

Shochiku
Grand Kabuki
Chikamatsu-za

Friday and Saturday, June 17-18, 2005, 8 pm
Zellerbach Hall

Takeomi Nagayama, *Tour Chairman*
Nakamura Ganjiro III, *Artistic Director*
Nobuhiko Shirai, *Deputy Chairman*

ACTORS

Nakamura Ganjiro III, Nakamura Kanjaku V, Nakamura Kikaku II

Nakamura Jujiro, Arashi Kitsusaburo, Nakamura Gando, Nakamura Gannosuke,
Nakamura Sennojo, Nakamura Gansei

Nakamura Gangoro, Nakamura Ganyo, Nakamura Kanno, Nakamura Ganshu,
Nakamura Gansho, Nakamura Gandai, Nakamura Gankyo, Nakamura Kanyu,
Nakamura Kansai, Nakamura Mataichi, Nakamura Matajiro,
Sawamura Kuniya, Kataoka Senshiro

MUSICIANS

Takemoto Tanitayu, Takemoto Rokutayu, Tsurusawa Yasujiro, Tsurusawa Kimihiko

Matsushima Tojiro, Yoshimura Isohei, Yoshimura Yasuichi, Kineya Gokoji,
Kineya Sayosuke, Wakayama Tomiyuki, Omiya Satoru, Okayasu Kikusho,
Kineya Katsukunishu, Kashiwa Yokichi

Mochizuki Tasaji, Mochizuki Tasanari, Mochizuki Tasaji, Mochizuki Tasaichiro,
Mochizuki Tadayuki, Mochizuki Takisaku

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PROGRAM

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PROGRAM

Boshihari

(Tied to a Pole)

by Okamura Shiko

CAST

Nakamura Kanjaku V, *Jirokaja*
Nakamura Kikaku II, *Tarokaja*
Arashi Kitsusaburo VI, *Sone Matsubei*

BACKGROUND

Tied to a Pole is based on one of the most popular plays in the Kyogen repertory. Kyogen are short comic plays typically performed between longer, serious, and more formal Noh plays. Noh and Kyogen are much older than Kabuki, dating from medieval times. In the Edo Period Noh and Kyogen were performed primarily for the ruling samurai class, and Kabuki and puppet theater (now called Bunraku) for urban commoners. Nevertheless, Kabuki playwrights often borrowed characters and stories from Noh and Kyogen.

Until the mid-19th century Kabuki versions of Noh and Kyogen were as different from each other as the musical *Miss Saigon* is from the traditional opera *Madame Butterfly*, but in 1840 Edo's premier Kabuki actor, Ichikawa Danjuro VII, made a radical departure by presenting a Kabuki version of the Noh play *Ataka* using the structure, characters, costumes and stage set of the original in a new Kabuki version, called *Kanjincho*. The Kabuki elements in the play were the music, choreography and acting. Initially audiences were repelled by Danjuro's strange experiment, but after a few years *Kanjincho* became one of the most popular plays in the repertory. With its success, more and more Noh plays were adapted to Kabuki.

In the first decade of the 20th century playwrights and actors began to adapt Kyogen plays in the same manner, and they were very popular. *Tied to a Pole* is one of them. The author, Okamura Shiko (1881-1925), wrote it in 1916 for the two finest dancers in Kabuki at that time, Bando Mitsugoro VII and Onoe Kikugoro VI. These two played the servants Taro Kaja and Jiro Kaja, whom the master ties up in order to prevent them from stealing saké while he is out of the house. Much of the appeal of this dance drama lay in watching these two fine dancers perform with their arms tied up in different positions while simulating drunkenness.

SYNOPSIS

The plot of the Kabuki play is almost exactly the same as the Kyogen play of the same name. The major difference is that a large *nagauta* musical ensemble provides the musical accompaniment for the Kabuki dance drama, and the songs they play and the choreography of the dances differ from the original Kyogen play. The actors' speech follows the vocal patterns of Kabuki, though sometimes they pay homage to the delivery of the original Kyogen.

The master of the house begins the play by introducing himself, and explaining to the audience that when he is away from home his two servants always steal and drink his saké. He needs

to go away on business, and plans to prevent such thievery today by tying them both up. He will need to use trickery to accomplish this, and first enlists the aid of Taro. Matsubei tells Taro that Taro must help him tie Jiro up as punishment for a minor infraction. Taro tells his master that Jiro has been practicing stick fighting, and if Taro and the master work quickly, during one of Jiro's fighting moves Jiro can be overpowered and tied up. Matsubei follows his first servant's advice. Matsubei convinces Jiro to demonstrate stick fighting, and at just the right moment they surprise Jiro and tie his arms to his pole.

Taro finds his fellow servant's predicament amusing, and when he lets down his guard and laughs at his friend, Matsubei ties Taro's hands behind his back. Now, with both servants securely bound, Matsubei leaves the house on business, confident that his saké supply is safe.

Taro and Jiro figure out why they have been tied up, but their condition is making them thirstier and thirstier. They realize that by cooperating they will be able to get saké out of the casks in the cellar and into a container. After considerable spilling, they figure out a way to help each other drink it. As they drink more and more saké, their mood becomes more jolly and festive. They begin by singing as they scoop and pour saké. Jiro and Taro are too jolly, and too inventive, to allow their bound condition to prevent them from dancing. Jiro even uses his pole to enhance his representation of imagery in the accompanying song. Clever thievery and covert drinking devolve into outright revelry.

Taro and Jiro are too drunk to notice when Matsubei returns. They don't even realize he is home when they see his reflection in a cup of saké. All the reflection serves to do is inspire the two servants to ridicule their master, who briefly endures their abuse in silence. Matsubei finally announces his presence, which comes as an unexpected shock to his two servants. He rebukes them, but they drunkenly deny having imbibed. Even though he is still tied up Jiro manages to land a few blows of his pole on his master. Both servants run off, tipsy and triumphant, with their master in hot pursuit.

INTERMISSION

Sonezaki Shinju (*The Love Suicides at Sonezaki*)

Original Script by Chikamatsu Monzaemon

Dramatization and Direction by Uno Nobuo

Set Design by Nagasaka Genko

Music by Nozawa Matsunosuke

Choreography by Katsumi Yoshiyuki

CAST

Nakamura Ganjiro III, *Ohatsu (Courtesan of Tenmaya Tea House)*

Nakamura Kanjaku V, *Tokubei (employee of Hiranoya Soy Sauce Shop)*

Nakamura Kikaku II, *Kubeiji (an oil merchant, Tokubei's acquaintance)*

Nakamura Jujiro, *Otama (maid at the Tenmaya House)*

Arashi Kitsusaburo, *Kyuemon (Tokubei's uncle)*

Nakamura Gando, *Gibe (Ohatsu's customer)/Sobei (owner of Tenmaya House)*

Nakamura Gannosuke, *Osato (teashop waitress)/Ochiyo (a courtesan)*

Nakamura Sennojo, *Okuni (teashop waitress)/Onaka (a courtesan)*

Nakamura Gansei, *male shrine visitor/Mobei (clerk at oil merchant's)*

PROGRAM



Photo courtesy of Shoichiku Co., Ltd.

Nakamura Ganjiro III as Ohatsu and Nakamura Kanjaku V as Tokubei in Sonezaki Shinju

Nakamura Gangoro, *Hikomaru (professional jester) /Ichibei (male shrine visitor)*
 Nakamura Ganyo, *Chozo (apprentice at soy sauce shop)/male shrine visitor*
 Nakamura Kanno, *male shrine visitor*
 Nakamura Ganshu, *female shrine visitor*
 Nakamura Gansho, *Matsuemon (a townsman)*
 Nakamura Gandai, *palanquin bearer/male shrine visitor*
 Nakamura Gankyo, *male shrine visitor/Kasuke (a manservant)*
 Nakamura Kanyu, *Jinbei (a townsman)*
 Nakamura Kansai, *Rokubei (a townsman)*
 Nakamura Mataichi, *female shrine visitor*
 Nakamura Matajiro, *male shrine visitor*
 Sawamura Kuniya, *female shrine visitor*
 Kataoka Senshiro, *Heisuke (palanquin bearer)/male shrine visitor*

BACKGROUND

In Osaka and Kyoto at the turn of the 18th century, Kabuki *sewamono* plays dramatizing actual crimes and scandals were all the rage. Playwrights rushed to get these plays on the boards as quickly as they could, often with a turnaround time of as few as three days between the actual incident and the opening of the dramatization.

In 1703 Chikamatsu Monzaemon was working as staff playwright for the Hakayumo Kabuki theatre in Kyoto, but he also occasionally wrote puppet plays. In May of that year two lovers committed suicide in Osaka. Kabuki theaters scrambled to launch plays about it, and Chikamatsu too immediately put brush to paper. For reasons that are still unclear, Chikamatsu wrote a *sewamono* play for puppets rather than Kabuki actors, and sent the script to his friend, Takemoto Gidayu, manager and chief vocalist at an Osaka puppet theater. The play was *The Love Suicides at Sonezaki*. It was so successful that it established *sewamono* as a popular genre of puppet plays, and it encouraged Chikamatsu to leave Kabuki, move to Osaka, and work solely for the Takemoto puppet theater.

SYNOPSIS

Scene I

The Precincts of Ikutama Shrine, Osaka

Tokubei, working as a clerk for his foster father, Kyuemon, is in love with Ohatsu, a middle-ranking courtesan. Unknown to Tokubei, Kyuemon arranged a marriage for him and sent money to Tokubei's birth mother to seal the promise. Tokubei, however, can love no one but Ohatsu, and when he refuses Kyuemon's marriage plans, Tokubei must bring the money back. En route with the money Tokubei encountered his friend, Kuheiji, who begged Tokubei for a loan. Tokubei loaned the money to his friend.

The scene opens when Ohatsu meets Tokubei after a long time apart. She is with a customer and so she urges Tokubei to remain incognito. He tells her why he has been away in recent days. He expresses hope that Kuheiji will repay him today, helping him to mollify his foster father. Tokubei hopes that this will lead eventually to his buying Ohatsu out of her contract, allowing them to marry.

Kuheiji enters. Not only does he refuse to pay Tokubei, he accuses Tokubei of thievery. Kuheiji has cunningly framed Tokubei by certifying that Tokubei has stolen his seal and forged the promissory note. Kuheiji has effectively stolen Tokubei's money, and Tokubei recognizes Kuheiji's treachery will stand up in court. Tokubei is so angry that he attacks Kuheiji, but Kuheiji's friends

PROGRAM

intervene and beat up the hapless young man. Ohatsu looks on aghast, helplessly watching the man she loves being beaten and humiliated.

Scene II

The Tenmaya Teahouse, Osaka

Kyuemon arrives hoping to meet Tokubei to discuss urgent business. Kyuemon is escorted to an inner room. Tokubei comes to the teahouse, still suffering from the beating. He hides his face in a straw hat. Ohatsu hides Tokubei and helps him to enter unnoticed. She sits on the veranda and he continues to hide on the floor, concealed by the skirts of her robe.

Kuheiji arrives with his cronies and boasts to all present in the restaurant how Tokubei tried to trick him out of money, but how he, the clever and innocent Kuheiji, discovered the perfidy. Weeping and clinging to Ohatsu's foot under the verandah, Tokubei listens to the slander. Ohatsu stands up for her lover. Kuheiji scoffs and tells Ohatsu that if Tokubei kills himself, she should take Kuheiji as her lover. She tells Kuheiji she would rather die. During this conversation Ohatsu uses her foot to signal Tokubei her determination to die with him. He signals his affirmation.

The proprietor of the Tenmaya attempts to prevent Ohatsu from leaving by packing her off to bed, but she is able to sneak out after everyone is asleep. The lovers depart, determined to commit suicide together.

Later that night Mohei, a clerk from Kuheiji's shop, comes seeking Kuheiji. Mohei reveals that he lent Kuheiji's seal to the magistrate's office and now Kuheiji's trickery has been revealed. Kuheiji is angry at the unwilling betrayal of his plot by his own servant. He will have to repay Tokubei and explain his innocence. Kyuemon confronts Kuheiji, then states that he is satisfied as to Tokubei's innocence and will help him get together with Ohatsu. They send a servant to Ohatsu's room to tell her the good news, but learn to their horror that she is gone.

Scene III

Michiyuki (travel scene): Traveling in the woods of Sonezaki, outskirts of Osaka, just before dawn

The first part of the scene is the poetic highlight of the play, written entirely in verse, and expressing the lovers' devotion to each other and desperate hopes to be reborn together in Buddha's paradise. The scene begins with some of the most beautiful lines written for the Japanese stage (translation by Donald Keene):

*Farewell to the world, and to the night farewell
We who walk the road to death, to what should we be likened?
To the frost by the road that leads to the graveyard,
Vanishing with each step we take ahead:
How sad is the dream of a dream!*

In the second part of the scene the lovers arrive at Sonezaki Wood, and after they exchange last words of love, regret and hope for the world after death, Tokubei stabs his beloved and then kills himself.

Chikamatsu Monzaemon (*playwright, 1653-1725*) is the author of more than 100 Kabuki and Bunraku puppet plays and is widely recognized as the finest playwright in Japanese history. Born in what is now Fukui Prefecture into a family of wealthy samurai, as a youth he studied poetry. When his family moved to Kyoto he was able to study under a teacher from the court nobility.

But the Kyoto riverbank was the scene of a very different cultural phenomenon—vibrant entertainments for commoners—everything from jugglers and animal trainers, to puppet and Kabuki theater. At some time in his teens, Chikamatsu went to the riverbank, saw the shows and was hooked.

As an aspiring writer he sensed that it was here that he could best put his talent and his creativity to the test. He gave up his elite status and his name, and went to serve as a lowly apprentice in the Kabuki theater under the pen name, Chikamatsu Monzaemon. After apprenticing for five years in Kabuki and puppet theater, in 1683 Chikamatsu wrote his first complete play, a puppet play called *The Soga Heir*, which he published under the Chikamatsu name.

Shortly thereafter Chikamatsu left his teacher to set out on his own. He stayed in Kyoto, and began to work with the greatest Kabuki actor of the day, Sakata Tojuro (1647-1709).

In his two decades working as a Kabuki playwright, Chikamatsu had to confront various challenges. A Kabuki playwright had to tailor his scripts to the talents and predilections of three or four leading actors, and had to provide roles of prescribed length to more than 30 actors in all.

If plays failed at the box office, the playwright had to come up with a new play in a matter of days. If another theater created a hit, he had to immediately steal it, adding just enough material to make his version more popular than his rival's. From the 1690s, when "true crime" *sewamono* plays became all the rage, he had to keep his ear to the ground

for the best scandals to dramatize and embellish them and have them ready for rehearsal with only a day or two's notice. Chikamatsu excelled at all of this, and thanks to his efforts, Tojuro and his theater companies prospered.

Chikamatsu continued to write puppet plays for his friend Takemoto Gidayu in Osaka. The most successful of these, *The Love Suicides at Sonezaki* (1703), changed the direction of Chikamatsu's career. Sonezaki was the first *sewamono* play written for puppets, and in this play Chikamatsu was able to create more sympathy for his doomed hero and heroine than in earlier Kabuki *sewamono* plays.

The combination of a sudden demand for these puppet plays and Tojuro's gradual retirement from the Kabuki stage encouraged Chikamatsu to change cities once again. He moved to Osaka in 1706 and became senior staff playwright at Gidayu's Takemoto Theatre. It was working at this theatre for the next 18 years, writing entirely for puppets, that Chikamatsu crafted the masterpieces that earned him the reputation of the finest playwright of the Edo Period.

After his death, writers and theater fans belatedly realized that a great figure had passed. They eulogized him, "the god of playwrights," and the name Chikamatsu became a professional name for playwrights.

This did not mean that his words were treasured the way the English-speaking world has venerated Shakespeare. Beginning a decade after his death, all of Chikamatsu's puppet play texts were modified.

It was not until after World War II that Takechi Tetsuji and disciples like the current Ganjiro III began to see the value of returning to Chikamatsu's original texts and resurrecting the power of his characters and stories couched in the actual words set down by the great playwright's brush.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Nakamura Ganjiro III (*actor, founder*) has been the most influential figure in the modern movement to revive Chikamatsu's work for both the Kabuki and Bunraku stages. He and his father's revival in 1953 of *The Love Suicides at Sonezaki* was a tremendous success and thrust the young Ganjiro (then known as Nakamura Senjaku II) into the world of stardom. Over the years he has made the role of Ohatsu his own, performing it for more than 50 years. Ganjiro's father (Ganjiro II) performed the role of Tokubei until his death in 1983. In this touring production, we see the wheel turn as Ganjiro III is performing with his son Kanjaku V as Tokubei.

Ganjiro III came of age during a bad time for Kabuki – the immediate postwar years. Kabuki audiences were dangerously reduced by privations suffered in cities destroyed by bombing, coupled with a new national inclination to reject old customs and vestiges of traditional culture.

Although Ohatsu and Tokubei were never forgotten by Japanese theatergoers, Chikamatsu's version had been, until right after World War II when it was resurrected based on a new dramatization by Uno Nobuo. Shochiku Chairman Otani Takejiro suggested the young *onnagata* actor (female role specialist) Nakamura Senjaku. In his reading of the play Senjaku saw Ohatsu as a passionate woman, stronger and more decisive than her lover, Tokubei. In his 1953 debut as Ohatsu, Senjaku spoke Chikamatsu's clear and direct lines with more intensity than usual for *onnagata*, and sat closer to Tokubei, focusing "her" gaze on him, rather than on the audience. These simple, but carefully conceived changes made palpable Ohatsu's love for Tokubei, and electrified the audience. Senjaku was suddenly a superstar, sought after by producers of Kabuki and cinema.

Ganjiro has explained in interviews how he has struggled throughout his career with the challenge of interpreting and re-interpreting the Ohatsu role, and in devising techniques time and time again to portray her emotions and actions.

Modern audiences find it easy to enter Chikamatsu's world, says Ganjiro, because his themes are

so strong and true. Ganjiro has presented Chikamatsu's *The Love Suicides at Sonezaki* in England and Russia as well as Japan and finds that the audience's reactions are always exactly the same.

"I think that it must be because love is truly universal," says Ganjiro.

The success of the 1953 performance led to a revival of interest in performing Chikamatsu's plays on Kabuki and Bunraku stages, a revival that has been greatly abetted by Ganjiro's own endeavors as founder and director of the Chikamatsu-za theater troupe.

He was inspired to dedicate the troupe Chikamatsu-za to producing Kabuki plays using Chikamatsu's original texts, when he and his wife went backstage to visit with Laurence Olivier after a performance in Manchester in 1971. Introduced as a Kabuki actor devoted to the work of Chikamatsu, "the Shakespeare of Asia," Ganjiro was asked by Olivier if Japan had a company analogous to Britain's Royal Shakespeare Company, a company devoted to producing the works of Chikamatsu.

"I replied that we did not. Then he told me 'It's up to you to do it,' and in 1981 I was finally able to found Chikamatsu-za."

In December of this year, Ganjiro will take the name of Sakata Tojuro IV, the name of the greatest actor of Chikamatsu's day, an actor of romantic, male leads, a name that hasn't been seen on the Kabuki stage in 200 years. He sees his assumption of Tojuro's name as a new opportunity to present the art he has invented and will continue to invent over the course of his career, playing both male and female roles. He also sees the reappearance of Sakata Tojuro on the Kabuki stage as a symbolic statement that the Kamigata (Kyoto/Osaka) Kabuki is flourishing – that the gentle, realistic traditions of Kamigata Kabuki are as important as the showy, martial traditions of Edo (Tokyo) Kabuki, which have been continuously represented by actors bearing the name of Ichikawa Danjuro.

"True to the spirit of the first Tojuro," said Ganjiro, "I don't see this new name as a creation of a family tradition, but as recognition of personal artistic creativity and freedom in Kabuki."

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

PRINCIPAL ACTORS

Nakamura Kanjaku V (*principal actor*) is destined to be a leader of the next generation of Kabuki actors. He made his debut on the Grand Kabuki stage at the Kabuki-za in Tokyo at the age of 8 with the stage name of Nakamura Tomotaro.

In 1980, 13 years after his youthful debut, and while Tomotaro was still in college, he was asked to step in and play Tokubei in *Sonezaki Shinju* in the place of his grandfather, Nakamura Ganjiro II, who had suddenly fallen ill. Tomotaro's performance as Tokubei (opposite his father Nakamura Ganjiro III) gained great notoriety and critics marveled at Tomotaro's grace and expertise.

In 1995 he took the stage name Kanjaku and played two major Kabuki roles at the Naka-za in Osaka. Kanjaku moved to Osaka in 2001 and is very active in the area today, familiar to the people of the Kansai region as a regular commentator on a popular morning television program.

Kanjaku has performed in Grand Kabuki Tours to New Orleans, Vancouver, Seattle, Los Angeles, Mexico City, London, Manchester, St. Petersburg and Beijing, as well as led acting workshops in India.

In the Kabuki world Kanjaku has become synonymous with the role of Tokubei, a role he stepped into on an emergency basis some 25 years ago.

Nakamura Kikaku II (*principal actor*) Because the world of Kabuki is organized along family lines, many actors are born into Kabuki families, debut as children, and continue their training with their families. Kikaku is unusual because although he was born as the child of an actor, he also enrolled in and completed the Kabuki training course of the National Theatre of Japan. Upon graduation he became an apprentice of his uncle, the Kabuki actor Nakamura Tomijuro V, and under the stage name Nakamura Yoshihiko he began to build up his professional performance experience. He took every opportunity to play major roles in many types of plays, whether on the Kabuki stage or as part of study groups, and he is greatly admired for his dedication and drive.

With his excellent onstage delivery, reminis-

cent of his uncle's performances, and his extraordinary work ethic, this young actor has Kabuki fans in Japan excited about the future.

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