

From the Forty-eight Selected Plays of Ichikawa Ennosuke III

TAIKO SANBASO

with Nagauta Hayashi Ensemble

Cast:

Hideyoshi Ichikawa Ukon

Yodo-no-Kata Ichikawa Emisaburo

Kita-no-Mandokoro Ichikawa Emiya

In the noh tradition, the ancient and sacred play *Okina* was performed by three characters, the Okina (the Patriarch), Senzai (Thousand Years), and Sanbaso (literally the Third Man), to pray for peace and prosperity. Deriving from this tradition, in kabuki there is a ceremonial dance called *Kotobuki Shiki Sanbaso* that is often performed at the opening of a new theater because it is a solemn but delightful number fitting to the occasion. And in kabuki, the “Sanbaso” became a popular theme and several variations of this dance were created and categorized as “sanbaso-mono”. *Taiko Sanbaso* is a version where the shogun Toyotomi Hideyoshi, referred to as Taiko Hideyoshi (*taiko* is a title for a regent), dances the role of Sanbaso. It was premiered in 1981 at the Tokyo Meijiza Theatre by Ichikawa Ennosuke (current Ichikawa En-o II) and the dance became one of the “Forty-eight Selected Plays of Ichikawa Ennosuke III”.

The scene opens up to the preparation of the ceremonial occasion of the completion of Osaka Castle. Toyotomi Hideyoshi has decided to perform the Sanbaso dance on this special event. The festivities begin and Hideyoshi's wife Kita-no-Mandokoro, in the role of the Okina, and his mistress Yodo-no-Kata, in the role of Senzai, appear and being a solemn dance. Yodo-no-Kata diverts to a more festive dance, followed by Kita-no-Mandokoro who dedicates a dance to pray for long-lasting peace and eternity of the Osaka Castle. Then the main personage Hideyoshi appears wearing the traditional *eboshi* hat and a scarlet costume. His dance is much more animated and lively, shaking the clusters of bells in his hand. But into this festive event the remnants of the enemy clan approach to seek revenge, but Hideyoshi being a well trained warrior fends off his attackers while he dances. This style of staging is called a *shosa-date*, where a stylized combat scene is choreographed into the movements. Hideyoshi completes his offertory dance and wishes eternal prosperity at the foot of the prestigious castle he has just completed.

Ichikawa Ennosuke IV
Ichikawa Chusha IX
Name-taking Performance

KOJO

Cast :

Ichikawa Ennosuko

Ichikawa Chusha

Kataoka Hidetaro

and Other Main Actors

As June of 2012 marked the 50th anniversary of the Passing Away of Ichikawa En-o I and his son Ichikawa Danshiro III, a name-taking ceremony took place to mourn for their death, and at the same time the actors took on the name of Ichikawa Ennosuke IV, and Ichikawa Chusha IX. Today, actors will line up on stage to celebrate Ennosuke's and Chusha's name-taking ceremony.

Ippon Gatana Dohyo Iri

(The Entrance into the Sumo Wrestling Ring, with Sword)

by Hasegawa Shin

in two acts, five scenes

Cast :

Otsuta.....Ichikawa Ennosuke

Komagata MoheiIchikawa Chusha

Nami Ichiri Giju, a gang boss.....Ichikawa Enya

Nekichi..... Ichikawa Tsukinosuke

Young boatman..... Ichikawa Kotaro

Yahachi.....Ichikawa Enshiro

Carpenter.....Ichikawa Juen
Old boatman..... Bando Takesaburo
Tatsusaburo, Otsuta's husband.....Ichikawa Monnosuke

Background :

This play was first performed in 1931 starring Onoe Kikugoro VI. It was written by Hasegawa Shin showing his nostalgic, but achingly realistic world of petty gamblers, down and out geisha and other people on the bottom of society.

Synopsis :

Act I

Scene 1: In front of the Abikoya, a low-class restaurant at the Toride stop in the Mito Highway

A crowd gathers as the bully Yahachi picks fights. He tries to fight Mohei, who is an apprentice sumo wrestler. But Mohei has been disowned by his teacher and is weak and starving. Yahachi thinks this will be an easy win, but Mohei defeats him by butting him in the stomach with his head.

Otsuta has been watching from the second floor. She is drunk because she sees no future to her life. She talks with Mohei and learns of his predicament, but no matter how bad things get, Mohei won't give up his hopes. This inspires Otsuta and she gives him some money and her hair ornaments that he can pawn, but she makes him promise to be a success as a sumo wrestler and says that she will go and cheer him on.

Act I

Scene 2: The Tone River Crossing

Mohei eats some sweet potatoes and encounters Yahachi who wants to get revenge. But having eaten, Mohei handily defeats him.

Act II

Scene 1: Ten years later, a small, shipbuilding yard by the Fuse River

Mohei never made it as a sumo wrestler, but is now a successful, powerful gang and he has come in search of Otsuta to repay her favor. She is living in poverty nearby with her daughter. Her husband Tatsusaburo is a woodcarver and has wandered away, but is coming back to Otsuta Tatsusaburo tried to raise money by cheating at dice at the gambling den of the boss Nami Ichiri Giju. When Mohei appears on the scene members

of Giju's gang are searching for Tatsusaburo and mistake Mohei for him, but Mohei defeats them and he is angry at being attacked mistakenly. After Mohei is gone, Tatsusaburo appears and laments the desperation that made him try to cheat at dice. He goes to look for Otsuta as well.

Act II

Scene 2: Otsuta's house

Members of Giju's gang appear looking for Tatsusaburo, but she says that she hasn't seen him. After they are gone, Tatsusaburo sneaks in and the family is finally reunited. But Mohei comes and warns them that the gang is about to attack. He gives Otsuta a large sum of money to repay her for her kindness so long ago. She accepts it, although she can't remember who he is. She keeps trying to recall who he is when the gang members attack. Mohei counterattacks and this makes Otsuta remember.

Act II

Scene 3: Outside Otsuta's house

Mohei fights off the entire gang, including the gang boss, Giju. He helps Otsuta and her family to escape to safety. Alone, Mohei says that for years he wanted to become a sumo wrestler so that Otsuta could cheer him on. As he could not be, with a mixture of pride and shame, he says that this is the frivolous entrance into the sumo wrestling ring, all that he can do to reward the sake of Otsuta.

Historical Background of Kabuki

The word “Kabuki” literally means song, dance and acting and is a combination of all three arts with the main emphasis on the last. its origins can be traced back to a woman named *Izumo no Okuni* who popularized a new form of dance drama, known as *Okuni Kabuki*, in Kyoto at the beginning of the 17th century. After the appearance of professional groups of women specializing in this form of entertainment, *Okuni Kabuki* was eventually suppressed by the government of the day as having a bad influence on public morals. it was soon replaced by *Wakashu Kabuki* performed by young male actors, but this was also banned on grounds of immorality.

Toward the end of the 17th century, however, Kabuki began to assume respectability and take on its present form, ceasing to be a mere dance drama and developing a repertory of first-class plays ranging from those with a historical background to those depicting contemporary life. The actors, though all male, were no longer restricted to youths and gradually formed themselves into professional families who handed down their acting skills from generation to generation. There emerged a certain type of actor, known as “*onnagata*,” who specialized in playing female roles.

With the establishment of Kabuki theaters, many innovations were made in the structure of the stage. The most notable of these was the “*hanamichi*,” a raised passage way leading through the audience from the stage to the back of the theater. It was primarily designed to highlight the entrances and exits of the principal actors.

The music in Kabuki is mainly provided by the three-stringed *shamisen*, with the addition of flutes and drums depending on the type of play. There are also singers who carry the narrative.

Kabuki dictionary

Aragoto — the masculine “rough style” of acting associated with the Ichikawa *Danjuro* line of actors and typified by exaggerated movement, makeup, costume and diction.

Geza — background music played from behind the slatted wall on the left of the stage. *Geza* employs a great variety of instruments such as the *shamisen*, drums, gongs, flutes, and bells. The *geza* musicians provide stylized sound effects which add immeasurably to the atmosphere and character of Kabuki performances.

Hanamichi — literally “flower path.” The walk-way running through the auditorium from the green room to the main stage. Used for important entrances and exits.

Jidaimono — period plays set in Japan’s real or legendary past prior to the Edo period (1603-1868).

Kabuki — written with the three characters (歌舞伎) that mean “song,” “dance,” and “acting.”

Kabuki Juhachiban — the “Eighteen Favorite” plays of the Ichikawa line of actors, mostly in the *aragoto* style of acting.

Kakegoe — a form of appreciation called out to the actors by highly knowledgeable members of the audience. Most commonly shouted is the actor’s *yago* or generation number. *Ichikawa Danjuro XII*, for example, would be “Narita-ya!,” his *yoga*. Callers may also shout “*Juni-daime!*” (“The Twelfth”). The calling is usually timed to an actor’s entrance or to the subtle and important pauses during a speech, or else during dramatic poses such as a mic. The callers are almost exclusively male and are called *Omuko-san*, “great distant people” because they traditionally call from the cheapest and most distant seats (third or fourth floor) from the stage.

Ki — also know as *hyoshigi*. Wooden blocks, most commonly struck together to signal the opening and closing of the curtain. .

Koken — formally dressed stage assistants who discreetly assist the actors in both plays and dances by handing them props or adjusting their dress, makeup or wig.

Kurogo — similar to *koken* but usually dressed completely in black and traditionally considered invisible. The role of the *kurogo* is less formal than that of the *koken* and is more one of keeping the stage tidy.

Mie — poses at climactic moments involving rotating, nodding movements of the head and the crossing of one eye in a powerful glare.

Onnagata — actors who *specialise* in female roles.

Sewamono — “domestic plays” which deal with the everyday life of the *chonin*, the townspeople in feudal Japan.

Shosagoto — dances. Together with *jidaimono* and *sewamono*, one of the three main categories of Kabuki play.

Tachimawari — stylized, choreographed fight scenes, usually with musical accompaniment. The blows of the sword or hand are mimed to the beating of the *tsuke*.

Tachiyaku — actors of male roles.

Tsuke — the beating of two wooden blocks onto a board at the far right of the stage and done to punctuate and emphasise such movements as mic poses, walking, running and *tachimawari*.

Yago — the “acting house name” which all Kabuki have and which they share with other members of the same acting family, and which is often shouted as *kakegoe*. Examples include, *Narita-ya* (成田屋), *Harima-ya* (播磨屋), *Korai-ya* (高麗屋), *Kyo-ya* (京屋), *Matsushima-ya* (松嶋屋), *Narikoma-ya* (成駒屋), *Nakamura-ya* (中村屋), *Otowa-ya* (音羽屋), *Tennoji-ya* (天王寺屋), and *Yamato-ya* (大和屋).