

DOWNLOAD PDF 2. ORIGINS OF KABUKI ACTING IN MEDIEVAL JAPANESE DRAMA

Chapter 1 : Kabuki: A Brief History

Kabuki theater is a type of dance-drama from Japan. Originally developed during the Tokugawa era, its story-lines depict life under shogunal rule, or the deeds of famous historical figures. Today, kabuki is considered one of the classical art forms, giving it a reputation for sophistication and formality.

The story goes that kabuki was invented as a new form in Kyoto, Japan in when Izumo no Okuni started performing a new form of dance drama on the dry riverbeds of Kyoto. The original stories were comic involving female and male performers in short plays or playlets about everyday life. Some people draw comparisons between Kabuki and the commedia dell arte because of these elements. Originally many ensemble sequences were often performed by females and some people claim that the dubious origins of some of the dancers often led to kabuki being associated with prostitution. Originally performances would go from morning until sunset and the theatres in the original district in Kyoto where kabuki was performed were often linked with teahouses. Eventually in , female kabuki or onna-kabuki were banned for being too erotic and male actors yaro-kabuki started to take on both female and male roles. The exclusion of women from performing sparked a new age in kabuki as a performance art. More emphasis started to be put on the drama and the stories rather than the dance form. Just like in Elizabethan theatre in England, young males played the female roles. The erotic elements of the form still continued however and links to prostitution and immorality still continued. Like commedia dell arte this partly came through the development of archetypal characters. Also this period saw the adding of more theatrical conventions as kabuki specific venues and theatres were built. The integration of puppet sequences which later became the form of bunraku puppetry, added to the appeal of the form. Chikamatsu Monzaemon was from a samurai class family. Probably almost of his plays were written for bunraku puppet theatre performance but at least 20 were written for kabuki theatre or were seen in a kabuki theatre after adaptation from the bunraku form. In this play, an apprentice clerk and his lover, a prostitute in the pleasure quarters, finding no other way to be together, decide to commit a double suicide so that they can at least be united in death. Another famous Japanese actor and playwright who was prominent just a little later was Ichikawa Danjuro who wrote about 6 plays and performed in over 50 plays. He is credited with developing the aragoto style of acting which is typifies the gestural and pose elements of kabuki. He also probably invented the kumadori mask-like makeup. After World War II, kabuki went into decline because of a ban by the occupying forces. By , the ban was lifted. Japanese writer and actor Yukio Mishima also re-popularised and re-contextualised kabuki in modern settings. Kabuki started to become popular outside of Japan and the Australian kabuki troupe Za Kabuki has performed a kabuki play on the grounds of the Australian National University every year since Conventions of Kabuki theatre The kabuki theatre a stage area and an extra stage or walkway called a Hannamichi which extends into the audience. Some kabuki stages have trap doors, or revolving stages and other staging effects. There are three main genres or types of kabuki plays jidai-mono historical plays , sewa-mono domestic plays or dramas and shosagoto dance dramas. Important aspects of kabuki include mie where an actor holds a still image or picturesque pose to initially establish the character. Slow gestural acting known as the aragoto style of acting. Red as a colour is used to indicate positive or passionate elements while black and blue indicate negative elements. Green is used for supernatural elements while purple is used for royal elements or nobility. The slow movements used in kabuki fit with the principle of jo-ha-kyu which states that the pace of acting and a performance should start slow, speed up and end quickly. Show a video of Kabuki style theatre. Discuss the attributes of this form of theatre. Compare and contrast the form to Noh Drama and other Japanese theatre styles. Kabuki Plays on Stage. The Kabuki Theatre of Japan. Sex, Drag, and Theatre.

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Chapter 2 : Kabuki - Wikipedia

Kabuki is a stylized traditional form of Japanese Dance-Drama developed during the early 17 th century. The name kabuki derives from kabuki which means "bizarre" or "out of the ordinary". The name kabuki derives from kabuki which means "bizarre" or "out of the ordinary".

Traditionally, all forms were performed in the one day with a sixth form of ritual or drama called an Okina performed first which had more of a religious purpose. Today individual play forms are often performed on their own. God Plays – The first scene is a shite in the first scene where a simple story is told or poem recited about the origin of the shrine or theatre. After interval the story of the individual god is often told. Here is a clip of a modern cross-cultural God Play: Warrior or Ghost Plays – These plays centre on the warriors of the Gengji-Heike clan and often tell the stories of famous battles. Often ghost warriors appear and they relive their last battles. Here is a clip of a Ghost Play scene: Woman Plays – Plays that deal with women of the Heian Period normally portrayed as beautiful and in glorious costumes. Insanity Plays – Dealing with a variety of characters often females and showing different types of madness or insanity. Demon Plays deal with both good demons bringing blessings to humans and others evil demons bringing evil but they are usually subdued by humans in the end of the play. In the opening Jo sequence we see the entrance of a subsidiary character waki and once he is introduced then he gives away the plot or his reason for being there. Then the waki character goes to travel somewhere and we may hear a travel-song michiyuki , sung by the chorus who are positioned at the side of the stage. The waki then arrives at his destination. Then the main character or protagonist shite , enters sometimes accompanied by other characters. The characters talk and the whole plot of the whole play is revealed along with the themes and tensions that exist. The following clip has the opening Jo sequence at the beginning. The Shite dances a stylized set of actions or movement which re-enactments previous events. This is a kuse. A Kyogen comic interlude is then performed by comic characters who speak in everyday, informal language. Sometimes Kyogen plays are also performed on their own outside their structure and place in Noh Drama. The following is a videoclip of a Kyogen sequence: While these levels are very complex in their original forms, I find I can give students a taste of these through using the image in the brackets to help them visualize and attain movements to give them a sense of the form. Levels 9, 8, 7 and 6 tend to be faster and with more movement while levels 5, 4, 3, 2 and 1 tend to slower, fuller and with less movement. Some movements are made primarily with the feet and legs and other movements are made primarily with the hands and arms. The violent and corrupt style: The powerful and violent style: The superficial but ornamental style: The ample and precise style: The style of the genuine flower: The style of the serene flower: The style of the flower - high and deep: The style of the marvelous flower: Briefly, In Noh, a small stage leads out to the main stage in Noh via a catwalk. The main stage is normally 30 square meters in area. The following website has a lot of information and pictures of Noh Theatre staging. I have found that Noh mask is good as a research process or students can make or paint their own masks. The costumes are often elaborate with silver and embroidery. The symbolism of the colours is another area for students to research. A good website for students to start at is: Students can research and experiment with the three elements of Noh: Slow symbolic movements are often seen as stylistically characterizing Noh as a form. Some interesting websites for research are below but many of the exercises late concentrate on movement aspects. Brecht was influenced by Kabuki and some of his alienation techniques were developed from Japanese theatre techniques. Some modern plays of Yukio Mishima and Tadashi Suzuki have mixed tradition and modern, eastern and western traditions in their work. The work of these people or work in the area of cross cultural form and aesthetics is interesting. Here is one description bu Noh performer and teacher Sakurama Kintaro: If you pull back your chin your whole body - not only the line of your neck - will be naturally straight. The shoulders should be relaxed, but the arms kept at the sides and held in a gentle arc so that the elbows will not sag You should let your strength flow into your abdomen without making any conscious effort to do so. The

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mind is in the hara, mouth is closed, tongue pressed on the upper palate. Students should initially breath through the nose and experiencing the breath. Students then are instructed to steady and stabilize the mind by counting the breath. Each inhalation and each exhalation is counted. Inhale and at the end of the inhalation, count one. Exhale and at the end of the exhalation, count two. Count up to ten and then start all over again. Counting focuses the mind and the breath. Their should be room enough for a ball in the armpit. Women should actually keep the elbows in making actual contact with the body. Both men and women should put the hands on the upper thighs with the fingers lightly touching. Noh Walking Walk on the heels and slightly curve up the toes and bend the knees as little as possible when walking. Try to make contact with the floor for most of the time and make the step suri ashi or sliding in its motion. Forward walking always starts with the left foot and walking backward always starts with the right foot. I often use fans as a element and prop to help students find stylized movement. The movements should be done with a neutral face or students can always use a neutral mask during some of this work. Students then slow these gestures even more. Students then can be led to find ways to show emotions without using facial expression. The gestures should display or show the emotion in movement. Sometimes students find this difficult so I sometimes allow them to use facial expressions initially and then I get them to try to express the emotion without the facial expression. Some expression that work are: I ask the students to repeat some of the everyday movements and the emotions they did earlier to see which work with the fan. Read out the following words and students do actions for each word. Old, young, pond, frog, pond, light, moon flower, shadow, creep, forest, winds, rage and leaves. Get into groups of three, four or five people.

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Chapter 3 : Bunraku & Kabuki Resources

Kabuki (æ-Œè~žä¼Ž) is a classical Japanese dance-drama. Kabuki theatre is known for the stylization of its drama and for the elaborate make-up worn by some of its performers. The individual kanji, from left to right, mean sing (æ-Œ), dance (è~ž), and skill (ä¼Ž).

Although kagura dance has been influenced by later more sophisticated dance forms, it is still performed much as it was 1, years ago, to religious chants accompanied by drums , brass gongs , and flutes. A Korean performer, Mimaji Mimashi in Japanese , is credited with having brought the Buddhist gigaku processional dance play to the Japanese court in Mimashi established an official school to train Japanese dancers and musicians in gigaku. Gigaku masks cover the entire head as do Korean folk masks today. They are superb examples of the art of mask making, strong-featured and beautifully conceived. From a description of a 13th-century performance, gigaku apparently consisted of a succession of scenes enacted as characters passed by. Masks characterized an Aryan-featured dignitary called Baramon or Brahman, indicating Indian origin , a fierce wrestler, a Buddhist monk, a princess of the state of Wu in China , a bully, a wistful old man, and others. Some scenes were serious, others were earthy slapstick. Bugaku court dances introduced from Korea also were patronized by the court. They supplanted gigaku as official court entertainment, and gigaku disappeared as a performing art by the 12th century. It was the custom to have performers of bugaku enter from dressing rooms to the right and the left of the raised platform stage: Bugaku is usually performed by groups of four, six, or eight male dancers who move in deliberate, stately steps, repeating movements in the four cardinal directions. A composition consists of three sections: Japanese performers and courtiers created new compositions within the old style in the 10th and 11th centuries. Still, bugaku represents a remarkable preservation of ancient Chinese, Indian, and Korean music and dance that have long since disappeared in their countries of origin. During the Heian period â€” professional troupes, ostensibly attached to temples and shrines to draw crowds for festival days, combined these lively stage arts, now called sarugaku literally, monkey or mimic music , with dancing to drums from dengaku and began to perform short plays consisting of alternate sections of dialogue , mimicry, singing, and dancing. For most of his life, Zeami benefited from the patronage and the refined audiences that stemmed from this circumstance. The borrowings of Noh from other arts are many. The exquisite masks for which Noh theatre is famous have a quality of serenity, a neutrality of expression that places them in a rank perhaps unmatched in the world. Yet, historically there is no doubt that they are derived from earlier bugaku and gigaku masks and hence are related, if distantly, to the masks of Korea, China, and India. One evidence of the special development of Noh masks is that they are smaller than previous masks; they cover only the face proper. From bugaku music , Zeami took the three-part structure of the Noh drama. A normal Noh program consists of five plays, which are grouped into three dramatic units: Drums and flute were taken over from earlier musical forms, and Noh chanting grew out of Buddhist prayer chants. On the other hand, the Noh stage represents an advance on the simple square platform of bugaku. A sharply peaked roof over the stage is supported by four pillarsâ€”to help the performer orient himself as he looks out through tiny eye holes in the maskâ€”and a long ramp, hashigakari, emphasizes the entrance of major characters. The Noh play emphasizes the Buddhist sentiment of the evanescence of mortal life and the inevitability of pain and sadness. Every Noh play contains Chinese poems, quoted verbatim or paraphrased so as to appeal to the educated spectator. It was a first principle of dramatic writing, said Zeami, to base a play on a well-known incident in which the central character was familiar to the audience. The usual play is a straight dialogue drama, making it perhaps the oldest developed form of nonmusical play in East Asia. Dialogue is composed in colloquial language of the 15th century, in short phrases suitable for comedy. Movement is highly stylized, again for comic effect. Masks may be worn for the roles of animals and demons, but most roles are played unmasked. Gale collection, Mound, Minn. Courtesy of Richard P. Artistically severe and highly disciplined , Noh was imbued with the sternly pessimistic philosophy of Buddhism. In content, Noh

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plays taught the folly of worldly power and position, that time destroys all living things. In contrast to this, commoners of the cities in the late 16th century began to perform their own dances and plays that were up-to-date, lively, exciting, and at times morally licentious. They were intended to appeal to literate townsmen, well-to-do wives of merchants, workers, and the fops, wits, and dandies of the burgeoning cities. Tokugawa period During the Tokugawa period Noh was assiduously cultivated by samurai as a refined accomplishment. Noh became the exclusive theatre art of the warrior class, while bugaku continued as the chief performing art of the imperial court. They were enormously popular. In several kinds of urban dances were arranged by a young woman named Okuni into a new dance, called Kabuki. A scroll of the period shows Okuni as a young, fashionably dressed samurai, indolently leaning on a sword, dallying with a teahouse girl. Other pictures of the time show young women playing the three-stringed samisen as they recline sensuously on tiger skins, dancing girls circling about them. Audiences of monks, warriors, young lovers, and townsmen gaze raptly at this appealing and even bizarre sight. The appearance of professional women and boy performers in Kabuki was a phenomenon of urban society. Court nobles and samurai lords had always been able to take mistresses in any number they wished; now the commoner and townsman could, with his new wealth, purchase the favour of a newly risen class of women whose role was to cater to their desires. In the same way, taking young boys as sexual companions, which was common practice among the Buddhist clergy and the warrior class e. Library of Congress, Washington, D. LC-DIG-jpd In , when the authorities required Kabuki to be performed by adult males, Kabuki began to develop as a serious art. The idea of the rampway came from the Noh hashigakari, but, in typical Kabuki fashion, it was transformed into an infinitely more theatrical device. From the puppet theatre, Kabuki borrowed the use of fairly elaborate scenery, the revolving stage years before its use in Europe , traps, and lifts. To the old Noh drums and flute were added the new samisen, a large drum, a dozen bells, cymbals, gongs, and two types of wooden clappers, making the resulting music flexible and varied. A print from about shows Kabuki actors performing Sumidagawa The Sumida River , with costumes and properties modeled closely on the Noh original. By the Genroku period , new Kabuki dramatic styles had emerged. In the play Sukeroku yukari no Edo zakura Sukeroku: Genroku-period Kabuki plays are lusty and active and contain much verbal and physical humour. Kabuki theatres were required to be built in special entertainment quarters near licensed quarters for prostitution , along with puppet theatres. Puppets, imported from Korea centuries earlier, were fused with epic storytelling and the resulting narrated play accompanied by samisen music sometime before This and other legends were in the nature of Buddhist miracle stories, the obligatory scene being one in which Buddha sacrifices himself or otherwise brings to life one of the main characters. One of the most characteristic features of Kabuki was its contemporaneous dramatic subject matter; puppet drama was much changed when Chikamatsu brought this quality from Kabuki into his puppet plays. The puppet theatre underwent significant physical change when the puppet operators, samisen player, and chanter were made fully visible to the audience in A revolutionary three-man puppet was created in which mouth, eyes, eyebrows, and fingers could move, encouraging writers to compose dramatic plays calling for complex emotional expression. The Treasury of Loyal Retainers. The latter is the best-loved and most often performed drama ever written in Japan; it typifies mature puppet drama. It is based on actual events that occurred from to A 47th conspirator was not involved in the actual killing. The major scenes of the suicides of the lord Hangan and his retainer Kampei are intensely emotional scenes of self-sacrifice. Today the best puppet plays are equally a part of the Kabuki and puppet theatre repertoires. They wrote all the standard types of Kabuki play—sewamono domestic , jidaimono history , and shosagoto dance plays—in large numbers; each wrote between and plays in his professional career. They spent their lives in the Kabuki theatre as writers. Although neither was formally educated, their plays reflect with great discernment the desperate social conditions that prevailed as the feudal system in Japan neared its collapse. Thieves, prostitutes, murderers, pimps, and ruthless masterless samurai are major figures in a new type of play, kizewamono, or gangster play, which Namboku created and Mokuami developed. They wrote for the talents of star actors: Namboku created rhythmic dialogue composed in phrases of seven and five syllables;

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Mokuami used puppet-style music to heighten the pathos of certain scenes and wrote elaborately conceived major speeches which required exceptional elocutionary skill on the part of the actor. Interior of a Kabuki theatre, coloured woodcut triptych by Utagawa Toyokuni, c. Courtesy of the trustees of the British Museum

Meiji period Noh, puppet theatre, and Kabuki were affected in differing degrees by the abolition of feudalism in . At a stroke, the samurai class was eliminated and Noh lost its base of economic support. Important actors retired to the country to eke out a living as menial workers. For several years Noh was not performed at all, except that Umewaka Minoru, a minor actor, gave public performances in his home and elsewhere between and . In a public stage was built in Shiba Park, Tokyo, for performances sponsored by the newly formed Noh Society and by its successor, the Noh Association. The most influential supporter of Noh during the Meiji period “ was the aristocrat Iwakura Tomomi. The end of feudal society forced Noh to seek and cultivate a new audience; the popular audience of Kabuki and the puppet theatre, however, continued with little change during the Meiji period. Kabuki audiences remained large and loyal, but audiences for puppet plays continued to decline as they had for the previous hundred years. The popular term for puppet drama, Bunraku , dates from this time. Learning to chant puppet texts became a vogue during the late Meiji period. As they always had, Kabuki writers and actors of the Meiji period tried to place current events on the stage. Western influence also was seen in theatre construction, with the first European-style theatre built for Kabuki in Tokyo in . Released from previous government restrictions, Kabuki artists created dance dramas from the Noh play *The Maple Viewing* and others, in which the elevated tone of the Noh original was purposely retained. Kabuki attendance was more than a million spectators yearly. But, in spite of prosperity and seeming adaptation to new conditions, by the early decades of the 20th century, new artistic creation in Kabuki reached an impasse, and thereafter Kabuki became restricted almost as much as Bunraku and Noh to a classic repertoire of plays.

Japanese Bunraku theatre; woodblock print by Utashige, 19th century. The puppeteers appear on stage with their puppets; the narrator is shown at the right. Courtesy of the Puppentheatermuseum, Munich

Scholars and artists, learning of Western drama , organized successive groups designed to reform Kabuki—that is, to eliminate excessive stylization and to press for a more realistic manner of performance. These and other influences produced few long-lasting changes in Kabuki, but they did set the stage for the creation of new kinds of drama that would depart radically from traditional forms. One shimpa troupe continues to perform today, in a style that retains turn-of-the-century sentiment and mannerisms. The members of shingeki troupes were earnest amateurs, strongly motivated by artistic and social ideals to create a theatre that reflected life in 20th-century Japan. The *Treasury of Loyal Retainers*, were banned briefly.

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Chapter 4 : Japanese Culture - Entertainment - Kabuki Theater

Origins of Kabuki Acting in Medieval Japanese Drama. By Laurence R. Kominz
Origins of Kabuki Acting in Medieval Japanese Drama. By Laurence R. Kominz

Skip to content Japanese Theater Japanese theater has a long, rich history. There are four main types of traditional theater in Japan. These are noh, kyogen, kabuki, and bunraku. Each of these forms of theater performance is very distinct and unique from the another. Noh theater, also called nogaku, is a form of musical drama. The Japanese started performing Noh in the fourteenth century. Most of the characters in these plays are concealed by masks, and men play both the male and female roles. The subject matter consists of a few historical stories. It is common for the performances to last an entire day. Five plays are usually performed during each showing. The earliest scripts for Kyogen theater date back to the fourth century. Noh plays were only put on to entertain people in the upper classes. During that time, Kyogen was performed to give Noh theater an intermission between acts. One difference between Noh and Kyogen performances is that the Kyogen performers do not wear masks and the Noh performers do. Kabuki is a form of Japanese theater that combines drama, dance, and music and is the most well-known to people around the world. Okunis performed the Kabuki plays. Kabuki theater is very lively. Swordfights and wild costumes are the norm in the stage productions. Until about , the plays used real swords. The art of Kabuki was actually created in opposition to the Noh theater. The idea was to tell more timely and lively stories to shock the audiences. The first Kabuki show was performed in Eventually, it grew into a stylized art form that still remains popular today. Kanadahon Chushingura is one of the most-beloved Kabuki plays. One of the conventions of kabuki theater is that people in the audience will make kakagoe shouts at certain times when the drama is highest. Often, these people are seated in cheap seats and are called omuko-San great distance ones. Bunraku is Japanese theater that uses puppets. The puppets used are usually about three to four feet tall and are controlled by puppeteers who dress completely in black and can be seen by the audience. In contrast, the omozukai head puppeteer wears colorful clothing. Chants and music are popular in bunraku theater. The leader of the plays also plays the shamisen, a Japanese stringed instrument. Unfortunately, the art of bunraku has been losing popularity since the second half of the eighteenth century. Even with government funding, the art form looks like it has a bleak future. The craftsmen of the intricate puppets are dying, and people are not very interested in taking the time necessary to learn how to replace them. Geisha artists are female entertainers who perform various arts, like dancing, playing classical music, or performing poetry. In the eighteenth century, courtesans began using their singing, dancing, and acting skills to entertain clients usually men and and became known as geisha. However, the first geisha were actually men that entertained men waiting to see the courtesans. The dance they perform has origins in kabuki theater. Similar to tai chi, it is very disciplined. Gestures are used to subtly tell stories through the dance. The shamisen is the main instrument that is used to play the traditional music that accompanies the performances. Although these dances are the most well-known activities that geisha perform, many do a variety of other things, such as painting, composing music, and writing poetry. In , there were eighty thousand geisha in Japan. Today, there are only around one thousand. It can cost around eight hundred USD per person to have dinner in the company of a geisha. Japanese theater is a traditional form of entertainment that can be enjoyed by anyone, whether fluent in Japanese or not.

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Chapter 5 : Kabuki | Japanese arts | calendrierdelascience.com

Kabuki, traditional Japanese popular drama with singing and dancing performed in a highly stylized manner. A rich blend of music, dance, mime, and spectacular staging and costuming, it has been a major theatrical form in Japan for almost four centuries.

Female kabuki[edit] The earliest portrait of Izumo no Okuni , the founder of kabuki s The history of kabuki began in when Izumo no Okuni , possibly a miko of Izumo-taisha , began performing a new style of dance drama in the dry riverbeds of Kyoto. It originated in the 17th century. Female performers played both men and women in comic playlets about ordinary life. The style was immediately popular, and Okuni was asked to perform before the Imperial Court. In the wake of such success, rival troupes quickly formed, and kabuki was born as ensemble dance and drama performed by womenâ€™a form very different from its modern incarnation. Much of its appeal in this era was due to the ribald, suggestive themes featured by many troupes; this appeal was further augmented by the fact that the performers were often also available for prostitution. Kabuki became a common form of entertainment in the ukiyo , or Yoshiwara , [5] the registered red-light district in Edo. A diverse crowd gathered under one roof, something that happened nowhere else in the city. Kabuki theaters were a place to see and be seen as they featured the latest fashion trends and current events. The stage provided good entertainment with exciting new music, patterns, clothing, and famous actors. Performances went from morning until sunset. The teahouses surrounding or connected to the theater provided meals, refreshments, and good company. The area around the theatres was filled with shops selling kabuki souvenirs. Kabuki, in a sense, initiated pop culture in Japan. The shogunate was never partial to kabuki and all the mischief it brought, particularly the variety of the social classes which mixed at kabuki performances. The theatre remained popular, and remained a focus of urban lifestyle until modern times. Although kabuki was performed all over ukiyo and other portions for the country, the Nakamura-za, Ichimura-za and Kawarazaki-za theatres became the top theatres in ukiyo, where some of the most successful kabuki performances were and still are held. After women were banned from performing, cross-dressed male actors, known as onnagata "female-role" or oyama , took over. Performances were equally ribald, and the male actors too were available for prostitution to both female and male customers. Both bans were rescinded by The structure of a kabuki play was formalized during this period, as were many elements of style. Conventional character types were established. Kabuki theatres, traditionally made of wood, were constantly burning down, forcing their relocation within the ukiyo. When the area that housed the Nakamura-za was completely destroyed in , the shogun refused to allow the theatre to be rebuilt, saying that it was against fire code. The shogunate took advantage of the fire crisis in to force the Nakamura-za, Ichimura-za, and Kawarazaki-za out of the city limits and into Asakusa , a northern suburb of Edo. Actors, stagehands, and others associated with the performances were forced out as well. Those in areas and lifestyles centered around the theatres also migrated, but the inconvenience of the new location reduced attendance. This period produced some of the gaudiest kabuki in Japanese history. The district was located on the main street of Asakusa, which ran through the middle of the small city. The street was renamed after Saruwaka Kanzaburo, who initiated Edo kabuki in the Nakamura Theatre in This Western interest prompted Japanese artists to increase their depictions of daily life including theatres, brothels, main streets and so on. One artist in particular, Utagawa Hiroshige , did a series of prints based on Saruwaka from the Saruwaka-machi period in Asakusa. Ichikawa Kodanji IV was one of the most active and successful actors during the Saruwaka-machi period. He introduced shichigo-cho seven-and-five syllable meter dialogue and music such as kiyomoto. In , the Tokugawa shogunate fell apart. Emperor Meiji was restored to power and moved from Kyoto to the new capital of Edo, or Tokyo, beginning the Meiji period. Kabuki became more radical in the Meiji period, and modern styles emerged. New playwrights created new genres and twists on traditional stories. As the culture struggled to adapt to the influx of foreign ideas and influence, actors strove to increase the reputation of kabuki among the upper classes and to adapt the

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traditional styles to modern tastes. He was first known as Nakamura Senjaku, and this period in Osaka kabuki became known as the "Age of Senjaku" in his honor. Kabuki appears in works of Japanese popular culture such as anime. In addition to the handful of major theatres in Tokyo and Kyoto, there are many smaller theatres in Osaka and throughout the countryside. Writer Yukio Mishima pioneered and popularized the use of kabuki in modern settings and revived other traditional arts, such as Noh, adapting them to modern contexts. There have even been kabuki troupes established in countries outside Japan. For instance, in Australia, the Za Kabuki troupe at the Australian National University has performed a kabuki drama each year since, [27] the longest regular kabuki performance outside Japan. Okuni also performed on a hanamichi stage with her entourage. The stage is used not only as a walkway or path to get to and from the main stage, but important scenes are also played on the stage. Kabuki stages and theaters have steadily become more technologically sophisticated, and innovations including revolving stages and trap doors were introduced during the 18th century. A driving force has been the desire to manifest one frequent theme of kabuki theater, that of the sudden, dramatic revelation or transformation. Hanamichi and several innovations including revolving stage, seri and chunori have all contributed to kabuki play. Hanamichi creates depth and both seri and chunori provide a vertical dimension. The trick was originally accomplished by the on-stage pushing of a round, wheeled platform. Later a circular platform was embedded in the stage with wheels beneath it facilitating movement. This stage was first built in Japan in the early eighteenth century. Seri refers to the stage "traps" that have been commonly employed in kabuki since the middle of the 18th century. These traps raise and lower actors or sets to the stage. Seridashi or seriage refers to traps moving upward and serisage or serioroshi to traps descending. This technique is often used to lift an entire scene at once. This is similar to the wire trick in the stage musical *Peter Pan*, in which Peter launches himself into the air. This technique originated at the beginning of the 18th century, where scenery or actors move on or off stage on a wheeled platform. Stagehands also assist in a variety of quick costume changes known as hayagawari quick change technique. This involves layering one costume over another and having a stagehand pull the outer one off in front of the audience. Traditional striped black-red-green curtain, at the Misono-za in Nagoya The curtain that shields the stage before the performance and during the breaks is in the traditional colours of black, red and green, in various order, or white instead of green, vertical stripes. The curtain consists of one piece and is pulled back to one side by a staff member by hand. An additional outer curtain called doncho was not introduced until the Meiji era following the introduction of western influence. These are more ornate in their appearance and are woven. They depict the season in which the performance is taking place, often designed by renowned Nihonga artists. Please help improve this article by adding citations to reliable sources. Unsourced material may be challenged and removed. Strict censorship laws during the Edo period prohibited the representation of contemporary events and particularly prohibited criticising the shogunate or casting it in a bad light, although enforcement varied greatly over the years. Frustrating the censors, many shows used these historical settings as metaphors for contemporary events. Often referred to as "domestic plays" in English, sewamono generally related to themes of family drama and romance. Some of the most famous sewamono are the love suicide plays, adapted from works by the bunraku playwright Chikamatsu; these center on romantic couples who cannot be together in life due to various circumstances and who therefore decide to be together in death instead. Many if not most sewamono contain significant elements of this theme of societal pressures and limitations. This is called hara-gei or "belly acting", which means he has to perform from within to change characters. Emotions are also expressed through the colours of the costumes, a key element in kabuki. Gaudy and strong colours can convey foolish or joyful emotions, whereas severe or muted colours convey seriousness and focus. Rice powder is used to create the white oshiroi base for the characteristic stage makeup, and kumadori enhances or exaggerates facial lines to produce dramatic animal or supernatural masks. Rather than attending for 2-5 hours, as one might do in a modern Western-style theater, audiences "escape" from the day-to-day world, devoting a full day to entertainment. Though some individual plays, particularly the historical jidaimono, might last an entire day, most were shorter and sequenced with other plays in order to

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produce a full-day program. The structure of the full-day program, like the structure of the plays themselves, was derived largely from the conventions of bunraku and Noh, conventions which also appear in other traditional Japanese arts. The concept, elaborated on at length by master Noh playwright Zeami , governs not only the actions of the actors, but also the structure of the play as well as the structure of scenes and plays within a day-long program. Nearly every full-length play occupies five acts. The first corresponds to jo, an auspicious and slow opening which introduces the audience to the characters and the plot. The final act, corresponding to kyu, is almost always short, providing a quick and satisfying conclusion. Through most of the Edo period, kabuki in Edo was defined by extravagance and bombast, as exemplified by stark makeup patterns, flashy costumes, fancy keren stage tricks , and bold mie poses. Kamigata kabuki, meanwhile, was much calmer and focused on naturalism and realism in acting. He is then deified, as Tenjin , kami divine spirit of scholarship, and worshipped in order to propitiate his angry spirit. Every actor has a stage name, which is different from the name they were born with. Many names are associated with certain roles or acting styles, and the new possessor of each name must live up to these expectations; there is the feeling almost of the actor not only taking a name, but embodying the spirit, style, or skill of each actor to previously hold that name. Many actors will go through at least three names over the course of their career. Most often, a number of actors will participate in a single ceremony, taking on new stage-names.

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Chapter 6 : The ballad-drama of medieval Japan - ECU Libraries Catalog

Japanese modern drama in the early 20th century, the s, consisted of Shingeki (experimental Western-style theatre), which employed naturalistic acting and contemporary themes in contrast to the stylized conventions of Kabuki and Noh.

The Lively Art, 7th edition: What is Asian Theatre? There is no single Asian theatre. Although they share several common characteristics, each theatrical form is different. What is generally considered the earliest Asian Theatre? Indian Sanskrit drama dates back to the eighth century BCE, long before the birth of classical Greek tragedy. These works are some of the earliest theatrical texts. It is the only surviving specimen of the ancient Sanskrit drama. What are some of common characteristics of Eastern Theatre? Eastern, or Asian, Theatre is More visual and sensual than literary or intellectual. A Kabuki script is seen by the Japanese as a production vehicle, not a literary text. The plays are seldom read, even in Japan. There is a strong emphasis on storytelling, but the plotting techniques of Western drama-- escalating incidents, plot reversals, climaxes --are absent. The formalized acting techniques are typically passed from father to son. Scripts and concepts which were developed three or four hundred years ago are still presented to a modern audience with minimal changes. What eastern nation is the home of both Kabuki and Noh. When was Kabuki born? What are the three categories of Kabuki plays? History plays-- jidaimono [period things] --dramatize major political events from the past-- 9th to 15th century. Dance-dramas-- shosagoto [pose things] --which are very popular, often deal with the world of spirits and animals. Describe a Kabuki theatre. Because the musicians are a part of the company they perform on the stage instead of being buried in the orchestra pit. The flat, two dimensional, painted scenery is stylized, but not abstract. It is used to give location. From a historical perspective, the Kabuki was the first theatre to use rolling wagons, an elevator stage and a turntable See the diagram on pages What is the hanamichi? The hanamichi, or "flower way," is an entrance ramp which runs from stage right to the rear of the auditorium. The Noh drama is a mysterious, tragic, usually supernatural, ceremonial music-dance-drama. There are about Noh texts. All were written about years ago by the members of one family. All Noh dramas focus on a single character, the shite who is interrogated, prompted and challenged by the waki. The Noh is not "the drama of mass entertainment. Describe a traditional Noh theatre. Modern Noh Theatre The traditonal Noh stage is an eighteen foot square platform. The audience sits in front of, and stage right of the deck. There is a bridge, the hashigakari, which leads from the dressing room to the right rear corner of the platform. A six to ten member chorus of singer-chanters is on the actors left and the four musicians, a flute and three drums, or located at the rear of the stage. A stylized image of a single dignified pine tree is painted on the back wall. See the ground plan on page and the photograph of the National Noh Theatre in Tokyo on page How has Asian theatre influenced Western drama? Starting in the middle of the twentieth century, non realistic playwrights, directors and designers began using elements of Eastern theatre in their presentations. E-mail questions and comments to Larry Wild at wildl northern.

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Chapter 7 : The Forms of Japanese Drama | Asia for Educators | Columbia University

A combination of ritual, ceremony, and drama, it incorporates acting, music, storytelling, poetry, and dance; the costumed actors often wear masks. Audience participation is common.

Traditional forms of Theatre[edit] Noh and Kyogen[edit] The early existing Kyogen scripts date from the 15th century. Kyogen was used as an intermission between Noh acts—it linked the theme of the Noh play with the modern world by means of farce and slapstick. Noh played to the high level class, but there were occasions where Noh was performed for common audiences. Unlike Noh, the performers of Kyogen do not wear masks, unless their role calls for physical transformation. Although they were both very popular forms of theatre, commoners were often in higher attendance for Kyogen performances. Both men and women were allowed to perform Kyogen until Kabuki[edit] The best known form of Japanese theatre is Kabuki. It combines music, drama, and dance. Its fame comes from the wild costumes and sword fights employed in this form until the s, real swords were used. Kabuki grew out of opposition to Noh — dramatists wanted to shock the audience with more lively and timely stories. It is told to have been first performed by Okunis in Like Noh, however, Kabuki also became a stylized, regimented art form and is still performed in the same fashion. As a matter of interest, the popular Gekidan Shinkansen, a theatrical troupe based in Tokyo today, insists it follows pure kabuki tradition by performing historical roles in a modern, noisy, and outlandish way characteristic of this theatrical method. Whether or not they represent traditional kabuki, however, remains a matter of debate and personal opinion. Bunraku[edit] Puppets and Bunraku were used in Japanese theatre as early as the Noh plays. Medieval records prove the use of puppets actually in Noh plays. The puppets were 3- to 4-foot-tall 0. The puppeteers controlling the legs and hands are dressed entirely in black, while the head puppeteer is wearing colorful clothing. Music and chanting is a popular convention of bunraku, and the shamisen player is usually considered to be the leader of the production as well as the one with the shortest hair. Modern Theatre[edit] Japanese modern drama in the early 20th century, the s, consisted of Shingeki experimental Western-style theatre, which employed naturalistic acting and contemporary themes in contrast to the stylized conventions of Kabuki and Noh. In the postwar period, there was a phenomenal growth in creative new dramatic works, which introduced fresh aesthetic concepts that revolutionized the orthodox modern theatre. Challenging the realistic, psychological drama focused on "tragic historical progress" of the Western-derived shingeki, young playwrights broke with such accepted tenets as conventional stage space, placing their action in tents, streets, and open areas and, at the extreme, in scenes played out all over Tokyo. Plots became increasingly complex, with play-within-a-play sequences, moving rapidly back and forth in time, and intermingling reality with fantasy. Dramatic structure was fragmented, with the focus on the performer, who often used a variety of masks to reflect different personae. Playwrights returned to common stage devices perfected in Noh and Kabuki to project their ideas, such as employing a narrator, who could also use English for international audiences. Major playwrights in the s were Kara Juro, Shimizu Kunio, and Betsuyaku Minoru, all closely connected to specific companies. In contrast, the fiercely independent Murai Shimako won awards throughout the world for her numerous works focusing on the Hiroshima bombing, which were frequently performed by only one or two actresses. In the s, stagecraft was refined into a more sophisticated, complex format than in the earlier postwar experiments but lacked their bold critical spirit. Tadashi Suzuki developed a unique method of performer training which integrated avant-garde concepts with classical Noh and Kabuki devices, an approach that became a major creative force in Japanese and international theatre in the s. Sho-Gekijo[edit] The s also encouraged the creation of the Sho-Gekijo, literally little theatre. Recently, new generation of Sho-Gekijo artists who are labeled as the "Generation of the Lost Decade" or the "Generation of s" are emerging. Principal artists among this generation are: Yukio Ninagawa is an internationally known Japanese director and playwright who often turns to elements of Shakespeare for inspiration. In he performed the "Shakespeare Tenpo 12Nen", an interpretation of the wildly popular British

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theatre Shakespeare Condensed: Famous actors such as Natsuki Mari and Karawa Toshiaki were involved.

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Chapter 8 : A Matter of Style: Kabuki Theatre

SOURCE: Kominz, Laurence. "Origins of Kabuki Acting in Medieval Japanese Drama." Asian Theatre Journal 5, No. 2 (Fall,): [In the following essay, Kominz maintains that the impulse.

A Brief History Created around the year , around the same time the English began to form colonies on the American continent, the history of Kabuki is as long as that of the United States and just as multi-faceted. While it barely scratches the surface, the brief description of the history of Kabuki that follows will attempt to give a general overview of the theater. Kabuki was created by Okuni, a shrine maiden from Izumo Shrine. Her performances in the dry river beds of the ancient capital of Kyoto caused a sensation and soon their scale increased and a number of rival companies arose. Early Kabuki was much different from what is seen today and was comprised mostly of large ensemble dances performed by women. Most of these women acted as prostitutes off stage and finally the government banned women from the stage in an effort to protect public morales, just one in a long history of government restrictions placed on the theater. This ban on women, though, is often seen as a good move because it necessitated the importance of skill over beauty and put more stress on drama than dance, putting Kabuki on the path to become a dramatic art form. Another development was the appearance of onnagata female role specialists, men who played women. The last quarter of the 17th century is referred to as the Genroku period and was a time of renaissance in the culture of Japanese townspeople. As the main form of theatrical entertainment for commoners, there was a great flowering of creativity in Kabuki. It was during this period that the stylizations that would form the base of Kabuki were created. The playwright Chikamatsu Monzaemon and actors like Ichikawa Danjuro and Sakata Tojuro left strong legacies that can still be seen today. It was also during this period that the close relationship between Kabuki and the Bunraku puppet theater began and the two would continue to grow while influencing each other. The decades after the Genroku period saw numerous cycles of creative periods followed by refinement. In the early 18th century, the rise of skilled playwrights in the Bunraku puppet theater helped it to briefly eclipse Kabuki in popularity. Indeed, it was remarked by one observer that it seemed as though "there was no Kabuki. The late 18th century saw a trend towards realism and the switch of the cultural center from Kyoto and Osaka to Edo. One consequence of this was the change of tastes in onnagata acting. While onnagata trained in Kyoto who had the soft, gentle nature of that city had been valued before, now audiences preferred those who showed the strong pride and nature of Edo women. An increasing audience desire for decadence as seen in the ghost plays and beautification of murder scenes marked early 19th century. The opening of Japan to the West in affected Kabuki and the rest of the country profoundly. Though it was freed from numerous government restrictions, Kabuki was faced with the important challenge of how to adapt to a changing world. Actors like Ichikawa Danjuro IX strove to raise the reputation of Kabuki, which since its beginning had been seen as base by the upper classes, while others like Onoe Kikugoro V worked to adapt old styles to new tastes. The defining moment of the period, and a symbol of the success of their efforts, was a command performance before Emperor Meiji. Though Kabuki survived government oppression during the Edo period, the loss of many young actors in World War II and censorship by occupation forces after the war, it faces its most difficult enemies in modern forms of entertainment like movies and television. Its position as a "traditional" form of theater often makes it seem stuffy, and people are not as familiar with the special peculiarities of Kabuki as they used to be. Still, popular actors continue to bring audiences into the theater and there has recently been a "Kabuki boom" centered around young people. Kabuki continues to be a form of entertainment enjoyed by a wide range of people, just as it has been for years. For more information, please send mail to Kabuki Master All material copyright Matthew Johnson, , and may not be reproduced without permission.

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Chapter 9 : A Brief History of Kabuki - Narukami - The Thunder God

Two of the greatest stars of Japan's kabuki theater reveal what has only rarely been seen, the actual acting techniques used in the most difficult and splendid of theater forms. Onoe Shōroku II and Onoe Baikō VII discuss and demonstrate their craft in conversation with the well-known author of works on Asian arts, Faubion Bowers.

Because Kabuki was related to the History of the form The Kabuki form dates from the early 17th century, when a female dancer named Okuni who had been an attendant at the Grand Shrine of Izumo, achieved popularity with parodies of Buddhist prayers. She assembled around her a troupe of wandering female performers who danced and acted. The sensuous character of the dances and the prostitution of the actors proved to be too disruptive for the government, which in banned women from performing. Young boys dressed as women then performed the programs, but this type of Kabuki was suppressed in, again because of concern for morals. Finally, older men took over the roles, and it is this form of all-male entertainment that has endured to the present day. Kabuki plays grew in sophistication, and the acting became more subtle. Eventually, by the early 18th century, Kabuki had become an established art form that was capable of the serious, dramatic presentation of genuinely moving situations. Bugaku, the dance ceremony of the imperial court, and the Noh theatre, both of great antiquity, were long the exclusive domain of the nobility and the warrior class known as samurai; Kabuki became the theatre of the townspeople and the farmers. Bugaku and Noh have a fragile elegance and an extreme subtlety of movement. Kabuki is somewhat coarse and unrestrained, and its beauty is gaudy and extravagant. During this period a special group of actors, called onnagata, emerged to play the female roles; these actors often became the most popular of their day. The audience Traditionally, a constant interplay between the actors and the spectators took place in the Kabuki theatre. The actors frequently interrupted the play to address the crowd, and the latter responded with appropriate praise or clapped their hands according to a prescribed formula. They also could call out the names of their favourite actors in the course of the performance. Because Kabuki programs ran from morning to evening and many spectators often attended for only a single play or scene, there was a constant coming and going in the theatre. At mealtimes food was served to the viewers. The programs incorporated themes and customs that reflected the four seasons or inserted material derived from contemporary events. Unlike most Western theatres, in which since the late 17th century a proscenium arch has separated actors and audience, the Kabuki performers constantly intruded on the audience. When two hanamichi, elevated passageways from the main stage to the back of the auditorium, were used, the audience was fenced in by three stages. Subject, purpose, and conventions Kabuki subject matter creates distinctions between the historical play jidaimono and the domestic play sewamono. A Kabuki program generally presents them in that order, separated by one or two dance plays featuring ghosts, courtesans, and other exotic creatures. Thus, the plays often present conflicts involving such religious ideas as the transitory nature of the world from Buddhism, and the importance of duty from Confucianism, as well as more general moral sentiments. Tragedy occurs when morality conflicts with human passions. Structurally, the plays are typically composed of two or more themes in a complex suji plot, but they lack the strong unifying element for which Western drama strives. Kabuki plays include a variety of intermingled episodes which develop toward a final dramatic climax. Despite the ease with which it can assimilate new forms, Kabuki is a very formalized theatre. It retains numerous conventions adapted from earlier forms of theatre that were performed in shrines and temples. Kabuki dance is probably the best-known feature of Kabuki. Rarely is an opportunity missed to insert dancing, whether the restrained, flowing movement of the onnagata or the exaggerated posturings of the male characters. The acting in Kabuki can be so stylized that it becomes virtually indistinguishable from dancing. At present, regular performances are held at the National Theatre in Tokyo. The city was also home to the Kabuki Theatre Kabuki-za, which closed in An office tower which would include the theatre was scheduled to be built on the site, with an opening date of Other theatres have occasional performances. Troupes of Kabuki actors also perform outside Tokyo.

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There are several such companies, but their memberships often overlap. At the National Theatre the length of an average program is about four hours. The theatre stresses the importance of the play itself, trying to maintain the historical tradition and to preserve Kabuki as a classical form. Learn More in these related Britannica articles: