



dance music theater

Cal Performances

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY

SchoolTime 07/08



Study Guide

Bunraku—The National Puppet Theater of Japan

Monday, October 15, 2007 at 11:00 a.m.

Zellerbach Hall



dance music theater

Performances

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY

About Cal Performances and *SchoolTime*

The mission of Cal Performances is to inspire, nurture and sustain a lifelong appreciation for the performing arts. Cal Performances, the performing arts presenter of the University of California, Berkeley, fulfills this mission by presenting, producing and commissioning outstanding artists, both renowned and emerging, to serve the University and the broader public through performances and education and community programs. In 2005/06 Cal Performances celebrated 100 years on the UC Berkeley Campus.

Our *SchoolTime* program cultivates an early appreciation for and understanding of the performing arts amongst our youngest audiences, with hour-long, daytime performances by the same world-class artists who perform as part of the main season. Teachers have come to rely on *SchoolTime* as an integral and important part of the academic year.



Cal Performances Education and Community Programs Sponsors

Cal Performances' Education and Community Programs are supported by American Express Company Foundation, California Arts Council, California Mortgage & Realty, Design Community & Environment, Evelyn & Walter Haas, Jr. Fund, Orton Development Inc., Sharon & Barclay Simpson, Pacific National Bank, The Wallace Foundation, Bernard E. & Alba Witkin Charitable Trust, and The Zellerbach Family Foundation.

Welcome

September 25, 2007

Dear Educators and Students,

Welcome to Cal Performance's *SchoolTime*! On **Monday, October 15, 2007 at 11:00 a.m.** your class will attend the SchoolTime performance of **Bunraku —The National Puppet Theater of Japan** at Zellerbach Hall on the UC Berkeley campus.

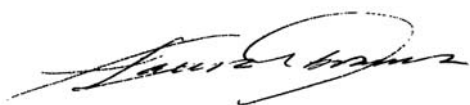
For the first time in almost 25 years, The National Puppet Theater of Japan returns to Berkeley to perform an extraordinary, centuries-old form of Japanese puppet theater called Bunraku. Weaving together three distinct and highly refined artistic disciplines: *yoruri* (ballad narration), *shamisen* instrumental music and *ningyo tsukai* (puppet manipulation), these master performers reveal the multidimensional complexity and stunning beauty of this unique art form. A demonstration and discussion of the puppet techniques will accompany a performance of the classic Bunraku play, *Date Musume Koi no Higanoko* (Oshichi of the Fire Watch Tower), a play that was first performed in 1773.

This study guide will prepare your students for their field trip to Zellerbach Hall. Your students can actively participate at the performance by:

- OBSERVING how the puppeteers operate the puppets to make them seem lifelike
- LISTENING to the expressiveness of the narrator and the instrumental music
- THINKING ABOUT how culture, emotions and ideas are expressed through this style of theater
- REFLECTING on the sounds, sights, and performance skills experienced at the theater

We look forward to seeing you at *SchoolTime*!

Sincerely,



Laura Abrams
Director of Education
& Community Programs



Rica Anderson
Education Programs Administrator

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1 Theater Etiquette

Be prepared and arrive early. Ideally you should arrive at the theater 30 to 45 minutes before the show. Allow for travel time and parking, and plan to be in your seats at least 15 minutes before the performance begins.

Be aware and remain quiet. The theater is a “live” space—you can hear the performers easily, but they can also hear you, and you can hear other audience members, too! Even the smallest sounds, like rustling papers and whispering, can be heard throughout the theater, so it’s best to stay quiet so that everyone can enjoy the performance without distractions. The international sign for “Quiet Please” is to silently raise your index finger to your lips.

Show appreciation by applauding. Applause is the best way to show your enthusiasm and appreciation. Performers return their appreciation for your attention by bowing to the audience at the end of the show. It is always appropriate to applaud at the end of a performance, and it is customary to continue clapping until the curtain comes down or the house lights come up.

Participate by responding to the action onstage. Sometimes during a performance, you may respond by laughing, crying or sighing. By all means, feel free to do so! Appreciation can be shown in many different ways, depending upon the art form. For instance, an audience attending a string quartet performance will sit very quietly, while the audience at a gospel concert may be inspired to participate by clapping and shouting.

Concentrate to help the performers. These artists use concentration to focus their energy while on stage. If the audience is focused while watching the performance, they feel supported and are able to do their best work. They can feel that you are with them!

Please note: *Backpacks and lunches are not permitted in the theater. Bags will be provided for lobby storage in the event that you bring these with you. There is absolutely no food or drink permitted in the seating areas. Recording devices of any kind, including cameras, cannot be used during performances. Please remember to turn off your cell phone.*



2 About the Performance

For the *SchoolTime* performance on Monday, October 15, The National Puppet Theater of Japan will present, ***Date Musume Koi no Higanoko (Oshichi of the Fire Watch Tower)***. This piece tells the dramatic tale of the daring Oshichi, the greengrocer's daughter who, on a snowy night, starts a fire in town and then climbs a tower to sound an alarm in order to save her secret lover. This legendary "love crime" took place in 1681 and has become a staple in the repertoire of both Bunraku and Kabuki theater. Written by Suga Sensuke, Matsuda Wakichi and Wakatake Fuemi, the play was first performed at the Kitahorie-no-shibai Theatre, Osaka, in 1773.

The program includes a brief demonstration of the finely coordinated techniques of puppetry (***ningyo tsukai***), musicians playing three-string lutes (***shamisen***) and ballad narrators (***yoruri***). Prominent film and theater scholar, Peter Grilli will also lead an engaging overview and discussion of Bunraku.

For the first time in more than two decades, The National Puppet Theatre of Japan, internationally-acclaimed as the world's foremost Bunraku ensemble, returns to the United States to visit a few select cities as part of a national tour supported by the government of Japan. The Osaka-based company of expert puppeteers, musicians and narrators will perform classic Bunraku masterworks.

The 33-member company is made up of 16 puppeteers, musicians and narrators, and an additional touring staff of 17 wig masters, costumers, and stage technicians.



*Love is like a leaping flame, blazing where it will.
Consuming all before it, leaving ash. No snow or ice
can stop its burning path. – from Oshichi of the Fire
Watch Tower*

The traditional art of Bunraku puppetry traces its origins to 17th century Japan when the three distinct and highly refined artistic disciplines of ***yoruri*** (ballad narration) ***shamisen*** instrumental music, and ***ningyo tsukai***, (the art of puppet manipulation), were brought together. Each nearly life-size puppet is manipulated by three puppeteers, moving together in such seamless coordination that the puppets seem human in all their actions and emotions. A Bunraku performance is a multi-dimensional feast for the eyes, the ears and the imagination, for when masters of the form weave these elements of story, movement and music together, the true magic of Bunraku is revealed.

3 About the Artists

The National Puppet Theatre

In 1963, **Bunraku Kyokai** (the Bunraku Association) was formed in Japan to oversee the preservation and support of the ancient art form of Bunraku. Then, in 1984, to commemorate the art form's 300th anniversary, Bunraku Kyokai, Osaka Prefecture, Osaka City and the Kansai Economic Association worked in collaboration to open Japan's National Puppet Theatre in Osaka. Since that time, The National Puppet Theatre performs nine months each year, alternating between The National Bunraku Theatre in Osaka and the National Theatre in Tokyo.

Officially designated an "Important Cultural Asset of Japan," The National Puppet Theatre is the only full-time, professional repertory puppet troupe operating in Japan. The company's performers include narrators, musicians, and puppeteers. Unlike Kabuki actors, who inherit their craft and position from their fathers, Bunraku performers need no pedigree, only skill. However, the acquisition of that skill is a lifetime undertaking.

Among the company's performers are four "Living National Treasures," who were awarded this title by the Japanese government. Recognized for their skill and dedication to their craft, these master artists have been entrusted with transmitting their knowledge to the next generation of artists.

In addition to the performers who appear on stage, the company includes numerous unseen **urakata** or "people of the back": the off-stage musicians, wig masters, keepers of the puppet heads,



Puppet masters and National Living Treasures bring the characters to life, sharing passionate and tragic tales.

Designated as a Living National Treasure, Tsuruzawa Enza plays the shamisen in a soft, sensitive and sensuous style.

Narrator, and Living National Treasure, Takemoto Koshijidayu uses his whole being to express the essence of a character.





prop masters, stage assistants and costumers.

Bunraku's popularity continues to grow. In Tokyo, The National Puppet Theatre's performances sell out regularly. Worldwide, appreciation and interest for Bunraku is on the rise. In 2003, Bunraku was declared a "Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity" by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).



Bunraku — The National Puppet Theatre of Japan

Tour Chairman

Shimomura Susumu

Chanters

Takemoto Tsukomadayu

Toyotake Rosetayu

Takemoto Aikodayu

Shamisen Musicians

Takezawa Danshichi

Toyosawa Tomisuke

Takezawa Dango

Toyosawa Ryouji

Puppeteers

Yoshida Kazuo

Yoshida Tamame

Yoshida Seizaburo

Yoshida Kazusuke

Yoshida Tamaka

Kiritake Monhide

Yoshida Tamasho

Yoshida Tamayo

Percussion

Mochizuki Tamenari Ensemble

4 About the Art Form

Bunraku Puppet Theatre

Guiding Questions:

- ◆ What makes Bunraku a unique form of theater?
- ◆ Name an important process in creating a Bunraku puppet. What additional elements help to bring the puppet to life?
- ◆ How the narrator and the shamisen enrich the performance?

Along with Kabuki, Noh and Kyogen, Bunraku is one of the four forms of Japanese classical theater. Bunraku is also called *ningyo joruri*; *ningyo* means “doll” or “puppet,” and *joruri* refers to a style of dramatic narrative chanting accompanied by the three-stringed instrument, the *shamisen*.

Bunraku has often been described as an art of threes and this combination of interlocking “triangles” is what continues to fascinate audiences. The spellbinding coordination of three puppeteers manipulating one doll; the unity achieved by the three independent components of movement, words and music; and the intersecting lines of communication — between puppeteer and narrator, narrator and *shamisen* player, musician and puppet — offer complexities not found in any other theater in the world.

The Puppets

The size of a Bunraku puppet depends on the gender and age of the character, but they are generally between two-and-a-half to four feet tall. The



puppets can weigh anywhere from 10 pounds for a small female puppet to 40 pounds for a warrior character. The puppet’s body consists of a wooden head, a shoulder board with loofahs attached at either end to create well-defined shoulders, a trunk, arms and legs.

Puppet heads are called *kashira* and are carved from a special type of wood called *hinoki* (cypress). This wood is soaked in a stream for three months and then stored for five years before it is ready to be carved. Specially trained *kashira* carvers start with a solid block of wood and carefully carve it according to their rough sketch. When they finish creating a shape for the head, the carvers split the solid head into two blocks just in front of the ears and hollow out both blocks. The head is then attached to a *dogushi* (grip stick), which fits through a hole





Bunraku puppets showcase a variety of characters that have a specific age, social class, personality, and facial characteristics. Left to right: 1. Beautiful young countess of high class; 2. Young maiden or wife; 3. Comedic middle aged maiden; 4. Young and handsome teenager; 5. Large-minded samuri; 6. Handsome and noble man; 7. Passionate, tragic and handsome hero; 8. Strong, wise and noble older man; 9. Trustworthy man from town; 10. Comedic and somewhat likeable villain; 11. Minor villain; 12. Big hearted, noble and handsome supporting hero.

in the shoulder board. While female puppets are often made with immovable faces, the grip sticks in the heads of male puppets are fitted with control springs to move the puppet's eyes expressively, raise his eyebrows in surprise, and open and close his mouth. In plays with supernatural themes, a puppet may be constructed so that its face can quickly transform into that of a demon.

Arms and legs are separately attached by strings from the shoulder board to allow for distinct and subtle movement of the limbs. A *sashigane* (long wooden stick) is attached to the puppet's left hand, so that the left-hand puppeteer can easily move the puppet's arm and hand without disturbing the movements of the other puppeteers. The puppet's costume fits over the shoulder board and trunk, and a bamboo hoop is hung from the trunk to form the hips.

Since female puppets wear long **kimonos** that completely cover the lower half of their bodies, most are not made with legs. To represent a female puppet's feet, the foot puppeteer places his fists in the hem of the doll's robe and creates the illusion of walking.

At the start of each performance run, the head puppeteer chooses the characters' heads from a selection of over 300 Bunraku puppet heads. These heads are divided into male and female, and then classified into categories according to their age, social class, and distinguishing personality traits. Each head is given a specific name reflecting its special characteristics.

The *kashira tanto* (master of the puppet head) repaints or repairs the heads in preparation for the performance. Then, an appropriate costume is sewn around the doll and the puppet's wig is dressed in a style befitting the role.

The puppets' wigs are called *kazura*. The wig masters, or *tokoyama*, create the hairstyle, or *keppatsu*, for each character, using only water and beeswax to hold the hair in place. Once the hairstyle is complete, the *kazura* is attached to the puppet head. *Tokoyamas* mostly use human hair, but will sometimes add hair from a yak's tail to give a wig more volume.

The puppet's elaborate costumes are specially selected for a particular character. Like a real *kimono*, the

puppet's costume has many layers including an ***juban*** (under robe), an ***kitsuke*** (inner kimono), an ***haori*** (outer jacket) or ***uchikake*** (outer robe), the ***eri*** (collar), and the ***obi*** (belt-like sash). There is a hole in the back of the costume to allow the puppeteer to manipulate the doll.



The Puppeteers

As three puppeteers are needed to operate one puppet, each puppeteer manipulates specific areas of the puppet's body. The ***omo-zukai***, (head puppeteer) operates the puppet's head and face by holding the grip stick with levers in his left hand; with his right hand he moves the puppet's right hand. The ***hidari-zukai***, (left-hand puppeteer) uses his right hand to maneuver the doll's left hand and picks up props the character will use with his left hand. Lastly, the ***ashi-zukai***, (foot puppeteer) creates the movements of the doll's legs and feet with his hands and stamps his feet for sound effects.



While all three puppeteers must work in perfect harmony to create a puppet's natural and expressive movement, the ***omo-zukai*** is chiefly responsible for giving the doll a lifelike grace and vitality since his left hand supports the weighty head and "spine" of the puppet.

Bunraku puppeteers usually wear black robes and head coverings called ***kurogo*** during a performance as the color black signifies "nothingness" and allows the puppeteer to "disappear" behind the puppets. However, as the ***omo-zukai*** is a true master of the craft, audiences want to see him and acknowledge his ability. Therefore, an ***omo-zukai*** nearly always remains unhooded. This visibility is called ***dezukai***. He may wear a ***kimono*** marked with his ***montsuki*** (family crest) and a divided skirt called a ***hakama***. If the

performance involves spectacle, he may wear a special type of ***hakama*** skirt with a matching ***kataginu*** (broad-shouldered outer vest). The head puppeteer also wears ***butai geta*** (high wooden straw-soled stage clogs) so he can work comfortably above his two associates and slide quietly across the stage.

Many years of training are required to become a Bunraku puppeteer. Novice puppeteers begin their training by concentrating on the puppets' feet for about 10 years. Once the feet have been mastered, the puppeteer progresses to the left hand. "Ten years for the feet, ten years for the left," as an old saying goes. Bunraku performers say it takes at least 25 years to attain the status of ***omo-zukai***.



The Narration

The *yoruri* chanter who tells the story as the action unfolds, is called a ***tayu***. Stamina and expressiveness are considered his most important attributes. He sets the scene, describes the emotions of the characters, recites the dialogue, delivers the narrative and describes the background behind the onstage events. Usually there is only one *tayu* on stage. Since he recites all of the characters' parts, from young maiden to ferocious warrior, the *tayu* needs to command great tonal range and versatility.

Vocally, he must be able to change instantly from a suggestive whisper to rage, from bass to soprano, from melody to conversational chatter. A senior *tayu* may be responsible for as many as 14 roles in a single scene. When the narrative reaches an emotional or dramatic crescendo, he will often rise on his knees and gesticulate.

Because of the intensity of the *tayu's* performance, his posture and clothing are very important. Although he appears to be seated while on stage, he is actually sitting on his heels while supported by a small wooded stool. Sitting this way frees his abdomen from pressure and helps his breathing. The *tayu* curls his toes under his feet so that he is in an active and alert position and can project his voice better. When dressing, he places a bag filled with beans and sand in his kimono as a weight to counterbalance gravity when he leans forward.



The Music

The *shamisen* is the main instrument played during bunraku performances. The musician sits on the narrator's left playing the ***futazao*** (wide-necked) ***shamisen***, a three-stringed musical instrument that is larger and heavier than the traditional *shamisen* and has a lower pitch and a fuller, more resonant tone. Bunraku music has many complex changes of tempo and consists mainly of stylized motifs and fixed musical phrases, chords or single notes. Occasionally melodic sections of greater length are played to establish atmosphere or to accompany a lament, song or dance.

Like the *tayu*, the *shamisen* player's job is to accompany the action of the puppets, to express the emotions, atmosphere and tension of the onstage story. He assists the *tayu* in his narration by giving the drama emphasis, punctuation and texture. His music precedes or concludes the characters' actions and serves as a musical bridge for the puppets' movement during pauses in narration. Since the puppeteers cannot see the *tayu* and *shamisen* player, the performers cannot visually cue each other, therefore, it is up to the *shamisen* player to set the pace of the performance.



The Stage

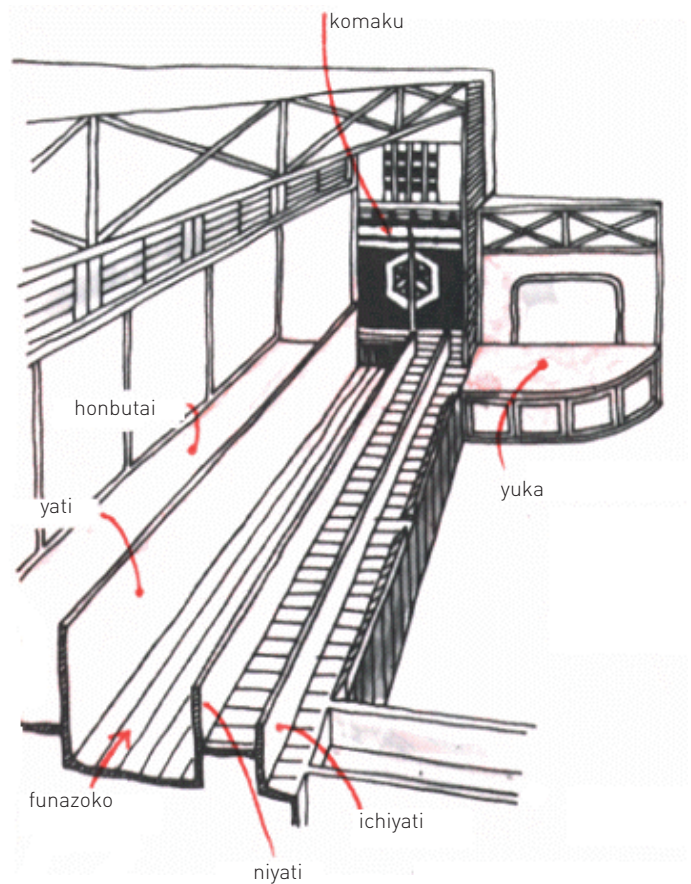
The Bunraku playing area consists of the musician's stage called the **yuka**, and a multi-level stage for the puppeteers. The musicians' stage is on the right side of the playing area and extends into the audience. On this stage is a special revolving platform upon which the *tayu* and *shamisen* player sit and make their first appearance. They perform on the platform, which revolves to bring them backstage when they are finished, while placing the next performers onstage.

The puppet stage is called the **honbutai**. On it are three stage partitions called **tesuri** (railings) which run from the back to the front of the stage. The **yatai** (set) and **kakiwari** (painted backdrop) are attached to the upstage partition. The area in the middle of the stage is called the pit or **funazoko** which means "ship bottom" in Japanese. The pit area is one step lower than the main stage and is where the puppeteers stand. This allows the puppeteers to hold the puppets so that the puppets' feet move along the railings in front of the pit, creating the illusion that they are actually walking upon the ground.

The puppets enter and exit through **komaku** (small black curtains) set up on either side of their stage. Just above these small curtains are rooms that are screened-off from the audience's view by

Top: Elaborate design and painting of the set helps bring the Bunraku to life

Below: Bunraku stage design



bamboo blinds. These rooms are called **misuuchi**. In the room to the audience's right sit the apprentice chanters and shamisen players. In the other room members of the **hayashi** (orchestra), perform on flutes, stick drums, hand drums and bells, creating atmospheric sounds like wind, rain, and flowing rivers.

5 The History of Bunraku

Guiding Questions:

- ◆ Explain how street performers, Takemoto Gidayu and Chikamatsu Monzaemon influenced Bunraku.
- ◆ What are some popular themes in Bunraku? How is Japanese culture reflected in these themes?

Long before Bunraku was performed in theaters, the seeds of the art form could be seen in the entertainment of Japan's street performers. During the Heian period (794-1185), storytellers and puppeteers called *kugutsumawashi* traveled around Japan playing for donations. Using a box around his neck as a stage, the puppeteer would perform stories by manipulating two hand puppets. Storytellers chanted popular epics of the time, usually about military themes, while accompanying themselves on a *biwa* (a type of lute).



In the 1500's, the *shamisen* replaced the *biwa* as the instrument of choice, and the *yoruri* style developed. The name *yoruri* came from one of the earliest and most popular works, the legend of a romance between warrior Minamoto no Yoshitsune and the beautiful Lady Joruri. Puppetry combined with chanting and *shamisen* accompaniment grew in popularity in 17th century **Edo** (what is now Tokyo) where it received the patronage of the shogun and other military leaders. Many of the plays at this time depicted the adventures of Kimpira, a legendary hero renowned for his bold, outlandish exploits.

The Golden Age of Bunraku

When the chanter, Takemoto Gidayu (1651-1714), opened the Takemoto-za Puppet Theater in Osaka in 1684, *ningyo yoruri* (puppetry with chanting and music) flourished. Audiences were drawn to Gidayu's style of storytelling which revealed the characters' deep emotions,

and to his powerful chanting style, called **gidayu-bushi**. The public also loved the work of playwright Chikamatsu Monzaemon, who began writing **jidai-mono** (historical dramas) for Gidayu in 1685.

Drawn to Bunraku by Gidayu's work, Chikamatsu's plays explored the epic and fantastical style of older tales while including distinctly human elements. Chikamatsu also pioneered a new type of play that was hugely successful in commercial towns, the **sewamono**, or domestic drama about the merchant class. Central to his plays was the tension and tragedy resulting from a character's struggle to suppress personal feelings (**ninjo**) in order to uphold the Confucian concept of loyalty and social obligation (**giri**). A month after a shop clerk and a courtesan committed double suicide, Chikamatsu dramatized the incident in *The Love Suicides at Sonezaki*, a play that spawned many other works on this subject and triggered real-life love-suicides in Japan.

While domestic dramas like the love-suicide plays became a favorite subject for puppet theater, historical dramas continued to be popular and became more sophisticated as audiences came to expect the psychological depth seen in the *sewamono*.

Bunraku and Kabuki

Throughout the 18th century, Bunraku developed both a competitive and cooperative relationship with **Kabuki**, Japan's traditional theater. Kabuki performed many Bunraku works, especially those of Chikamatsu, while lavish Kabuki-style productions were staged as Bunraku. In addition, Kabuki actors began to imitate the distinctive movements of Bunraku puppets and

the chanting style of the *tayu*, while Bunraku puppeteers adapted the stylistic flourishes of famous Kabuki actors into their performances.

Although puppeteers borrowed from the formalized movement of Kabuki, they began to strive towards realism in their puppets' look and expressiveness. They created new puppets with moving eyes, eyebrows and mouths. Then, attempting to move the puppet in a more fluid and lifelike way, Bunraku pioneered the technique of three puppeteers working together to operate a single puppet. This method was first used in the play *Kuzu no ha*, which premiered in 1734.



Above: Actors Nakamura Ganjiro and Nakamura Kanjaku of Shochiku Grand Kabuki – Chikamatsu-za perform *Sonezaki Shinju* (*Love Suicides*).

Left: Bunraku puppets. Notice the costume, wig and make-up similarities between Kabuki and Bunraku theater.

The Decline and Rebirth of Bunraku

Bunraku lost its popularity to Kabuki in the late 18th century and many of the established theaters closed. In 1872, a puppeteer named Uemura Bunrakukken established a theater called **Bunraku-za**. The art form of Bunraku, previously called *ningyo joruri*, took its name from this theater.

After World War II, Bunraku depended on government support for its survival. However, its popularity has increased over the years. Bunraku is thriving again in Tokyo and Osaka, and performance tours by The National Puppet Theater of Japan have been enthusiastically received in cities all around the world.



The National Bunraku Theater in Osaka, Japanan



Illustration from 1840 of Otome Bunraku

While Bunraku puppeteers traditionally have been male, women puppeteers and puppet builders participated in **Otome Bunraku** (female Bunraku). Instead of three puppeteers moving one puppet, in this style of Bunraku only one person operates the puppet. The puppeteer fixes the puppet to her body and wears a kind of head-brace with wires that attach to either side of the puppet's head. This allows any head movement made by the puppeteer to be mirrored by the puppet. The hands of the puppet may have movable joints, or the puppeteer may use her own hands to represent the puppet's by slipping them through the puppet's sleeves.

6 Learning Activities

Visual Art (Grades 2-12)

Kakiwari (Bunraku Backdrop)

Visit the Asian Art museum and the Japanese Tea Garden in San Francisco. Or, you can look at images from the internet (for example, visit the Asian Art museum's on-line gallery, search "Japanese painting" on Google Images, or visit: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Japanese_painting.)

Then, using colored markers, crayons or paints, create a possible backdrop for a Bunraku play. Your backdrop could show a historic city or country scene; try to include a building or house similar to something you saw in the Japanese pictures you viewed.

You can work together in groups to create a large mural-style picture.

History and Visual Art (Grades K-8)

Bunraku Paper & Stick Puppets

After doing some research on Japanese history (see the resources section for ideas) pick a specific time period, and perhaps a specific city or village in Japan, and have a class brainstorm about what kind of people lived in that place at that time. For example, you might have Shogun warriors, male and female entertainers, farmers, merchants, etc. What would each of these people wear? (Teachers, try to provide reference pictures from the internet or a book.)

Choose a "character" to draw or paint on heavy paper (younger students may color in an existing picture, some examples on page 14). After you've finished your drawing, place it on top of a sheet of construction paper and with scissors, cut around the outline of your drawing. You should now have a cut-out of your drawing and a cut-out of the shape of your drawing in construction paper.

Making sure your cut-outs are aligned, glue the top third of a bamboo skewer, popsicle stick or wooden chopstick between the two pieces of paper. Let the other two-thirds of the stick extend beneath your drawing so you can hold the paper puppet by the stick and move it around.



Science (Grades 3-12)

Skeleton Studies

Puppet makers must have a solid working knowledge of the human body and skeletal system in order to make puppets with joints that move in a realistic way. Look at a human skeleton (or a plastic version of one) carefully and with the class try to name each bone. (Teachers can also give students a picture of a skeleton, with names for all the bones, available at: <http://www-personal.une.edu.au/~pbrown3/skeleton.pdf>)

Using popsicle sticks to represent the bones, create your own version of a skeleton. You can glue the “bones” together or hammer holes in the ends of your sticks and fasten the sticks together with string or pipe cleaners to make moveable “joints.” (Teachers may want to pre-perforate these sticks, or purchase craft building sticks with holes.) Write the name of each bone on the popsicle stick representing that bone.

Language Arts and Theater (Grades 5-12)

Tales from Plays or Books

Bunraku plays often depict dramatic themes like revenge or suicide. In the last century, Bunraku puppeteers have performed works from the Western stage, including Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* and several of the Greek tragedies. You can see how a play like *Romeo and Juliet*, a story of doomed love, might be attractive to Bunraku performers. Can you think of other Western plays or literature that might be performed as Bunraku?

Choose one of these stories and write a brief synopsis of the tale. Now imagine you are the *tayu* or chanter telling this story for a Bunraku performance. How would you write it so that it would be a compelling narrative to accompany the puppets’ actions? Rewrite the story with this in mind, you might describe how the characters are feeling and add what they would say. Your narration does not need to be longer than a few paragraphs.

Working in groups of 5, share your stories, and choose one to perform. Among your group, decide who will be the narrator, the “puppet,” the ***omo-zukai***, (head and right hand puppeteer), the ***hidari-zukai***, (left-hand puppeteer) and the ***ashi-zukai***, (foot puppeteer). As the narrator reads the story, the puppeteers can gently and slowly move the “puppet” to act out the scene.

Variation: Found Object Puppet

Create a “found object” puppet from a long sleeved shirt or jacket (preferably stuffed with cloth or newspaper), a wooden or plastic mask, or a paper mask mounted on a stick, and a pair of shoes. While the narrator reads the story, one person should operate the head (the mask) and the right arm (right sleeve) of the “puppet,” one person should operate the left arm (left sleeve) and hold the neck of the shirt. Tucking the bottom of the shirt into the two shoes, the third puppeteer should move the “feet” of the puppet.

Resources

Artist web sites:

<http://www.bunraku.or.jp>

Bunraku:

<http://www.japan-zone.com/culture/bunraku.shtml>

<http://www.sagecraft.com/puppetry/definitions/Bunraku.hist.html>

<http://www.sg.emb-japan.go.jp/JapanAccess/bunraku.htm>

<http://www2.ntj.jac.go.jp/unesco/bunraku/en/>

<http://ceas.uchicago.edu/bunraku/Student%20Guide%20to%20Bunraku.pdf>

Video & Audio clips on the web:

<http://youtube.com/watch?v=JPvej3XrtBA>

<http://youtube.com/watch?v=lOJbKD4eLs4>

Japanese Culture and History:

<http://web-japan.org/kidsweb/>

<http://www.culture-at-work.com/jpnlinks>.

<http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/EAL/>

<http://www.japan-guide.com/e/e2126.html>

<http://www.japan-guide.com/e/e641.html>

Japanese Literature:

The Master Puppeteer. Written by Katherine Paterson; illustrated by Haru Wells. New York: Harper Trophy, 1975.

The Bee and the Dream: A Japanese Tale. Retold by Jan Freeman Long, illustrated by Kaoru Ono. New York: Dutton Children's Books, 1996.

Japanese Children's Favorite Stories.

Edited by Florence Sakade, illustrated by Yoshisuke Kurosaki. Rutland: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1958.

Images:

<http://photojapan.com>

<http://www.tnm.jp/en/gallery/type/painting.html>

<http://www.phototravels.net/japan/photo-gallery/>

www.flickr.com (search Japan)

www.images.google.com (search

Local venues featuring Japanese Culture:

Japanese Tea Garden at Golden Gate Park
Tea Garden Dr. off John F. Kennedy Dr.,
San Francisco
(415) 752-4227
\$3 admission fee

Asian Art Museum

<http://www.asianart.org/>

200 Larkin Street, San Francisco
(415) 581-3500

Japan Society

<http://www.usajapan.org>

(415) 986-4383

Japanese Cultural & Community Center
of Northern California

<http://www.jcccnc.org>

1840 Sutter Street, San Francisco
(415) 567-5505

Theatre of Yugen

<http://www.theatreofyugen.org/nospace.html>

2840 Mariposa Street, San Francisco
(415) 621-0507

7 Glossary

Japanese words

ashi-zukai – the puppeteer who operates the puppet’s feet with grips which are attached to the heel or shoe of the puppet. Since Bunraku artists begin their training in this role, the ashi-zukai is considered the junior of the three puppeteers.

biwa – a Japanese short-necked fretted lute, similar to the Chinese pipa

butai geta – elevated wooden stage clogs used by the omo-zukai

Confucian – relating to and sharing the same ideas of Confucius, a Chinese philosophical scholar who encouraged self-discipline and an ethic of reciprocity.

dezukai – the practice of leaving the omo-zukai unhooded among the other hooded puppeteers so the audience can see his face and body easily.

dogushi – the grip stick attached to the puppet’s head that the omo-zukai operates. Shamisen strings attached to this grip stick move the eyes, eyebrows and mouth. A whale tooth is sometimes used to make one of the dogushi’s springs.

giri – a Japanese cultural value roughly corresponding in English to mean “duty,” “obligation,” or even “burden of obligation”

hidari-zukai – the Bunraku puppeteer who operates the doll’s left hand.

Considered the first assistant to the omo-zukai, this artist makes sure the puppet’s left arm moves in coordination with its right arm and head.

jidai-mono – Japanese plays featuring historical plots and characters, such as famous samurai battles.

yoruri – a type of chanted recitative that came to be used as a script in Bunraku puppet drama. Dialogue and descriptive commentary soon took a large role as part of the Bunraku narrative.

Kabuki – a traditional Japanese form of theater from the 1600’s known for its stylized drama and elaborate make-up. Kabuki plays focus on subjects like historical events and moral conflicts in love relationships. Actors speak in a monotone and are accompanied by traditional Japanese instruments.

kimono – the national costume of Japan. Literally translated as “something worn,” the word originally referred to all types of clothing, but has come to specifically refer to the full-length traditional garment worn by women, men, and children.

ningyo tsukai – puppet manipulation; a skill puppeteers use to give puppets a lifelike quality.

ninjo – human emotion that is in conflict with the value of giri (social obligation) within the Japanese world view.

omo-zukai – the head puppeteer who operates the puppet’s head and face by operating the grip stick with levers in his left hand. He moves the puppet’s right arm with his right hand. Considered the chief puppeteer among the three Bunraku operators.

sashigane – a long wooden stick that is attached to a puppet’s left hand. The hidari-zukai (left-hand puppeteer) uses the stick to move the puppet’s arm and hand without disturbing the movements of the other puppeteers.

sewamono – a domestic drama about the merchant class pioneered by Japan’s esteemed dramatist Chikamatsu Monzaemon.

shamisen – a three-stringed musical instrument played with a pick. It is the main instrument played during Bunraku performances.

tayu – the chanter who describes the emotions of the characters, recites the dialogue, delivers the narrative and reveals the background behind onstage events.

tokoyama – wig masters who create the hairstyle for each puppet character, setting the hair using only water and beeswax.

uchikake – a full-length outer robe traditionally worn by women of noble families on special occasions.

yatai – the set in front of which a Bunraku scene takes place.

yuka – part of the Bunraku stage where the narrator (tayu) and musician (shamisen player) sit.

Additional words

chord – a combination of three or more pitches sounded simultaneously.

motif – a short rhythmic or melodic passage that is repeated in various parts of a composition.

notes – musical sounds or tones

phrase – a short passage or segment, often consisting of four measures or forming part of a larger unit

pitch – the specific key or keynote of a melody

tone – a sound of distinct pitch, quality, and duration

upstage – the rear part of a stage, away from the audience.



8 California State Standards

Theater Grades K-12

1.0 Artistic Perception

Comprehension and Analysis of the Elements of Theater

1.2 Identify the structural elements of plot (exposition, complication, crisis, climax, and resolution) in a script of theatrical experience.

2.0 Creative Expression

Creating, Performing, and Participating in Theater

Students apply processes and skills in acting, directing, designing, and script writing to create formal and informal theater, film/videos, and electronic media productions and to perform in them.

3.0 Historical and Cultural Context

Understanding the Historical Contributions and Cultural Dimensions of Theater

Students analyze the role and development of theater, film/video, and electronic media in past and present cultures throughout the world, noting diversity as it relates to theater.

Role and Cultural Significance of Theater

3.2 Interpret how theater and storytelling forms (past and present) of various cultural groups may reflect their beliefs and traditions.

4.0 Aesthetic Valuing

Responding to, Analyzing, and Critiquing Theatrical Experiences

Students critique and derive meaning from works of theater, film/video, electronic media, and theatrical artists on the basis of aesthetic qualities.

5.0 Connections, Relationships, Applications

Connecting and Applying What is Learned in Theater, Film/Video, and Electronic Media to Other Art Forms and Subject areas and to Careers



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