

Missing People: Introduction

Welcome to this introduction to the streamed performance of **Missing People** by Brad Birch. It's been directed for Leeds Playhouse by Mark Rosenblatt and Kani Public Arts Center Associate Director Nobuhiro Nishikawa. **Missing People** is the first co-production between Leeds Playhouse and Kani Public Arts Center in Japan. This performance was filmed live at the Kani Public Arts Center on the 26th February 2020.

Missing People is played in Japanese and English. Japanese and English subtitles are used throughout, translating the language being spoken in each scene. The Japanese subtitles will be read as part of the audio description. Your describer is Roz Chalmers.

The story is set in the present day in the coastal city of Nagoya in Japan. The action takes place in the home of the Nakamura family, and in locations around the city.

The set is a representation of both the home and the city. The most striking feature is the constant presence of four giant four-sided wooden beams. Each is about eight metres long and half a metre wide. The wood is a pale brown and the sides facing us have an inset screen of fine black net. Images are projected onto these screens, taking us to the different locations visited by the characters. They will be described as they appear. In addition, Japanese subtitles appear on them in white during scenes that are played in English. Two of the beams are vertical and slide from left to right. The other two are horizontal and rise up and down, sometimes resting on the floor so that people can use them as a seat, sometimes hanging suspended on black steel rods at different heights in front of or behind the vertical beams. When they're not being used for projections, there's an image of woodgrain on three screens and one of a fine wooden latticework on the right-hand vertical beam.

The Nakamura's living room is suggested by a two-seater sofa set on a floor of large, light brown tiles. The sofa faces us, covered by a beige throw patterned with trailing foliage and

pale orange flowers. A blonde-wood dining chair stands against the left-hand vertical beam. To the far left of the space is a small carved and lacquered dark-wood cabinet. This is the family's butsudan, a Buddhist shrine. Inside it is a little brass bowl that is struck to give a bell-like tone. There's also a glass of water, some blue and white flowers in a vase and an incense burner. Black and white framed photographs of long-dead relatives stand behind the ritual items.

Other pieces of furniture are brought in. When the family eats, two low dark wood tables are placed in front of the sofa for serving food, a rectangular one and a small round one. A light grey zaisu – a traditional Japanese chair with a back but no legs – sits on the floor at the right-hand end of the rectangular table. There's a piece of cloth hanging over the back in the same floral fabric as the sofa throw.

A light-wood single bed with a pink and white quilt is set side on to us to indicate a bedroom. The light dims on the rest of the space to isolate it. A study is indicated by a plain square table on the right with the dining chair pulled up to it. The

table is strewn with papers and on the horizontal beam above is a projection of a shelf of books and folders in different colours

There are eight characters.

Sakiko Nakamura is a Japanese woman in her late twenties. Resident in the UK, she's visiting her family after many years. Sakiko has a clear-complexioned face with dark eyes and carefully plucked brows. She wears pale pink lipstick. Her mouth is often tight and anxious and her body is tense. She wears her glossy black hair straight and flowing to her shoulders. Sakiko arrives back in Japan dressed in a pink hoody over a white T-shirt. Her jeans are light blue. Later she changes into a straight long-sleeved dress with a swirling scarlet and black pattern. Sakiko wears black tights, and pads around her parents' house without shoes.

She's travelling with her fiancé, **Dan Hughes**. He's a tall, well-built man of around the same age. Dan wears large brown-framed glasses and his reddish-brown hair is cut short with a

little tuft at his brow. There's a light stubble at his chin and upper lip. He wears a navy-blue windcheater over a pale blue shirt and charcoal grey trousers. Dan has a pleasant, friendly expression and is keen to do the right thing, bending his tall frame into a polite bow to greet his prospective in-laws. He too follows the custom of not wearing shoes in the house. Dan speaks with a Yorkshire accent.

His mother, **Linda** accompanies them. Like Dan, she speaks in a Yorkshire accent. She's in her sixties and petite, her head only reaching her son's chest. Linda has dyed auburn hair cut with a short fringe and hanging loose to her shoulders. She is carefully made up with dark eyeliner and red-brown lipstick. Her nose is slightly aquiline and her mouth is curved into a polite but uncomprehending smile when listening to people speak Japanese around her. Linda is dressed in an orange buttoned cardigan and black trousers when she arrives off the plane. She changes into a dark green woollen jacket over a black blouse, black knee-length skirt and black tights with no shoes. Linda wears a gold pendant shaped in a square standing on one end with a black stone in the centre.

Sakiko's mother **Chiyo** greets them at the house. She's in her sixties, a neat, restrained little woman with her black hair set into soft waves around a sweet face with a bright, welcoming smile. She wears discreet pale pink lipstick. Chiyo dresses in a yellow scoop neck top with a pattern of darker yellow flowers and cream trousers with white socks. At meal times she kneels on a cushion on the floor to serve food and to eat. She occupies herself with housewifely duties and tending her garden. There's a guardedness about Chiyo and she sometimes finds it difficult to meet people's eyes.

Her husband **Masaru** is a gruff man, a little older than his wife. His grey hair is short and thinning a little on top, and his eyebrows are thick, over fierce eyes. He has a short bristly moustache. Masaru dresses in a brown cardigan over a white open necked shirt and grey trousers. He seats himself at the head of the table in the low zaisu chair. Masaru is not in good health. When he moves it's often with a laboured shuffling gait.

A young man visits the family. He is **Koji Saito**, a colleague of Sakiko's elder brother, **Hiroki**. Koji is slightly built, his black hair parted and brushed over in a thick fringe. His face is smooth and youthful, his brown eyes earnest. He's immaculate in a grey suit with a grey and white striped shirt and navy and grey striped tie and carries a briefcase. Koji has a silver lapel badge as a symbol of his status as a lawyer.

On a visit to a Shinto shrine Linda meets a friendly young Japanese man, **Genki**. Genki's face is wreathed in smiles as he communicates in a mixture of rudimentary English, signs and gestures and sheer persistence. He wears a green baseball cap with the interlocked N and Y logo of the New York Yankees. His bomber jacket is light blue worn with the sleeves rolled up to the elbows over a black and white check shirt. His trousers are black, worn with white trainers.

Finally we meet **Yasuko**. She is Sakiko's sister-in-law, and in her early thirties. Yasuko's black hair is pulled back tightly from her high forehead and held with a claw clip. Her eyebrows are sharply arched over her brown eyes and her

mouth is pursed. Tiny pearl earrings hang at her ears. Yasuko holds herself stiffly, her brow creased. She wears a beige mac over a white shirt and cream trousers. She is constantly interrupted by her mobile phone, responding to it tersely.

Cast and production credits

Sakiko Nakamura is played by Susan Momoko Hingley

Her fiancé Dan Hughes by Simon Darwen

His mother Linda by Ishia Bennison

Sakiko's father, Masaru Nakamura is played by Yutaka Oda

Her mother Chiyo by Natsumi Nanase

Her brother's colleague, Koji Saito and a young man, Genki, are played by Hiroki Tanaka

Sakiko's sister-in law Yasuko is played by Yuri Eikawa

Set designer, Rumi Matsui

Costume designer, Rie Nishihara

Lighting designer, Elliot Griggs

Sound designer, Matt Padden

Movement by Sachi Kimura

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Nobuhiro Nishikawa