

**Commemorative Program for the 45th Anniversary of
the Normalization of Diplomatic Relations between Japan and China**
**The Japan Foundation and Shochiku will present
Shochiku Grand Kabuki in Beijing, China in March**



The Japan Foundation will present performances of Shochiku Grand Kabuki in Beijing, China over the three days from Saturday, March 18 to Monday, March 20, 2017 (a total of five performances), to commemorate the celebration of the 45th anniversary of the normalization of diplomatic relations between Japan and China. The Foundation is planning multiple programs to commemorate the anniversary and will organize this kabuki performance as the first of them.

The program is specially devised so that the audience in China can fully appreciate the charm of kabuki. The audience can enjoy the formal beauty of kabuki in *Yoshitsune and the Thousand Cherry Trees*, the dramatic nature of kabuki in *The Love Messenger of Yamato*, and the dancing of the *onnagata* [the actors who play female roles] in *Wisteria Maiden*. The program will feature a star-studded lineup of main actors including Nakamura Ganjiro, Nakamura Shikan, and Kataoka Takataro. In 2007, Nakamura Ganjiro and his father Sakata Tojuro appeared in performances given in four Chinese cities as a project to commemorate the 35th anniversary of the restoration of Japan-China diplomatic relations. The present project will be the first full-scale masterpiece performance of classical kabuki in 10 years and a performing group of nearly 100 people led by Nobuyoshi Otani, the chairman of Shochiku Co., Ltd., will travel to Beijing for the performance. The venue, the Beijing Tianqiao Performing Arts Center, is a new and large-scale theater that opened in 2015 and has three halls in different sizes. There are plans to directly connect the center to a subway station and it is expected to play a central role in performing arts in Beijing. At the press conference held on February 7, Nakamura Ganjiro said, "I look forward to seeing how 'Breaking the Seal' will be received." He also expressed that he hoped the audience members would feel the spirit of Japanese people and the bond among them. Nakamura Shikan said, "I will do everything I can to help Chinese people understand the culture of kabuki," and Kataoka Takataro said, "The dancing of the *onnagata* is a fundamental part of kabuki. I hope to show the audience members the aesthetics of Japan."

We at the Foundation hope this project will help cultural exchanges between Japan and China to develop and flourish further.

<Outline of Shochiku Grand Kabuki in Beijing, March 2017>

[Dates and times]	Saturday, March 18 2:00 p.m. / 7:30 p.m. (2 performances)
	Sunday, March 19 2:00 p.m. / 7:30 p.m. (2 performances)
	Monday, March 20 7:30 p.m. (1 performance)

[Plays to be performed]

Yoshitsune and the Thousand Cherry Trees "In Front of the Shrine Gate"
Ganjiro Junikyoku *The Love Messenger of Yamato* "Breaking the Seal"
Wisteria Maiden

[Main cast members]

Yoshitsune and the Thousand Cherry Trees "In Front of the Shrine Gate"
Tadanobu Sato (actually Genkuro the fox): Nakamura Shikan
Shizuka Gozen: Kataoka Takataro
Itsumi no Tota: Nakamura Fukunosuke

Musashibo Benkei: Nakamura Hashinosuke
Minamoto no Yoshitsune: Ichikawa Monnosuke

The Love Messenger of Yamato “Breaking the Seal”

Kameya Chubei: Nakamura Ganjiro
Keisei Umegawa: Nakamura Kazutaro
Izutsuya Oen: Kamimura Kichiya
Tanbaya Hachiemon: Nakamura Shikan

Wisteria Maiden

Spirit of the Wisteria: Kataoka Takataro

[Venue] Medium Theater, Beijing Tianqiao Performing Arts Center (900 seats)

[Entrance fees] 380 yuan, 280 yuan, 100 yuan, 80 yuan

[Organized by] The Japan Foundation

[Operated by] China Arts and Entertainment Group

[Planning and production] Shochiku Co., Ltd., The China Performing Arts Agency

[Supported by] The Chinese People’s Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries (provisional), The Embassy of Japan in China

<At the press conference on February 7, 2017>



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<Highlights of the performances>

Yoshitsune and the Thousand Cherry Trees “In Front of the Shrine Gate”

Yoshitsune has fallen out with his older brother Minamoto no Yoritomo and is under suspicion of mounting a rebellion. He is forced to leave the capital and makes his way to Fushimi Inari Shrine together with a small number of retainers including Musashibo Benkei. Yoshitsune’s mistress Shizuka Gozen appears at the shrine having followed Yoshitsune and his companions there, but Yoshitsune admonishes Shizuka Gozen to stay in the capital, gives her the drum called Hatsune as a keepsake, and leaves. Having been left behind, Shizuka Gozen is almost captured by agents sent by the Kamakura shogun, but retainer Sato Tadanobu runs in and rescues her. Yoshitsune returns to the scene and commands Tadanobu to protect Shizuka Gozen, before escaping safely to western Japan.

Audiences are sure to enjoy the action scene in which Tadanobu the fox fights brilliantly, featuring Shikan as Tadanobu the fox and Monnosuke as Yoshitsune.

Ganjiro Junikyoku The Love Messenger of Yamato “Breaking the Seal”

Chubei, the adopted son of courier firm Kameya in Awajicho, is in love with Umegawa, a courtesan from Shinmachi in Osaka but when Tanbaya Hachiemon announces that he will ransom Umegawa, a fight breaks out between Chubei and Hachiemon. When Chubei does not have the money to pay the ransom, he is humiliated before a lot of people, and breaks the seal on the money that should have been delivered to a samurai’s mansion. Chubei, who has now committed the major crime of embezzlement of public funds, and Umegawa, who knows what happened, receive a sending off by everyone at the licensed quarters, who do not know anything about the matter, as they embark on a journey that will end in their deaths.

Ganjiro Junikyoku is 12 plays that famous Kamigata [Kansai region] actor Nakamura Ganjiro I chose as his specialties. Audiences will savor this dramatic and moving Kamigata kabuki set in a licensed quarters and featuring Ganjiro IV as Chubei, and Shikan as Hachiemon.

Wisteria Maiden

A loveable maiden wearing a bamboo hat and holding a wisteria branch in her hands appears alongside a large pine tree carpeted with blooming wisteria flowers. The pretty maiden, who looks like she belongs in an Otsu painting, is actually the Spirit of the Wisteria. She performs a dance that represents the cold hearts of men, in which the famous Eight Views of Omi are recounted, and as well as a glorious dance depicting the frustrations of love. The Spirit of the Wisteria then retreats to the large pine tree, before finally reappearing from the shade of the tree and beginning a leisurely and bewitching dance, in which she portrays herself as slightly tipsy. Next comes a magnificent hand dance that combines the loveliness of the maiden and the eroticism of the women in the licensed quarters. Eventually night falls and the figure of the wisteria maiden quickly disappears.

Audiences are sure to be mesmerized by Takataro’s flamboyant and elegant dancing.



<Profiles of the main performers>

**Nakamura Ganjiro IV (Narikoma-ya)**

Nakamura Ganjiro IV was born on February 6, 1959 and is the oldest son of Sakata Tojiro. In November 1967, he made his stage debut under the name Nakamura Tomotaro as Ichimanmaru in *Kobai Soga* at the Kabukiza Theatre. In January 1995, as Chubei in “Breaking the Seal” by the Nakaza Theatre and other roles he took the name of Nakamura Kanjaku V. From January to February 2015, he played the roles of Chubei in “Breaking the Seal” and Izaemon in *Love Letter from the Licensed Quarter* at the Osaka Shochikuza Theatre, and took the name of Nakamura Ganjiro IV, which is one of the traditional names that represents Kamigata kabuki. This will be his ninth overseas performance and his third performance in China and Beijing after performances in June 2004 and September 2007. The 2007 performance was given to commemorate the 35th anniversary of the normalization of diplomatic relations between Japan and China, and he went on a performing tour to four cities, primarily Beijing and also Shanghai, Hangzhou, and Guangzhou.

**Nakamura Shikan VIII (Narikoma-ya)**

Nakamura Shikan VIII was born on August 31, 1965 and is the second son of Nakamura Shikan VII. In May 1970, he made his stage debut under the name Nakamura Koji as Yoshimatsu-gimi in *The Ambition of Yanagisawa Yoshiyasu* at the National Theatre. In April 1980, as naked warrior Ishikawa Ginpachi in *Hototogisu Koji no Rakugetsu* and other roles at the Kabukiza Theatre, he took the name of Nakamura Hashinosuke III. In October and November 2015, he took the name of Nakamura Shikan VIII at the Kabuki Theatre. He has been assigned *tachiyaku* [leading male roles] in a wide range of genres, including period plays, domestic plays, and new kabuki. He has performed many roles including Kumagai Naozane in “Kumagai’s Battle Camp,” Tokaiya Ginpei who is actually Shinchunagon Tomomori in “Tokaiya” and “Daimotsu Ura” of *Yoshitsune and the Thousand Cherry Trees*, Banzui Chobei in *Kiwametsuki Banzui Chobei*, and Katsu Kokichi in *Tenpo Yukyuroku*. This will be his fifth overseas performance.

**Kataoka Takataro I (Matsushima-ya)**

Kataoka Takataro was born on January 23, 1968 and is the oldest son of Kataoka Nizaemon XV. In July 1968, he made his stage debut under the name Kataoka Takataro as Ichimatsu in “Natsumatsuri” at the Kabukiza Theatre. He is one of the leading *onnagata* actors of his generation, with a wide-ranging repertoire including Osono in “Keyamura,” Ofune in *Shinrei Yaguchi no Watashi*, Okiyo in “Ohama Goten Tsunatoyokyo,” Omitsu in “Nozakimura,” and Omiwa in *Mt. Imo and Mt. Se: An Exemplary Tale of Womanly Virtue*. He is also capable of portraying the eroticism needed for *onnagata* roles in Kamigata kabuki and has earned great acclaim for his performance of Okichi in *The Woman Killer and the Hell of Oil*, Koharu in “Kawasho,” and others. In addition, Takataro is performing more frequently on television and in movies and this will be his third overseas performance.

<Overseas kabuki performances>

Since its founding in 1895 Shochiku Co., Ltd., as the only kabuki production and promotion company in the world, has worked to maintain the tradition of, develop, and promote worldwide kabuki and the other traditional performing arts unique to Japan. It has produced overseas performances of kabuki since the beginning of the 1920s, in 38 countries over a period of 90 years. The Beijing performance will be the 72nd overseas kabuki performance. The first ever kabuki production in China was in October 1955 and this will be the fifth performance in Beijing. The overseas performances they promoted have received high praise. In reference to the performances in Australia in March 1978, some newspaper wrote that “kabuki is a travelling embassy.”

<The Japan Foundation> <http://www.jpf.go.jp/j/index.html>

The Japan Foundation is an institution that dedicated to conducting comprehensive international cultural exchange programs throughout the world. It was established in 1972 as a special legal entity supervised by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and became an independent administrative institution on October 1, 2003. The Japan Foundation has a headquarters (Tokyo), the Kyoto Office, and two affiliated institutes (Japanese-Language Institute, Urawa and the Japanese-Language Institute, Kansai) in Japan, and 24 overseas offices in 23 countries (including two Asia Center liaison offices). It is creating exchanges between people through a variety of projects and information provision, in order to deepen mutual understanding between the people of the world and the people of Japan, in three major fields of activities: arts and cultural exchange, Japanese-language education overseas, and Japanese studies and intellectual exchange.

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