

Bunraku Ningyo Awakenings

A Performance by
Kanroku and Mokugu-sha

Friday, January 11, 2019
5 p.m. and 8 p.m.
Joyce J. Camilleri Hall
University of Southern California



KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

- Bunraku is a form of traditional Japanese puppet theatre that originated in Osaka in the seventeenth century.
- It is included on UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.
- Bunraku emphasizes collaboration and achieving harmony among multiple simultaneous elements: narrative recitation, music, and manipulation of puppets.
- Bunraku music is performed on a three-stringed traditional Japanese instrument called a shamisen.

BUNRAKU

Developed and refined over centuries, bunraku combines multiple art forms, including puppetry, music, and text. The art of *yoruri* (or chanted narrative music, where the recitation of a story is combined with shamisen music) was brought together with *ningyo* (the manipulation of puppets) in the seventeenth century, creating *ningyo joruri*. After hundreds of years of evolution, this form is known today as bunraku.

Bunraku dolls, usually made of wood, are half-life-sized. Approximately 40 traditional types of puppet heads are used in classical bunraku performances. These can be customized via changes to the hair and makeup. During the seventeenth century, bunraku puppets became complex enough to make detailed movements of the eyes, fingers, and mouths, and it became typical for three puppeteers to operate a single puppet character. Rather than being hidden, bunraku puppeteers traditionally perform in

full view of the audience, wearing black robes, which sometimes include black hoods.

It is typical for a single chanter, or narrator, to recite many or all of the parts, changing their voice to represent different characters. The chanter harmonizes with music performed on a shamisen.

The bunraku canon is divided into three major categories: historical (*Jidai-mono*), domestic (*Sewa-mono*), and dances (*Keigoto/Keiji*). The different categories typically have different structures and numbers of acts.

From the seventeenth through the nineteenth century, there were hundreds of bunraku troupes across Japan, both amateur and professional. The number has dwindled since World War II, and today there are only a handful of troupes using traditional bunraku forms, including the National Bunraku Theater in Osaka, Awaji Ningyoza, and Mokugu-sha.

KANROKU AND MOKUGU-SHA

Kanroku has been a bunraku ningyo puppeteer for almost half a century. He studied at the National Bunraku Theater in Osaka under Master Kanjuro Kiritake II, and was named Kanroku Kiritake in 1979. He then apprenticed under Minosuke Yoshida III, and was renamed Kanroku Yoshida in 1987. In 2006, he started his own theatre company, Mokugu-sha. Kanroku teaches and practices the classical works of bunraku ningyo theatre while pursuing contemporary projects and collaborating with artists working outside of bunraku. Mokugu-sha is based in Osaka, the birthplace of bunraku.

BUNRAKU TERMS

gigeiin – bunraku performers

jururi – the art of chanted narration with music

kashira – the head of a bunraku doll

ningyo – the manipulation of puppets

shamisen – traditional Japanese instrument with three strings

tayu – narrator

FAMOUS BUNRAKU PLAYS

HISTORICAL (JIDAI-MONO)

Honcho Nijushiko (1766) by Chikamatsu Hanji et al.

Imoseyama Onna Teikin (1771) by Chikamatsu Hanji et al.

Meiboku Sendai Hagi (1785) by Matsu Kanshi et al.

Ehon Taikoki (1799) by Chikamatsu Yanagi et al.

DOMESTIC (SEWA-MONO)

Sonezaki shinju (1703) by Chikamatsu Monzaemon

Shinpan Utazaimon (1780) by Chikamatsu Hanji

DANCES (KEIGOTO/KEIJI)

Kotobuki Shiki Sanbaso (1859) – a ceremonial dance performed on special occasions such as the new year

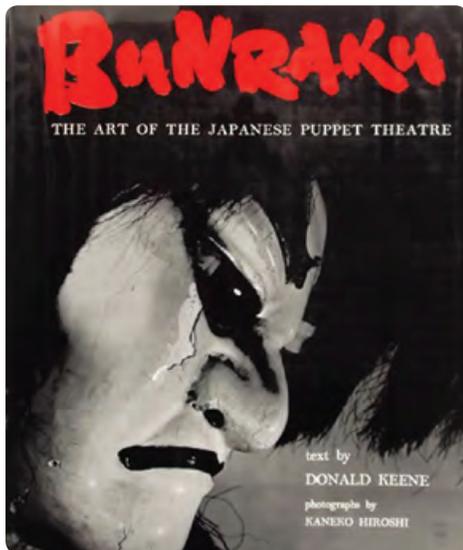
FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

- Why is it important to preserve and share traditional art forms?
- The synchronization of elements (narrative recitation, shamisen music, and puppetry) makes bunraku a highly collaborative art form, and the quality of a performance is judged partly on the harmony between elements—for instance, between the shamisen player and the chanter. How well do you think the voice and instrument harmonized in this performance?
- How did the puppeteers manipulate the dolls to signify the traits of different character types or identities? What does this tell us about the relationships between movement, gesture, and social identities?

IF YOU LIKED THIS EVENT, YOU MIGHT WANT TO CHECK OUT

- Mokugu-sha online
mokugusha.com
- Performing-arts events at the Japanese American Cultural and Community Center in Little Tokyo
jacc.org/performingarts
- The antique bunraku puppets in the USC Libraries' East Asian Library
libraries.usc.edu/locations/east-asian-library





DISCOVER MORE AT THE USC LIBRARIES

REBECCA CORBETT of the USC Libraries selected the following resources to help you learn more about *bunraku ningyo* and this evening's event. Those with a call number (e.g., books) are physical items which you can find in our campus libraries. Those without a call number (e.g. journal articles and databases) are electronic resources, which you can access through the search bar on the USC Libraries homepage at libraries.usc.edu.

BOOKS

Keene, Donald, and Hiroshi Kaneko. *Bunraku: The Art of the Japanese Puppet Theatre*. Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1973.

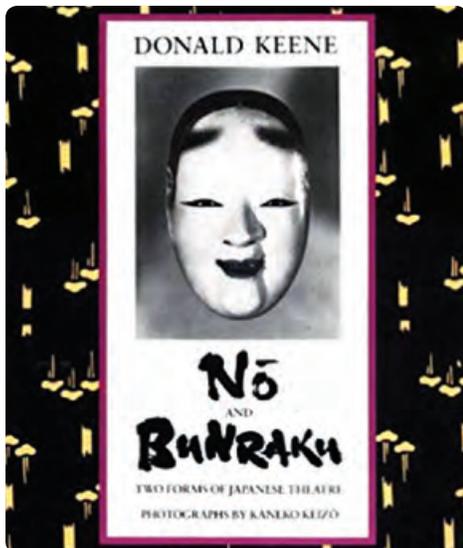
Doheny Memorial Library: **PN1978.J3 K4 1973**

Keene, Donald, and Keizō Kaneko. *Nō and Bunraku: Two Forms of Japanese Theatre*. Morningside ed. New York: Columbia University Press, 1990.

Leavey Library: **PN2924.5.N6 K38 1990**

Jones, Stanleigh H., Hanji Chikamatsu, and Tokuzō Chikamatsu. *The Bunraku Puppet Theatre of Japan: Honor, Vengeance, and Love in Four Plays of the 18th and 19th Centuries*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2013.

Doheny Memorial Library: **PL768.J6 B865 2013**



ARTICLES

Mori, Mitsuya. "The Structure of Acting Reconsidered: From the Perspective of a Japanese Puppet Theater, Bunraku." *Themes in Theatre* 8 (January 1, 2014): 243-261.

Skipitares, Theodora, and Michiko Hirano (translator). "The Tension of Modern Bunraku." *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art* 26, no. 1 [76] (January 2004): 13-21.

Gabrovska, Galia. "Onna Mono: The 'Female Presence' on the Stage of the All-Male Traditional Japanese Theatre." *Asian Theatre Journal* 32, no. 2 (October 1, 2015): 387-415.

DVDS

Request these materials at the Doheny Memorial Library circulation desk.

Chikamatsu, Hanji. *Shinpan utazaimon: Ningyō jōruri bunraku meishū = A New Broadside Ballad*. [Japan]: NHK Entāpuraizu, 2013.

Doheny Memorial Library: **JDVD 0329**

Chikamatsu, Monzaemon. *Meido no hikyaku: Ningyō jōruri bunraku menenshū = The Courier for Hell*. [Japan]: NHK Entāpuraizu, 2013.

Doheny Memorial Library: **JDVD 0330**

OTHER RESOURCES

Invitation to Bunraku www2.ntj.jac.go.jp/unesco/bunraku/en
Basic information on Bunraku from the Japan Arts Council website
(English/Japanese)

