



A. Dramas

1. Jesuit tradition

Sophia University has a long history of performing dramas, inheriting the tradition of Jesuit education. The theater has been used as a tool of active learning and of expressing oneself ever since the Jesuit's first school was opened in Italy in the 16th century. Jesuit drama turned out to be so effective that it was spread throughout Europe and beyond.



Drama performance in 1932

“School dramas are an important tool often used for classes and education,” wrote Father Johannes Kraus in Sophia University’s 25th anniversary book published in 1938. “This was an extension from the practice of speeches and debates, but it was developed far beyond what the Jesuit school guidelines imagined, attracting wide audience including European aristocrats, court nobility and kings.”

Jesuits missionaries to Japan in the 16th century also used this method in their schools, performing their first dramas from Bible stories in Oita, according to the New Catholic Encyclopedia. Shows about the nativity, creation, and Adam’s fall were presented in the following years in other parts of Kyushu island.



Kan Kikuchi’s drama Sophia students performed in 1935

2. Sophia's stage performances

Extra-curricular drama groups were active from the pre-war era. A drama study group was launched in 1931, with the departments of directing, performing, stage art,



Drama shown in 1956

audio and playwright. Goeth's "Faust" was shown during the war when entertainment and arts were limited, and this performance in the Sophia auditorium moved many people's hearts.

After the war ended, the theater group resumed its activities and performed a piece written by a famous playwright, Kunio Kishida, in June 1946. At the Sophia Festival in November that year, "The Assumption of Hannele" by Nobel Prize laureate Gerhart

Hauptmann's was performed. Through this work, the student artists wanted to reflect upon their lives tossed from patriotism to Marxism after the war's end, according to a member's essay published in the student newspaper in November, 1946.

In the following years, pieces by Anton Chekhov, Jean Cocteau, T.S. Elliot, and Yukio Mishima were performed.

3. Auditorium in Building No. 1

The auditorium in building No. 1 has been offering a stage for student actors and actresses for many years. One day in 1971, Father Donald Mason and his drama club students walked in with paintbrushes in their hands. They painted the wall black, and turned the auditorium into a theatre. This surprised school staffers but the theater still remains today.

Nicknamed the Sophia Mini Theater, this stage became famous in the 1970s beyond the campus, hosting such famous professionals as Hideki Noda, the British Royal Shakespeare Company who performed "Henry V," and the British actress



Show in the auditorium in bldg. No.1, 2010

Judith Dench, according to Sophia professor of English literature, Takanori Togo. Crown Prince Naruhito also visited this theater around 1990.

B. Foreign-Language dramas

1. Dramas to learn foreign languages

Dramas in foreign languages were performed from the school's foundation as a tool to acquire foreign languages. Students learned pronunciation, intonation, timing of pauses, gestures and how to express emotions in another language through drama practices supervised by native speakers, according to the Sophia archive book Vol. 2.



Spanish drama at the Sophia Festival, 1959

The first record of a foreign-language performance is a German drama performed on February 19, 1915 in the redbrick building, according to Father Henri Boucher's diary.

In November 1921, Father Victor Gettelman, who loved dramas, directed Schiller's "Wallenstein." Students including Y. Taneichi and K. Sakurai acted, according to the program, after they studied hard the German lines.

Later on, Schiller's "William Tell" was performed.

Father Hermann Heuvers, a drama expert, adapted a Grimm story for a German play. English plays such as Dickens' Christmas Carole were also produced.



2. Foreign-language drama festival

The Beggar's Opera performed in 1977

Foreign-language dramas flourished after the end of the war, reflecting Sophia's strength in language education. The culminating event was held in 1960 as the first festival of foreign-language dramas, presenting shows in English, Germany, Spanish, French Russian and Portuguese. The festival became an annual event, first held at Sabo hall in Akasaka and later in Sophia's auditorium in Building No. 1.

"Sophia students act out scripts written in the original language after understanding them, rather than reading Japanese translation and memorizing lines in a foreign language with agony," wrote Goro Uda, head of the Faculty of Foreign Studies in 1963. "Their words and actions are naturally coordinated because they have excellent foreign



instructors.”

The English drama troupe ceased to participate in 1970. The Portuguese club suspended its activities in 1972. The French group suspended its activities in 2004, followed by the German troupe while the Portuguese Brochure of 4th drama festival in 1963 resumed its operations in 2002.

In 2010, the drama festival revived after an interval. In November 2012, Spanish, Russian and Portuguese shows were presented by students in the Faculty of Foreign Studies.

4. Brief history of drama groups

1) German dramas (1910s – 2006)

German dramas have the oldest history in Sophia since around the time of the school's founding. In the post-war extra curricular activities, the study group of German culture showed its first stage art in 1950. The group became a German drama production committee in 1973 and changed its name in 1976, 1987 and 1994.



French drama at the Sophia Festival 1967

The members performed works by famous German playwrights such as Brecht and Goethe. They also worked on ambitious pieces such as Peter Handke's avant-garde drama "Kasper" and original works with some Japanese lines in the late 1980s.

2) Spanish dramas (1955 – present)

Students were acting "zarzuela" operettas, a sort of light comedy, from the time the Spanish Department was in the Faculty of Humanities. From 1976, the group produced two performances a year, often a comedy in the spring, and a serious piece in the autumn. The renewed group was formed in 1977, and they produced famous Spanish dramatists' works.

3) French dramas (around 1960 -2004)

Students in the French Department and the extra curricular group that studied French culture performed dramas in the early years. The French drama production committee was formed in 1971, and eight years later, a French drama troupe was organized by French-major students. They often acted famous French pieces by Moliere, Saint-Exupéry, and Sartre.



4) Russian dramas (1960-present)

Leaflet of a Russian drama performance

The Russia Soviet study group acted “The Lower Depths,” written by Russian playwright Maxim Gorky, in the 1960 drama festival. The group changed its name to the Russian drama team, performing Gorky and Chekhov stories. In 2000, one group called Anjuta branched off to seek performance outside the school.