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Entertainment & Life

## Williams fest spotlights Japanese influence

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The Thursday-through-Sunday celebration of Williams, who wrote some of his most famous works in town, and writer Yukio Mishima — whom festival officials called “perhaps Japan's most provocative writer” — will include two world premieres as well as some celebrity power.

“The Lady From the Village of Falling Flowers,” performed at various times each of the festival's four days by Spooky Action Theater of Washington, D.C., will be the 13th world premiere the festival has staged of a Williams play. It will be presented in a pop-up “kamishibai” style, which uses illustrations to help tell the story.

The new work by Mishima — who influenced Williams and became his friend in the late 1950s — will be the short farce “Busu,” about two panicked shop assistants, co-directed and performed by choreographer Daniel Irizarry. The show will be on a double bill with a traditional Japanese version of the same story.

The star power for the festival comes with the addition of actress Kathleen Turner, the festival's gala guest in June, to teach an acting class Saturday morning. On Sunday, TV stars Yuhua Hamasaki, from last year's “RuPaul's Drag Race,” and James Yaegashi, from “Marvel's Runaways,”

will star in a staged reading of the 1960s-Japan-set “The Black Lizard.” Surrounded by a larger cast of festival actors, Hamasaki will play Black Lizard, “a most fabulous master of criminal illusions,” and Yaegashi will play Kogoro Akechi, the Sherlock Holmes of Japan. Hamasaki will also perform a Saturday show that will be one of the festival’s late-night entertainments.

Overall, the 2019 lineup will be produced and performed by artists from locations that include South Africa, Japan and Cyprus. Beyond the plays, the festival will feature workshops, classes, parties, and Williams 101 discussions.

Highlights will include the return of South Africa’s Abrahamse and Meyer Productions for Williams’ “The Night of the Iguana.” The style of the show, though, will be inspired by Japan’s traditional Noh (classical drama) theater. Abrahamse and Meyer has been in a monthlong residency at Provincetown Theater and will continue its presentation of “Lady Aoi,” the story of an apparition haunting a hospital bed — using puppets, masks and live actors in a modern version of a Noh play.

Marissa Carpio of New York City will produce the English-language premiere of Mishima’s “The Lighthouse,” about unspoken desire affecting a postwar family’s placid life. The show will be staged by director Benny Sato Ambush from a new English translation by Laurence Kominz.

Also playing will be Philadelphia-based Egopo Classic Theater’s production of Williams tragic comedy “And Tell Sad Stories of the Deaths of Queens...” and Poreia Theatre Group from Cyprus’ production of “The Angel in the Alcove.” The latter one-act, based on a Williams short story will be paired with “Airing Old Clothes,” created and performed by Runn Shayo.

The festival will host a new morning workshop series on Japanese theater arts, as well as an immersive Tennessee Williams Institute symposium. Festival artwork will be influenced by psychedelic designs of Tadanori Yokoo, a well-known Japanese graphic designer and illustrator.