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ROBOTS AND ANDROIDS FROM JAPAN TAKE THE STAGE AT WEX

“Enthralling...not only with the state-of-the-art technology but also with its compelling humanist message.”

—*The Nation* [Thailand]

January 18, 2013—Columbus, OH—Japan’s long-held fascination with robots, androids, and artificial intelligence bears fruit in two one-act plays from the **Seinendan Theater Company + Osaka University Robot Theater Project**, which will stage [*Sayonara*](#) and *I, Worker*, a pair of plays featuring interactions with domestic robots and a lifelike android, with both shows revealing the empathetic and emotional dimensions of these mechanized characters, at the Wexner Center **January 31–February 2, 2013.**

Both *I, Worker* and *Sayonara* will be performed in **Japanese with English surtitles.**

The double bill was developed by Seinendan Theater Company’s founder/playwright/director Oriza Hirata, a pioneer of Japan’s “Quiet Theater” contemporary theater movement, and Dr. Hiroshi Ishiguro, a leading researcher on robotics and the director of the Intelligent Robotics Laboratory at Osaka University, who was brought on as an expert collaborator and technical advisor for the compelling pair of productions.

In the touching play *Sayonara*, a woman engages a human-like Geminoid F model android in a discussion of their respective views on life and death. Hirata recently updated the work to include new scenes inspired by the catastrophic events of the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster, in which the android breaks down, then gets successfully repaired, only to be sent off to help fix problems at a critically damaged nuclear power plant.

I, Worker, set in the near future, subtly contrasts the trials of a distressed husband who has lost all motivation to work with the couple’s pair of ever-ready Mitsubishi manufactured robot maids that were



Robot domestic servants interact with a cast member in *I, Worker*. Photo: OSAKA UNIVERSITY & Eager Co. Ltd.

Seinendan Theater Company + Osaka University Robot Theater Project

Android-Human Theater: Sayonara
Robot-Human Theater: I, Worker

DATES: January 31–February 2 (Thursday–Saturday at 8 pm).

LOCATION: Wexner Center’s Performance Space at 1871 N. High St.

RUN TIMES: *Sayonara*, approx.. 20 mins.; *I, Worker*, approx.. 30 mins. Total runtime including intermission is approx. 75 mins.

TICKETS: \$18 general public, \$16 members, and \$10 students.
Available at tickets.wexarts.org and at the Wexner Center Ticket Office

MORE INFO: wexarts.org

created for the sole purpose of working. The multilayered piece raises questions such as “does a robot lose all value if it can't work?” and “does the same thing apply to humans, even when we reach the age of retirement?”

Notes Chuck Helm, director of performing arts at the Wexner Center, “Japan has long been a leader in developing sophisticated robots and redesigning their evolving relationships with humans. It’s no surprise that this longstanding fascination in Japan has resulted in robots taking the stage in a unique collaboration such as this. What may be a surprise to audiences is the human side that the robot and android characters have been imbued with in these plays that makes them so touching and poignant.”

These performances by the Seinendan Theater Company + Osaka University Robot Theater Project mark the first time that robots or androids have been a part of a theatrical production at the Wexner Center. The six-city tour of the program also includes stops in Manhattan; Philadelphia; Burlington, Vermont; Toronto; and Pittsburgh.

In addition to the public performances, the Wex will host a **masterclass discussion** with the Seinendan Theater Company + Osaka University Robot Theater Project’s artists and robotic engineers on Friday, February 1 at 2:30 pm. Attendees are requested to have attended performances of the Robot Theater Project prior to attending the masterclass, which will be held in the Wexner Center Performance Space. For more information on the discussion, email Sarah Swinford, sswinford@wexarts.org.

About Seinendan Theater Company

<http://www.seinendan.org/en/about/>

BBC News on the Geminoid F’s stage debut in *Sayonara* (link includes video clip)

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/technology-11732995>

Institute for Ethics & Emerging Technologies on robots and the Robot Theater Project

<http://ieet.org/index.php/IEET/more/5201>

Reuters on *Sayonara*

<http://uk.reuters.com/article/2010/11/11/oukoe-uk-japan-robot-idUKTRE6AA19F20101111>

Cnet.com on *I, Worker*

http://news.cnet.com/8301-17938_105-10108211-1.html

EVENT/SEASON SUPPORT

Major support for the Wexner Center’s 2012–13 performing arts season is generously provided by the **Doris Duke Charitable Foundation**.

This program's six-city tour is co-produced by **Japan Society**, New York and **The Japan Foundation**, and organized by **Japan Society**, New York.

This presentation is sponsored by **Ohio State's College of Engineering** with additional support from the **East Asian Studies Center**.

Accommodations provided by **The Blackwell Inn**.

Lead media season support is provided by the **Columbus Dispatch**.

The Wexner Center also receives generous support from the **Greater Columbus Arts Council**, **The Columbus Foundation**, **Nationwide Foundation**, and the **Ohio Arts Council**, as well as from the **Corporate Annual Fund of the Wexner Center Foundation** and **Wexner Center members**.

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