

Japanese Theatre



Bunraku



Kabuki

Noh





Noh Drama

Noh Drama

- ✧ Emerged in the 14th c.
- ✧ Frozen in the 17th c.
- ✧ Invention attributed to **Kanami Kiyotsugu** (1333–1384)
- ✧ Perfected by his son, **Zeami Morokiyo** (1363–1443)

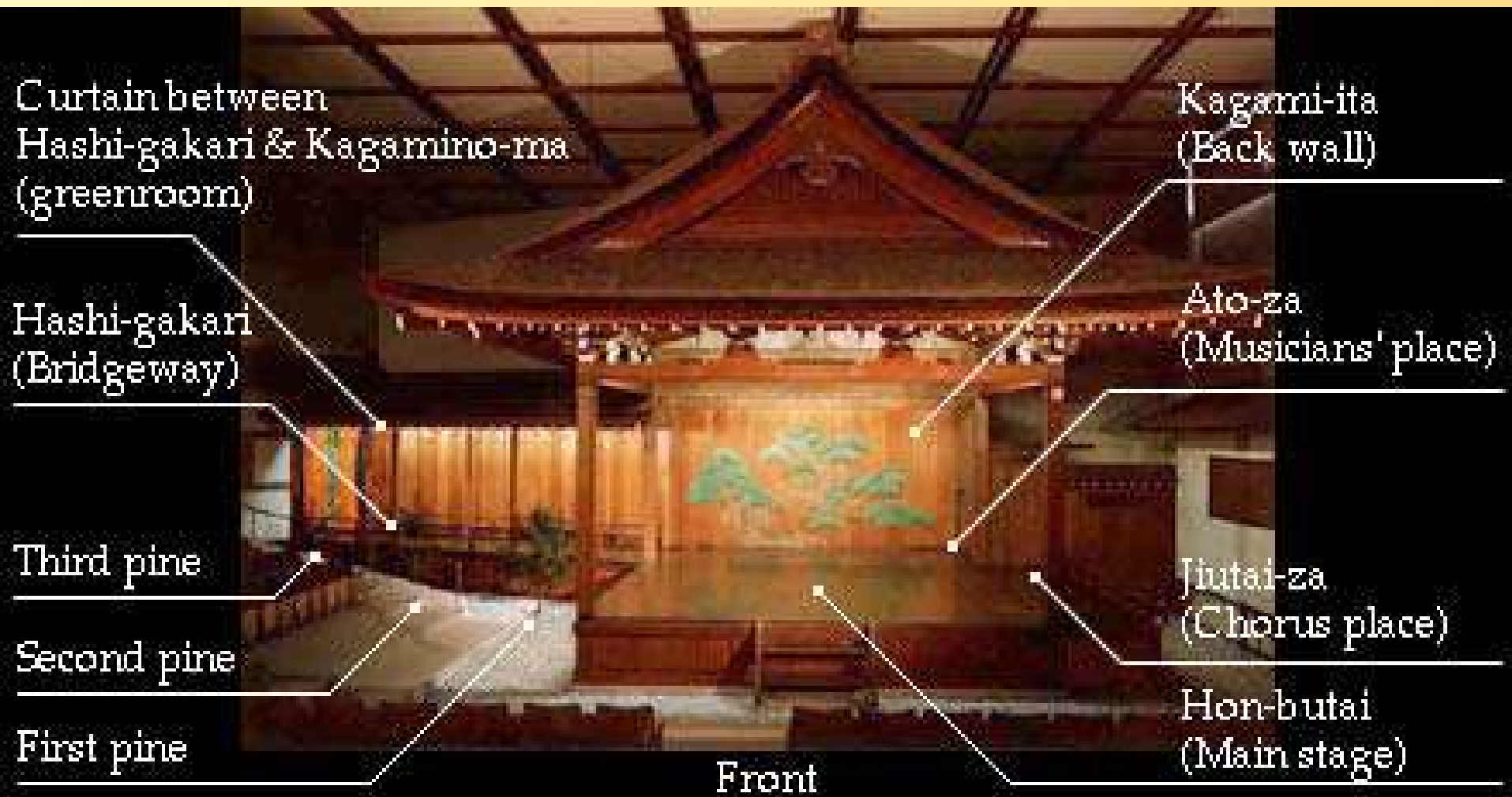


Noh Drama



Performed at courts of Ashikaga Shoguns

Noh Stage





Hayashikata/Jiutai

Hayashikata (instrument players) of whistle, drums, etc. sit at the back of the stage.



The *Jiutai* (singers) sit in a line on the left



Noh

Characters

- ✧ Conventional roles in all dramas
- ✧ **Shite:** principal character -- the only true “person”
- ✧ **Waki:** secondary character -- introduces story and asks questions; often a priest
- ✧ **Tsure:** shadowy companion to shiite and/or waki
- ✧ **Kokata:** child
- ✧ **Kyogen:** clown -- usually lower class

Noh Conventions

- ✧ Very short, plotless, tragic in mood
- ✧ Highly stylized with very slow pace: 200–300 lines of play can take an hour to perform
- ✧ Integrate singing, speech instruments, and dancing
- ✧ No limitation in time or space
- ✧ Highly allusive, poetic, symbolic language
- ✧ Less about characters than emotions





Yugen:

haunting poetic quality, suggesting quiet elegance and grace, subtle and fleeting beauty

Types of Noh Plays

- ✧ A Day's Entertainment contains:
 - ✧ A god play
 - ✧ A warrior play
 - ✧ A woman play
 - ✧ A realistic play
 - ✧ A demon play
- ✧ Kyogen Plays: placed between Noh plays as comic relief
 - ✧ No music
 - ✧ Broad humor
 - ✧ About 20 minutes long



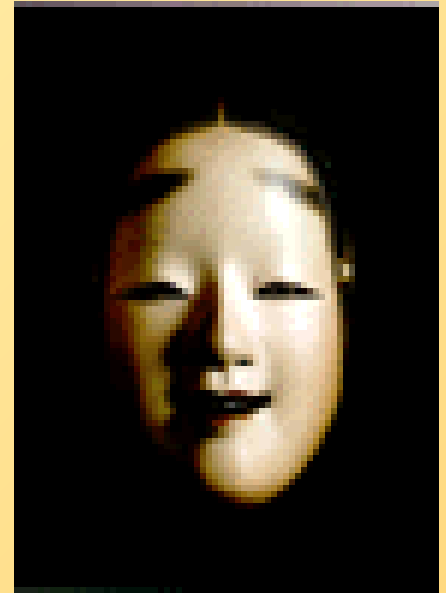
*A Kyogen play Boshibari
(fasten to a bar)*

Noh Masks



Male Mask

Female Mask



Demon Mask



Old Man Mask

Noh Costumes

Costumes are heavy silk kimonos often luxuriously embroidered



The ability of the *shite* and *waki* to express volumes with a gesture is enhanced by their use of various hand properties, the most important of which is the folding fan (*chukei*). The fan can be used to represent an object, such as a dagger or ladle, or an action, such as beckoning or moon-viewing.

Contemporary Noh performed by firelight
at Heian Shrine in Kyoto



Bunraku



v*Ningyo-joruri*, literally puppets and storytelling

v1684: Takemoto Gidayu set up his own theater in Osaka

vHe was helped in his effort by **Chikamatsu Monzaemon**, the greatest playwright in Japanese history, and Takeda Izumo, a famous theater owner and manager.

vBunraku developed alongside and competed with Kabuki: borrowing of scripts promoted growth of both Bunraku and Kabuki





Puppets

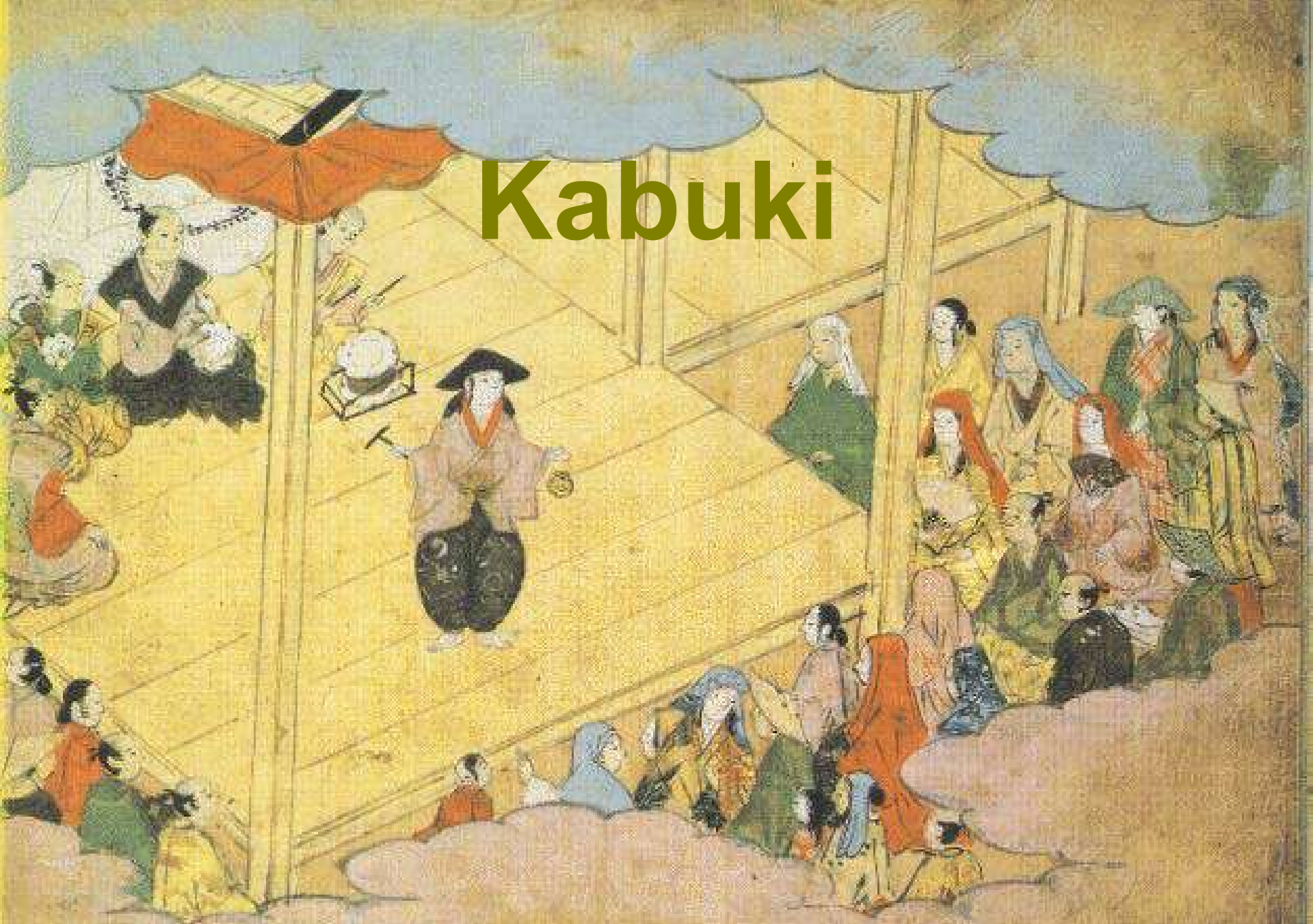




Narrator and Shamisen



Kabuki





1586: Kabuki was
invented by a dancing
priestess,
Izumono no Okuni



Okuni dancing as a samurai
in traditional and modern prints

*2003 stamps celebrating
the 400th anniversary of Kabuki*



Okuni Kabuki Screen



Kabuki plays



Kabuki was popular theatre with a greater emphasis on plot, conflict and excitement than Noh

Kabuki Theatre

- ❖ 1629: Shoguns forbid females to appear on stage; young boys played their roles
- ❖ 1652: Young boys forbidden to play female roles
- ❖ 1983: An all-female Kabuki troupe is formed: Nagoya Musume Kabuki



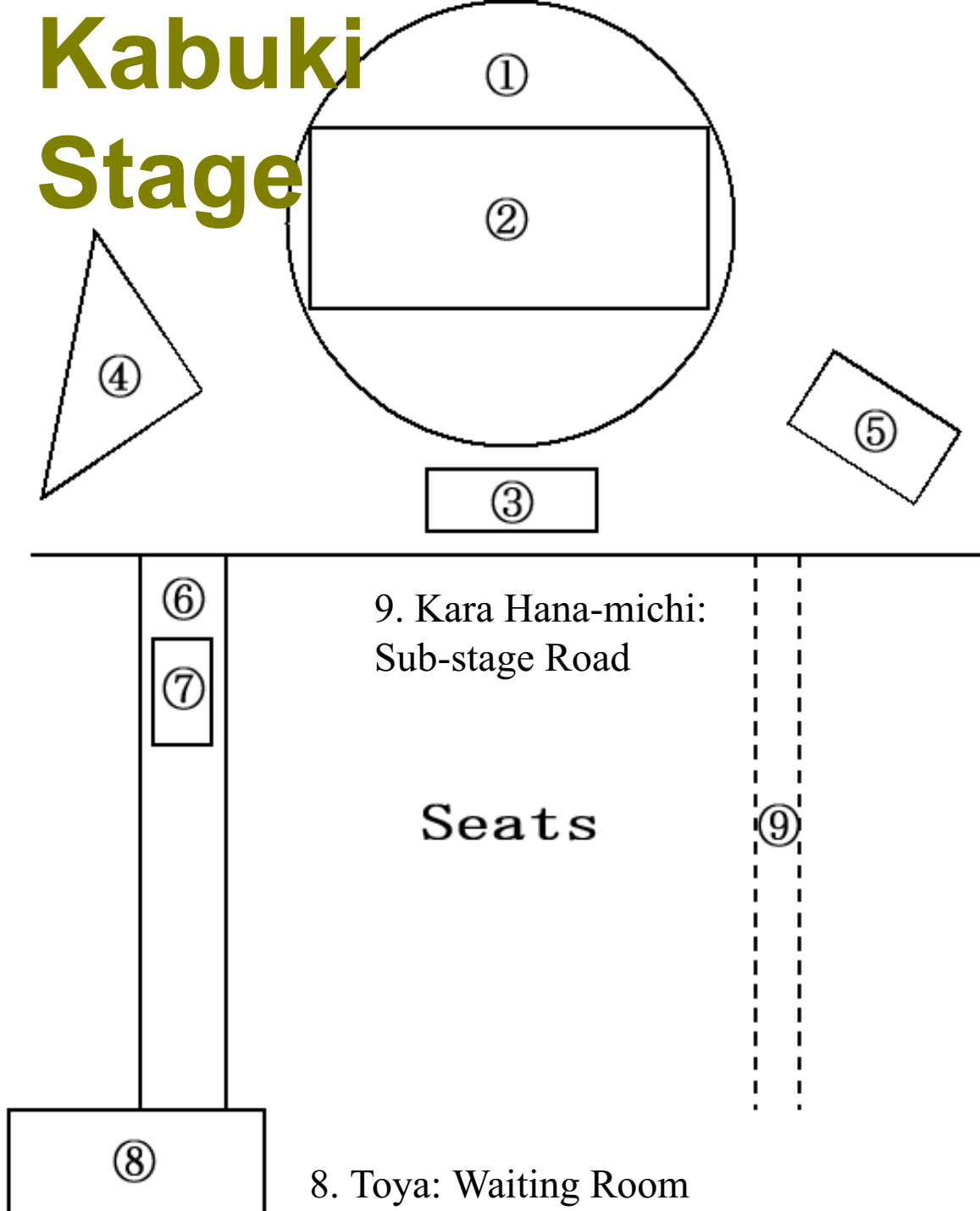
Nagoya Musume Kabuki



Kabuki Stage



Kabuki Stage



1. Mawari-Butai: Turntable – used to change scenes.
Invented by Japanese: first used in Kabuki

2. Oh-Zeri: King –sized elevator used to bring scenery from cellar to stage

3. Seri: lift for actors and sets

4. Geza: stage left/ Music box
Place where music and sound effects are produced

5. Yuka: Narration stage
Narrator's playing place

6. Hana-michi: Flower Path/
Stage Road

7. Suppon: lift where monsters appear

8. Toya: Waiting Room

Kabuki Staging

- ❖ **Geza:** Musicians: samisen, percussion, winds, voices
- ❖ **O-dugu:** Stage sets: traps, lifts, revolving stages
- ❖ **Ko-dugu:** Properties
- ❖ **Afuri-kaeshi:** spectacular set changes

KA BU KI



Kabuki Characters

Kabuki Charact ers



Onnagata: females

played by male
actors.

The ideal for the
onnagata is not
to imitate women
but to
symbolically
express the
essence of the
feminine.





Aragota: vigorous heroes



Tachi Yaku: males

Tate: virtuous hero

Kataki: villain

Doki: comic

Rojin: old man



Kodomo: children



Kabuki Style

- ❖ **Kata:** stylized movement patterns
- ❖ **Onnagata:** female characters
 - ❖ centerpiece dance
 - ❖ super feminine
- ❖ **Tachiyaku:** Male character roles
 - ❖ **Aragota style:** rough style
 - ❖ “superman” type characters
 - ❖ **Kumadori** makeup
 - ❖ **Mie:** poses with glaring crossed eyes
 - ❖ **Wagoto:** soft style
 - ❖ refined, merchant’s sons who fall in love with beautiful courtesans
 - ❖ disowned by families
 - ❖ somewhat comic

Kabuki Conventions

- ❖ **Hanamichi:** flower path
- ❖ **Mawari-butai:** revolving stage: rapid scene shifts
- ❖ **Tyobo:** drums indicating play was adapted from Bunraku
- ❖ **Geza:** inconspicuous “music box” -- samisen
- ❖ **Debayasi:** onstage orchestra during dance
- ❖ **Kurogo:** assistant dressed in black who aids actors

Types of Kabuki Plays



- ❖ **Aragota:** vigorous hero plays
- ❖ **Shiranami-mono:** lives of thieves plays
- ❖ **Koroshi-ba:** feudal plays with many kill scenes
 - ❖ **Tachi-Mawari:** the fight
- ❖ Seasonal plays:
 - ❖ New Year's: revenge play
 - ❖ April: **Hanami Tsuki:** “flower viewing” -- court ladies
 - ❖ Summer: ghost plays
 - ❖ December: **Shibakaku:** plays to introduce new actors
- ❖ **Aiso-zukashi:** scorned love plays
 - ❖ **Engiri:** break-up scene
- ❖ Suicide Pact plays

