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AWAJI PUPPET THEATER COMPANY WITH LIVE CHANTING AND SHAMISEN MUSIC ACCOMPANIMENT

February 17 – 18, 2009
8:30pm

presented by

REDCAT

Roy and Edna Disney/CalArts Theater

California Institute of the Arts

AWAJI PUPPET THEATER COMPANY

WITH LIVE CHANTING AND SHAMISEN MUSIC

ACCOMPANIMENT

In Japanese with English subtitles

PROGRAM

Ebisu mai (Ebisu [Deity of Prosperity] Dance)

Chanter: Takemoto Tomosho

Taiko: Tsuruzawa Tomoya

The Ferry Crossing Scene from Hidakagawa Iriai Zakura

Chanter: Takemoto Tomosho

Shamisen: Tsuruzawa Tomoya

Accompanying Shamisen (*Tsure*): Tsuruzawa Tomoshige

INTERMISSION

The Mountain Scene from The Miracle at Tsubosaka Temple (Tsubosaka Reigen-ki)

Chanter: Takemoto Tomowaka

Shamisen: Tsuruzawa Tomoshige

Accompanying Shamisen (*Tsure*): Tsuruzawa Tomoya

Puppeteers: Bando Sentaro, Yoshida Shinkuro, Yoshida Shiko, Yoshida Hironosuke, Yoshida Tokuzo, Yoshida Kotaro and Yoshida Koji

Stagehand (*Koken*): Matsuyama Mitsuyo

Awaji Puppet Theater Company

President: Bando Sentaro

Vice President: Takemoto Tomosho

Head Puppeteer: Yoshida Shinkuro

The seven-city North American tour of Awaji Puppet Theater Company is organized and produced by Japan Society, New York, in partnership with the City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs, and is supported by the Agency for Cultural Affairs, Government of Japan; The Japan Foundation through the Performing Arts JAPAN program; The Jim Henson Foundation; and Awaji Ningyo Support Group.



and Belgium among many other overseas venues. In 1988 he performed as one of the main puppeteer at the National Theater. In 1995 he began teaching puppetry at the Mihara High School Folk Art Club. In 2003 he performed as one of the main puppeteers at the National Theater.

Yoshida Shiko (puppeteer) joined the Folk Art Club at Nandan Middle School in 1984 and the Awaji Puppet Theater Company in 1984. Since 1992 he has performed internationally with the company, including performances in Spain, Germany and Poland, among others. He began teaching at Folk Art Club at Minami Awa Middle School in 1995 and in 2002 performed as one of the main puppeteers at the National Theater.

Yoshida Hironosuke (puppeteer) joined the Folk Art Club at Nandan Middle School. In 1987 he joined the Folk Art Club at Mihara High School and in 1990 the Awaji Puppet Theater Company. In 1992, he performed with the company in Spain, Germany and Poland. He began teaching at the Ningyo Joruri (traditional puppetry) Club of the Fukui Children's Association, and in 2003 performed as one of the main puppeteers at the National Theater.

Yoshida Tokuzo (puppeteer) joined the Folk Art Club at Minami Awa Middle School, one of the inheritors of Awaji Island's puppet theater tradition, and was active as a chanter. In 1987 he joined the Folk Art Club at Mihara High School and in 1990 the Awaji Puppet Theater Company. In 1992, he performed with the company in Spain, Germany and Poland. He began teaching at Mihara Middle School Folk Art Club in 1996. In 2003 he performed as a one of the main puppeteers at the National Theater.

Yoshida Kotaro (puppeteer) joined the Folk Art Club at Mihara Middle School in 1986 and at Mihara High School in 1989. In 1992 he joined the Awaji Puppet Theater Company, and the same year performed with the company in Spain, Germany and Poland. In 2003 he performed at the National Theater.

Yoshida Koji (puppeteer) joined the Folk Art Club at Nandan Middle School in 1987 and then joined the Bunraku Theater as an apprentice. In 1993 he joined the Awaji Puppet Theater Company and the following year toured with the company to the Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania, and Poland. He performed at the National Theater in 2003.

Matsuyama Mitsuyo (*koken* [stagehand]) joined the Awaji Puppet Theater Company in 1985 and performed with the company in Australia and New Zealand in 1986. She performed at the National Theater in 2003.

Takemoto Tomosho (chanter) studied with the Ningyo Joruri (traditional puppetry) Club of the Fukui Children's Association. When he was in the third grade he began studying chanting for several years under the Living National Treasure Tsuruzawa Tomoji and performed with the Fukui Children's Association on its tours. In 1983 he joined the Awaji Puppet Theater Company and the following year made his overseas debut in the Netherlands and Belgium as a chanter. In 1985 he performed for the now Emperor and Empress of Japan, and the following year he toured to Australia and New Zealand. In 2001 he began teaching chanting at the Fukui Children's Association Ningyo Joruri Club in his teacher Tomoji's stead. In 2006 he began teaching chanting and shamisen at Mihara Middle School Folk Art Club. He has performed at the National Theater in Japan in 1988 and 2003.

Takemoto Tomowaka (chanter) began studying under Toyozawa Machiko in 1974, and made her stage debut in 1976. In 1996 she began studying under Tsuruzawa Tomoji and the following year she chanted in Ebisu-mai for the Awaji puppet Theater Company's performances in France.

Tsuruzawa Tomoshige (shamisen) joined in 1991 the Folk Art Club at Nandan Middle School, one of the inheritors of Awaji Island's puppet theater tradition, and in 1996 began studying shamisen under Tsuruzawa Tomoji. The following year, she joined the Awaji Puppet Theater Company and played koto for their performances in France. She appeared in the National Theater performances in 2003 and toured to France and Germany in 2004.

Tsuruzawa Tomoya (shamisen) has studied the hosozao (thin-necked) shamisen since elementary school. In 1993, he began studying the futo-zao (thick-necked) shamisen with Tsuruzawa Tomoji at the Nandan Middle School Folk Art Club, and in 1995 he joined the Folk Art Club at the Hyogo Prefecture Mihara High School, one of the inheritors of Awaji Island's puppet theater tradition, performing in Hungary with the group. In 1997, he received an Award for Excellence at the National Culture Festival produced by the Mihara High School Folk Art Club and performed at the National Theater. He joined the Awaji Puppet Theater Company in 1999, and performed in the company's U.S. tour in 2001. In 2003 he once again performed at the National Theater.

Yoshida Shinkuro (puppeteer) joined the Folk Art Club at Nandan Middle School in 1983 and the Awaji Puppet Theater Company in 1984, performing in the Netherlands

ABOUT AWAJI PUPPET THEATER

Designated an Intangible Cultural Folk Asset by the Japanese government, the Awaji Puppet Theater is based on Awaji Island, the largest island in Japan, located in the Seto Inland Sea, about 30 miles away from Osaka. With a recorded history of over 500 years, there are numerous stories about the art form's origins, but perhaps the most well-known dates back to the Kamakura era (1192 – 1333). During that period, many priests who made a living as musicians and dancers for shrine rituals moved to Awaji Island from Osaka. Among them was a puppeteer who originally belonged to the Nishinomiya Ebisu Shrine in Hyogo, just west of Osaka. It is believed that this puppeteer began to use puppets for divine services. This custom became so popular that it became part of the tradition to utilize puppets in a wide variety of seasonal sacred rituals to pray for the safety in homes, farmland, and fishing boats, and worshipping the sacred. Even up until the 1930s one could witness works from the celebratory ritual repertoire (such as *Sanbaso* or the *Ebisu Dance*) performed in front of household shrines.

In its heyday at the beginning of the 18th century, there were over 40 fully active puppet theatre troupes on Awaji. Over 1000 puppeteers performed both on Awaji Island and all over Japan. In fact Uemura Bunraku-ken, who founded Bunraku Puppet Theater originally hailed from Awaji Island. Unlike bunraku, the Awaji puppetry artists were traveling troupes, who, like a traveling circus, created their performance space wherever they went. Many traditional Japanese folk puppetry companies today have been deeply influenced by the traveling Awaji Puppetry art form. The Awaji tradition involved performances on outdoor stages and utilized larger puppets with larger gestures, and became known for its specialization in classical repertoires, quick costume changes, and sliding-screen backdrops. Combining the three elements of dramatic recitation, puppet manipulation and shamisen musical accompaniment, Awaji Puppet, often referred to as the origin of Bunraku Puppet, shares the same technique of three-man manipulation of puppets.

In 1964, the Awaji Puppet Theater Company was founded as the inheritors to the Awaji Island's puppet performance tradition. Since its inception the company has actively produced performances in its Awaji Puppet Joruri Center as well as national and international tours, provided special visiting programs for schools, and galvanized a national movement towards the preservation of traditional puppet theater.

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

Ebisu-Mai (Ebisu Dance)

Ebisu, now considered a deity of abundance and wealth, was originally hailed as the deity of the sea. Since long ago, people offered performances to Ebisu on the seashore to pray for plentiful fishing and safety at sea. This piece is a direct descendant of this ancient ritual in which puppets were used for divine services.

Synopsis: The Deity Ebisu comes to town and the Town Master welcomes him, offering up some holy sake. After several bowls Ebisu becomes drunk and begins to talk merrily about his life, claiming he is the deity of good luck and fortune, and then he begins to dance, bestowing good luck on the people, good fishing, good crops, and peace and prosperity to the town. Finally, drunk from the sake, he climbs into his boat and sails out to sea. He catches a tai fish (red sea bream – an auspicious symbol in Japan) and the story ends happily. To celebrate with Ebisu dancing joyously to the rhythmic taiko drum is thought to bring a generous heart and positive thinking to those to witness the dance.

The Ferry Crossing Scene from Hidakagawa Iriai Zakura

Hidakagawa Iriai Zakura is a historical play in five acts following the legend of Anchin and Kiyohime and the bell at Dojoji Temple. The play was jointly written by Chikamatsu Hanji and other playwrights of that time and was first performed in 1759. Of the five acts, the fourth, *The Ferry Crossing Scene* is the most renowned.

Synopsis: Due to a feud over the Emperor's successor, Prince Sakuragi is in danger. He disguises himself as an ascetic monk named Anchin to escape his pursuers. On his journey, the Prince spends a night in the home of a certain Manago Shoji in the Kumano region, and there he is reunited with his lover Odamakihime. However, the daughter of Manago Shoji, not knowing that the monk is actually a prince, falls hopelessly in love with him. Anchin and his lover escape to Dojoji Temple, across the river Hidakagawa. In *The Ferry Crossing Scene* Kiyohime has followed Anchin all the way to the river, and there asks the boatman for passage across. But the boatman has been instructed by Anchin to refuse her at all costs. The boatman denies her request. Kiyohime, consumed by a jealous rage, and determined to cross the river by her own strength, transforms into a giant serpent and jumps into the river to chase after Anchin.

The Mountain Scene from The Miracle of Tsubosaka Temple

(Tsuboaska Reigen-ki)

Based on one of countless stories told about pilgrimages to thirty-three temples dedicated to the Kannon Goddess in western Japan, *The Miracle at Tsubosaka Temple (Tsuboaska Reigenki)* was written by Awaji Island native Kago Chikajo and first performed in 1887. This one-act play is based on the story of the couple that experienced the good fortune of having the husband's sight restored by a miracle at the sixth temple, at Tsubosaka. The play begins at the couple's house and the final *Mountain Scene* takes place at the temple.

Synopsis: The blind Sawaichi is a shamisen and koto teacher who lives in Yamato Tsubosaka with his beautiful wife, Osato, who helps them eke out a bare subsistence. Sawaichi gets suspicious when he finds his wife leaving the house every morning at dawn. When he discovers that she had in fact been going to pray to Kannon, the Goddess of Mercy, to have his sight restored, Sawaichi is remorseful for having doubted his wife, and decides to make the pilgrimage with Osato to the Tsubosaka Temple. Sawaichi plans fast there for three days by himself, and asks his wife to go home. Once he is left alone he is overcome by shame. He wishes for his wife to be happily remarried and throws himself into the deep ravine beside the temple. When Osato returns to find what has happened, she follows Sawaichi in suicide. Finally, Kannon appears and shows compassion for the couple; their lives are restored as is Sawaichi's sight. The happy couple dance in gratitude and praise.

About the Awaji Puppet Theater Company *and* About the Program *excerpted from the Awaji Puppet Theater Company, edited and translated by Japan Society.*

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Bando Sentaro (President, Awaji Puppet Theater Company, puppeteer) studied with the Ningyo Joruri (traditional puppetry) Club of the Fukui Children's Association, one of the inheritors of Awaji Island's puppet theater tradition. In 1983 he joined the Awaji Puppet Theater Company as a puppeteer, and the following year, he made his overseas debut in the Netherlands and Belgium as one of the main puppeteers. Since then he has performed nationally and internationally with the company. In 1988 and 2003 he performed at the National Theater in Japan. In 1990 he became the vice-president of the Awaji Puppet Theater Company. In 1995 he became president of Awaji Puppet Theater Company.