

SONGS OF REVOLUTION IN TAKARAZUKA REVUE:
THE DIALECTICS OF CULTURAL IMPERIALISM
AND THE NOSTALGIA FOR INTELLECTUAL ACTIVISM
IN LATE-MODERN JAPAN

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Abstract

This paper focuses on Takarazuka Revue's strategies to re-invent the concept of "justice" specifically in the context of the French Revolution of 1789 by means of re-contextualizing history in the performance 1789 – The Lovers of Bastille (originally a French rock-opera, premiered in 2012). Founded in 1913 by Kobayashi Ichizō, one of the most significant entrepreneurs in pre-war Japan, the all-female popular musical theatre Takarazuka Revue proved itself along its centennial existence both a faithful mirror of Japanese reality and an influential model for society. This new theatrical performance reconstructs in a specific way asymmetric interactions between identity and alterity, model and copy, history and geography, obtrusively displayed in sparkling tunes, fairy-tale-like sceneries and gorgeous costumes. The last 40 years – since the world premiere of the blockbuster The Rose of Versailles in 1974 – marked an unexpected tendency in Takarazuka Revue's public appearance, visible both in the lavishness of its performances and in the intensified commercialization of the increasingly androgynous otokoyaku figures (female impersonators of male roles). This presentation takes into account the multiple layers in Takarazuka Revue's administration and self-orchestration: performance politics, the economic supervision of brand-related consumption, as well as the performances themselves. The transition from ethics to aesthetics and from imagination to ideology in Takarazuka Revue's marketing of historical-geographical spaces reflects and condenses its metamorphose from an insignificant socio-cultural medium to a powerful political and economic message in post-war Japan, highlighting Japan's shifting awareness from an "outsider" to the Western world to gradually becoming an "insider", within the Asian community.

Keywords: Takarazuka Revue, cultural imperialism, Japanese modernity, Japanese popular culture, French Revolution.

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1. Introduction: transcending historical boundaries

Within Japan's efforts to re-define the Soft Power concept as a sociocultural issue deeply rooted in local visions, but aiming at global expansion as an economic and political project, Takarazuka Revue has played a key-role both in the performative mirroring of the results and in the active outlining of the potential paths to follow. In this paper, I shall succinctly refer to the circumstances and the media impact of Takarazuka Revue's position in designing historical change as on-going individual process and social phenomenon. Furthermore, it is important to highlight Takarazuka Revue's strategies to re-invent the concept of "justice", specifically in the context of the French Revolution of 1789, by means of re-contextualizing history, as it happens in the performance *1789 – The Lovers of Bastille (1789 – Basutīyu no koibitotachi)*. Originally a French rock-opera, *Les Amants de la Bastille* – premiered on October 10, 2012, with music composed by Rod Janois, Jean-Pierre Pilot, Olivier Schulteis, William Rousseau, Dove Attia and Albert Cohen, with lyrics by Dove Attia and François Chouquet – was transformed into a Japanese version, staged at Takarazuka Grand Theatre in the city of Takarazuka, Hyōgo prefecture, between April 24, 2015 and June 1, 2015, and at Tokyo Takarazuka Theatre, in Tokyo, between June 19, 2015 and July 26, 2015, by the Moon Troupe, with Ryū Masaki and Manaki Reika in the leading roles, as Ronan Mazurier and, respectively, Marie Antoinette. After a short introduction into the phenomenon of Takarazuka Revue, I shall point out some key-issues of Takarazuka Revue's staging of the so-called "global revolution" – a revolution occurring within the system, characterised by its inner mechanisms and idiosyncrasies which created the premises of its own stability.

Takarazuka Revue was founded in 1913 by Kobayashi Ichizō (1873-1957), one of the most significant entrepreneurs in pre-war Japan. In 2014 it celebrated its 100th anniversary since its first performance in 1914 with *Don Burakko*, based on the story of Momotarō, a famous hero from Japanese folklore. Takarazuka Revue is nowadays the most popular Japanese musical theatre whose hallmark is its all-female casting, which makes the stress ratio between the *otokoyaku* (female impersonators of male roles) and *musumeyaku* (female impersonators of female roles) fundamental in creating gender-based roles and social models in modern and contemporary Japan. Along its centennial existence, Takarazuka turned out to be both a faithful mirror of Japanese reality and an influential model for society. Curiously enough, Takarazuka Revue is simultaneously conservative in its gender representation and progressive in its performance practice, becoming a contradictory symbol of Japanese modernity, while standing out as Japan's leading figure in entertainment industry. Takarazuka Revue emerged from the syncretic, cross-gender tradition of the centuries-old classical Japanese stage arts such as Nō and Kabuki and challenged that very tradition through the creative employment of Western music and dramatic plots as well as through the exclusive female casting.

This new theatrical art reconstructs in a specific way asymmetric interactions between identity and alterity, model and copy, history and geography, obtrusively displayed in sparkling tunes, fairy-tale-like sceneries and gorgeous costumes. The last 43 years – since the world premiere of the blockbuster *The Rose of Versailles* in 1974 – marked an unexpected tendency in Takarazuka Revue’s public appearance, visible both in the lavishness of its performances and in the intensified commercialization of the increasingly androgynous *otokoyaku* figures. In this paper, I shall take into account the multiple layers in Takarazuka Revue’s administration and self-orchestration such as performance politics, the economic supervision of brand-related consumption and the performances themselves. More importantly, my sources consist in extensive archive research of Japanese documents and in interviews with the Japanese producers as well as with Japanese and Western fans.

Furthermore, I shall evaluate Takarazuka Revue as an entertainment medium throughout the stormy 20th century and explore its transformation during the last two-and-a-half decades, since the opening of the New Grand Theatre in Takarazuka in 1993. Thus, ‘politics’ is regarded rather anthropologically, as part of a large historical system including culture, society and economy as well as a dynamic component of the construction-de/reconstruction process of late-modern identity in consumption societies. My goal is to analyse Takarazuka Revue’s position as a cultural institution within the Japanese late modernity, possibly carrying deep and wide-reaching messages of a new identity paradigm based on ‘love’. The transition from ethics to aesthetics and from imagination to ideology in Takarazuka Revue’s marketing of historical-geographical spaces, reflects and condenses its metamorphose from an insignificant socio-cultural medium to a powerful political and economic message in post-war period, highlighting Japan’s shifting awareness from an “outsider” to the Western world to an “insider” within Asian community.

2. The re-negotiation of modernity

As previously stated, in this analysis, I shall refer mainly to Takarazuka Revue’s strategies to align itself to the broader trajectory of the Japanese intellectual activism as represented in the performance *1789 – The Lovers of Bastille* from 2015. In order to offer a more generous perspective on its impact, I shall discuss the blockbuster *The Rose of Versailles* (1974), which had set a decade-long standard for successful enterprises within the all-too fluid Japanese entertainment industry. The reason resides in the fact that both performances handle the same topic, the French Revolution. Widely regarded as the ideological beginning of the Western modernity, the French Revolution² has been employed in recent decades³

² The most famous slogan of French Revolution was “liberty, equality, brotherhood” which defined the human being as an individual deeply rooted in his/her environment.

by Japanese intellectuals to actively establish Japan's position in late modernity. The recession in the early 1990s, on the one hand, and the fact that Japan's economic relations to world community have been increasingly impacted by globalization in the early 2000s, on the other hand, forced its leading political elite to acknowledge the necessity to align to the internationally changing standards of "nation branding" – or "re-branding", as in case of France, Great Britain, the Netherlands, which had an imperialist past –, so that Japan may gain a central seat at the global table of nations. Framed as the cultural version of classical imperialism⁴ manifesting in the artistic products from the entertainment industry (hence its interchangeable denomination as "Soft Power", in opposition with the "Hard Power" of military systems)⁵, "cultural imperialism" aimed, originally, at re-defining Japan's position from an importer to an exporter of cultural elements – which might set internationally recognised trends. Since early 2010s, the Japanese project of cultural imperialism has gradually evolved and has been distancing itself from the American counterpart by its distinct affiliation to political interests, unlike the non-Japanese cultural imperialism in which economic pressures and opportunities seem to dominate. In this politically charged context, Takarazuka Revue's *1789 – The Lovers of Bastille* displays, in its transformation from the French rock-opera original, specific features (such as ethnocentric re-evaluation of cultural assets, creative re-writing of the world history) which show a keen interest in re-interpreting historical facts in the light of alternative points of view wrapped-up in artistic forms of entertainment. Similar characteristics are visible in Ghibli Studio's recent anime works (*The Wind Rises*, *The Tale of Princess Kaguya*, both released in 2013) or Murakami Haruki's latest novels (the monumental *1Q84* from 2009-2010 or *Colorless Tsukuru Tazaki and His Years of Pilgrimage* from 2013), which have made significant efforts to contextualize the Japanese version of late-modern cultural imperialism as a dynamic continuation of the Meiji period (1868-1912) slogan *wakon yōsai* (Japanese roots/spirituality, Western knowledge/technology) and to integrate the preoccupation for cultural liberalism and social cohesion as fundamental premises of economic prosperity and political stability.

2.1 *The Rose of Versailles (1974) and the dialectics of love*

The main characteristic of *1789 – The Lovers of Bastille* is that it tackles exactly the same plot as *The Rose of Versailles*, the most emblematic performance in the history of Takarazuka Revue. The play brings forward the French Revolution of

³ The period refers to the late 1970s, with the rise of the so-called *Nihonjinron* movement, translated as "theories on Japanese [people] and Japaneseness" (Yoshino, 1992: 37).

⁴ Classical imperialism mainly focused on trade and its economic benefits.

⁵ There is, though, a series of subtle differences between Soft Power and cultural imperialism, but the most important one is that Soft Power refers to a clear target in a specific nation or area, while cultural imperialism is diffused globally, without a direct regional goal (Iwabuchi, 2015: 425; Rothkopf, 1997: 35).

1789, more specifically, between spring 1789 and August 1789. However, while *The Rose of Versailles* focuses on the imperial family and its surroundings, *1789 – The Lovers of Bastille* relies heavily on the “class struggle” (as defined by Karl Marx’ parlance one century later), and on the human drama.

The Rose of Versailles belongs to the large category of “historical drama”, the plot occurring shortly before, during and after the French Revolution of 1789, and is a typical example of cross-mediality (or media transfer). It started as a novel by the Austrian writer Stefan Zweig, *Marie Antoinette: Bildnis eines mittleren Charakters* (*Marie Antoinette: Portrait of an Average Woman*), published by Insel Verlag in 1932, which later on turned into a highly successful *manga* (1972-1973) by the Japanese *manga* artist, Ikeda Riyoko (1947-). A year later, in 1974, it was staged as an extremely popular theatre performance by the Takarazuka Revue Company under the direction of the cult-director Ueda Shinji (1933-). In 1979, the cult anime director Dezaki Osamu (1943-2011) released a TV anime series, and in 1980, the French director Jacques Demy (1931-1990) made a live-action movie, *Lady Oscar*, based on the Japanese version of the story in which the character Oscar François de Jarjayes is a girl raised and educated as a boy in order to inherit and protect the family’s name and wealth in the French aristocracy. However, in the complex dramaturgic structure of the musical play we can find the motif of “forbidden love story” between Marie Antoinette and the Swedish count, Hans Axel von Fersen. In the so-called “Boat Ride” scene in *The Rose of Versailles*, in which Marie Antoinette and Fersen profess their mutual love, an artistic-emotional message is revealed: love is powerful and noble, but also painful and ephemeral. This is clearly shown in the lyrics of the song performed in this scene – the leitmotiv of the entire performance:

愛それは甘く	Love is sweet,
愛それは強く	Love is powerful,
愛それは尊く	Love is precious,
愛それは気高く	Love is noble.
愛愛愛	Love, Love, Love!
愛あればこそ、生きる喜び	This is love, the joy of life!
愛あればこそ、世界は一つ	This is love, unique in the world!
愛故に人は美しい	The beauty of the human being emerges from love.
愛それは悲しく	Love is sad,
愛それは切なく	Love is bitter,
愛それは苦しく	Love is painful,
愛それははかなく ⁶	Love is ephemeral ⁷ .

⁶ The lyrics can be found in the performance pamphlets in 1974 and 2001.

The Rose of Versailles reflects the zeitgeist of “the golden decade”, the Shōwa⁸-Thirties. Starting with the Tokyo Olympics in 1964, continuing with Osaka World Exhibition in 1970, the “golden decade” would reach a climax with the world-premiere of *The Rose of Versailles* in 1974, sending across the message that economic affluence and prosperity, accompanied by political stability and empowerment, cannot erase the (typically Japanese) sense of transience. Moreover, *The Rose of Versailles* is a “forbidden love story”, doomed to fail due to social and historical hindrances. Marie Antoinette’s execution – a milestone in the history of the aestheticization of reality – would represent a crucial moment in the ideological turnover of moral ideals (Ishii et al., 1996: 28-31). *The Rose of Versailles* and its subsequent hundreds of versions⁹ have impacted the cultural perception of Japan, which attained the status of an economic superpower, while still struggling with the political heritage of the recent past. It is within this problematic stress-ratio that “love” was ideologically constructed and performatively implemented for over 40 years, until the play *1789 – The Lovers of Bastille* was imported from France to Japan in 2015 and its adoption induced a paradigm shift in the perception, processing and propagation of alternative historicities.

2.2 *The play 1789: The Lovers of Bastille (2015) and the fascination of freedom*

1789 – The Lovers of Bastille is essentially a love story between two star-crossed lovers: Olympe, an aristocrat, and Ronan, a farmer. The plot is quite linear, as in most musical plays. In the spring of 1789, France is devastated by famine. The French people begin to rise in unrest against the ruling French king, Louis XVI. Ronan, a young peasant, leads a revolt marching to Paris, where he encounters Olympe, an assistant governess of the children of Marie Antoinette of Austria. The two fall in love during the tumultuous stirrings of the French Revolution, their romance playing out amid entanglements with other major revolutionary figures such as Georges Jacques Danton, Maximilien de Robespierre and Camille Desmoulins. After they are separated, Ronan and Olympe find each other again on 14 July 1789, during the assault on the Bastille prison — an encounter which seals their destiny as a new era begins.

⁷ The translation of the lyrics in the entire paper was made by me; in the case of the Japanese lyrics, my friend and colleague, Prof. Dr. Ikeda Yukie, helped me, and I express here my deep gratitude.

⁸ In the Japanese traditional periodization, Shōwa era represents the period between 1925 and 1989, when Japan was ruled by the emperor Hirohito, himself a highly controversial historical figure due to his involvement in and attitude towards the wars, initiated and led by the Japanese military forces all-over Asia in the first half of the 20th century.

⁹ Almost all re-stagings centred on Oscar’s character and on the “forbidden love story” between Maria Antoinette and Fersen, and explored the inner worlds and the complex interactions and relationships between a huge diversity of secondary characters belonging to all sorts of social strata.

There are several fundamental differences between the original French performance, 1789 – *Les Amants de la Bastille*, and its Japanese Takarazuka Revue version, 1789 – *The Lovers of Bastille*. On the most superficial level, in the French version the human dimension of the characters overshadows the historical events, while in the Japanese performance the historical events are in the foreground, with the love story itself serving as an additional element to highlight the discrepancies between the old and the new historical periods revolving around the French Revolution. In order to analyse and comprehend the function of these differences, it is important to take into account the fact that the French Revolution marked the ideological beginning of modernity with its declaration of human rights stating the position and definition of the human being, both as an individual and as an entity belonging to an immediate community. Takarazuka Revue displays the role of the history and of the group on stage, and in doing so, actively constructs the human being as an “enlightened” existence both from the point of view of the Japanese standards and classical views. The sociocultural, economic and political background of this performance re-negotiates the parameters which defined the European modernity, and, consequently, the Western modernity, at its very roots.

The most impactful way to create this change of perspective is by adapting the contents of the two main songs. In Japanese version “Les mots qu’on ne dit pas” became “Voiceless words” (*Koe-naki kotoba*), the last song at the end of the first act, and respectively “Pour la peine”, “The retribution for sadness” (*Kanashimi no mukui*), the last song of the second act and of the entire performance¹⁰.

A detailed comparison of these songs reveals deep shifts both at the semantic and at the ideological level. In the French version, “Les mots qu’on ne dit pas” is a love song in which Olympe expresses her difficulty in coping with the newly found emotions for Ronan. She talks about her romantic yearning and her conflicting loyalties because she feels strongly attracted to someone below her status, but is also aware of her professional obligations towards her employers and her social environment. In the Japanese version, it becomes a song calling the masses to rise and gather in order to fight injustice and oppression, which are a consequence of personal choices resulting in revolt, which, in turn, leads to a better life for the individual.

“Les mots qu’on ne dit pas”

“The words we don’t say”

Il y a des mots qui brûlent mes rêves,
tant d’interdits sur mes lèvres que je

There are words that burn my dreams,
forbidden by my lips,

¹⁰ Unlike the French original, in the Japanese version an additional “show-part” is added at the end of the theatrical performance, including exclusively dancing and singing numbers, in accordance with the traditional structure of the Takarazuka Revue performances.

n'avoue pas.	which I don't admit.
J'ai tant de plaisirs qui se taisent,	I have so many silent pleasures,
tant de désirs qui se plaisent, a rester	so many voiceless desires,
sans voix.	which I keep hidden deep down.
J'ai devant moi la vie que je n'ose pas,	I have in front of me the life I don't
au fond de moi l'envie que je laisse là.	dare,
J'entends chanter dans mes nuits ...	deep within the envy which I keep there.
les mots que l'on ne dit pas.	I hear singing in my nights ...
Il y a des silences qui font mal,	the words we don't say.
quand les sentiments se violent des non-	There are silences which hurt
dits	when feelings hide themselves
qui la serrent.	by unspoken words which suffocate
Malgré les regards qui condamnent	them.
mes idéaux portent mon âme	Despite the looks that condemn,
vers les mots qui espèrent.	my ideals carry my soul
J'ai devant moi la vie que je n'ose pas,	towards the words which hope.
J'entends chanter dans mes nuits ...	I have in front of me the life I don't
les mots que l'on ne dit pas.	dare,
Je sais rien n'est parfait,	and I hear singing in my nights ...
je sais tous mes rendez-vous manqués.	the words we don't say.
J'aurai la vie que je voulais,	I know that nothing is perfect,
oser chanter dans mes nuits ...	I know all my missed appointments.
les mots que l'on ne dit pas.	I'll have the life I wanted if I dare
J'entends les mots, les mots que l'on ne	singing
dit pas,	in my nights... the words we don't say.
L'envie que l'on ne vit pas, la vie que	I hear the words... the words we don't
l'on ose pas.	say
Oser les mots, les mots que l'on ne dit	The envy we don't live. The life we
pas,	don't dare.
L'envie que l'on ne vit pas, la vie que	Daring the words ... the words we don't
l'on ose pas.	say ¹¹ .
La vie que l'on ose pas,	
les mots que l'on ne dit pas.	

“Les mots qu'on ne dit pas” is a defensive song, focusing on the inability of the individual to face challenges and change or, at least, to accept that endings can bring out new beginnings – chances for a better future. This pessimistic message generated by defeat and fear rejects change and draws attention to an individual stuck in a past already surpassed by the waves of history. Struggling to move on to a life of change-oriented choices, Olympe is painfully, inevitably trapped between the glimpse of the future, envisioned by Ronan and his comrades, and the delusional stability offered by the privileges of her class. On the other hand, the

¹¹ The lyrics can be found on the DVD of the performance *1789 – Les Amants de la Bastille* (2012).

Japanese version of the song, “Voiceless words”, carries an optimistic message grounded on a future world built by the accumulated forces and the sacrifices of countless citizens who could not bear injustice and oppression anymore. It is a song calling the masses to rise and fight for their own benefit and for the future, so that the next generations can love and live and be happy.

<p>声なき言葉</p> <p>(ロナン&農民/コーラス) 声なき言葉を重ね合えれば、 響きになり、音が聞こえてくる。 夢見ることさえ許されずに 生きてきた日々を別れを告げ、 勇気を出し、立ち上がろう。 俺たちの声を届けよう！ 明日の歴史を変えるのだ。 声なき言葉を伝えるまでは、 この舗道に立ち続け、動かない。 我らの希望の光を消し去る者は 誰であろうと逃げずに闘うぞ！ 俺たちの声を届けよう！ 明日の歴史を変えるのだ。</p> <p>(マリーアントワネット) 彼らと同じで、希望の光は見えない、 明日をどう行き得ばいい、 恋の喜びも、本当。</p> <p>(ロナン&農民/コーラス) 愛する人のため、壁を乗り越えて、 結ばれる日が来ると信じたい。 愛する人と幸せに生きる日が来ると 信じていたい。 その日が必ず来る、 愛する人と幸せに生きる日が来る。 この俺たちは歴史を変えるのだ¹²。</p>	<p>“Voiceless words”</p> <p>(Ronan & Farmers/Choir) If voiceless words pile up, they start to reverberate, and their sound starts to penetrate the silence. Let’s say “Goodbye” to those days in which we lived even without the permission to dream. Let’s find the courage to stand up. Let’s make our voices be heard! We change the history of tomorrow. Until the voiceless words transgress the silence, we keep on standing on this pavement, we don’t move. No matter who would try to obliterate the light of our hope, we won’t run away, we fight! Let’s make our voices be heard! We change the history of tomorrow. (Marie Antoinette) Like them, I cannot see the light of hope, I don’t know how to get going, not even in the joy of love, indeed. (Ronan & Farmers/Choir) For those we love, we overcome walls, and we want to believe that the day will come when we can be together. I want to believe that the day will come</p>
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¹² The lyrics can be found in the performance pamphlet (2015).

	<p>when we can live happily with those we love. That day will definitely come, the day when we can live happily with those we love. (Because) We change the history of tomorrow.</p>
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Unlike the French original, “Voiceless words” calls for active participation, which turns dreams, seemingly impossible only a few years ago, into visible goals, but it also refers to the fear of losing one’s own life and the lives of those dear to us. The French version made clear that the French Revolution occurred in a moment of crisis, as Marie Antoinette publicly displayed her personal dissatisfaction with the life at court, and the profound lack of personal fulfilment, amplified by official obligations and emotional yearnings. Stepping farther from the French original, the Takarazuka Revue’s performance addresses change at all levels and expresses the necessity of historical awareness as an on-going process, beyond personal control, but deeply impacting those involved in times of upheaval and turmoil.

As it is obvious from the lyrics of the two versions, a series of subtle transformations leads, eventually, to a fundamental transfer of meaning: while the French version, “Les mots qu’on ne dit pas”, is a love song full of self-doubt and yearning, passively expressing romantic expectations, in the Japanese version, “Voiceless words” becomes the song of revolution, building self-awareness and confidence in the population participating in the uprising and emphasizing the historical significance of the individual involvement.

A similar process is experienced in the last song of the second act, “Pour la peine”, which turns into “The retribution for sadness”. The French original tune is a song of despair, bringing into focus the value of historical progress in terms of its toll on human lives, alluding to the fact that the individual healing is somehow separated from the collective sense of progress. It is a pessimistic song, expressing the painful awareness that historical change lies in the hands of those individuals who have learnt to cope with loss and anger, as they are responsible for their own healing and for overcoming their past. Conversely, in the Japanese version, it becomes a song of hope, joyfully underlining the value of forgiveness, and praising collective happiness, regarded as a result of individual fulfilment and commitment.

“Pour la peine”

“Because of this pain”

Quand la peur s’immisce dans nos
 illusions,
 on abandonne, abandonne, le ciel
 pardonne.

When fear breaks in on our illusions,
 we abandon, abandon, and heaven forgives.
 When the mind engages in unreason,
 the cannons sound, cannons sound, and

Quand l'esprit s'enlise dans la déraison, les canons tonnent, cannons tonnent, les cris résonnent. Pour la peine, je t'emmène ... On veut des rêves qui nous soulèvent, on veut des fleurs a nos douleurs. On veut du sens, de l'innocence, au nom de nos libres penseurs. Au nom des larmes qui nous désarment, on doit pouvoir changer l'histoire ... pour la peine. Au nom de nos pères qui nous ont appris le prix d'un homme, prix d'un homme, ce que nous sommes. Au nom de nos frères tombés dans l'oubli, des droits de l'homme, droits de l'homme, droit des hommes. On veut des rêves qui nous soulèvent, On veut des fleurs a nos douleurs, On veut du sens de l'innocence, au nom de nos libres penseurs. Au nom des larmes qui nous désarment on doit pouvoir changer l'histoire, Pour la peine, pour la peine ... Je veux sourire à tes erreurs, embrasser tes blessures, nous apprendrons par coeur la démésure. Car nos peines sont les mêmes. On veut des rêves qui nous soulèvent, On veut des fleurs a nos douleurs. On veut du sens de l'innocence, au nom de nos libres penseurs. Au nom des larmes qui nous	cries resound. Because of this pain, I carry you away ... We want dreams which lift us up. We want flowers even in our sorrows. We want a sense of innocence in the name of our free thinkers. In the name of the tears which disarm us, we must be able to change history. Because of this pain ... In the name of our fathers who taught us the worth of a man, the worth of men, men such as we. In the name of our brothers fallen into oblivion, the rights of man, rights of man, right of men. We want dreams which lift us up. We want flowers even in our sorrows. We want a sense of innocence in the name of our free thinkers. In the name of the tears which disarm us we must be able to change history. Because of this pain ... I want to smile at your errors, to kiss your wounds, we will learn this outrageousness by heart. For our pains are the same. We want dreams which lift us up. We want flowers even in our sorrows. We want a sense of innocence In the name of our free thinkers, in the name of the tears which disarm us we must be able to change history Because of this pain, because of this pain.
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désarment

on doit pouvoir changer l’histoire,
Pour la peine, pour la peine ...¹³

As in the case with the first song, “Pour la peine” is a defensive statement, which portrays the human being as helpless and overwhelmed by historical events. The sad overtones magnify the isolation of the individual amidst the masses deprived of any emotion and empathy. A profound lack of hope as well as deep loneliness appear as hindrances in overcoming one’s own fears and moving towards the radical “otherness”. On the other hand, the Japanese version, “The retribution for sadness”, makes togetherness and unconditional belonging the ultimate tools in discovering one’s full potential and in tapping into one’s unknown strengths, so that the impetus for change and self-improvement may come from within – as part of a greater and fundamentally more diverse whole.

悲しみの報い

“The retribution for sadness”

悲しみの報いとして、
人は夢を見る権利を得る。
憎しみを乗り越えて、
新しい世界/時代を築き上げる。
愛し合う自由が約束された。
歴史の波間に浮かんで消えて行く
ひとつひとつの命の叫ぶ声が、
響き合い重なって、明日の歴史造
る。
歌い続けよう、永遠に・・・・・・
苦しみの報いとして、人は許す心
を持つ。
力に頼る事なく、希望と勇気を求め
る。
歴史の波間に浮かんで消えて行く
ひとつひとつの命の叫ぶ声が、
響き合い重なって、明日の歴史造
る。
歌い続けよう、永遠に・・・・・・
人はいつの日か、辿り着くだろう、
愛と平和に満ちた輝く世界！
いつの日か、

As a retribution for the sadness,
the humans earned their right to dream.
By overcoming the hatred,
the humans are crafting a new
world/era.
We made the promise to love each
other.
The individual voice of each destiny
floats away with the waves of history,
And their echoes gather together
and create the history of tomorrow.
Let’s keep on singing, eternally.
As a retribution for the pain,
the humans have received a forgiving
heart.
Not relying on power,
but striving for hope and courage.
The individual voice of each destiny
floats away with the waves of history,
And their echoes gather together
and create the history of tomorrow.
Let’s keep on singing, eternally.
One day, a bright world full of love and
peace
will become reality.
One day, the individual voice of each

¹³ The lyrics can be found on the DVD 1789 – *Les Amants de la Bastille* (2012).

歴史の波間に浮かんで消えて行く	destiny
ひとつひとつの命の叫ぶ声が、	will float away with the waves of
響き合い重なって、明日の歴史造	history,
る。	And their echoes will gather together
歌い続けよう、永遠に！	and create the history of tomorrow.
愛し合う、永遠に！ ¹⁴	Let's keep on singing, eternally.
	Let's love each other, eternally.

In striking difference with the original “Pour la peine”, “The retribution for sadness” goes beyond despair and sadness and turns into a powerfully optimistic song of hope, which highlights the value of forgiveness and of overcoming the difficulties as part of unstoppable lifecycle, in brutal contrast to the value of historical progress and its toll on human lives, as promoted by the French authors. Furthermore, collective happiness results in individual fulfilment and commitment, which surpasses temporal and spatial constraints, and, eventually, creates the cosmic awareness that human beings belong to a greater whole, unlike the original French, with its painfully accurate display of an individual alienated from the universal whole and longing to be part of the collective awareness. Within this process of emotional channelling of historical messages, the Takarazuka Revue carefully constructs a world of soft, colourful dreams within the grasp of social actors, and encourages the faith in change, as a voluntary act of raising the awareness of the masses. Besides being the popular messenger of change, Takarazuka Revue and its actresses have become the very symbol of change: the function and significance of the French Revolution, as the foundation of Western modernity, is extracted from the original French rock-opera and transformed into a Japanese modernity project – an unexpected gesture to design national progress and individual self-actualization.

Thus, in the fragile, slender stature of the *takarasiennes*¹⁵, one can discover a dynamic alternative to the late-modern Japanese everyday life, infused with Western influences, dominated by consumerism, suffocated by excess and surplus. Beyond its stylistic cacophony, ideological inconsistency and aesthetic contradictions, Takarazuka Revue blossoms out incessantly as a romantic world focused on progress and change, self-improvement and the urge to overcome one's own limitations. In taking over French ideals and role-models as well as cultural paradigms and projects in the shape of live performances and key-songs embedded in performances, Takarazuka Revue metamorphoses into a model of change and forward-movement, keeping its own central position within the landscape of Japanese media and entertainment industry as an agent of tradition and stability.

¹⁴ The lyrics can be found in the pamphlet of the performance (2015).

¹⁵ The Takarazuka Revue actresses are sometimes lovingly called *takarasiennes* since the director Shirai Tetsuzō (1900-1983) compared them to the beautiful *parisiennes* at Moulin Rouge by mid-1920s (Hashimoto, 1999: 11).

2.3 Justice at the intersection of love and freedom

The Japanese translation of the ideals of the French revolution went back to mid-19th century. While “freedom” and “equality” were rendered identically as 自由 *jiyū* and 平等 *byōdō*, “brotherhood” was translated as 博愛 *hakuai* or 友愛 *yūai*, which means, in fact, “friendship” (Howland, 2001: 167; Havens 1970: 39). Combined with a sense of genuine kindness, towards oneself and the others, friendship has recently become one of the main elements to be transmitted worldwide as part of the ideological dimension of Japanese late-modern cultural imperialism. Furthermore, friendship and kindness, 優しさ *yasashisa*, the deep consideration of the others as part of one’s own world, are fundamental in the Declaration of the Human Rights as proclaimed in the Takarazuka Revue’s performance 1789 – *The Lovers of Bastille*, where freedom and equality are defined in terms of belonging to a larger community, where respect, loyalty and responsibility are fundamental parameters for enlightened human beings.

1. 『人は生まれながらにして自由かつ平等の権利を有する。』
People are *free* and *equal* from their birth on.
2. 『全ての人民は法のもとにおいて平等であり、平等に保護される。』
People are *equal* in front of the law, and equally protected by the law.
3. 『何人も政治・宗教の違いにおいて、脅威にさらされてはならない。』
Even when political or religious differences occur, people should not be intimidated.
4. 『全ての人民はあらゆる職業、地位、職務に付く権利を有する。』
All people have the right to choose their profession, to strive for their status, in any position.
5. 『全ての人民は、その罪が証明されるまでは無実とする。』
All people are innocent, until their guilt is proven.
6. 『全ての人民は、表現と出版の自由を有する。』
All people have the *freedom* of expression, privately and publicly.
7. 『自由とは、他人を害さないすべてのことを為し得ることである。』
Freedom is what we choose to do without harming those around us.

1789年8月26日、人権宣言が採択されること
1789, August 26, The Declaration of the Human Rights¹⁶

The declaration represents the ideological climax of a long history of transforming the external inputs into national cultural assets, which would later on turn into economic and political power. During the Meiji period (around the 1880s), the pre-modern slogan *wakon kansai*¹⁷ (“Japanese spirit/roots, Chinese

¹⁶ The Declaration can be found on the DVD of the performance (2015).

¹⁷ *Wakon kansai* refers to the long centuries in which China had served as the main source of information and instruction on all levels.

technology/knowledge”) was replaced by *wakon yōsai* (“Japanese spirit/roots, Western technology/knowledge”). Thus, Japanese technocrats at mid-19th century decided to gradually turn away from the Chinese models which had been serving as inspiration sources for centuries, and appeal to the Western paradigms of knowledge and technology. Furthermore, prior to this decision, there was a period of confusion and turmoil, in which the need to keep and develop a model according to the existing traditions and doctrines prevailed, as the slogan *sonnō jōi* (“revere the Emperor, expel the [Western] barbarians”) illustrates (McClain, 2002: 140-144). This mentality clashed with the necessity to adapt to the Western policies and paradigms, as reflected in the slogan *bunmei kaika* (literally meaning “[Western] civilization and enlightenment”) (McClain 2002: 169-181). Furthermore, since late 2000s, the mid-19th century slogan, *wakon yōsai*, has gradually changed into *wakon wasai* (“Japanese spirit/roots, Japanese technology/knowledge”), a tendency clearly visible in present-day Japan. It is an important transition from a worldview based on imported artefacts, which underwent a process of “Japanisation”, towards an existential paradigm in which national identity serves as a cultural construction of the “national self” (also known as “nation-branding”), promoted, propagated and implemented on an international level. In this context, Takarazuka Revue is an excellent socio-cultural barometer of the Japanese society as well as an aesthetic-ideological foundation of the Japanese entertainment industry in the spiral-like practice of internalizing external paradigms into a century-old system of constructing, propagating and implementing Japanese assets. Within this process, Japan shifted from its position as an ‘outsider’ to the Western world to an ‘insider’ to the Asian community.



On a more technocratic level, the performance *1789 – The Lovers of Bastille*, as staged by Takarazuka Revue, represents exactly the late-modern ratio of cultural activism and intellectual apathy of the socio-cultural elites, as opposed to the economic leading class. *1789 – The Lovers of Bastille* is a foreign cultural product belonging to the famous category of French rock opera, with its history of resistance and alternatives going back as far as Michel Berger's *Starmania*, in the late 1970s (around the same time as Pink Floyd's *The Wall*). Imported to Japan, the play *1789 – The Lovers of Bastille* was instilled with two new parameters: hierarchy – the top-star *musumeyaku* still enacts Marie Antoinette – and discipline – visible in the much higher quality of the Japanese performance in comparison to the French original. These new elements were combined with the fundamental concepts of love and hope, incorporated in the definition of Takarazuka Revue (regarded both as a historical institution and a symbol of Japan). Furthermore, the performance *1789 – The Lovers of Bastille* provides a sense of awareness of its position within the historical continuum as an embedded element which grounds a sense of expansion beyond the limitations of the theatrical medium, highlighting the idea that change is possible and it resides within the individual, who can transcend time and space in his quest for new shores.

3. Conclusion: towards a Japanese rewriting of Enlightenment

For decades, since mid-1920s, Takarazuka Revue proclaimed itself as *ai no sekai* (“world of love”) or the symbol of Japan (*Takarazuka wa Nihon da*, “Takarazuka is Japan”) (Hashimoto, 1999: 31). Like the Imperial Theatre, built in 1911¹⁸, Takarazuka Revue, which was supposed to symbolize the middle-class cultural attitudes and life-styles of the late-1910s, took its place in people’s minds alongside new private housing estates and department stores. In accordance to Richard Wagner’s concept of “Gesamtkunstwerk” (total art-work), which implied both a revolution of the prevailing structures in the German opera and the re-definition of the German identity through the employment of Germanic myths (Millington et al., 2001: 935b), Kobayashi Ichizō, the founder of Takarazuka Revue, imagined his new theatre as a musical, cultural institution for all social strata, including men, women and children (Hashimoto 1999: 54, 123-125), as one can experience in the Takarazuka Revue theatre in Tokyo, which was called “a temple of family entertainment” (*katei kyōraku no dendō*). (Robertson, 1998a: 36; Ortolani, 1995: 274)

My biggest aim is to separate theatre from the grasp of noble people and make it available to everyone. Plays should not be luxurious occasions, but should be an everyday entertainment. I don't want an audience made up of the sons of rich families with their geishas, nor dignitaries who have no care for how much they spend on leisure activities. I want ordinary families to come. (Kobayashi quoted in Berlin 1988: 125)

Takarazuka Revue is clearly a phenomenon of shinkokumingeiki (New People's Theatre). Created after the model of kokugeki (National Theater)¹⁹, Takarazuka Revue underlies the dialectics of the kokumin'engeki-undō (Movement of the People's Theatre), strongly defended by Ōyama Isao and Iizuka Tomoichirō, two pre-war theatre historians and critics, in late 1930s as “mass theatre for

¹⁸ Like other main theatres, in its architectural design, the Imperial Theatre was entirely Western both outside and inside: the exterior was in somewhat a French Renaissance style, and the interior was as ornate as any large nineteenth-century European theatre. The proscenium arch was a baroque extravaganza of moulded and painted plasterwork, featuring a flock of alabaster doves suspended from the ceiling on one side (Powell, 2002: 52).

¹⁹ The term was coined by the theatrologist Tsubouchi Shōyō in 1904 (Domenig, 1998: 269; Ōzasa, 1985: 74; Robertson, 1998a: 124; Iizuka, 2002: 490).

family entertainment”, in opposition to pre-modern Kabuki²⁰. The *shinkokumingei* was supposed to consolidate the Japanese cultural homogeneity and preserve the construction of the Japanese national identity. Kobayashi rejected specific structures of the Japanese traditional theatre, such as the music, which he considered unsuitable for powerful military marches or impressive chorus, and, thus, adopted the Western (popular) music, even in Asian or Japanese plots, where popular melodic clichés were mixed with Western sounds. His goals to create a theatre ‘for the people’ and to offer them models of discipline and hard-work, on the one hand, and to support the imperialist levelling efforts, on the other hand, can be summed-up as it follows: “entertainment (*kairaku*), education (*kyōyō*) and assimilation (*dōka*) of the audiences can be attained through manners (*girei*), social interactions (*shako*) and friendship (*shinwa*)”. (Takaoka 1943: 194; Domenig, 1998: 274f.; Ortolani, 1995: 274; Robertson, 1998a: 28f., 1998b: 294f.; Watanabe, 1999: 39)

In this light, the transition from ethics to aesthetics and from imagination to ideology in the Takarazuka Revue staging of the world, reflects its metamorphosis from an insignificant socio-cultural medium to a powerful political and economic message in post-war Japan, continuing its previous efforts of cultural assimilation and national re-branding. The play *1789 – The Lovers of Bastille* and its powerfully reverberating statements of hope and liberation included in the main songs (“Voiceless words” and “The retribution for sadness”) reveal this double-edged function of Japanese cultural products released by the entertainment industry and targeted at mass audiences: national reframing with powerful international impact. Cultural imperialism may be encompassed in the national project of self-actualization of the role of the individual in relation to the community. However, while importing cultural assets and Japanizing them, the tackling of foreign influences and structures leads to a sense of expansion, orchestrated by unexpected insights and revelations. “The global revolution” incorporates the external inputs within the national system, and then transforms those elements into outputs for change and progress, propagated and implemented worldwide. To a certain extent, Takarazuka Revue is a historical and emotional barometer of the Japanese society, sensibly expressing doubts, in times of exuberance, and hope, in times of confusion. Takarazuka Revue’s public staging of love, freedom, justice, progress and innocence in post-war Japan transcends the dramatic transition of works of arts from creative, introspective means of expression belonging to early modernity into

²⁰ Takarazuka Revue adopted elements such as *ginkyō* (the silver bridge), the *cross gender* representation, and the concept of a “total art-work” from Kabuki (Ortolani, 1995: 273, Robertson, 1998a: 29, 1998b: 292).

intellectual tools of self-awareness and social awakening in late modernity, establishing a fresh, powerful identity paradigm, in which compassion, kindness and self-confidence are its core elements.

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