

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**THE GRAND KABUKI THEATER OF JAPAN,
PERFORMS THE EPIC LOVE STORY *SONEZAKI SHINJU* AND A COMIC SHORT,
BOSHIBARI, AT CAL PERFORMANCES FRIDAY & SATURDAY, JUNE 17 & JUNE 18**

**THE BEAUTY AND SPECTACLE OF ONE OF THE WORLD'S MOST PROFOUND
ARTFORMS TRANSPORT AUDIENCES BACK TO 18TH CENTURY JAPAN**

**LECTURE/DEMONSTRATION: Japan's Living National Treasure Nakamura Ganjiro III
discusses Kabuki's history and techniques, Wednesday, June 15 at 6:30 p.m. in Hertz Hall**

BERKELEY, May 10, 2005 – Transforming the stage of Zellerbach Hall into a Kabuki theater, including full-scale sets, costumes and a specially constructed *hanamichi* bridge that extends into the audience, the **Shochiku Grand Kabuki – Chikamatsu-za** returns the Bay Area following a nine year absence **June 17 & 18** at Cal Performances. Kabuki, literally meaning song-dance-artistry where every gesture and note is created for maximum exploration of human passions and flaws, is one of the world's oldest, continuously performed styles of theater. The program of the all-male Chikamatsu troupe includes the tragic love story *Sonezaki Shinju* (“The Love Suicides at Sonezaki”), written by the company's namesake playwright **Chikamatsu Monzaemon**. *Boshihari* (“Tied to a Pole”), a short musical play, will also be performed. The 75-member company, which includes 22 musicians playing a variety of drums, flutes, and three-stringed plucked instruments called *shamisen*, is led by founder and actor **Nakamura Ganjiro III**. Designated a Living National Treasure in Japan, he has played the leading female role in *Sonezaki Shinju* for over 50 years. The Cal Performances appearance marks the only Northern California engagement of the company.

A free **lecture/demonstration** will be given by **Nakamura Ganjiro III** on Kabuki's history, followed by the transformation of one of the company artists into a Kabuki heroine through the application of full traditional make-up and costume, **Wednesday, June 15 at 6:30 – 8:00 p.m.** in Hertz Hall.

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PROGRAM

Shochiku Grand Kabuki – Chikamatsu-za performs two very different styles of plays: one is from the *sewamono* repertioire and the other is a *kyôgen* dance play. In the 18th century, many plays were generated from actual crimes, scandals and suicides. These stories were embellished and dramatized for the Kabuki theater—similar to “ripped-from-the-headlines” dramas currently popular in films and television. *Sonezaki Shinju* (“The Love Suicides at Sonezaki”), a full-length play written in 1703 by **Chikamatsu Monzaemon**, is from the *sewamono* repertioire. Inspired by a double suicide in Osaka, the play tells the ill-fated story of a young man of limited means and a courtesan. *Sonezaki Shinju*, his most beloved play, is written in verse, expressing the lovers' devotion to each other and desperate hopes to be reborn together. The story has been restaged frequently over the last 300 years. Chikamatsu Monzaemon is considered Japan’s greatest playwright and most is frequently compared to Shakespeare. Like Shakespeare’s plays, *sewamono* works were performed for the masses. The *hanamich* bridge, constructed specifically for Zellerbach Hall, is used by the actors making entrances and exits.

Boshihari (“Tied to a Pole”), written in 1916 by **Okamura Shikô**, is one of the most popular plays in the *kyôgen* repertory—short, farcical stories typically presented with longer, more serious works. The *kyôgen* repertory is older than Kabuki, dating back to the 1300s, and was usually performed for the ruling samurai class. *Boshihari* tells the story of two servants who are tied up by their master to prevent them from stealing sake while he is out of the house on business. Determined to outwit their master, the characters cleverly find a way to drink sake even while bound together by ropes—the more they drink, the more they sing and dance, such as they are able. An ensemble of musicians stationed behind the actors provide accompaniment for the musical play. Both plays are presented with lavish Kabuki sets, costumes and make-up. Headphones offering commentary in English will be available.

NAKAMURA GANJIRO III

Born in 1931, **Nakamura Ganjiro III** has been the most influential figure in the modern movement to revive Chikamatsu Monzaemon's work for the Kabuki stage. He is a third generation actor; he and his father's revival in 1953 of *Sonezaki Shinju* was a tremendous success and thrust the young Ganjiro into the world of stardom. In his debut as Ohatsu, the female lead,

he brought a directness and sincerity to the role that electrified the audience. "I love playing Ohatsu because even though she is a young prostitute, a vulnerable woman, she is even stronger than her lover," Nakamura Ganjiro observed. "She is committed to following her beliefs, even if they lead her to death." In the 1950s, Ganjiro played Ohatsu opposite his father; now in his 70s, he is playing the character opposite his son.

The success of the 1953 performance sparked Nakamura Ganjiro's interest in producing Chikamatsu's plays on the Kabuki stage. In 1971 during a backstage visit, acclaimed British actor and producer Laurence Olivier referred to Chikamatsu as "the Shakespeare of Asia" and asked if Japan had a company analogous to Britain's Royal Shakespeare Company, devoted to producing the works of Chikamatsu. Nakamura Ganjiro took Mr. Olivier's question as a sign and subsequently founded Grand Kabuki – Chikamatsu-za. This United States tour marks his final performance in the role of Ohatsu. When he returns to Japan, he will take on a new stage name and begin performing new roles, both male and female.

KABUKI

Although Kabuki has been performed exclusively by male actors, called *onnagata*, for more than three hundred years, it was a woman who founded the art. In 1597, a former shrine dancer Okuni headed a troupe of women that produced vaudeville-like performances presenting the latest fashions. Erotic gender confusion, comic actors and side-show artists were thrown in for good measure. In reaction to increasingly risqué performances, the government banned women from the Kabuki stage. By the 1670s, productions began to move toward longer, more serious forms of drama. Two different styles of acting developed: *wagoto* or Kamigata Kabuki (gentle, romantic and realistic acting) and *aragoto* or Edo Kabuki (wild and masculine acting). At the turn of the 18th century, the actors advocated strict role specialization for their parts in order to perfect characters and acting styles. Some *onnagata*, actors portraying women, went so far as to live their lives as women off stage in order to bring realism to their performances. In four centuries of Kabuki performance, each generation of artists has brought about changes—some endeavoring to recreate the lost traditions, while others wanting to move Kabuki into the 21st century—all adding to Kabuki's rich brocade.

TICKET INFORMATION

Tickets for **Shochiku Grand Kabuki – Chikamatsu-za** on **Friday & Saturday, June 17 & June 18** in Zellerbach Hall are priced at **\$40.00, \$65.00, \$90.00, and \$125.00**. Tickets are available through the Cal Performances Ticket Office at Zellerbach Hall; at (510) 642-9988 to charge by phone; at www.calperfs.berkeley.edu; and at the door. Half-price tickets are available for purchase by UC Berkeley students. UC faculty and staff, senior citizens and other students receive a \$2 discount, and UC Alumni Association members receive a \$3 discount (Special Events excluded). For more information, call Cal Performances at (510) 642-9988, or visit the Cal Performances web site at www.calperfs.berkeley.edu.

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Cal Performances' 2004/2005 season is sponsored by Wells Fargo.

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CALENDAR EDITORS, PLEASE NOTE:

CAL PERFORMANCES PRESENTS

Wednesday, June 15 at 6:30 – 8:00 p.m.
Lecture/Demonstration

Hertz Hall, UC Berkeley Campus
Bancroft Way at College, Berkeley

LECTURE/DEMONSTRATION

Nakamura Ganjiro III talks about Kabuki's history, followed by the transformation of an actor into a Kabuki heroine through the application of full traditional make-up and costume. For further information call 510.642.0212. Admission is free; no tickets required.

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Friday & Saturday, June 17 & June 18 at 8:00 p.m. **Zellerbach Hall, UC Berkeley Campus**
Bancroft Way at Telegraph, Berkeley

Special Event

Shochiku Grand Kabuki – Chikamatsu-za

Program:

Boshihari (“Tied to a Pole”)

Sonezaki Shinju (“Love Suicides at Sonezaki”)

Tickets: \$40.00, \$65.00, \$90.00, \$125.00, available through the Cal Performances Ticket Office at Zellerbach Hall; at (510) 642-9988 to charge by phone; at www.calperfs.berkeley.edu; and at the door.

A GLOSSARY OF KABUKI TERMS

ARAGOTO Wild, masculine acting style developed in the late 17th century.

DOKEKATA Comic characters.

GAKUYA Dressing room, a term used for the entire backstage area.

GEZA The musicians' room, located behind a black grille on stage, to the left of the audience

GIDAYU Also called *takemoto*, the narrative music from the Bunraku puppet theatre. In Kabuki, it is used especially in plays from the puppet repertory (from which *Shunkan* is derived).

HAKAMA A divided skirt, or long culottes.

HANAMICHI The runway through the audience; used as an extension of the acting space.

IEMOTO The head of an artistic family or school. In Kabuki, the *iemoto* system means that the heads of the leading families have almost total control of the art form.

JORURI The narrative vocal style of the *nagauta*. The three principal styles of *yoruri* are: *gidayu*, *tokiwazu* and *kiyomoto*.

KOYAKU Children's roles.

KATAKIYAKU Villainous characters.

KATSURA Kabuki wigs, a large variety according to the age, sex, social class and status..

Wig changes can signify the heightening of emotions or psychological change.

KOKEN Assistants who appear on stage to take care of an actor's props and costumes.

KUMADORI Distinctive make-up style with lines--usually red to indicate strength--on a white base. This style originated with *aragoto* acting.

KYOGEN Short, farcical stories typically presented with longer, more serious works.

MIE Dramatic poses that punctuate the action in Kabuki drama.

NADAI Rank of a full-fledged actor; the term is used to distinguish these actors from lower-ranking actors who must use a communal dressing room.

NAGAUTA Singing style used both as the accompaniment for some dance scenes and as background music from the *geza*.

ONNAGATA Male actors who specialize in female roles.

ROPPO A character exit on the *hanamichi* with exaggerated arm and feet movements in a series of leaps and bounds. Literally "six directions."

SEWAMONO Plays generated by actual crimes, scandals and suicides.

SHAMISEN Three-stringed instrument with a drumlike base.

SEIZA Formal kneeling; this sitting style is an important part of both polite Japanese behavior and Kabuki movement.

SURI ASHI Basic sliding step in traditional Japanese theater.

TACHIYAKU Loyal and courageous characters

TACHIMAWARI Stylized fight scenes.

TAIKO Stick drum; also part of the Noh percussion ensemble.

TOKIWAZU Style of narrative music from the 18th century Edo, to accompany dance scenes.

TSUKE A percussion instrument made of two wooden blocks and a board, generally used to accompany a dramatic moment when the actor strikes a *mie*.

TSUZUMI Hand drums. There are two types, the *kotsuzumi* or "small drum," which is held on the shoulder; and the *otsuzumi* or "large drum," which is held on the lap.

WAGOTO Gentle, romantic, more realistic acting style.

WAKASHUKATA Young male characters, or "**nimaimé**" if mild of disposition.