

Libretto

Toshio Hosokawa

HANJO

An Opera in One Act (6 Scenes)

Music by Toshio Hosokawa

Libretto by Toshio Hosokawa

Based on HANJO,

a Nō play by Yukio Mishima, translated by Donald Keene

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Dedicated to Kazushi Ono

Commissioned by the Festival d'Aix-en-Provence,
with the agreement of Schott Japan Company Limited

CHARACTERS:

HANAKO,Soprano
a mad girl

JITSUKO HONDA,Mezzo Soprano
a spinster

YOSHIO,Baritone
a young man

Scene I Preludio

Station. Autumn.

(HANAKO is waiting for YOSHIO at the station.)

Scene II JITSUKO's Room

JITSUKO HONDA's atelier. From afternoon to evening. The room is in disorder with evident preparations for a journey. JITSUKO, seated in an easy-chair, reads a newspaper. She puts down the newspaper, stands up impatiently, only to sit again and read.

JITSUKO *(to herself)* It's come to nothing, to nothing, all that I've been through. I could tear this newspaper to shreds. . . . But tearing it up would do no good. No, the best thing for me would be to read it aloud, the way people do, with animation and interest, as if it happened to someone else. *(Jitsuko reads newspaper.)* "Tragic love of mad girl. Old-fashioned romance at railway station . . . A beautiful mad girl may be seen every day, rain or shine, sitting on a bench in the waiting-room of a certain station with an opened fan in her arms. She peers into the face of every man who alights at the station, only to return each time disappointed to her bench. In reply to a reporter's questions she said that this was Hanjo's fan. A man she met at a certain place exchanged fans with her as a pledge that they should meet again. The mad girl holds a man's fan with a snow scene painted on it. The faithless man has her fan with a moonflower design. The man has never returned, and the girl has gone mad with longing. Her name is

Hanako, and, according to a station attendant, she lives at the house of the lady artist Miss Jitsuko Honda, at Number 35 X Street.”

Living at the house of Miss Jitsuko Honda, did it say? All I’ve gone through up to now has been so much foam on the water. It was useless of me never to have submitted to an exhibition any of the pictures I painted of Hanako, preferring people not to see them. *(Jitsuko starts frantically cutting the newspaper with scissors into tiny snowflake-like fragments.)* I suppose that it was fated to happen sooner or later. I could not bind Hanako to me.

Sooner or later people are bound now to start talking about the beautiful mad girl with the fan, and next it will come to the ears of Yoshio, that faithless creature. *(She rises wildly.)* The only thing is to go on a trip somewhere. The only thing to do is to run away without a moment’s delay, for as long as possible, just the two of us, and hide until the sensation dies down. We’ll leave tonight. Nothing else can be done. Just the two of us, for some faraway place. . . . Then, if we are overtaken *(she laughs)* it won’t matter much if I die. Yes, that will be quite all right. *(She begins again to make preparations for the journey.)*

Scene III JITSUKO and HANAKO

(HANAKO enters.)

JITSUKO *(pretending to be calm)* Oh, you’re back already.

HANAKO *(extremely beautiful but heavily made up, and overdressed in a somewhat*

soiled costume. She holds against her breast, opened, a large fan with a snow scene painted on it.) It will be all right, won't it, if I leave the door open? So that if Yoshio comes he can go right in.

JITSUKO Yes, leave it open. For now — But winter is coming on.

HANAKO It's autumn, isn't it. An autumn fan, an autumn fan, a fan for autumn. *(She weeps.)*

JITSUKO *(putting her arms about HANAKO'S shoulders)* There's no need to cry. Yoshio will surely come for you one day.

HANAKO Today I waited again at the station, all day long, all day long. I think that I've come to life through waiting for him. I looked at the faces of the people getting off the train. None of them looked like his. They were all faces of other people. I don't think anyone has a living face except Yoshio. The faces of all the other men in the world are dead. They are all skeletons. Many, many people with skulls instead of heads and brief cases in their hands got off at the station. I was so tired. Jitsuko, I waited all day today, too.

JITSUKO I have never once waited for anything.

HANAKO It doesn't matter with you. There's no need for you to wait. But some people must wait. *My* body is filled with waiting. Don't they say that human beings go on living by waiting and making other people wait? If you gave your whole life to waiting, how would it be? *(She points to her body.)* Is this my body? Am I an unshut window? An unshut door? *(She points to the door.)* Like that door . . . Can I go on living without

sleeping? Am I a doll that does not sleep?

JITSUKO You are beautiful. I can't believe that there is anyone in the world more beautiful than you. Everybody opens many windows too widely, thinking to improve the ventilation, only to lose everything as a result. But you have only one window, and through that window everything in the world enters you. You are the richest person in the world.

HANA KO *(She is not listening.)* Today, too, I sat all day on a wooden bench. How hard that bench is. How hard that bench is. I had intended waiting for him on soft grass. When he came I would jump up and he would brush my dress for me. "Oh, see how your dress is stained by the grass."

JITSUKO I love to see you naked. I have never seen nakedness as pure and rich as yours. Your breasts, your belly, your thighs . . . It was worth waiting.

HANA KO What do you say?

JITSUKO Because you waited you possess all the beautiful things in the world. A woman somewhere one morning lost her breasts, and then they were shining on your body, like medals of flesh, wonderfully fragrant. What men have fought to win, you have won by waiting.

HANA KO *(not listening)* Spring, summer, autumn . . . Which comes first, summer or autumn? If my fan were here now and the moon-flowers alive, wouldn't summer come? *(playing with the fan, opening and shutting it)*

JITSUKO Hanako, let's go on a trip.

HANA KO *(shielding her face with an exaggerated gesture)* Why? Why?

JITSUKO We'll go look for Yoshio. Why don't we leave as soon as possible, tonight even? You'll never find him by waiting that way. Let's go all through Japan looking for him. From village to village, from town to town, traveling, the two of us — how enjoyable it will be. Soon it will be the season for autumn leaves. The mountains will all turn crimson. I want to see how healthy you look when the autumn tints are reflected on the paleness of your face.

HANA KO No . . . no . . .

JITSUKO Why don't you want to go?

HANA KO Isn't it like running away from something?

JITSUKO *(startling)* Running away?

HANA KO It's because you don't wait, because you're a person who never waits. People who don't wait run away. I shall wait here. I won't listen to another word you say. Don't be angry, will you? If only I had stayed in the town where I met him and not gone away, he might have come again. But you dragged me here. . .
(She notices the scraps of newspaper on the floor.) What's this?

JITSUKO *(paling)* It isn't anything.

HANA KO It's snow! I'm sure it's snow. Dirty snow . . . *(For a few minutes*

she scoops up the paper, then scatters it around her.) See! The snow has fallen. *(with the cunning of the insane)* The snow has fallen, it's winter already. We don't have to go on any trip.

JITSUKO No, it's no use, Hanako, we must go away.

HANAKO No, no.

JITSUKO Do you understand? *(She pushes HANAKO into a chair, and leaning over her she speaks in a persuasive tone.)* You have waited long enough. You have waited enough and become so beautiful that if he should meet you he would never be able to leave you again. Do you understand? You must stop waiting and go to look for him.

HANAKO No, I will not move from here. I will not move for the rest of my life. The world is so big that no matter how much I search for him it won't do any good. I will wait here and not stir. As long as I stay still, he in his wanderings will surely come to me. The motionless star and the moving star will meet.

JITSUKO What if he is also waiting and not moving?

HANAKO You don't know men.

JITSUKO Hanako, please don't be unreasonable. I beg of you.

HANAKO Oh, I'm so tired. You haven't any consideration for how tired I am, have you, Jitsuko? Every day I must sit on a hard wooden bench waiting for him. Day after day. I am tired. I don't look it perhaps. I suppose that I look like a glossy rose. But I am

really very tired. I'll rest for a while. I'll sleep for an hour or two. Then I shall look like a little island fast asleep. On that island there is no need for clocks. Today I shall throw away my clock.

JITSUKO Why?

HANAKO Then the train will never leave.

(Exit HANAKO. JITSUKO stands still for a moment. She looks at the scraps of paper and begins to sweep them together toward the door with a broom. She is about to throw them away when she notices a man standing in the door.)

Scene IV YOSHIO and JITSUKO

JITSUKO Who is it?

YOSHIO Is Hanako here?

JITSUKO *(drawing herself up)* There's nobody here by that name.

YOSHIO I'm sure that she's here. *(He produces a newspaper from his pocket.)*
I read about her in this morning's newspaper.

JITSUKO The newspapers must be going in for misinformation, as usual.

YOSHIO *(stepping farther in)* Please let me see Hanako.

JITSUKO *(already realizing, but asking anyway)* Who are you?

YOSHIO If you say that Yoshio is here, she'll know who I am.

JITSUKO That name has been familiar to me for a long time. A hateful name with a disagreeable ring to it.

YOSHIO *(Remains silent.)*

JITSUKO In the first place I have no way of knowing whether or not you are the real Yoshio.

YOSHIO If you have any doubts, look at this. It's her fan, with moonflowers painted on it.

JITSUKO I wonder where you could have picked it up.

YOSHIO I thought that you would say something like that. Now, if you would be so kind as to take me to her . . .

JITSUKO When you saw the newspaper article you suddenly fancied yourself the hero of a love story and came rushing here — wasn't that it? To a woman you had abandoned for three years.

YOSHIO I managed things extremely badly, I know. But about a year ago I at last became free, and I went to the town where I left her. She was no longer there. People said that after she had gone out of her mind and couldn't perform any more as a geisha, her contract was bought out by a lady artist, who took her off to Tokyo. That was all I could find out. The artist was you, wasn't it?

JITSUKO Yes, it was I, a spinster painter on the verge of forty. I went to that town about a year and a half ago on a sketching trip. The geishas were talking about her at a restaurant to which I was invited. One summer, they said, she and a young customer from Tokyo met. The man promised to come again, and exchanged fans with her by way of a pledge. Every day she would look at the fan and think of him, and her days were spent waiting for his return. She stopped performing for customers, and was so hounded by the madame that the poor thing finally lost her mind. When I heard this story I begged to see her. She sat in a room like a dark prison, her eyes cast down, clutching a fan in her small white hands, apparently unaware even when I entered. When I spoke, she at last lifted her face. The beauty of that innocent face, like the moon with a ring round it! I fell in love at first sight. I bought out Hanako's contract and returned with her to Tokyo. At the time I made a vow to myself never to let her be stolen from me by that faithless man.

YOSHIO Since then, for the past year and a half, she's been in your hands, I take it.

JITSUKO I'll thank you not to adopt that tone, exactly as if you had left one of your belongings in my keeping.

YOSHIO Then you won't let me see her. . . . In other words, her happiness is not what you desire.

JITSUKO I desire exactly what she desires, and she has no desire whatever for happiness.

YOSHIO *(with a defiant smile)* Then, just supposing I came here in order to make her unhappy again . . .

JITSUKO Her unhappiness is beautiful and perfect. No one can intrude.

YOSHIO Then there is no need to be so afraid of letting me see her.

JITSUKO Afraid? Yes, I value my good fortune.

YOSHIO At last you've come out with the truth.

JITSUKO You have no comprehension of what my good fortune is. I am a woman who has never been loved by anyone, even when I was a child. And that is not the worst. If by a remote chance someone were to love me, I have come to think that I would probably hate him in return. I can't allow any man to love me . . . love me . . . That was why I began my life of dreaming — dreaming of making a captive of someone who was very deeply in love, but not with me. What do you think of that?

YOSHIO Is that what your good fortune involves?

JITSUKO Yes.

YOSHIO People who aren't loved think up horrible things, don't they?

JITSUKO All love is horrible, and there are no rules.

YOSHIO One thing clear to me is that you and I are enemies. Well, then, what do you give her? Is it hope? By making a decoy of me? That would seem to be all. I think that I can give her the

world.

JITSUKO You lie. All you can do is to steal the world from her.

YOSHIO That may be, for all I care. You can't tell unless you've tried.

JITSUKO I won't let her be tried any further. She is a flawless, inviolable gem. A deranged gem. There must be someone more suitable for worthless rubble like you.

YOSHIO Say it plainly. You are afraid to let me see her.

JITSUKO You don't know, do you, what stratagems an unloved woman will go to so as not to be left alone? You are obviously a person who has never once been alone.

YOSHIO Come now, take me to Hanako.

JITSUKO As a special favor, please don't shout.

YOSHIO If you don't take me to her, I'll go myself.

JITSUKO Do you see the suitcases? I was just thinking that we would have to go off on a journey somewhere to escape from you.

YOSHIO Does Hanako want to go away?

JITSUKO No. She was acting peevish and went off to have a nap.

YOSHIO She still has her wits about her.

JITSUKO No, it is a sign of her madness.

YOSHIO You certainly try your best to make Hanako out to be insane. I suppose that suits your convenience.

JITSUKO I have only known Hanako since she lost her mind. That has made her supremely beautiful. The commonplace dreams she had when she was sane have now been completely purified and have become precious, strange jewels that lie beyond your comprehension.

YOSHIO Say what you will, flesh is in those dreams.

JITSUKO Flesh! please do not make me think of things that are distasteful to me.

YOSHIO I am not trying to make you think of anything.

JITSUKO (*suddenly intense*) Please go at once.

YOSHIO What new suggestion is this after all we've gone over?

JITSUKO I'm afraid. I'm afraid.

YOSHIO I can well understand that you would be.

JITSUKO If she should go off and abandon me . . .

YOSHIO I will make her abandon you.

JITSUKO I shall die.

YOSHIO You — die? I don't think that will make Hanako unhappy.
Now if I were to die . . .

JITSUKO You think Hanako would be stricken with grief? No — that
would be the best thing you could do. Please do die. That will
give her a reason to go on living.

YOSHIO Which will give you a reason for living. No, thank you kindly.
(He goes toward the bedroom.)

JITSUKO Don't go there!

YOSHIO Hanako, I've come!

JITSUKO Go away, please. After killing me.

YOSHIO Hanako! *(shout)* Hanako!

JITSUKO *(crouching before him)* Go away, go away.

YOSHIO *(softly, sidestepping her)* Hanako! Here's the fan. The fan with the
moonflowers. *(He opens the fan and goes toward the bedroom door.)*

JITSUKO Oh-h-h! *(She covers on the floor, hiding her face.)*

*(The door of the bedroom opens and HANAKO appears. She holds
against her breast the fan with the snow scene.)*

Scene V

(A long pause. HANAKO slowly approaches YOSHIO.)

YOSHIO It's I, Yoshio. I've kept you waiting for me such a long time, I know. I'm sorry, Hanako. I've taken good care of your fan.

HANAKO My . . . fan . . .

YOSHIO Yes, with the moonflowers on it. And that fan you have with the snow scene is mine.

HANAKO My fan . . . your fan. What happened to the fan? Were you looking for a fan?

YOSHIO No. For you. For Hanako.

HANAKO I . . . the fan . . .

YOSHIO Don't you understand me? Hanako! *(He places his hand on her shoulder and shakes her. As he does so JITSUKO, having recovered her strength, stands motionless and stares at them.)*

HANAKO Yoshio?

YOSHIO Yes, I'm Yoshio.

HANAKO *(A long pause. She shakes her head almost imperceptibly.)* No you are not. You are not.

YOSHIO What are you saying? Have you forgotten me?

HANAKO You look very much like him. Your face is exactly like his, just as I've seen it in dreams. And yet you are different. The faces of all the men in the world are dead, and only Yoshio's face was alive. You are not Yoshio. Your face is dead.

YOSHIO What!

HANAKO You too are a skeleton. Your face is only bones. Why do you look at me that way with your hollow eyes of bone?

YOSHIO Look steadily. Look at me steadily.

HANAKO I am looking more steadily than you. *(to JITSUKO)* Jitsuko, you are trying to deceive me again, aren't you? To deceive me and take me away with you on a trip against my wishes. You sent for this total stranger and got him to say that he was Yoshio. You are trying to make me give up the idea of waiting, yesterday, today, tomorrow, waiting the same way — aren't you? But I won't give it up. I'll wait longer. I still have in me the strength to wait a long, long time. I am alive. I can tell a dead man's face as soon as I see one.

JITSUKO *(to YOSHIO, gently)* Please go. You had best resign yourself to it.

YOSHIO *(longingly)* Hanako!

(HANAKO, without turning back, walks to an easy-chair where she sits, facing the audience. YOSHIO watches her. A long pause. YOSHIO suddenly rushes out.)

Scene VI

HANA KO Come here.

JITSUKO Yes.

(It begins to grow dark outside.)

HANA KO It's evening already, isn't it?

JITSUKO Yes.

HANA KO In the evening the morning sun shines and the cocks crow, don't they? On an island you don't need a clock.

JITSUKO Yes.

HANA KO Jitsuko, why do we have to go away?

JITSUKO We don't have to go any more.

HANA KO Will we? Oh, I'm so glad. . . . Jitsuko —

JITSUKO Yes?

HANA KO That man who came here before. Who was he?

JITSUKO Did someone come?

HANA KO Yes, I'm sure someone came. He had some business, I think.

JITSUKO Yes.

HANAOKO He was saying something in a loud voice. I hate people who talk in such loud voices.

JITSUKO Yes, I hate them too.

HANAOKO (*Hanako is playing with the fan again.*) That's what waiting is. . . .
Waiting, waiting . . . and soon the day ends.

JITSUKO You wait. I'm not waiting for anything.

HANAOKO [I wait.

JITSUKO [I wait for nothing.

HANAOKO [I wait . . . and today has grown dark too.

JITSUKO (*her eyes flashing*) Oh, wonderful life!

- CURTAIN -

World premiere:

Production by the Festival d'Aix-en-Provence,
in coproduction with the Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie / de Munt

Conductor Kazushi Ono

Director Anne Teresa de Keersmaecker

Set and Lighting Designer Jan Joris Lamers

Costume Designer Tim van Steenberghe

Cast

Hanako Ingela Bohlin

Jitsuko Honda Lilli Paasikivi/ Fredrika Brillembourg

Yoshio William Dazeley

Orchestra Chamber Orchestra of the Monnaie

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