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FESTIVAL & FRINGE
Water city splashes out
By SUSAN ARCHDALL

ACCLAIMED Japanese director Yukichi Matsumoto has arrived in Adelaide with the final 42 members of his 66-strong theatre company, **Ishinha**.

The company, which is performing Mizumachi: Once Upon a Time in Osaka, flew in from Japan on Sunday morning.

Matsumoto who established **Ishinha** 30 years ago has written, directed and helped design Mizumachi .

It will be Osaka-based **Ishinha**'s first overseas performance.

Speaking through an interpreter yesterday, Matsumoto said: "In one sense I am looking forward to it, in another I feel a little worried how it's going to turn out.

"It has been difficult (to tour) as you see we construct a rather huge theatre space.

Also the cast and crew amount to quite a large number."

The company's performances are characterised by huge outdoor sets which look like a complete town.

There are 41 actors and 15 crew in Adelaide for the production.

The actors speak in an original language Jan Jan Opera which Matsumoto himself developed in about 1985.

They are Japanese words but comprise nouns without the linkage words which would normally form a sentence.

Jan Jan is named after a street in Osaka and was inspired by a fashionable Japanese advertising method chin-don ya, where bands walk around with instruments and placards to advertise a particular store. Matsumoto adopted the bands' image and rhythm to make Jan Jan Opera.

"It's not a direct relationship with the advertising band," he said.

The 53-year-old majored in fine arts at college before becoming a performance artist.

In the early 1970s he became involved in a performance art movement which produced happenings or spontaneous performance.

The artists would either perform on the street or set up a tent in the middle of town for whoever passed by.

"The performance work was more a kind of free expression," he said.

Matsumoto started to build smaller scales of the elaborate set constructions he now builds during the mid-1970s.

His translator, Dr Junko Sakaba, said yesterday: "The leading (Japanese) critics recently recognised the quality of work Matsumoto has been doing in the past 30 years, which is unprecedented in the whole of Japan."