedom and creativity? While various small contradictions exist in his work, I am more focused on contemplating the fearless spirit of his response."

Even though I feel embarrassed looking back at the fervid voice of my writing, it certainly conveys the extent of the recital's impact.

Another influential Sōgetsu Contemporary Series event titled *Takahashi Yūji Piano Recital 1*, which took place on October 30 just before Ichianagi's recital. Takahashi held a second recital four months later on February 23, 1962. For the latter recital, the Greek-French composer Iannis Xenakis, who was deeply impressed by the young musician's talent, sent a piano piece that he had composed specifically

for Takahashi.

Titled *Herma* (1961), the piece was also significant for Xenakis himself because it served as the basis for his later computer music works. The composition was the first music to be made using elements of mathematical logic. Apparently, when Xenakis showed the composition to pianists in France, they all said that it could only be played if one had twenty or thirty fingers. Takahashi mastered this extremely challenging score in just two weeks and played it splendidly from memory. Xenakis was dumbfounded when he listened to the tape recording of the recital mailed to him immediately after the performance. Seeing the importance of the young man's talent for his own development, Xenakis later worked hard to get Takahashi to come to Europe.

Document 25

Review of Takahashi Yūji Piano Recital 2

Takahashi Yūji, who had his first piano recital last fall and became famous as a unique pianist, held his second recital as the 11th Contemporary Series event at the Sōgetsu Kaikan.

Many critics have praised this young pianist's exceptional technical skill and talent. However, I think that such an evaluation is limiting.

Last fall, Takahashi played John Cage's *Winter Music* (1957), a piece that evokes a conversation enriched by extremely long sounds of silence. He confronted pressing issues of contemporary music during the hour and forty-minute performance. In other words, the performance was an introspective examination of said fundamental issues.

A pianist with a new kind of significance has also emerged in our country. Unlike conventional pianists who focus on their skill in playing the instrument, Takahashi is an artist voicing himself through the piano. This is why his music does not

enrapture us. Instead, his radial consciousness makes our blood run cold, and we feel anxious about discovering his cruel and elegant conception and metaphysics. His recitals are one of the few places where we can discover fun.

Akiyama Kuniharu

Yomiuri Shimbun, evening edition, March 2, 1962

In 1963, Takahashi Yūji, Ichianagi Toshi, and I led the founding of a creative musicians group called New Direction. Its first concert took place on May 26 of the same year as the 20th Sōgetsu Contemporary Series event.

Only a handful of musicians were playing contemporary compositions in Japan at the time. Those who were eager to explore experimental and avant-garde music were even more scarce. Therefore, musicians had to take the initiative in developing creative activities. New Direction started with fifteen members, including talented musicians Kobayashi Kenji, Kuronuma Toshio, Iwamoto Tadao, Noguchi Ryū, Kumagai Hiroshi, Yamaguchi Kōichi, Kakishima Jun, Saitō Akira, Ōhashi Toshinari, Nobata Junko, and Masuda Mutsumi, with Akutagawa Yasushi as the conductor.

Geijutsu shinchō published a misdirected and spiteful commentary about New Direction in its culture column. It read, “Sōgetsu originally wanted to create a musicians group centered around Seiji Ozawa to compensate for the Composers Group’s unyielding activities. However, this plan never materialized due to problems such as the NHK debacle.¹¹ Therefore, Arakawa and Akiyama were put in charge.” But in reality, Takahashi Yūji and I created the group, and we were the ones who approached Seiji Ozawa to collaborate. I fondly remember drafting the “Regulations for New Direction” by referencing examples to execute this unfamiliar task.

The New Direction held a total of five concerts until April 1964. They all showcased unconventional music from Japan and abroad.

11 [The “NHK debacle” refers to the feud that took place between Seiji Ozawa and the NHK Symphony Orchestra in 1962. Ozawa was appointed as the orchestra’s conductor when he was only twenty-seven years old. However, certain musicians, unhappy with his youth, style, and character, refused to play under him. After his humiliating experience when his orchestra decided to boycott an important concert, he quit and eventually went abroad.]

Examples of experimental foreign works include Mauricio Kagel's "Transición II" (1958), with a curious graphic notation that looks like a micrograph; Sylvano Bussotti's "Phrase à Trois" (1960); Pierre Boulez's "Improvisation sur Mallarmé I" and "II" (1957); Luciano Berio's "Circles" (1960), which is a composition for a soprano, harp, and percussion based on poems by the prominent American poet e.e. cummings; and the Polish composer Krzysztof Penderecki's "String Quartet," which incorporated methods such as hitting and rubbing the string instruments. From Japan, works such as Takahashi Yūji's "The Umbilicus of Limbo," also known as "Window to Artaud" (1963), which was based on Antonin Artaud's poems and performed by a combination of tape and live instruments; Ichianagi Toshi's *Sapporo* (1962), an event of pellucid sounds created through the cross-cutting noise and silence; and Kosugi Takehisa's *Organic Music* (1963), an event based on the human respiratory organ, were performed.

The audience seemed especially shocked by Kosugi's performance. Seven musicians blew air into instruments and various objects of their choosing. A man wearing a gas mask was placed in the middle of the stage, lying down on his back, as if an "instrument." The composer Kosugi breathed air into the man as if administering artificial respiration.

The air the man exhaled traveled through a pipe and slowly accumulated into a giant plastic bag hanging from the ceiling.

George Brecht's eccentric event, *Drip Music* (1962), performed by Takahashi Yūji and Ichianagi Toshi, was also memorable. Per the title, the performance involved making music (?) by slowly dripping water from a bucket while standing on a stepladder.

New Direction's events were a new type of concert that featured the latest trends of the 1960s from abroad with a sense of international contemporaneity. The events showcased numerous works, such as Boulez's compositions, Alban Berg's "Lyric Suite" (1925-26), and Xenakis's "ST-4/1" (1956-62), which was an extremely challenging computer-generated algorithmic composition for a string quartet. The

Japanese musicians' magnificent performance of "ST-4/1" marked the first time the composition was presented in the country. New Direction also organized many events featuring intensely harsh sounds that were detested by conservative musicians.

A diverse array of aspiring musicians, painters, and filmmakers gathered at these events. Many of the musicians who were young at the time have later recalled the influence of these events in their career.

In the fall of 1963, Takahashi went to Europe while I left for New York, leaving Ichiyanagi in charge of organizing the New Direction events. Despite his best efforts, the group ceased after the *New Direction String Quartet* concert on November 4, 1964.

Document 26

Regulations for New Direction

First Amendment: Name

The group will be called New Direction.

Second Amendment: Aim

The group aims to contribute to the development of music culture in Japan by focusing on contemporary music.

Musicians will organize on their own initiative events and advance their creative endeavors while making international connections.

Third Amendment: Administrative Office

The group will have an office at SAC: 3-7 Akasaka Omotechō, Minato Ward, Tokyo.

Fourth Amendment: Projects

The group will conduct the projects listed below to accomplish the aim mentioned in the Second Amendment.

1. Hold regular concerts.
2. Organize and participate in concerts and contemporary

music festivals in various locations.

3. Actively work to create a space in which a wide range of audiences can enjoy contemporary music.
4. Contribute to musicians' creative endeavors.
5. Connect and contribute internationally.
6. Work on issues concerning the members' benefits.
7. Conduct any other work deemed appropriate.

Fifth Amendment:

The group will pursue the projects listed in the Fourth Amendment in collaboration with SAC.

(The rest, which continues to the Sixteenth Amendment, is omitted)

Document 27

New Direction, a musicians group focusing on contemporary music and devising various distinctive activities, held its third regular concert the other day at the Sōgetsu Kaikan in Akasaka, Tokyo.

While members performed works by Cagean musicians such as Earle Brown and Pierre Boulez, Kosugi Takehisa's *Organic Music* received the most significant responses. As indicated by the title, an organ—in this case, the lung—served as the foundation.

The critic Mr. Akiyama Kuniharu blew into a rubber tube attached to an iron kettle until his face turned red; the violinist Mr. Kobayashi Kenji blew into a rubber balloon and then attached it to a whistle to make noise; Mr. Ichianagi Toshi stuck a lit cigarette into the tip of a tube attached to an accordion and then began playing the instrument as if suddenly remembering to do so; the flutist Mr. Noguchi Ryū stood still holding a flute; the soprano singer Ms. Masuda Mutsumi sometimes uttered a voice.

The composer Kosugi Takehisa gave artificial respiration to a

man lying down on his back wearing a gas mask. The man's legs twitched as his irregular breathing in the mask made bubbling noises. The mask was connected to a balloon that hung from the ceiling, and the balloon gradually expanded during the approximately thirty-minute performance.

The pamphlet listed only six musicians as the performers when there were seven people on stage. However, this makes sense because one man was on the stage as an instrument. Distinct from a vocalist who could also be considered a human instrument, the man's entire body was an instrument played by another musician. How far music has come! There were amused avant-garde composers and other audience members who seemed fed up, making for a lively intermission.

“Rough sketch,” column from *Asahi Shimbun*, evening edition, October 16, 1963

A Space for Events and a Place for Happenings

BY THIS TIME, SAC's events had gone beyond music, actively backing vanguard trends from various genres.

In July 1964, Sōgetsu Experimental Theater started. Its first event was held in collaboration with Tan'ami Yatsuko and Kahara Natsuko's Group NLT. Running from July 1 to 10, it showcased a play by Jean Genet titled *The Maids* (translated and directed by Mizuta Haruyasu) and Jean Tardieu's *Keyhole* (translated by Ōoka Makoto, directed by Shiose Hiroshi).

The Experimental Theater's second event aroused much anticipation as it was supposed to be a performance of Alfred Jarry's *King Ubu* with Takiguchi Shūzō's translation. However, for some unknown reason, the Experimental Theater ended after its first event. Ichiyanagi Toshi's opera, *Form is Not Different from Emptiness* [Shikisokuzekū], which

was also supposed to take place, never materialized either.

However, the legacy of the art center's experimental "little theatre" format influenced the development of various art theatres and Kinokuniya Hall.

Other than devising original events, SAC was also notable for providing a place for theater troupes run by zealous young creatives to experiment with ambitious performances.

Terayama Shūji presented his plays *Vampire Research*, *The Hunchback of Aomori*, and *A Tale of Fantastic Traditional Playing Cards* [Hanafuda Denki]; Kara Jurō's Situation Theater and the experimental Puppet Theatre Hitomiza also actively utilized the hall; and the butoh dancer Hijikata Tatsumi also presented *Masseur: A Story That Supports Passion* (1963).

In any case, everyone at the time knew of Sōgetsu Hall as a place where new artistic trends were presented every evening.

SAC also organized some prominent exhibitions. Examples include *Bauhaus Tokyo*¹² in February 1963 and Concrete Poetry Exhibition in late June 1964.

The event *Biocode Process: The Expression of a Many-body system by Electronic Computer Construction* that took place on December 14 and 15, 1966,¹³ is momentous as the first performance in our country that combined arts and computers.

I have been using the word *event* in this article. *Events* and *happenings* were terms associated with a new artistic tendency and practice that emerged in the 1960s. The Sōgetsu Hall showcased such experimental works for the first time in Japan. I think everyone at the time perceived Sōgetsu Hall as "a space for events and place for happenings."

Among the various happenings at SAC, the 15th Sōgetsu Contemporary Series event titled *Works of Yoko Ono* that took place on May 24, 1962,

12 [The official title of the exhibition was *Bauhaus: Eine Ausstellung von Idee und Arbeit, von Geist und Leben am Bauhaus, 1919-1928 und 1933*/バウハウス1919-1933の間の理念と製作精神と生活を示す展覧会 (*Bauhaus 1919-1933: Ideas and Creation, Spirit and Life/Bauhausu 1919-1933 no aida no rinen to seisaku seishin to seikatu wo simesu terankai*).]

13 [The original text erroneously states that the event took place in 1964.]

was the most unusual.

Ono presented various events, such as an event in which algebra and factorization determined the number of sounds played by instruments and *Chair Piece #1 to #10*, in which a chair was employed. The audience was asked to participate in the last event. All the performers stood on stage and stared into the audience. When the audience member looked away, the performers shifted their gaze to the next person. The performers were allowed to sit or even lie down on stage if they got tired. The event was to end when the last audience member left the hall.

About half of the twenty-some performers stayed to conduct this event, including Kobayashi Kenji, Awazu Kiyoshi, Ichiyonagi Toshi, Kosugi Takehisa, Matsudaira Yoriaki, Yoshimura Masunobu, Théo Lesoualc'h, Akasegawa Genpei, Yoshioka Yasuhiro, Akiyama Kuniharu, Tōno Yoshiaki, and Minagawa Tatsuo. Twenty minutes passed, then thirty, and then an hour. . . . Eventually, people began laughing out loud as an audience member went onto the stage and began pinching the noses of the performers standing stiffly upright. He began conducting this “ritual” one after another, starting from stage left. I recall thinking of striking this man if he pinched my nose. Perhaps noticing my fierce look, the man moved past me and went along, pinching the next performer. Suddenly, I heard a thud. The man and Minagawa Tatsuo, a scholar of medieval music, had gotten into a wrestling match. They continued fighting even after falling into the auditorium. I saw Mrs. Minagawa, who was sitting at the back, run to the front with an umbrella in hand, screaming, “Stop it, stop it!”

I cannot recall what happened next. This event lasted for two hours and thirty minutes, ending before midnight when the hall’s administrator asked for it to stop. Only one young man lying down in the first row remained in the audience.

I later found out that the man who pinched the noses was Doi Mikio, a member of the group Jikan-ha (School of Time). The evening of happenings ended with a happening within a happening.

Ay-O's *Rainbow Event*, which took place in November 1966 as part of the *From Space to Environment* exhibition, was also exhilarating. Ay-O carried out a series of actions, such as smearing shaving cream all over his face, shaving in the auditorium aisle, and brushing his teeth.

3

Film Became the Focus After 1965

IT IS NOT AN OVER-EXAGGERATION to say that all the new artistic tendencies from the 1960s came out of SAC.

I have already elaborated on the first attempts at happenings and events in our country at the art center. This new tendency also impacted music, theater, and film.

For example, Group Ongaku's debut concert took place at the Sōgetsu Hall on September 15, 1961. The group was created centering around four recent Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music graduates: Kosugi Takehisa, who lives in the US today and continues to conduct music events abroad, Shiomi Mieko (Chieko at the time), Mizuno Shūkō, and Tojima Mikio. The group comprised six members, adding musicians such as Tone Yasunao. They presented improvisations, performances, and happenings of sounds and actions at the concert. For example, one of them ran up and down the lobby in geta, making loud sounds as the rest of the members performed on stage. At another point, a different

member played the saxophone extremely loudly and ran around the hall. The audience listened to the concert as a strange experience of sounds occurring both inside and outside the hall.

Collective Music (May 23, 1964), a concert showcasing works by Takemitsu Tōru, Ichijanagi Toshi, Kosugi Takehisa, and Jo-un Keiji¹⁴ (John Cage), and *Works of Nam June Paik* featuring the Korean-born Neo-Dada composer who came to Japan in 1963, also involved happenings and events by musicians. Nam June Paik's happenings were especially powerful as he broke a vintage piano explicitly purchased for the recital.

In the meantime, SAC's director Teshigahara Hiroshi became busy working as a film director. He consecutively created notable works: *Pitfall* (1962), *Ako (White Morning)* (1965), *Woman in the Dunes* (1964), and *The Face of Another* (1966). Therefore, Igawa Kōzō and Nara Yoshimi began taking more responsibility for organizing the art center's events.

Nara reminisced about this time:

“SAC's unrestricted activities frequently became a problem for the Sōgetsu institution after the two of us began managing and making more of the decisions. Hiroshi also harshly criticized our management style for not sufficiently following organizational procedures. Of course, the complaints were reasonable since the art center was under Sōgetsu. I felt humiliated whenever Sōfu told people we were lucky folks who got to do whatever we desired. I also remember Sōfu sarcastically saying that the art center was an ‘out center.’”

From 1965, SAC gradually shifted course from music to film.

Sōgetsu Cinémathèque ran a screening event from March to April 1965 titled *Traces of Japanese Films (Tōhō Anthology): From Sound Film to Today*. Twenty-four prominent films from the prewar to the postwar era were presented, including *Enoken's Chikiri Kinta* (1937), *Enoken's Monk* (1938), *Saga of the Vagabonds* (1959), *Horse* (1941), *The War at*

¹⁴ [*Jo-un Keiji sho*/叙雲啓示頌 is the title of a composition made by Akiyama Kuniharu in 1987 to commemorate John Cage's seventy-fifth birthday. The title is a homonym of the Japanese pronunciation of “John Cage” and signifies “revelation of the clouds.” The composition repeatedly plays a recording of Akiyama reading haiku about clouds and sounds associated with Zen.]

Sea from Hawaii to Malaya (1942), *Sugata Sanshirō* (1943), *The Men Who Tread on the Tiger's Tail* (1952), *War and Peace* (1947), *Mr. Pu* (1953), and *Throne of Blood* (1957). Even though many of the prewar films can be accessed today through the Film Library, viewing them was impossible at the time, and thus this event at the art center was a remarkable accomplishment. However, actualizing the event was challenging because we had to first duplicate the film rolls covered in dust at the Tōho film archive. This was very profitable for Tōhō since we returned all the new rolls to the film company after the screening. At least, this is what I observed and felt as an outsider to the project. It apparently was also a challenge to get Tōhō to agree to have the event.

Nonetheless, the event was extremely popular as it provided an opportunity to see classic films from the prewar era. Enomoto Ken'ichi (Enoken) visited the venue dragging his bad leg and spoke nostalgically before the screening of films he starred in.

Pleased with the result, the art center held another event from July to September of the same year under the title *Tōhō Anthology Sequel* and screened twenty films.

Document 28

While the collaboration with the Film Library Grant Council helped realize this event, SAC is planning to expand the scope of Sōgetsu Cinémathèque by organizing retrospective screening events also featuring films from other film companies such as Shochiku, Nikkatsu, and Daiei Film.

The Film Library Grant Council and the National Museum of Modern Art have already undertaken such screenings. However, the art center's highly anticipated event will examine Showa history through film by serially screening films from specific film companies.

During the event, the art center will also hold lectures and performances of popular songs from the relevant periods.

Mainichi Shimbun, evening edition, February 6, 1965

In February of the following year, 1966, SAC invited Henri Langlois, the director of Cinémathèque Française, for almost a month and held the *International Avant-Garde Film Festival* at Sōgetsu Hall. The scale of the event was truly spectacular. Langlois brought approximately two hundred short and feature-length experimental films, ranging from classic to modern, from around the world. Examples include Luis Buñuel and Salvador Dalí's *Un Chien Andalou* (1929) and *The Golden Age* (1930), Jean Cocteau's *The Blood of a Poet* (1932), other prominent Dada and Surrealist works such as *The Starfish* (1928), *The Seashell and the Clergyman* (1928), *Entr'acte* (1924), and *Ghosts Before Breakfast* (1928); documentaries from the silent film era by Dziga Vertov, Joris Ivens, and Walter Ruttmann; and wartime and postwar works such as *Louisiana Story* (1948), *Guernica* (1951), Alain Resnais's *Night and Fog* (1955), Chris Marker's *La Jetée* (1962), Roman Polanski's *Two Men and a Wardrobe* (1958), and Jan Lenica's *House* (1958). It was astonishing to see many controversial works, once only accessible through film history books and magazines.

However, it would be absurd to conclude that SAC became a theater for prominent international films from 1965. The art center's orientation toward avant-garde tendencies clearly echoed in its diverse film selections.

For example, SAC held an event in 1962 showcasing films by the Austrian experimental filmmaker Peter Kubelka known for his flickering screen images. His films, such as *Mosaic* (1955), *Adebar* (1957), and *Schwechater* (1958), were presented. SAC continued to feature many cutting-edge films into the late 1960s.

Document 29

A bright light suddenly flickered back and forth in synchrony with electronic music on a white screen. The tempo became

faster until the flashing suddenly stopped, like a broken machine at a third-rate movie theater. The screen light started rhythmically flashing again when the tolerant audience giggled and clapped their hands.

The whole house could not stop laughing when they heard a camera shutter sound snapping the entirely white screen. The film ended after six minutes of the screen flashing. This film was the Austrian filmmaker Peter Kubelka's film.

Geijutsu shinchō, July 1962 issue

Experimental films developed as part of the underground and expanded cinema worlds centered in the US.

While living in New York from 1963 to 1964, I saw the latest films by Andy Warhol, who was still obscure, at his studio. They were utterly unconventional: *Haircut* was an hour and thirty-minute-long scene of gay friends giving haircuts; *Eat* (1964) and *Sleep* (1964) followed people engaging in the process of eating and sleeping for the entire duration of the film. Independent films like these were emerging, especially among young artists in the US who were experimenting with unconventional cinematic methods. Their films were called “underground cinema.”¹⁵

Upon returning to Japan, I told Nara about my experience in the US. With glittering eyes, he spoke of his desire to present underground films in Japan. Therefore, I reached out to several experimental filmmakers I had met in the US, such as Jonas Mekas.

An event titled Underground Cinema I took place in June 1966, immediately after the *International Avant-Garde Film Festival*. Kanesaka Kenji, who had gone to the US, served as the mediator between the American filmmakers and SAC. The festival screened a total of nine films, including Carl Linder's *The Devil is Dead* (1964), Robert Nelson's *Oh Dem Watermelons* (1965), Stan Brakhage's out-of-focus film *Songs 1-25*, which appear as if an amateur made it, and Iimura Takahiko's *A Dance Party in the Kingdom of Lilliput* (1964).

15 Other significant events sponsored by SAC

1961

May: *Experimental Music Concert and Lecture by Iannis Xenakis*

Jul 21: Sōgetsu Cinémathèque 1: *Viewpoint of Documentaries*, Matsumoto Toshio and others

Sep 29: Sōgetsu Cinémathèque 2: *New Television Images*, Wada Makoto

1962

Jan 19-20: Three-Person Animation Circle: *Three-Person Animation 2*

Apr 21: Sōgetsu Cinémathèque 3: *Power of Silent Comedy*, Charlie Chaplin, Harold Lloyd, and others

Jun 2: *Screening of Peter Kubelka's Films*

Jun 26: Sōgetsu Cinémathèque 4: *Early Era of Comedy*

Dec 25: Sōgetsu Cinémathèque 5: *New Television Images II*

1963

Feb 25: *Bauhaus 1919-1933 Exhibition and Bauhaus and Today's Art* lecture and performance by Kawazoe Noboru, Akiyama Kuniharu, Takahashi Yūji

Apr 3: Three-Person Animation Circle: *Three-Person Animation 3*

1964

Feb 20: Sōgetsu Cinémathèque 7: *New Films*, Ōshima Nagisa

May 1-24: Jean Erdman Dance Company Japan Recital: *The Coach with the Six Insides*

Jun 10: Sōgetsu Cinémathèque 9: *Sōgetsu International Experimental Film Festival*

Jun 18-20: *Concrete Poetry Exhibition* cosponsored by Goethe-Institut Tokyo

Jul 1: Sōgetsu Experimental Theater 1, *The Maids, Keyhole*

Aug 11: *Yoko Ono Farewell Concert: Strip Tease Show*

Sep 21-26: Sōgetsu Cinémathèque 11: *Sōgetsu Animation Festival '64*

Nov 4: Musicians Group *New Direction String Quartet Concert*

Nov 10-11, 24-25: *Merce Cunningham Dance Company's Performance in Japan* (Sankei Hall and other locations)

Nov 20: *Modern Jazz Workshop: An Exchange Between Japanese and American Dancers in Association with the Merce Cunningham Dance Company's Performance in Japan*

Nov 27: *John Cage and David Tudor's Recital*

Nov 28: *Twenty Questions to Bob Rauschenberg*

1965

Mar 10-May 1: *Traces of Japanese Films (Tōhō Anthology): From Sound Film to Today*

Jul 14-15: Mime Festival: *Festival of Space and Silence*, Théo Lesoual'h

Oct 1-4, 8-11, 15-18: Sōgetsu Cinémathèque: Sōgetsu Animation Festival '65

1966

Feb 1-13: *International Avant-Garde Film Festival: The Pioneers of Art Films*

Jun 29-Jul 2: Sōgetsu Cinémathèque: Underground Cinema I

Jul: Sōgetsu Cinémathèque: *German Expressionist Cinema* (Featuring Fritz Lang)

Oct 21-Nov 4: Sōgetsu Cinémathèque: Sōgetsu Animation Festival '66

Dec 14-15: *Biocode Process: The Expression of a Many-body system by Electronic Computer Construction*

1967

Mar 8-14: Sōgetsu Cinémathèque: Underground Film Festival II

Sep 18-23: Sōgetsu Cinémathèque: Invitation to Animation (name changed from Sōgetsu Animation Festival)

Nov 7-25: Sōgetsu Cinémathèque: 1st Experimental Film Festival

1968

Feb 10, 13, 17, 20: Sōgetsu Cinémathèque: *Yakuza Film: One Trend in Postwar Japanese Cinema*

Apr 10, 15, 20, 25, 30: *Expose 1968: Say Something, I'm Trying*, Yokoo Tadanori, Isozaki Arata, Awazu Kiyoshi, Kara Jurō, and others

May 25: *Jazz, Rock, Relax*, Akira Ishikawa & The Midnight Sounds

Jun 26-29: *Moving Image Design Research: The Glib Image: Television Commercials*

Oct 18-30: Sōgetsu Cinémathèque: Film Art Festival Tokyo 1968

1969

Feb 13-14: Sōgetsu Cinémathèque: Stan Vanderbeek visits Japan and performs "Expanded Cinema"

Oct 14-25: Sōgetsu Cinémathèque: Film Art Festival Tokyo 1969, but canceled due to violence from extremists

Dec 15, 19: Sōgetsu Cinémathèque: *Andere Kino (The Other Cinema)*

1970

Feb 10, 20, 27: Sōgetsu Cinémathèque: *Works by Jimura Takahiko and Arakawa Shūsaku*

Mar 14, 24: Sōgetsu Cinémathèque: *Works by Luis Buñuel*

1971

SAC closes

The film event happened again in March of the following year under a revised name, Underground Film Festival II. Similarly, the festival screened nine films, including *Guns of the Trees* (1961) by Jonas Mekas, *Breathdeath* (1964) by Stan Vanderbeek, *All My Life* (1966) by Bruce Baillie, *Turn, Turn, Turn* (1966) by Jud Yalkut, *Hopscotch* (1967) by Kanesaka Kenji, and *Emotion: That Dracula We Once Knew* (1967) by Ōbayashi Nobuhiko.

Film Art Festival

AN “UNDERGROUND BOOM” swept across Japan after the introduction of American underground films. Underground culture, associated with rock music, burgeoned as a phenomenon, especially among the youths in the Shinjuku area of Tokyo.

Underground cinema did not intend to become a specific film genre or method. Furthermore, it was certainly not part of the cultural phenomenon associated with hippies and marijuana. However, for some reason, “underground” became a commercialized buzzword perceived as a popular trend.

Underground cinema signifies a particular attitude of the filmmakers—a spirit of freedom that lays an explosive charge against institutional stability. Young filmmakers in Japan were also motivated by this spirit and developed their works with a similar attitude.

In particular, 1966 and 1967 marked the most dynamic years as a new generation of filmmakers emerged.

SAC’s 1st Experimental Film Festival, held in November 1967, was part of this dynamic momentum.

*Document 30***1st Experimental Film Festival**

Films are significantly transforming in search of a new expression in a new era. Above all, this change must take place under an experimental spirit that explores new possibilities of expression. A creative tendency that challenges extant film conventions is finally surfacing. SAC will hold the Experimental Film Festival to further stimulate an open inquiry into film. The program is as follows:

1) Dates: November 7-22, 1967

Location: Sōgetsu Kaikan Hall

The film festival will travel to other regional cities afterward.

2) The screening is divided into an invitation section and an open-call section to internationally survey the latest experimental films.

3) The selection of films for both sections, as well as the programming and the evaluation of the open-call section, will be conducted by the management committee comprised of the following individuals: Awazu Kiyoshi, Uekusa Jin'ichi, Kawakita Kashiko, Kuri Yōji, Teshigahara Hiroshi, and Matsumoto Toshio

*Kashiko, Kuri Yōji, Teshigahara Hiroshi, and
Matsumoto Toshio
(From the invitation)*

Document 31

Sōgetsu Cinémathèque's 1st Experimental Film Festival will begin on November 7. The following works received awards after the jury's careful and fair consideration of the open-call section.

Grand prize: *Reprieve, or A Man Possessed of His Own Shadow* by Okumura Teruo

Honorable mentions: *Pull-ups on the Ground, or What is the Nature of Films?* by Suga Kikuo, *Emotion* by Higashi Yōichi, *Woman* by Yazaki Katsumi, *The Doctrine of Creation* by Okabe Michio, *Folk Mythology* by Ōi Fumio, *The Art of Fugue* by Tsukio Yoshio, *One, Two, Three, Four-shi-Death*¹⁶ by Nakano Masataka, *Trap* by Kasu Sanpei

¹⁶ [The character 死 (shi) in the original title 「1・2・3・死」 signifies “death” but phonetically sounds like “four.”]

ATG award: *Illusion City* by Shimamura Tatsuo

Riding the wave of the underground boom, the film festival received submissions from fifty-five independent filmmakers, surprisingly including individuals such as the daughter of the screenwriter Yanagisawa Ruiju and Ozawa Shōichi’s son. Okumura Teruo, whose film *Reprieve, or A Man Possessed of His Own Shadow* won the grand prize, is a University of Tokyo student. According to the jury, many films included explicit sex scenes, and some with highly sadistic acts such as *Pull-ups on the Ground, or What is the Nature of Films?* and *Immoral Trap*.

Eiga hyōron, December 1967 issue

The open-call section for which 16mm films were eligible received many submissions. Seven films, among the fifty-six submitted works, were also selected for the New York Sōgetsu Experimental Film Festival held at the New Cinema Playhouse in May 1968.

The film festival took place again in 1968 under a revised name, Film Art Festival Tokyo 1968. The number of submitted films increased to seventy-four. The grand prize went to *Sad Ballad Colored by Humor* by Hara Masataka, who was only eighteen years old and a third-year student at Azabu High School. He later made distinctive films, such as *The First Emperor* (1973), under the name Hara Masato.

The growing interest in experimental films may have been because, as Matsumoto Toshio described, topics the films “tackled resonated with other artistic genres and the overall culture of the time. The era was dynamically exploding with, so to speak, antiestablishment

and countercultural movements that encompassed instinctual and conscious acts.”

Document 32

While a new generation of filmmakers has been emerging all over the world, the Film Art Festival Tokyo 1968 that just took place at the Sōgetsu Kaikan in Akasaka, Tokyo, was epoch-making. Despite not seeing all the screened films, I could still sense the event’s aptness in reflecting the slogan, “films do not only belong to film directors,” from the twenty films I managed to watch. I have a hunch that this slogan will become standard practice soon.

While the pamphlet’s statement, “a generation making films as if keeping a diary and thinking with the camera has emerged,” may be an exaggeration, I can sense a new generation when I see films made with pleasure and playfulness, such as Hara Masataka’s *Sad Ballad Colored by Humor*.

Onchi Hideo

Asahi Shimbun, evening edition, November 6, 1968

Beyond these film festivals, the Sōgetsu Cinémathèque also continued to organize film screenings under various themes.

Some examples of the themes include *Lineage of Animation* (January 1967), *Works by Fritz Lang* (February 1967), *Works by Chaplin* (March 1967), *Discovery of Montage* (April 1967), *Experimental Films from the US* (May 1967), *Lineage of Comedy Films* (May 1967), *Mystery and Illusion* (June and July 1967), *Films from the Soviet Union* (August 1967), *Invitation to Animation* (September 1967, name changed from Animation Festival), *Animation from Eastern Europe* (October 1967), *Special Focus on Satire Comedy Film 1, 2* (October and November 1967), *Actuality of Cinema Beyond Eras* (January 1968), *Yakuza Film: A Trend in Postwar Japanese Cinema* (February 1968), *Post-Italian Neorealism* (March 1968), *Politics in American Films* (April 1968), *New Films of the World: Nouveau Cinéma 1, 2* (May and June 1968), and *Consciousness*

of the Times in Japanese Film (September 1968). SAC introduced many rarely seen and controversial films under these themes.

However, SAC's activities did not become exclusive to film. As I have mentioned, the art center's original intention was to be a space for various artistic genres to interact and create new collaborative works that synthesize the genres. Therefore, SAC was absolutely interested in more than film.

Even though the art center may not have been able to fully realize the synthesis of the arts, it nonetheless continued to strive toward that direction. SAC slowly but steadily identified and shed light on issues at the boundaries of the artistic genres.

Sōgetsu Hall was always filled with passionate energy emanating from young artists working in various genres, students, and emerging artists. Unlike concerts today that only attract music fans and music-related individuals, various individuals—painters, theater actors, film directors, dancers, poets, etc.—gathered in the hall.

The boundaries between artistic genres increasingly blurred after the 1960s. I believe that SAC was an abettor of this development because it produced various activities that encouraged cross-pollination.

Document 33

As a hub of contemporary Japanese culture and art, SAC lacks criticality. Artists from various generations are not using the space as an opportunity to thoughtfully and reciprocally interact with each other.

Without a common ground, the art center tends to become authoritarian, and irresponsibly imports foreign trends far from our actuality. We need to start afresh today from such corruption. This is the urgent task of the new generation.

SAC must become a fortunate space of realizing this urgent task to significantly impact the future of creative developments.

Okamoto Tarō
SAC pamphlet

Melting of Boundaries Between Artistic Genres Escalated

AN ECCENTRIC FIVE-DAY SYMPOSIUM on contemporary arts titled *Expose 1968: Say Something, I'm Trying* took place in April 1968, which epitomized SAC's distinct activities.

To start, the title of the symposium was very peculiar, and the topics of discussion were also, of course, very complicated. For example, the first evening was titled “Changed? What? (Contemporary Transformation)”; the second evening was “We Are All Crazy Clowns (What is a Collision)”; the third evening was “Violence and Ecstasy (Owning Action)”; the fourth night was “Encouragement for Evaporation (Fiction and Real Image)”; the fifth evening was “The Sun of the Day After Tomorrow Rises Tomorrow (Ability to Imagine the Future).”

The symposium did not involve the conventional format, in which participants sit around a table to conduct discussions. Instead, speakers spoke through four television monitors placed in the auditorium. They also spoke from inside boxes with their head sticking out of cut-out holes. The American Neo-Dada artist Geoffrey Hendricks painted the boxes with beautiful clouds during the discussion.

The goal of the symposium, cosponsored by the magazine *Dezain hihyō*, was to “create a perspective drawing of premonitions for the future after exhaustively discussing various issues among those who are conscious of contemporary art's turning point.”

The six main organizers of the symposium were the designer Awazu Kiyoshi, the filmmaker Matsumoto Toshio, the art critics Nakahara Yūsuke, Tōno Yoshiaki, and Hariu Ichirō, and the architecture critic Kawazoe Noboru. Individuals from various fields, such as music, fine art, design, architecture, film, theater, television, poetry, and literature,

participated. The participants included Yokoo Tadanori, Kurokawa Kishō, Iijima Kōichi, Ichianagi Toshi, Konno Tsutomu, Akiyama Kuniharu, Hara Hiroshi, Hasegawa Ryūsei, Shinohara Ushio, Ishidō Toshirō, Takahashi Mutsuo, Tomioka Taeko, Izumi Shinya, Andō Norio, Takamatsu Jirō, Shiraishi Kazuko, Hani Susumu, Kara Jurō, Yamaguchi Katsuhiko, Komatsu Sakyō, Isozaki Arata, Takeuchi Yoshirō, Ōoka Makoto, Sakamoto Masaharu, Suzuki Tatsuo, Uryū Ryōsuke, Satō Keijirō, Hanaga Mitsutoshi, Hamano Yasuhiro, and Iida Momo.

The program comprised discussions and entertainment such as psychedelic shows, multi-projections of slides and films, film screenings, musical performances, and theater every evening.

Awazu left the following comment about the symposium.

“This theatrical show-like symposium was an experience that epitomized that [the new artistic condition]. Language, body, act, movement. Matter, light, sound . . . Kara Jurō, who portrayed himself as Yui Shōsetsu, a famous rebel from the early Edo period, made ‘rebellion’ an expression as he screamed with rage, ‘Stop that noise!’ Hasegawa Ryūsei presented a plan for a ‘Sōgetsu graveyard.’ Hariu Ichirō theatrically spoke in a manner evoking a traditional storyteller reciting a lustful tale. Shinohara Ushio stripped naked instead of speaking, hung from a ladder, and lit a sparkler at the tip of his penis. Matsumoto Toshio directed a transvestite story shown on two screens. The discussion on the last day, titled ‘The Sun of the Day After Tomorrow Rises Tomorrow,’ was about imagining the future and took place in the dark with only candlelight as five hundred attendees listened.

“I believe that this symposium, full of unrealistic acts, successfully created a perspective drawing of premonitions for the future.” (*Yomiuri Shimbun*, evening edition, May 14, 1968)

Even though the symposium was a multimedia chaos, I think that it reflected the contemporaneous situation. In the words of Awazu Kiyoshi, “It encapsulated a line from Samuel Beckett’s play, *Waiting for Godot*. The line, ‘Say something! I’m trying,’ conveys an attitude to

explore precious expressions from within us.”

Another interesting symposium titled *The Glib Image: Television Commercials* took place in June¹⁷ of that year, soon after *Expose 1968*.

Document 34

Television commercials have become part of mass communication today. Thus, a four-day symposium, *The Glib Image*, to examine television commercials from the perspective of moving images took place from the 26th at SAC in Akasaka, Tokyo. The symposium gathered a full house every day despite the 500-yen entrance fee. It showcased various commercials.

A total of eighty-one commercials from the US and fifty-six from Japan, many of which had won awards, were screened during the four days. The length of the commercials spanned from five seconds to sixty seconds, employing various modes such as humor, sales pitches, and didactic explanations.

Every day focused on a different theme, with three accompanying lectures. The themes were: “Commercials, Neither Truth nor Fiction,” “Commercial Theory Similar to Environment Theory,” “Sensibility in Commercials,” and “Structure of Expression in Commercials.” Most of the attendees were employees of advertising agencies and design students. They laughed aloud and clapped their hands, filling the venue with excitement.

Mainichi Shimbun, evening edition, July 2, 1968

The lively procession of multimedia and environment art initiated by the *From Space to Environment* exhibition in the fall of 1966 continued to develop as young artists poured their energy into the upcoming Expo '70, Osaka. At the same time, the political climate was intensifying, catalyzed by the student power of the May 1968 revolts in Paris.

¹⁷ [The original text erroneously states that the symposium at Sōgetsu Kaikan took place in July. However, the actual dates were June 26-29. The author most likely confused the dates with iterations of the symposium, which took place in Kyoto (July 11), Nagoya (July 12), Osaka (July 15, 16), and Hokkaido (July 26).]

From a Revolt to the Closure of the Art Center

ON OCTOBER 14, 1969, an incident took place at SAC. The Film Art Festival Tokyo 1969 was reluctantly canceled due to a powerful and violent attack by political radicals [*geba*].¹⁸ Various artists groups, including Suginami Cinema Club and Newsreel, with members such as Kanesaka Kenji, stormed into the festival venue screaming, “Destroy it!”

Today, this dramatic revolt is understood to have been instigated by the immodest personal grudges and ignoble struggles for leadership among the underground cinema community.

Newspapers from the time covered the incident with headlines such as “Is the revolt against the festival actually an inner-sect struggle?” According to Nara Yoshimi, the protestors “justified their act as a ‘revolt’ when the real purpose was to favorably mark themselves in the growing current of independent films.” In other words, their act, rationalized as a revolt, was in fact about their personal interests.

I have very bitter feelings about this “fake revolt.”

At a later date, I skimmed through Kanesaka Kenji’s collection of criticism at a bookstore and read a sentence about the film festival mayhem. He had written that Akiyama Kuniharu, hiding in the corner of the venue, made some infantile comment when the chaos started to quiet down. I feel troubled by people like Kanesaka, who readily turn fiction into facts. Let me take this opportunity to recount my own experience.

I rushed to the first day of the film festival at SAC after finally finishing my work with Takahashi Yūji. I entered the hall expecting many of the films to have finished screening already. However, nothing had been shown yet. Instead, men were standing on the stage screaming in a mannerism distinct to the violent student protests that sound like a voice training exercise. At first, I did not know what was going on, but eventually, I understood that this was a violent protest to destroy

¹⁸ [*Geba* (ゲバ), short for *gebaruto* (ゲバルト), comes from the German word, *Gewalt*, which variously means “force,” “violence,” or “power.” The Japanese media popularized the term in the 1960s, often to refer to various student protests of the era.]

the festival. Listening to their irresponsible and explosive statements became unbearable, and I felt the urge to say something. Therefore, I shared my opinion and asked questions from an audience member's perspective. However, I did not get any convincing answers. Thereupon, Takahashi Yūji, sitting next to me, stood up slowly and asked, "What are you guys trying to do here?" Unable to answer this simple question, the revolting group suddenly became quiet. The protest eventually ended after its dissolution was announced.

However, SAC canceled the festival because it was apparent that the riot police would get involved if the art center forcefully continued the festival and struggled with the protestors. The management committee strongly felt that the festival should not continue under police authority and reluctantly ended the festival.

The open-call section of the festival for that year had 145 film submissions, and the invitation section had twenty-seven films. The organizers only managed to show a short film from Czechoslovakia before the festival shut down, only an hour after the opening.

The festival, a new "space" to showcase films that were not screened in commercial theaters, was effaced by a very insignificant act. How can new films and the creative act of making them be deepened? The protestors lacked an understanding of the situation and consideration for such practical questions.

According to Matsumoto Toshio, "The experimental film world in Japan completely stalled for about half a year, and its momentum visibly declined" after this film festival incident.

By the way, what were the personal grudges the protestors had? They evidently had many grievances, but let us look at Document 30 as an example. Some filmmakers were upset that their names did not appear in the "management committee." Isn't this precisely what we call "infantile"?

Sōgetsu Cinémathèque continued to devise various events despite this

disturbance: *Arakawa Shūsaku: Why Not?* (November 1969), *Works by Luis Buñuel* (November 1969), *Andere Kino (The Other Cinema)* (December 1969), *New Survey of International Films* (January 1970), *Works by Imura Takahiko and Arakawa Shūsaku* (February 1970), *Works by Luis Buñuel* (March 1970), *Retrospect of German Expressionist Cinema 4 and 5* (April and May 1970), *Works by Terayama Shūji and Jean-Luc Godard* (June 1970), *Works by Roger Corman and Roman Polanski* (July 1970), *Works by Jean-Marie Straub and Glauber Rocha* (September 1970), *Animation from Canada and Belgium* (November 1970), *Canada and New Cinema* (November 1970), and *Works from Czechoslovakia and Cuba* (December 1970). However, film screenings halted after 1970.

19 “Questioning the Postwar Period of Music,” special feature, *Ongaku geijutsu*, August 1973 issue.

Perhaps still affected by the 1969 violent protest, SAC was forced to end in the spring of 1971.

What are the legacies of the lively activities at SAC from the 1960s? They permeated various developments of the late 1960s and the 1970s and eventually diffused. SAC also influenced the underground culture of Shinjuku. Further, its activities converted into intermedia, contemporary music, and environment art.

I wrote about SAC’s legacy back in the day.

“Born during the Showa era, I did not experience the Tsukiji Shōgekijō, Japan’s first modern theater from the early Showa. However, I have heard that the theater had an expansive influence. In that sense, I think that SAC, comprised of the energetic activities of the youth, was a postwar iteration of the Tsukiji Shōgekijō.

“Some critics examine the art center’s activities from a political perspective and frame it as a modernist rumpus. However, despite being critical, they have all confessed that its activities have unquestionably impacted them.

“SAC was a space that raised many questions. It was a vibrant place that served as a point of departure to explore fundamental questions about

art as part of a comprehensive actuality. That is how I think of SAC.”¹⁹

There is another hall today in the basement of the new Sōgetsu Kaikan, an eleven-story high-rise with a half-mirrored exterior.

I have already introduced Tōno Yoshiaki’s text, “SAC reopens: Will it become a new epicenter for 1980s avant-garde art?” published in the *Asahi Shimbun*’s culture column immediately after the opening of the new hall.

Although the Sōgetsu Hall has been founded again, the reopening of SAC has yet to be realized. The plan for a new art center is quietly developing under the direction of Teshigahara Hiroshi, who is now the new chief director of the Sōgetsu Ikebana School.

The future SAC—I look forward to its creative activities for the new era.

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