

THE WIND-UP BIRD CHRONICLE

BASED ON THE NOVEL BY
HARUKI MURAKAMI

CONCEIVED BY
STEPHEN EARNHART

WRITTEN BY
GREG PIERCE AND
STEPHEN EARNHART



DRAMATISTS
PLAY SERVICE
INC.

THE WIND-UP BIRD CHRONICLE
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The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle
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THE WIND-UP BIRD CHRONICLE received its world premiere at the Edinburgh International Festival (Jonathan Mills, Festival Director) in August 2011. It was directed by Stephen Earnhart, the assistant director was Karen Beaumont, the puppet direction and scenic design were by Tom Lee, the projection design was by Adam Larsen, the lighting design was by Laura Mroczkowski, the music and sound design was by Jane Shaw, the costume design was by Oana Botez-Ban, the Japanese translation was by Keiko Tsuneda and Sonoko Soeda, the Butoh choreography was by Kota Yamazaki, the music was written by Bora Yoon, the dramaturg was Claudia Orenstein, and the stage manager was Neelam Vaswani. The show was produced by Stephen Earnhart, Rafael Fogel, Pamela Lubell, and Guy & Lia Haskind, with Eric Gerber, associate producer. The cast was as follows:

TORU OKADA James Yaegashi
ENSEMBLE Akira Ito, Ai Kiyono, Yoshihisa Kuwayama,
Mina Nishimura, Sophia Remolde, James Saito,
Maureen Sebastian, Akira Takayama, Toshiji Takeshima,
Fergus Walsh, Yoshihiro Watanabe, Stacey Yen, and Bora Yoon.

THE WIND-UP BIRD CHRONICLE was initially presented during the Under the Radar Festival at the Public Theater (Mark Russell, Artistic Director; Andrew D. Hamingson, Executive Director) in January 2010, with the same creative team. The cast was as follows:

TORU OKADA James Yaegashi
ENSEMBLE Pepper Fajins, Yoriko Haraguchi, Akira Ito,
Yoko Myoi, James Saito, Sonoko Soeda, Yasu Suzuki,
Akira Takayama, Toshiji Takeshima, Nana Tsuda,
Yoshi Watanabe, Stacey Yen, and Bora Yoon.

A NOTE FROM THE WRITERS

This script is essentially a description of the premiere production. We developed the piece over seven years, amassing a creative team that included actors, Bunraku puppeteers, video and sound artists, a live musician, a choreographer, and a slew of other remarkably talented artists. Much of the cast was fluent in both Japanese and English so we had the luxury of using both languages. Once we assembled the team, we began to write to their skills. It would be unrealistic and autocratic of us to require other theater companies to assemble teams of artists with precisely the same abilities. Haruki Murakami was wildly generous in allowing us the creative freedom to adapt his novel as we envisioned it. We'd like to follow his lead and allow similar freedoms to theater artists who want to do their own productions. Though the dialogue should be performed as written, consider our descriptions of staging and our choices of media to be *an* approach rather than *the* approach. The play may be performed entirely in English, with claymation instead of Bunraku puppets, with a chamber orchestra instead of a single musician... you get the idea. *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle* is about dreams. With our gratitude and best wishes, dream.

—Stephen Earnhart and Greg Pierce

CHARACTERS

TORU OKADA
TELEPHONE WOMAN
CRETA KANO
KUMIKO OKADA
MAY KASAHARA
HOTEL WORLD WAITER
ROOM #208 WOMAN
SHADOWY MAN
PRANK SHOW HOST
PRANK SHOW MASCOTS
NOBORU WATAYA
TEA ROOM WAITER
USHIKAWA
LOUNGE SINGER
LIEUTENANT MAMIYA
CORPORAL HONDA
HAMANO
YOUNG LIEUTENANT MAMIYA
YAMAMOTO
RUSSIAN OFFICER
LOUNGE WEIRDOS/DREAM POLICE
HOTEL WORLD REPORTER
ANCHORPERSON
THE MUSICIAN

In the premiere production, these roles were played by fourteen performers.

The piece may be performed with or without an intermission between Acts One and Two.

A NOTE ABOUT THE SET

Our approach to the staging was to create set pieces that would be useful to delineate the different worlds Murakami describes: the waking world, the worlds of dreams, fantasies, memories, and other realms. The designers thoughtfully utilized set pieces, media and technologies, lighting schemes, sound design, music, shadow play, puppetry, and costumes to express the elemental themes of each of these distinct worlds. When we wanted to blur the lines between worlds, having these theatrical devices at our fingertips became invaluable.

Taking cues from Murakami's highly visual style, we integrated a substantial amount of video projections into the production. These appeared on layers of sliding scrims, on a large rear-projection screen, on TV screens, and on various set pieces (such as an aquarium, bed sheets, a refrigerator, etc.).

Taking cues from Murakami's many musical references, we linked specific songs and sounds with recurring themes in the narrative. We also made use of the fact that certain musical references carry different associations in Japan and in the West. For instance, the song "Auld Lang Syne," which is traditionally played on New Year's Eve in the West, is often played over community loudspeakers in Japan to signify the end of the working day and the closing of shops.

One set piece worth noting is a small platform that's reminiscent of a "hanamichi" used in Japanese kabuki theater. Traditionally, the hanamichi is a walkway that runs from the back of the theater, through the audience, up to the stage. It can be used for entrances and exits, or for scenes that are separate from the main action. In our production, we built a miniature hanamichi that was approximately 3' x 5', with raised edges so it could hold a few inches of water. A circular piece of wood that we nicknamed the "lily pad" was placed in the middle. When the Toru Puppet was "at the bottom of the well," he sat on the lily pad. This was also used as a kind of "subconscious looking glass" for times when characters had moments of self-reflection.

THE WIND-UP BIRD CHRONICLE

PRE-SHOW PRELUDE

The lobby of an old hotel. Various hotel staff, waiters, and characters we have not yet met are passing through. The ensemble, in this form, will be referred to as The Dream Police. They generally appear at times of heightened emotion, and can be thought of as shadow versions or “avatars” of the main characters. Each performs a different mundane task. In the center of it all, folding laundry as though suspended between dreams and reality, is Toru Okada. A TV flickers on, showing Toru’s wife, Kumiko Okada. She is partially obscured by static or by other characters. Her unique gestures are seared into Toru’s memory. As the prelude develops, The Dream Police mirror some of her gestures. These will echo throughout the story.

The Musician enters and crosses the stage with a bowl of water and empties it into the hanamichi, pouring new life into this world. Jellyfish and other aquatic images glide across the shoji screens, suggesting we are now in an aquarium. Light isolates a woman in a shimmering white dress. This is Kumiko. She waves to Toru. Everyone waves to Toru. The play officially begins.

Toru reaches into the pile of laundry and picks up a dress that’s identical to the one Kumiko is wearing.

ACT ONE

Scene 1: The Well

A cone of light creates an empty well. A Bunraku Puppet version of Toru sits at the bottom in the hanamichi. As the human Toru runs the sleeve of Kumiko's dress across his cheek, the Puppet mirrors this gesture. Lights fade on the human Toru so we focus on the Puppet.

TORU. (*Voiceover in Japanese with English supertitles.*) The bottom of a well is like the bottom of the sea. Things down here are still, as though everything is held captive by a great pressure. Far above me in the realm of light, people are walking, speaking, touching. I am no longer one of them. At the bottom of a well, there are no seasons. Time is a foreign language. When everything is dark, it's pointless to close your eyes. But I do it anyway. I feel myself sinking into the warm mud. Soon, the shadows come.

Lights fade on the Puppet. We see the shadow of a Hotel Waiter holding a tray with two glasses filled with ice and a bottle of whiskey. He is projected on multiple scrims as he walks down a hotel hallway. His journey is unnerving, disorienting. His footsteps are unnaturally loud. He comes to Hotel Room #208 and knocks a Secret Knock. The door clicks open.

The Waiter enters and pours the whiskey into a glass. The ice crackles loudly. We see the shadow of a woman reach for the glass and take a sip. She moans. A Shadowy Man enters the room and approaches her.

The actual Toru and the Shadowy Man reach forward simultaneously, each in his own world but mirroring the other. A phone rings. It sounds like it's underwater. A clap of thunder.

Scene 2: Telephone Woman Calls

Toru is in his living room in present-day suburban Tokyo. There's not much in it besides a TV and a small aquarium. It's late at night. It's raining. The phone is ringing. It sounds normal now. Toru answers it.

TORU. Hello? (*No response.*) Hello? (*He hears nothing but static on the other end.*) Kumiko? (*Nothing. He hangs up. Outside, he hears a siren, a dog barking. He folds more laundry. There's a scratching sound at the back door. A meow.*) Noboru? Here, kitty kitty! (*He grabs a bag of cat food and shakes it.*) Noboru-chan... Here, kitty! (*The phone rings again. Toru races over and answers it.*) Hello?

TELEPHONE WOMAN. (*Salaciously.*) Ten minutes please.

TORU. Sorry?

TELEPHONE WOMAN. Ten minutes. That's all we need to understand each other.

TORU. Who is this?

TELEPHONE WOMAN. Oh, we know each other *very* well, Toru Okada.

TORU. What can I do for you?

TELEPHONE WOMAN. (*Giggles.*) Hm...how about I do something for *you*—something your wife would never do.

TORU. You know my wife?

TELEPHONE WOMAN. You want me naked, don't you?

TORU. What??

TELEPHONE WOMAN. I can be naked or I can dress up. Like a school girl or whatever you want. Would you like that? Pigtails bouncing around? A little plaid skirt that you can reach underneath and feel my warm—

TORU. —Look, I'm cooking spaghetti, I don't have time to—

TELEPHONE WOMAN. —Spaghetti? At this time of night?

TORU. I can't sleep.

TELEPHONE WOMAN. Mmm...pussy on the brain?

TORU. Excuse me?

TELEPHONE WOMAN. Your cat. Still missing, right?

TORU. Who *are* you?

TELEPHONE WOMAN. Just picture me. I'm unzipping you. My lips are nice and wet...oooh (*Giggling.*) I can see how much you like that... (*Whispering.*) Let me touch it...

TORU. My wife's about to call.

TELEPHONE WOMAN. Oh just go cook your fucking spaghetti.

She hangs up, leaving Toru baffled. He dials a number. After a few rings, we hear an outgoing message.

KUMIKO. (*In Japanese.*) Hi, you've reached Kumiko Okada. Please leave a message, and I'll get back to you shortly. Thanks for calling! (*Beep.*)

Toru waits a few beats, then hangs up. He folds more laundry. He holds up Kumiko's dress, losing himself in memory. The intercom buzzes, breaking his trance. He drops the dress.

Scene 3: Creta Kano Enters

TORU. (*Over the intercom.*) Hello?

The intercom is malfunctioning. Toru can only hear fragments of a woman's voice.

CRETA. (*Over the intercom.*) ...evening...home of Toru Okada?

TORU. This is Toru Okada.

CRETA. ...name...Creta Kano...wife...missing cat...

TORU. Is this about Kumiko?

CRETA. ...asked me...come here...

TORU. Please come in.

Toru buzzes her in. The shoji screens part and Creta Kano floats in as her theme music plays. She wears a red vinyl hat. She removes her high-heeled shoes, and hands Toru her retro rain slicker, revealing a pastel business suit circa 1960.

CRETA. My name is Creta Kano. I hope I have come at a convenient time.

TORU. Midnight?

CRETA. Forgive me. These are the only hours I have to attend to matters of a personal nature.

Creta walks around the home, assessing her surroundings with an air of professional expertise.

TORU. I'm sorry, why did you say you've come?

CRETA. For a discussion concerning Noboru Wataya.

TORU. I'm not really on speaking terms with my brother-in-law.

CRETA. Not your brother-in-law. Your cat.

TORU. You found my cat?

CRETA. The cat remains at large. Your wife is extremely concerned.

TORU. So you've talked with Kumiko—when?

CRETA. Several days ago.

She pulls off her elbow-length gloves and presents her name card.

TORU. No phone number?

CRETA. Forgive me but I am the one who makes the telephone calls. Creta is not my real name, of course. Have you ever been to the island of Crete?

TORU. No.

CRETA. The wind is strong there and the honey is sweet. I love honey.

TORU. How long have you and Kumiko known each other?

CRETA. We met through a mutual acquaintance when she was first in need of my services.

TORU. I'm sorry, what is it you do?

CRETA. Oh. Many things.

TORU. I mean, what's your profession?

CRETA. I help people purify the elements of their bodies.

TORU. You what?

CRETA. I also help people locate things. Missing things. The police seek my assistance on occasion.

THE WIND-UP BIRD CHRONICLE

based on the novel by Haruki Murakami
conceived by Stephen Earnhart

written by Greg Pierce and Stephen Earnhart

8 men, 6 women (doubling, flexible casting)

At once a detective story, an account of a disintegrating marriage, and an excavation of buried secrets from World War II, this surreal mystery follows an unassuming “everyman,” Toru, as he searches for his wife who’s inexplicably disappeared. Toru soon encounters a cast of strange characters, each with their own intriguing stories, who begin showing up in his dreams, opening doors to a hallucinatory world charged with sexuality and violence. As the lines between dreams and reality dissolve, Toru must confront the dark forces that exist inside him as part of his human nature.

“Odd, mad, surreal... [with] beauty and emotional honesty beneath its weirdness.”
—**The Times (London)**

“Wondrous...and poignantly memorable in all sorts of unexpected ways.”
—**The Economist (London)**

“Does a tremendous job of creating a genuinely theatrical experience from a complex work of literature... has the heightened intensity of something by David Lynch.”
—**Variety**

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ISBN 978-0-8222-3811-9



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