

PERFORMING ARTS

2024

25





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Japan Society presents

National Bunraku Theater

Thursday, October 3, 7 pm

— Followed by a Gallery Exhibition opening reception at 8:30 pm

Friday, October 4, 7:30 pm

— Followed by an artist Q&A

Saturday, October 5 at 3 & 7:30 pm

Ningyo! A Parade of Puppetry Series – Program #2

The *Ningyo! A Parade of Puppetry* Series is supported by The Jim Henson Foundation.



National Bunraku Theater is produced under partnership with Japan Arts Council, which is supported, in part, by The Jim Henson Foundation Japan Cultural Expo 2.0, All Nippon Airways Co., Ltd., Kikkoman Corporation and Suntory Holdings Limited. The program is also supported, in part, by the John and Miyoko Davey Foundation and Takenaka Corporation.



2024—2025 Performing Arts Season Support

The season is made possible by public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council.



Additional, major support is generously provided by Doug and Teresa Peterson, Howard Gilman Foundation, and Jun Makihara and Megumi Oka. Endowment support is provided by the Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Endowment Fund, John and Miyoko Davey Foundation, and a leadership gift from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation.



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Japan Society programs are made possible by the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of the Office of the Governor and the New York State Legislature.



ARTISTIC DIRECTOR'S NOTE

We are thrilled to present National Theatre's bunraku theater in New York City for the first time since 1992!

I went to see that last performance in New York, which took place at City Center on 55th Street. The program included all three acts of *Sonezaki Shinju*. Although this piece is far from child-friendly—a long running time, slow development and a complicated plot on top of English subtitles—I was surprised to see many, many small children sitting (sullenly) in the audience. This might have happened because the play was promoted as “the Japanese *Romeo and Juliet*.” Yet, the major reason, I think, must have been that many Americans in those days thought “puppet theater” meant “children’s theater.” Given that memory, I am pleased to observe that American audiences’ perception of “puppet theater” has since expanded remarkably. I would like to say that bunraku’s global influence stimulated American contemporary puppet artists, leading them to create new types of puppet theater and evolving the general perception of what puppet theater could encompass.

For hundreds of years, Japan’s puppet theater culture has always targeted mature audiences. Puppetry mechanics and manipulation techniques were elaborately developed, and musical recitation was uniquely composed, to express a complete range of subtle feelings such as love, grief, sorrow, despair, joy and delight, incorporating many complex gestures. No one would argue that the National Theatre’s bunraku represents the highest standard of those elements of ingenuity.

Today’s program consists of two masterpiece scenes from bunraku’s traditional repertoire, which I am sure will leave you with a lasting impression. Then, you may want to visit Osaka, Japan next year—the city in which the World Expo 2025 will take place and where the National Bunraku Theatre is located. There, you can expose yourself to a rich variety of bunraku programming.



Yoko Shioya
Artistic Director

Program

The Fire Watchtower

Scene from *Date Musume Koi no Higanoko (Oshichi, the Greengrocer's Daughter)*

Tayu/Chanters: Toyotake Todayu, Toyotake Yoshihodayu, Toyotake Sakijudayu

Shamisen: Tsuruzawa Seishiro, Tsuruzawa Kantaro, Tsuruzawa Seiin

Puppeteer (Oshichi):

Main Puppeteer: Kiritake Monyoshi (Oct. 3, Oct. 5 Matinee),
Yoshida Minotaro (Oct. 4, Oct. 5 Evening)

Left Puppeteer: Yoshida Minotaro (Oct. 3, Oct. 5 Matinee),
Kiritake Monyoshi (Oct. 4, Oct. 5 Evening)

Foot Puppeteer: Toyomatsu Seinosuke

Get to Know Bunraku Puppet Manipulation

Demonstration: Yoshida Minotaro (Oct. 3, Oct. 5 Matinee), Kiritake Monyoshi (Oct. 4, Oct. 5 Evening)

Intermission

The Forest by the Tenjin Shrine

Scene from *Sonezaki Shinju (The Love Suicides at Sonezaki)*

Tayu/Chanters: Toyotake Todayu (Ohatsu), Toyotake Yoshihodayu (Tokubei),
Toyotake Sakijudayu

Shamisen: Tsuruzawa Seishiro, Tsuruzawa Kantaro, Tsuruzawa Seiin

Puppeteer (Tokubei):

Main Puppeteer: Yoshida Tamasuke

Left Puppeteer: Kiritake Monyoshi

Foot Puppeteer: Yoshida Tamanobu

Puppeteer (Ohatsu):

Main Puppeteer: Yoshida Minoshiro

Left Puppeteer: Yoshida Minotaro

Foot Puppeteer: Toyomatsu Seinosuke

Script and Composition: Matsunosuke Nozawa

Choreography: Ryunosuke Sawamura

Scenery Supervision: Kiritake Kanjuro

Art Director: Kazuo Oga

Scenery Production: Shimpei Yamada (Representative of Aozora, Ltd.)

Scenery Co-Production: Dehogallery, Inc.

Stagehands/Assistants: Kiritake Kansuke, Yoshida Tamanobu, Yoshida Tamayuki,
Toyomatsu Seinosuke

Production: National Theatre (Japan Arts Council)

Technical Support: KANSAI BUTAI Co. Ltd., Aozora, Ltd.

*(Traditional Japanese performers' and musicians' stage names are listed in the family-given order.
All others are listed in the given-family order.)*

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT OF JAPAN ARTS COUNCIL

Thank you very much for coming to see the National Theatre's bunraku theater production, brought to the U.S. by Japan Arts Council for the first time. The Council is an umbrella organization that manages Japan's national theaters, including the National Theatre in Tokyo and the National Bunraku Theatre in Osaka. At each of these theaters, we are proud to offer the public a variety of traditional Japanese performing arts programs, including bunraku theater.

Ningyo joruri bunraku is one of the representative forms of Japanese traditional performing arts and is designated as an Intangible Cultural Heritage by UNESCO. *Tayu* (or, chanters) and shamisen players perform music with an exquisite yet dynamic quality, while three puppeteers manipulate one puppet with their highly advanced techniques to express the subtle changes in the characters' emotions.

Today's performance includes scenes from two select masterpieces of classic bunraku repertoire: The *Tenjin no Mori* (*The Forest by the Tenjin Shrine*) scene from *Sonezaki Shinju* (*The Love Suicides at Sonezaki*) and the *Hinomi Yagura* (*The Fire Watchtower*) scene from *Date Musume Koi no Higanoko* (*Oshichi, the Greengrocer's Daughter*). In *The Love Suicides at Sonezaki*, beautiful, animated scenery created by Kazuo Oga, who has worked on the background art of many world-renowned anime masterpieces such as *Princess Mononoke* and *In This Corner of the World*, will be projected onto the stage. Please enjoy this production that integrates two genres of Japan's proud creativity: bunraku and anime.

This performance is also part of the activities of the Japan Cultural Expo, aiming to spread the appeal of Japan's arts and culture to people around the world. We hope that you are fascinated by Japanese culture through today's experience and motivated to visit Japan, and that you will appreciate the entire scope of the art of bunraku in its home country.

Finally, I would like to express our sincere gratitude to Japan Society and those who provided their tremendous efforts in making this performance possible.



Sincerely,

HASEGAWA Mariko
President
Japan Arts Council
National Theatre

ABOUT BUNRAKU

The Origin and Evolution of Bunraku

The word "bunraku" is conveniently used to refer collectively to Japanese traditional puppet theater, especially for productions that incorporate the three-person puppet manipulation technique that bunraku is most known for. However, precisely speaking, "bunraku" is a proper noun traced back to the name of a company/theater established in Osaka by an impresario and *joruri** chanter (or, *tayu*), Uemura Bunraku-ken, at the turn of the 19th century. This theater company flourished until the days led by Bunraku-ken III; however, after the early 20th century, the operation of the bunraku theater experienced a period of financial difficulty and waning support amidst rapid societal changes. Despite this, the theater found ways to survive even through WWII and maintained its status as a genre of high cultural import, having the honor of Japan's Emperor himself in attendance at a bunraku theater performance in 1947. In 1955, the Japanese government designated bunraku as an Important Intangible Cultural Asset. In 1972, the National Theatre (established in Tokyo in 1966) launched a program to train professional bunraku performers in each of the three critical bunraku roles: *tayu*, shamisen accompanists, and puppeteers. In 1984, The National Bunraku Theatre opened in Osaka, the city where it originated, as a successor to the original Bunraku theater. In 2008, UNESCO designated bunraku as an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, a status shared with *noh* and *kabuki*.

*Joruri** and Puppet Theater

Bunraku performance is based on *joruri*, a stylized narrative chanting form that is thought to have begun in the 15th century. In the 16th century, the practice of three-stringed shamisen instruments accompanying the chanter became standardized, making great strides for *joruri* both musically and literarily. *Ningyo* (or, puppet) theater, meanwhile, has a much longer history—likely starting in Japan's ancient Heian period (794-1185) or even earlier. It is said that the first use of *joruri* in *ningyo* theater was in the late 16th century.

Combining the two elements of puppetry and *joruri*, a literary term called *ningyo joruri*, became a sophisticated form of theatrical performance. Its popularity was attributed to two geniuses in their respective crafts: the

narrative chanter Takemoto Gidayu (1651-1714), who ran the Takemoto-za Theater in Osaka, and the playwright Chikamatsu Monzaemon (1653-1725). Their abundant collaborations gave birth to the megahit *Sonezaki Shinju* (*The Love Suicides at Sonezaki*), which premiered in 1703 and comprises one of tonight's featured scenes.

Chanter (*tayu*) and Shamisen

The *tayu*'s job is to provide a narrative, describe scenes, and convey the lines and emotions of each character in the play. Often, a *tayu* must use different tones and adjust the timbral quality of their voice to distinguish between different characters. Shamisen accompaniment enhances each emotion and mood and provides dramatic emphasis. They always sit in a kneeling position on the stage left, on a platform built as their exclusive performing space.

Bunraku Puppetry

Although bunraku is famous for its three-person manipulation, this unique technique was invented about 70 years before Umemura Bunraku-ken started his puppet theater. The innovation is said to have first appeared in 1734 at Takemoto-za Theater in a scene from *Ashiya Doman Ouchikagami*. However, it took some time to further develop and improve this skill/training-demanding operation, and, by the late 18th century, the technique was formalized into the style bunraku puppeteers use today.

Three puppeteers work in tandem to manipulate a single puppet. The lead puppeteer, called *omo-zukai* (or, head operator), operates the puppet's head and the right arm; a second puppeteer, called *hidari-zukai* (or, left operator), operates the left arm; and a third puppeteer, called *ashi-zukai* (or, leg operator), operates the legs. They must carefully coordinate their movements to ensure that the puppet's gestures and attitudes appear realistic.

Bunraku puppets are made of a head (*kashira*), which is carefully handcrafted by designated master puppet makers, along with a trunk and limbs. The lead puppeteer selects which head to use for the role. The hair of each puppet is made and maintained by a wigmaker specifically trained to care for bunraku puppets. After the wig is dressed, the costume is sewn onto the frame of the puppet, and the limbs are attached, the head is finally inserted into the

shoulder piece of the body. Female puppets have no legs, as the movement of the legs is forged by moving the hem of the kimono.

Visit National Theatre's "Invitation to Bunraku" website for more information:



ABOUT THE PROGRAM

Date Musume Koi no Higanoko (Oshichi, the Greengrocer's Daughter)

This play, co-written by Sensuke Suga and Wakichi Matsuda in 1773, drew inspiration from an actual incident in 1683, in which a girl who fell in love with a temple page committed arson to see him again and was sentenced to death.

Play Synopsis: Oshichi, the daughter of a vegetable store owner in Edo, falls in love with a temple pageboy named Kichisaburo. The pageboy's master was forced to commit *hara-kiri* (or, ritual suicide) for losing a treasured sword, leaving Kichisaburo responsible for locating the item or else following his master to the grave. Oshichi finds out that her unwanted fiancé Buhei has stolen the sword.

In tonight's climactic *The Fire Watchtower* scene, knowing that false fire alarms are an act punishable by death, Oshichi climbs the watchtower and beats the fire drum in a desperate attempt to open the city gates to inform her lover of the sword's whereabouts.

Sonezaki Shinju (The Love Suicides at Sonezaki)

Sonezaki Shinju premiered at the Takemotoza Theater in Osaka in 1703. It was written by Chikamatsu Monzaemon (1653-1725), who is regarded as one of Japan's greatest dramatists. The story was adapted from an actual double suicide incident that took place only a month before the premiere. Because of its enormous success, not only did the theme of "double suicide" turn out

to be a popular theme for both puppet and kabuki theaters, but suicide attempts became popular among lovers and rapidly grew to become a social problem—so much so that the work was temporarily banned by the Shogunate government in 1722. In addition to its status as one of the most popular works of bunraku, *Sonezaki Shinju* is significant as it established a new genre of plays, called *sewa-mono*, depicting the contemporary life of commoners, in contrast to the pre-existing *jidai-mono* genre that recounts historical stories.

Play Synopsis: Tokubei, a clerk at a soy sauce shop in Osaka, falls in love with the courtesan Ohatsu. Tokubei hopes to buy Ohatsu her freedom, but his uncle and employer, who desires for Tokubei to marry his wife's niece, forces Tokubei's stepmother to accept a dowry for an arranged marriage on Tokubei's behalf. When Tokubei rejects the marriage, he is disowned and ordered to pay the dowry back. Although he is able to get the money back from his stepmother, he lends the entire sum to his friend Kuheiji at his friend's begging under a loan agreement saying that the full amount is due in a few days. When Tokubei requests the now-overdue loan, Kuheiji denies the existence of any such debt and publicly humiliates Tokubei as a liar. With no hope of freeing Ohatsu and having been falsely disgraced as a swindler, Tokubei conveys to Ohatsu his determination that there is no means of relief from their torment other than ending their lives together.

In tonight's featured culminating scene, *The Forest by the Tenjin Shrine*, the couple, in the hopes of being reunited in the afterlife, flee into the woods in Sonezaki to make their move...

ABOUT THE DESIGNERS

(Traditional Japanese performers' and musicians' stage names are listed in the family-given order. All others are listed in the given-family order.)

Toyotake Todayu (*tayu*/chanter) began training in the National Theatre's 7th term Bunraku Training Program in 1980. In 1982, he became a disciple of then-Takemoto Mojitayu IX (the late Sumitayu VII) and took the name Takemoto Mojihisadayu. He made his debut at the Asahi-za Theater in July 1982. In April 2019, he adopted his current name. His accolades include the 22nd Bunraku Kyokai Association Award in January 1994, the Encouragement Award from the Chinami Association in November 1994, and the 24th Bunraku Kyokai Association Award in January 1996. He also received the 16th National Theatre Bunraku Prize Encouragement Award in January 1997, the 26th Bunraku Kyokai Association Award in January 1998, and the 20th National Theatre Bunraku Prize Encouragement Award in January 2001. Additionally, he received the 31st Bunraku Kyokai Association Award in January 2003, the Encouragement Award from the Chinami Association in January 2006, and the Jusanya-Kai Prize in April 2010. He also received the 35th National Theatre Bunraku Prize Excellence Award in April 2016, the Excellent Prize (Group Award) at the 2016 Osaka Cultural Festival in February 2017, and the Excellent Prize (Group Award) at the 2019 Osaka Cultural Festival in March 2020. Most recently, he was awarded the 42nd National Theatre Bunraku Prize Excellence Award in March 2023.

Toyotake Yoshihodayu (*tayu*/chanter) became a disciple of Toyotake Shimatayu in February 2003 and became a trainee of the Bunraku Kyokai Association. In May 2003, he adopted the name Toyotake Yoshihodayu, and in September of the same year, he made his debut at the National Theatre. In April 2021, he became a disciple of Toyotake Rodayu VI. His accolades include winning the 38th Bunraku Kyokai Association Award in April 2010, the 30th National Theatre Bunraku Prize Encouragement Award in April 2011, and the 40th Bunraku Kyokai Association Award in April 2012. Additionally, he received the Jusanya-Kai Prize in June 2013, April 2014, and June 2014. In March 2015, he was awarded the 43rd Bunraku Kyokai Association Award, and in March 2018, he received the Osaka Cultural Festival Prize



If you are having suicidal thoughts, please speak with the national suicide hotline or a mental health professional immediately, and do not try to manage these feelings on your own.

Free and confidential support is available at the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline.

Encouragement Award. In April 2018, he was awarded the 37th National Theatre Bunraku Prize Encouragement Award, and in July of the same year, he received the Jusanya-Kai June Monthly Prize (Encouragement Award).

Toyotake Sakijudayu (*tayu*/chanter) became a disciple of Toyotake Sakitayu in April 2002 and started his training in the Bunraku Kyokai Association. He adopted his current name in December 2003. In July 2005, he made his debut at the National Bunraku Theatre. His accolades include winning the 2021 Bunraku Kyokai Association Award (*Tayu* Division) in March 2022.

Tsuruzawa Seishiro (shamisen) joined National Theatre's 15th term Bunraku Training Program in April 1992. In April 1994, he became a disciple of Tsuruzawa Seiji and took the name Tsuruzawa Seishiro. In June of the same year, he made his debut at the National Bunraku Theatre. His accolades include the Encouragement Award from the Chinami Association in July 2000 and the 30th Bunraku Kyokai Association Award in January 2002. He received the 31st Bunraku Kyokai Association Award in January 2003 and the 32nd Bunraku Kyokai Association Award in January 2004, along with the 23rd National Theatre Bunraku Prize Encouragement Award. In March 2004, he received the Osaka Performing Arts Newcomer Award, and in September of the same year, he received the Encouragement Award from the Chinami Association. He was also awarded the 24th National Theatre Bunraku Prize Encouragement Award and the 33rd Bunraku Kyokai Association Award in April 2005. In September 2013, he received the Grand Prize at the Osaka Cultural Festival. In February 2015, he was awarded the Sakuya-Kono-Hana Prize (Theatre and Dance Division).

Tsuruzawa Kantaro (shamisen) began his training under his grandfather, the late Tsuruzawa Kanji VII, then-Living National Treasure, in 1999. He made his debut at the National Bunraku Theatre in January 2001 under the name Tsuruzawa Kantaro. In 2019, he began his training under Takezawa Sosuke. His accolades include the 37th Bunraku Kyokai Association Award in April 2009 and the 39th Bunraku Kyokai Association Award in April 2011. In February 2012, he received the Jusanya-Kai Prize, and in April of the same year, he was awarded the National Theatre Bunraku Prize Encouragement Award. In September 2013, he received the Grand Prize at the Osaka Cultural Festival,

and in April 2014, he was awarded the 42nd Bunraku Kyokai Association Award. In March 2015, he received the 43rd Bunraku Kyokai Association Award, and in April 2017, he received the National Theatre Bunraku Prize Encouragement Award. In February 2019, he was awarded the 2018 Sakuya-Kono-Hana Prize, and in April of the same year, he was awarded the 38th National Theatre Bunraku Prize Encouragement Award.

Tsuruzawa Seiin (shamisen) joined National Theatre's 25th term Bunraku Training Program in April 2011. In April 2013, he became a disciple of Tsuruzawa Seisuke and took the name Tsuruzawa Seiin. He made his debut at the National Bunraku Theatre in July of the same year. In March 2023, he was awarded the 42nd Bunraku Kyokai Association Award (Shamisen Division).

Yoshida Tamasuke (puppeteer) became a disciple of Yoshida Tamako in July 1980 and adopted the name Yoshida Kosuke. He made his debut at Asahi-za Theater in April 1981. In April 2018, he assumed the name of Yoshida Tamasuke V at the National Bunraku Theatre. He received the Encouragement Award from the Chinami Association in July 2000. In January 2001, he won the 29th Bunraku Kyokai Association Award, and in January 2003, he received the 31st Bunraku Kyokai Association Award. Additionally, he was awarded the Encouragement Award from the Chinami Association in September 2004 and received the Sakuya-Kono-Hana Prize in February 2007. Other notable awards include the Encouragement Award from the Chinami Association in February 2008 and the 27th National Theatre Bunraku Prize Encouragement Award in April in the same year. He was recognized with the Osaka Cultural Festival Encouragement Prize in August 2011. He received National Theatre Bunraku Prize Excellence Award in March 2015 and April 2019. In March 2020, he received the Osaka Cultural Festival Prize (First Division/Group Award). In November 2022, he was awarded the Jusanya-Kai November Recommendation Prize, while in August 2023, he received the Jusanya-Kai August Recommendation Prize. In December 2023, he was awarded the Jusanya-Kai Annual Grand Prize.

Yoshida Minoshiro (puppeteer) became a disciple of Living National Treasure Yoshida Minosuke III in July 1988 and made his debut at the National Bunraku Theatre in April 1991 under the name Yoshida Minoshiro.

His accolades include the Bunraku Kyokai Association Awards in April 2009 and April 2010. He also received the National Theatre Bunraku Prize Encouragement Award in April 2012. In February 2017, he was awarded the Sakuya-Kono-Hana Award, and in April, he received the National Theatre Bunraku Prize Bunraku Encouragement Award. He was honored with the 2019 Osaka Cultural Festival Prize (First Division) in March 2020.

Kiritake Monyoshi (puppeteer) began training in the National Theatre's 15th term Bunraku Training Program in April 1992. He became a disciple of Yoshida Bunsho in April 1994, taking the name Yoshida Shoroku, and made his debut at the National Bunraku Theatre in the same month. In September 2001, he became a disciple of Kiritake Monju and took the name Kiritake Monfumi. In August 2002, he changed his name to Kiritake Monyoshi. His awards include the 39th Bunraku Kyokai Association Award in April 2011 and the 2019 Osaka Cultural Festival Prize (First Division) in March 2020.

Yoshida Minotaro (puppeteer) became a disciple of Living National Treasure Yoshida Minosuke III in January 2000 and began training with the Bunraku Kyokai Association. In April 2000, he adopted the name Yoshida Minotsugu and made his debut at the National Bunraku Theatre. In July 2016, he assumed the name of Yoshida Minotaro II. His accolades include the 40th Bunraku Kyokai Association Award in April 2012 and the 45th Bunraku Kyokai Association Award in April 2017. In March 2020, he received the 2019 Osaka Cultural Festival Prize (First Division).

Kiritake Kansuke (puppeteer) became a disciple of Living National Treasure Kiritake Kanjuro III and began training with the Bunraku Kyokai Association. In April 2010, he adopted the name Kiritake Kansuke and made his debut at the National Bunraku Theatre. His awards include the 2017 Bunraku Kyokai Association Award in April 2018. In March 2020, he received the 2019 Osaka Cultural Festival Prize (First Division). Additionally, in March 2022, he was awarded the 2021 Bunraku Kyokai Association Award (Puppetry Division).

Yoshida Tamanobu (puppeteer) began his training in the National Theatre's 25th term Bunraku Training Program in April 2011. In April 2013, he became a disciple of then-Yoshida Tamame (currently known as Yoshida Tamao II, Living National Treasure) and adopted the name Yoshida Tamanobu, making

his debut at the National Bunraku Theatre in the same month. In March 2020, he was awarded the 2019 Osaka Cultural Festival Prize (First Division/Group Award).

Yoshida Tamayuki (puppeteer) began his training in the National Theatre's 26th term Bunraku Training Program in April 2013. In April 2015, he became a disciple of Living National Treasure Yoshida Tamao II and adopted the name Yoshida Tamayuki, making his debut at the National Bunraku Theatre in the same month. In March 2020, he was awarded the 2019 Osaka Cultural Festival Prize (First Division).

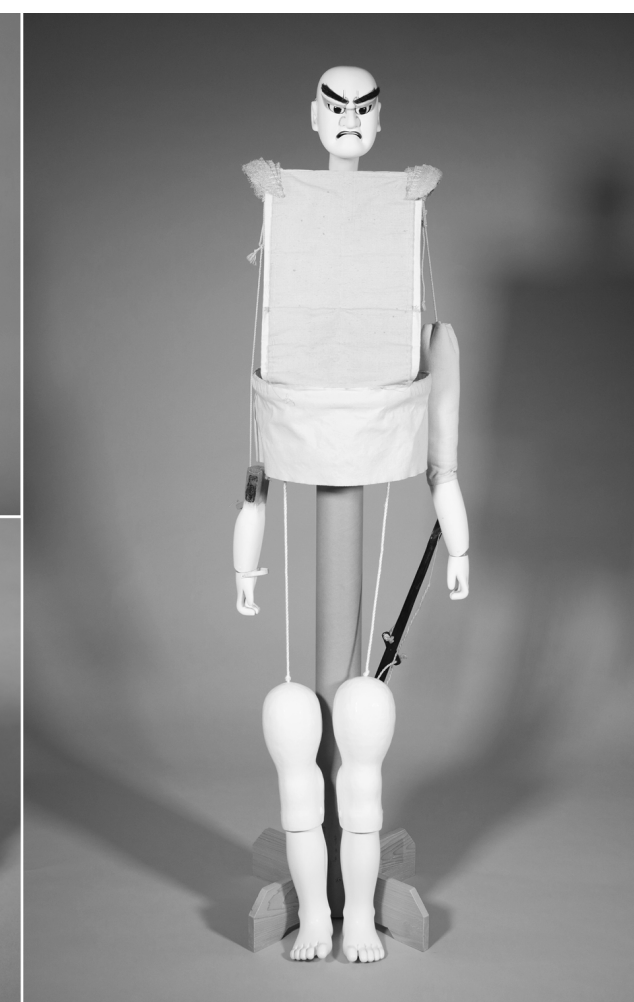
Toyomatsu Seinosuke (puppeteer) began his training in the National Theatre's 27th term Bunraku Training Program in April 2015. In April 2017, he became a disciple of Toyomatsu Seijuro and adopted his current name. That same month, he made his debut on stage at the National Bunraku Theatre. In March 2020, he was honored with the 2019 Osaka Cultural Festival Prize (First Division).

Kazuo Oga (art director) was born in Akita Prefecture in 1952. He joined Kobayashi Productions, an animation background art company, in 1972. His first work on background art was for the TV cartoon *The Adventures of Pinocchio*. As an art director, he has worked on *In This Corner of the World*, *Barefoot Gen*, *Toki no Tabibito: Time Stranger*, *The Wicked City* and others. For Studio Ghibli films, he worked as the art director for *My Neighbor Totoro*, *Only Yesterday*, *Pom Poko*, *Princess Mononoke (co-directed)*, and *The Tale of the Princess Kaguya*. Currently, he continues to work in a wide range of fields as a freelancer, including not only background art for animated films, but creating picture books, illustrations and essays.

Yoko Shioya 20/20: Celebrating 20 Years of Artistic Vision

For over seventy years, Japan Society's Performing Arts Program has enriched the arts in New York City, the U.S. and beyond through the presentation of artists whose works are formed or inspired by the arts and culture of Japan. Taking the mantle as head of Japan Society's Performing Arts Program in 2004, Yoko Shioya has carried this mission through the 21st century, programming over 200 events of the finest Japanese theater, dance, and music from the very traditional to the most cutting edge. Join us in celebrating Japan Society's Artistic Director Yoko Shioya's 20th anniversary and support the future of the Performing Arts Program! Your donation today will make tomorrow's unparalleled cultural experience possible.

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JAPAN SOCIETY GALLERY EXHIBITION

BUNRAKU BACKSTAGE

OCTOBER 4, 2024 — JANUARY 19, 2025

Alongside the live bunraku performances held at Japan Society this fall, Bunraku Backstage offers a rare glimpse behind the scenes of the theater. Showcasing actual working puppets, props, instruments, and costumes on loan from the National Bunraku Theatre, Osaka, this exhibition unveils the collaboration that goes into staging a bunraku production. Unexpected bunraku-inspired multimedia works by contemporary artists explore bunraku's ongoing inspiration and influence.



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