

This is the Audio Introduction for the 2025 Royal Shakespeare Company & Good Chance co-production of *Kyoto*.

Directed by Stephen Daldry & Justin Martin and written by Joe Murphy & Joe Robertson, *Kyoto* is a thrilling political drama, following the negotiation, lobbying and brinksmanship over the 10 years leading up to the final, climactic events of the COP3 climate conference in Japan in 1997.

The performance lasts for 2 hours 50 minutes including a twenty minute interval. This production contains explicit language, cigarette smoking, flashing lights, loud music and haze.

*Kyoto* will be audio described by Gethyn Edwards and Ess Grange.

This production seeks to place the audience right at the heart of the climate negotiations. Audience members are offered lanyards as they enter, as if they were delegates at the COP3 conference, and Miriam Buether's set design transforms Soho Place's normally in-the-round auditorium into a thrust set-up, with some audience members in the upper gallery looking down on the action from above a 'rear' wall. The entire thrust portion of the stage is a huge, circular conference table. Roughly twenty feet across, a broad ring of glossy dark wooden tabletop encloses a large, slightly lower circle of green-carpeted stage at its centre. The main theatre floor is also laid with this same short-pile, green carpet and the front rows of seating have been removed and replaced with free-standing meeting-room chairs, with plenty of space for characters to move around at audience level. Several audience members are actually seated at the

conference table itself, right alongside the characters in the play.

A substantial wooden desk for the conference chairman and president is situated centrally on the rear of the circular stage, and is curved to follow the contours of the conference table. This desk can be split in two and the halves repositioned to the left and right as required.

Suspended high above the centre of the stage, a cluster of lights is enclosed by a deep circular housing, panelled in similar wood to the table. Long strips of white LEDs are set discretely into the auditorium's pillars and all around the lip of the conference table, blazing intensely at key moments.

Beyond the stage is a dark void, separated from us by a high, broad wall of black mesh. Its multi-panelled, framed, construction evokes Japanese paper screen walls, bland hotel blocks and industrial windows. When lit from behind, this framework presents a silhouette reminiscent of oil pipelines, with taps jutting out at regular intervals.

The mesh wall doesn't simply divide the space, it also functions as a giant video screen displaying a wall of both still and moving images throughout the play. It shows us stylised photos of the actual Kyoto convention hall; city skylines; archive film of politicians; video feeds of characters speaking live on camera; blossoming cherry trees; cool 90s-style corporate powerpoint presentations; and even the text of key negotiating points - with specific words and punctuation highlighted and retyped as they're wrestled over by the delegates.

At times, characters appear beyond the mesh wall, silhouetted through it as they give a press conference or perform Shakespeare in a rain forest.

Entrance to the centre rear of the stage is from a double-door-sized opening in the mesh wall. Characters can also climb onto the raised conference table via two sets of steps, one front-right and one front-left of the stage. These are carpeted in the same green pile, and lead off diagonally via low walkways through the audience.

Eight black LCD panels are fixed, four to each side, at the height of the lower gallery and display various pieces of text during the play, the information often scrolling continuously from screen to screen around the room. At various times the screens display flight itineraries; locations, dates and carbon footprint data as these facts are mentioned; and indicate the names and acronyms of the different voting blocs seated around the conference table.

Each delegate position at the conference table has a black gooseneck microphone unit plus a headset for listening to their interpreters. Delegates also have a large, laminated, white label with their country's name on in block type, referred to as "Flags". These slot into a wooden block, set on the table in front of them, so they're easy to remove and hold up when delegates wish to speak during the conferences.

Spiral-bound printouts of numerous resolutions and proposals are regularly distributed; scientists make presentations on flipcharts; delegates carry briefcases, clipboards and corner-stapled documents and snatch drinks of water from conical paper cups.

Given that we're in the 90s, photographs are taken with actual cameras rather than phones; laptops are blocky, grey slabs; and mobiles are chunky, black, push-button Nokias, kept in pockets or worn in plastic belt-holsters.

Characters roam the set freely, standing both on the surface of the wooden tabletop and on the stage's central, carpeted circle. They sit behind and perch on the front edge of the chairman's desk, as well as seating themselves at the conference table and milling from place to place at audience level within the auditorium, coming and going from the back as well as both sides of the set. Two water coolers are situated at the left and right aisles, near the front rows of the audience and delegates often huddle round them in quiet conversation.

Kyoto is performed by a diverse, 20-strong company.

The story is primarily narrated to us by **Don Pearlman**, the lawyer hired by a cabal of oil companies to obstruct climate negotiations. Don - played by Steven Kunken - is a tall, lean and energetic man in his fifties with pale skin and dark brown hair cut in a neat short back and sides, and swept into a side parting on top. His face is angular and his brown eyes keen and alert behind square-framed glasses. Don wears a black single breasted suit with white shirt and blue tie. A chunky chrome watch glints on one wrist, and his black leather shoes are well polished. He wears a tuxedo with black bow tie for a gala, or a smart tailored camel overcoat for outdoors events.

Don is often accompanied by his loyal wife **Shirley**, played by Jenna Augen. Her friendly face lights up when she meets new people or encounters something intriguing about the country

she's visiting. She looks at Don with great love in her eyes. She has pale skin and shoulder length dark brown hair with a wave to it - often backcombed for volume, pinned up for gala events, or falling loose for more relaxed tourist outings. Shirley's outfit changes frequently, moving from sparkling, figure-hugging purple sequins for a presidential inaugural ball, to shoulder-padded late-80s skirt suits, and more relaxed frocks, favouring pastel colours and floral designs.

Among the many people Don and Shirley meet on their travels, is **Raul Estrada-Oyuela**, played by Jorge Bosch. Flamboyant and larger than life, Raul is an Argentinian lawyer and diplomat. He has salt-and pepper hair cut neat and worn in a side parting, and lightly tanned skin. A greying moustache bristles on his top lip, and his dark brown eyes glitter with good humour and sometimes passionate challenge if he senses someone isn't playing fair. He is dapper, wearing a dark grey suit with a white-collar-and-cuffs, white pocket square, and a pale blue shirt. His tie is a floral pattern in dark blues and greens and he also appears in a colourful, traditionally embroidered waistcoat, worn over his shirt. His reading glasses hang round his neck on a cord and he wears a wrist watch with black leather strap.

Much of Don's negotiations include the US diplomat **Sue**, played by Nancy Crane. She is a white woman in her late fifties, who charges round the stage with great energy. Her hair is strawberry blonde with grey, and is cut in a jaw length bob styled for volume. Red lipstick highlights her determined mouth and matching red nail varnish accentuates her gestures. She wears dark blue slacks with a white blouse and bright red power-jacket. Sue has chunky gold earrings, a slim gold watch, and gold necklace, and - of course - a small American flag

pinned to her lapel. She carries a large black handbag, often rummaging in it for the latest agreements or documents.

Another conference regular is **Professor Fred Singer**, played by Duncan Wisbey. Fred is an Austrian-American environmental scientist and climate-change sceptic. Fred is a vigorous white man in his sixties with short, scruffy white hair and an Austrian accent. He charges through scenes with great energy and is often curt, and even at times openly mocking of other characters. He wears a navy blazer with grey slacks and a lilac shirt with a cowboy-style black, shoelace tie.

**Dr Ben Santer** is another climate scientist, leading the effort to prove the cause of climate change. Played by Dale Rapley, he is in his fifties with pale skin, his salt and pepper hair in a side parting, he wears a brown tweed jacket, red knitted sweater and black trousers.

Also played by Dale Rapley, **Bert Bolin** is the Swedish chairman of the first few rounds of climate talks. He wears a grey jacket, light blue shirt unbuttoned at the collar and black trousers, peering over his reading glasses at the circle of delegates, his upper lip sporting a grey moustache. The actor later plays **Al Gore**, in dark blue suit and bright red tie.

**Saudi Arabia's** delegate, **Al Sabban**, is played by Raad Rawi. Al Sabban watches proceedings like a hawk and consulting closely with Don at all times. He is in his seventies with lightly tanned skin, slender and imposing in a black suit with Nehru collar, and a traditional white *keffiyeh* headscarf, held in place with a black cord hanging in tassels at the back.

**Germany**, played by Kristin Atherton, is represented by a white woman in her forties, with a layered jaw-length brown bob, red glasses and dark green power suit.

Kristin also plays **Angela Merkel**, in a bright blue blazer, her hair in Merkel's trademark bowl-cut bob.

**The UK's** delegate is performed by Ferdy Roberts. Heavy faced with pale skin, he has jaw length greying hair, slicked back on top then hanging loose, his greying beard giving a grizzled appearance. He wears a grey pinstripe suit, pale blue shirt and blue tie. Later, Roberts plays **John Prescott**, in a grey suit and a red tie, squinting and scowling at his debating partners, with an exaggerated paunch and a pugnacious authority.

The delegate for the nation of **Kiribati** [Kiri-bass], played by Andrea Gatchalian, is a young woman of micronesian heritage. Petite and delicate of features with light tan skin, she is nonetheless serious, grounded and defiant. She wears a white floral blouse, dark burgundy knee-length skirt and flat court shoes. Small gold earrings dangle at her ears, her long dark brown hair neatly plaited into a bun with a pink orchid flower holding it in place.

**Tanzania's** delegate, later **Professor Mwandiyosa**, is played by **Aïcha Kossoko**. Mwandiyosa is a woman in her early sixties with mid-brown skin, wearing a grey trouser suit, a pink blouse, and neat, dark grey shoes with a low heel. Her silver and black hair is styled in thin braids, neatly swept back in a thick plait pinned up on the back of her head. She watches the other characters keenly from behind silver wire-frame spectacles, and often displays a wry smile at the sometimes-chaotic proceedings.

**Japan's** delegate, later conference president and environmental minister **Hiroshi Ohki**. Played by Togo Igawa, he is a Japanese man in his late sixties with white hair in a tidy side parting and pale skin. He wears a classic dark blue pinstripe suit with white shirt and red, delicately patterned, silk tie. He has a small Japanese flag pinned to his lapel, and wears glasses with 60's style square frames.

China's delegate, **Professor Shukong Zhong**, is performed by Kwong Loke. Zhong is a wiry man in his sixties who moves with rapid, direct energy. He wears a grey suit, white shirt and light grey tie, his grey hair in a side parting and his skin light tan.

The many conferences are helped along by **Jo**, the **Secretariat**, performed by Olivia Barrowclough. Jo is a young woman with pale skin and blonde hair in French plaits who wears a neat grey skirt suit and white blouse. She moves through the space efficiently, handing out the many documents required, and assisting the Chairman with the administration of the conference.

Off-Stage Cover for this production is provided by **Mark Hammersley, Sibylla Meienberg, Alvaro Flores, Karen Barredo, Jeffery Chekai** and **Moe Idris**.

Outside of the conferences, Don occasionally meets with a sinister cabal of oil company representatives. Dressed in long black overcoats, with black leather gloves and scarves, these figures emerge from the shadows behind Don, their mild, pleasant smiles masking a palpable sense of threat.



Kyoto was written by Joe Murphy and Joe Robertson

It was directed by Stephen Daldry and Justin Martin

Set designer is Miriam Buether

Costume design is by Natalie Pryce

Lighting Designer is Aideen Malone

The sound designer is Christopher Reid

Video designer is Akhila Krishnan

The composer is Paul Englishby

And the Associate Director is Jane Moriarty