



My Friend Hitler

By Yukio Mishima

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Though best known for his novels, Yukio Mishima published more than sixty plays, almost all of which were produced during his lifetime. Among them are kabuki plays and others inspired by No dramas?two types used in classical Japanese theater. Of play-writing Mishima once observed, "I started writing dramas just as water flows toward a lower place. In me, the topography of dramas seems to be situated far below that of novels. It seems to be in a place which is more instinctive, closer to child's play." For English readers, these plays have been one of Japan's best-kept secrets?until now.

In this anthology, Hiroaki Sato translates the brilliance and richness of Yukio Mishima's writing into the English language. He has selected five major plays and three essays on dramaturgy, providing informative introductions to guide the reader. Sato's translations offer a broad historical and personal context in which those new to Mishima's work can place his writing. For those more familiar with Mishima, these translations offer another medium in which one can access his ingenious work.

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Editorial Review

From Library Journal

Mishima's brilliant plays are unknown outside Japan, something this scholarly yet fluid English-language anthology attempts to change. The five later plays and three dramatic essays include scholarly introductions and footnotes by Sato to help readers decipher the content. Mishima's complex and well-plotted plays are drawn from various sources, but all show his idealism and loyalty to the old Japan, and the common theme of premeditated ritual in four of the five pieces seems to foretell the author's 1970 public suicide. "The Rokumenkan" shows Japan's schizophrenic split between Westernization and nationalism. In "The Decline and Fall of Suzaku," Mishima laments Japan's defeat in World War II. "The Leper King" is based upon the Cambodian legend of Jayavarman VII. "The Wonder Tale: Kabuki" tells the heroics of 12th-century Japanese warrior, Tametomo. Finally, the title piece reveals Mishima's fascination with Hitler's political "genius." In addition, the dramatic essays and a lecture given at the National Theatre demonstrate his theatrical knowledge and passion for kabuki. Recommended for academic and large public libraries.

Ming-ming Shen Kuo, Ball State Univ., Muncie, IN

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From [Booklist](#)

Although best-known as a novelist, Mishima was a prolific playwright who fused centuries-old Japanese theatrical traditions with modern Western sensibilities. This volume contains six plays and several essays on the theater. The most striking example of his synthesis of old and new is *A Wonder Tale*, a very cinematic adaptation of another writer's story, cast in classical Kabuki style for a theater school aiming to revive a then-dying form; Mishima was the first prominent Japanese playwright in decades to compose a Kabuki play. Mishima is as comfortable with the Western genres of tragic, historical, and naturalistic domestic drama. *The Rokumeikan* takes a minor nineteenth-century diplomatic incident, in which Japan first asserted its power internationally, and transforms it into a Sophoclean tragedy. *The Decline and Fall of the Suzaku* chronicles in four beautiful acts Japan's agonies just before and after defeat in 1945. *My Friend Hitler*, an intense re-creation of Hitler's cold-blooded 1934 purge of Ernst Roehm and other S.A. leaders, also speaks volumes about imperial Japan's uneasy relationship with the Nazis. *Jack Helbig*

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(Rafu Shimpo)

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