

EIJI KUSUHARA

Born in Tokyo 1947,
Height : 5ft 7in
Eye Colour : Dark Brown
Age band normally cast : 40 - 70years
Equity member

SKILLS

Voice Over / TV Presenter
Languages : Japanese (mother tongue), English
Accent : Japanese, Chinese and general Far East



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いま紐解く楠原映二のエッセンス Vol.1
「かいつまんで、エイジ・クスハラ」
To Comprehensively Summarize Eiji Kusuhara

5pm-8pm 17th April 2016 at BankART Studio NYK 2F / Library

ゲスト=巻上公一、奥宮誠次、高泉淳子 司会=永関ひろき

主催：Eiji Kusuhara Foundation

Obituaries

Eiji Kusahara

Beguiling Japanese star of fringe theatre and popular television

The Japanese actor Eiji Kusahara, who has died of cancer aged 63, played the sadistic Lieutenant Sato in the television series Tenko (1981-85), was one of the narrators on the cult show Banzai (2001) and appeared on stages across the UK and Europe in a variety of beguiling roles. He was one of the first professional Japanese actors active in London in the 1970s and enjoyed something of a monopoly on roles until he starred alongside a fellow countryman, Togo Igawa, in *The Man Who Shot Christmas* (1984). Eiji spent most of his adult life in Britain. He always seemed relieved to have left his home country but was also perplexed by British culture. A natural comedian, he thought he was a misfit and constructed an endlessly playful persona for himself.

He was born in Tokyo shortly after the second world war, a time when poor provisions and facilities meant that many babies died. Eiji was one of four children born to Ryoichi and Yasuko Kusahara. Their first son died at three days old. Eiji was a weak, sickly baby and his parents waited to see if he would survive before they registered his birth. When Eiji was nine, his sister, Ikue, was part of a teenage suicide pact with her boyfriend.

Eiji was brought up in Hokkaido, where his father had a jewellery shop. He went to Iwamizawa East high school in Hokkaido before going on to study acting at Tama Art University in Tokyo. After graduation, he was a member of the Neo Literature Theatre company and then joined the Tokyo Kid Brothers. This company, formed by Yutaka Higashii in 1968, was part of the underground theatre movement and the style of rock music used in its shows was profoundly anti-establishment.

1st met Eiji in 1972 when the Kid

Brothers brought their show *The Moon Is East, the Sun Is West* to London. The show appropriated western music culture with a maniacal energy and felt both familiar yet utterly strange. It was based on a 16th-century Chinese adventure story about a monk travelling to India looking for enlightenment. The show opened at the Oval House theatre in Kennington, then moved to the Royal Court and the Hampstead theatre.

Eiji subsequently joined Stomu Yamashta's Red Buddha Theatre for *The Man from the East*, a physical theatre show depicting episodes from

Japanese life, ancient and modern, real and fantastic, with accompaniment from Yamashta and an ensemble playing electronic and traditional instruments. This popular show originated in Paris, played for a month at the Roundhouse in London, then toured Europe and the US.

In 1975 Eiji returned to Britain and joined my avant-garde theatre group, Lumiere & Son. He appeared in *The Sleeping Quarters of Sophia*, a play about split personalities, and delivered a succession of disciplined but eccentric performances for the company over

the next 10 years. He was serious and focused in rehearsal, yet could be constructively unpredictable in performance. In *Dogs* (1976), Eiji played Edgar, a hapless immigrant entrapped by a murderous couple who are in thrall to Sadean aristocrats. The part required a comic but cowed quality that contrasted strongly with the violence Eiji summoned in *Indications Leading to ...* (1975), a tale of detection in which the detectives enacted the roles of both perpetrator and prosecutor.

In 1977, he was in the Royal Shakespeare Company's production of

Privates On Parade by Peter Nichols, playing a spying communist servant. He worked for several other companies, including Oxford Playhouse, Bristol Old Vic, Yellow Earth, Polka Theatre and Amazonia, and was one of the founder members of Ichiza Theatre Company. His last stage performance was in 2007, in Hisashi Inoue's comedy masterpiece of Japanese postwar drama, *The Face of Jizo*, at the Arcola in east London. The play comprised conversations between a young woman who survived the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and the ghost of her father. The play shows the daughter's anguish that she survived but her father did not.

On television Eiji appeared in *Doctor Who*, *Inspector Morse* and in 17 episodes of the much-praised BBC series *Tenko*. Set in 1942 in an internment camp on a Japanese-occupied island, *Tenko* dramatised the experiences of British, Australian and Dutch women captured after the fall of Singapore.

During the 1990s, Eiji was a regular presenter on two Japanese TV programmes, *Hello London* and *Living in England*, in which his idiosyncratic, comic personality was given free rein. He had vast experience as a voiceover artist in both Japanese and English in film, TV, commercials and radio. He was the voice of the evil genius Dr Kamikazi in the animated TV series *Robotboy* and was particularly well known for his wild co-narration in the cult TV classic, *Banzai*, which invited viewers to place their bets on bizarre challenges, such as how long Mr Shake Hands Man would maintain a handshake with a procession of bemused celebrities. Eiji's enthusiastic commentary highlighted the programme's wackiness.

His film credits included small roles in *The Elephant Man*, *Eyes Wide Shut* and *Topsy-Turvy*, as well as many student films in which he appeared without taking a fee.

He is survived by his wife, the designer Kyoko Wainai, whom he married in 1992, and his brother, Yuji.

Hilary Westlake

Eiji Kusahara, actor, born 2 January 1947; died 23 April 2010



Kusahara in *Tenko*. He played the sadistic Lieutenant Sato in the popular 1980s BBC series Photograph: BBC

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Opening イベント

2016年4月17日[日] 17時~20時

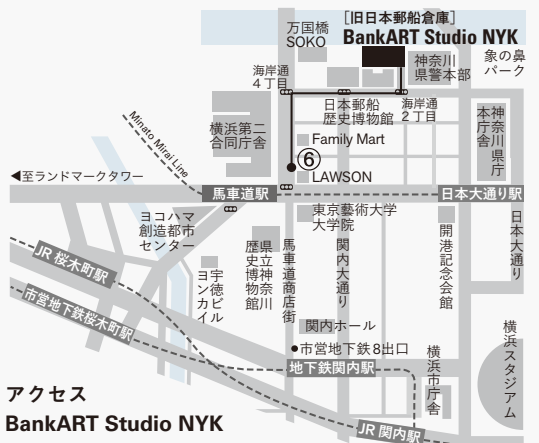
会場 = BankART Studio NYK 2階 / ライブラリー 料金 = 1,000円(お土産付き)

ゲスト = 巻上公一、奥宮誠次、高泉淳子 司会 = 永関ひろき

2010年4月23日、英国ベースで活躍していた日本人俳優楠原エイジが63年の人生に幕をおろしました。2016年4月17日、生誕70周年を迎える来年に向け、「日本人」役を演じきった彼の仕事をフィルムなどを通じてシリーズで検証していきたいと思います。これによって、日本人が自らの殻をやぶって世界に飛び出していくヒントになることを目指しています。オープニングとなるVol.1は、楠原の東京キッドブラザース時代から最期に至るまでを知る巻上公一氏と、サイモン・マクバーニーの劇団、コンプリシテの中で英国の舞台を経験している高泉淳子氏、遺影の予告ともとれるコタツの楠原エイジの撮影をした写真家奥宮誠治氏。この3方の作品、パフォーマンス、トークを交えて楠原エイジのエッセンスの紐解きを始めていきます。

【今後の予定】 Vol.2「恐れるな、これでいいのだ こだわりのジャパニーズイングリッシュ」、Vol.3「楠原映二を探せ! -血流し男からCEOまで」、Vol.4「メガネの顔」、Vol.5 楠原映二演出「My name is Ken」アシザワレオ

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