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Danjûrô's Girls: The Ichikawa Family and Women on the *Kabuki* Stage

by

Loren Edelson

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Theatre in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

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Abstract

Danjûrô's Girls: The Ichikawa Family and Women on the *Kabuki* Stage

by

Loren Edelson

Adviser: Professor Samuel L. Leiter

This dissertation examines the Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki (Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki) Troupe, an all-female *kabuki* company that was a national sensation in Japan in the 1950s. The troupe evolved from a provincial teenage girls' dance club to a serious, big city, professional contender after it earned the artistic patronage of the illustrious Ichikawa Danjûrô *kabuki* acting dynasty and the financial backing of the Hamamatsu Theatre (Hamamatsu-za). As a recipient of the coveted "Ichikawa" *kabuki* name, the troupe performed on almost every major city stage and received popular and critical acclaim. Thus, it briefly became part of the otherwise impenetrable all-male *kabuki* establishment that continues to monopolize Japanese traditional theatre today.

Despite its stellar success, the troupe has been all but relegated to an historical footnote. Apart from brief mentions in a few encyclopedias, no scholarly study about the troupe in English or Japanese has ever been published. Paying close attention to theoretical concerns such as age, gender, and class, I examine the troupe in all its complexity, arguing that despite its composition as an all-girls' troupe, it appropriated many of the same feudalistic ideals as male "grand" *kabuki*.

While focusing on Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki, the study provides insight into the complex hierarchy of mainstream *kabuki*'s social relations, as well as a broad discussion

of the history of women on the *kabuki* stage. By situating the Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki company as an in-depth case study, I raise questions as to why women are still barred from participating in professional *kabuki* in Japan today.

Acknowledgements

In 1997 I wrote several articles on women in Japanese traditional performing arts for the *Japan Times*. Little did I realize at the time that my article on Nagoya Musume Kabuki, the contemporary all-female *kabuki* company, would inspire my doctoral dissertation. I am indebted to members of the troupe for permitting me to attend numerous performances, watch rehearsals, and explore the frenetic activity behind the scenes. I am grateful for several opportunities to give pre-performance talks, and I thank the troupe for inviting me to the Wereld Muziektheater Festival in the Netherlands and Belgium in 2002. Without access to this troupe, I never would have learned about Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki.

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Notes on Style

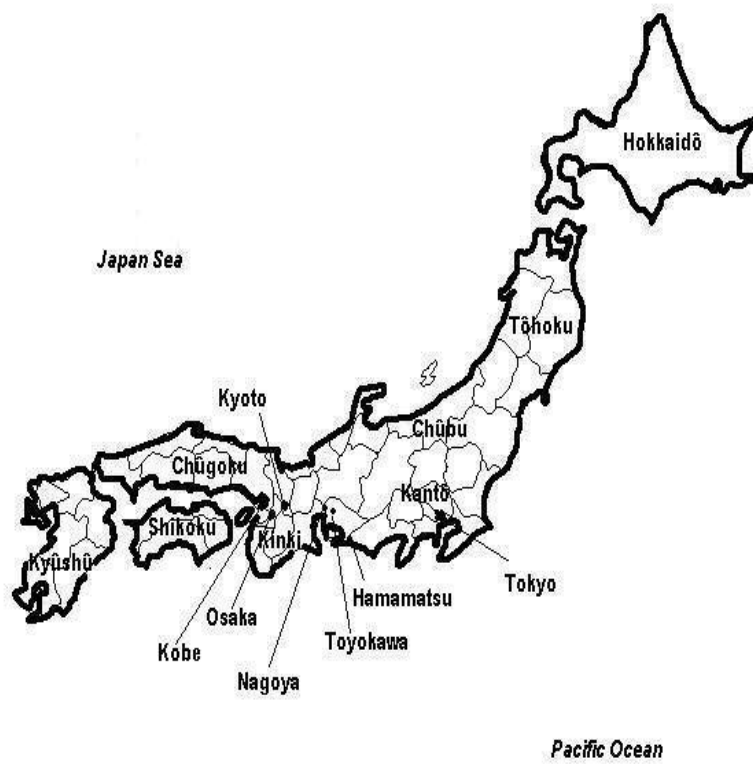
- ◆ Japanese names are given with the surname listed first, followed by the private name. Actors will generally be referred to by their stage names. In cases where actors have multiple stage names, I will give the name by which the actor was called at that point in my narrative. In other words, there are several cases where one individual, over the course of his or her lifetime, possesses several different stage names. While it should be clear from the text when an individual is being called by a new name, I have included a genealogy of the Ichikawa Danjûrô line and Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki/ Ichikawa Actress Company (see Appendix II) that lists the different stage names that were held by any one individual.
- ◆ Please note that unless otherwise indicated, all translations are mine. I have attempted to give full credit for the translations of *kabuki* plays and play titles that are cited in the text. For English-language synopses of the major plays, please see Samuel L. Leiter's *New Kabuki Encyclopedia: A Revised Adaptation of Kabuki Jiten*.
- ◆ Please note that the Japanese title of plays will be used in the text. A list of English translations is available in Appendix IV.
- ◆ With the exception of Japanese words that have become part of the English lexicon, Japanese words are italicized. Generally, I have provided English translations on the first reference.
- ◆ I have transliterated Japanese and Chinese names and terms following the modified Hepburn and pinyin systems, which are the dominant romanization systems used in Japanese and Chinese studies, respectively. The one exception is when an individual has indicated a preference for an alternative spelling (i.e., Ichikawa Ohka, not Ôka).
- ◆ When possible, the birth and death dates of noted individuals are provided on the first reference.
- ◆ The reader will note that some titles of plays are in quotes, while others are in italics. This is done to differentiate the scenes or highlights of longer plays that are frequently performed independently from the full-length plays (*tôshi kyôgen*). Quotations will be used for single acts; full-length plays will be italicized. There are several cases where a scene, such as "Terakoya," is so frequently performed as an independent work that it arguably could have been italicized, but quotations are used in order to alert the reader that it was excerpted from a longer work (in this case, *Sugawara Denju Tenarai Kagami*). Thus, while my choices might prove questionable at times, I have tried to be consistent.
- ◆ While it is standard in most footnotes to omit the author's first name, I have retained the first name in the myriad of cases where the surname is "Ichikawa."

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Map of Japan

Please note that map is not drawn to scale.



Introduction

Danjûrô's Girls

It's a black day for an actor family when no one is left but women who know nothing about the world—the way it was with the house of Naritaya. It's a pity to think of such an illustrious family of artists gone to ruin.

—Nagai Kafû (1879-1959), *Udekurabe*¹

This dissertation documents the history of an all-female *kabuki* troupe that was a national sensation in Japan in the 1950s. Comprised initially of teenage girls, Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki (Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki) performed on almost every major city stage and in almost every prefecture. At its peak, Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki boasted more than one hundred plays in its repertory, worked a year-round production schedule, and received popular and critical acclaim, briefly becoming part of the otherwise impenetrable all-male *kabuki* establishment that continues to monopolize Japanese traditional theatre today. Despite its stellar success, the troupe has been all but relegated to an historical footnote. Apart from brief mentions in a few reference books, no scholarly study about the troupe in English or Japanese has ever been published.² This dissertation examines the troupe in

¹ Kurt Meissner, trans., *Geisha in Rivalry* (Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle, 1963), 124. Edward Seidensticker alternatively translates the title *A Test of Skills* in his *Low City, High City: Tokyo from Edo to the Earthquake* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1983), 290.

² See Koike Shôtârô, "Okyôgen-shi," in *Kabuki Jiten* [Kabuki Encyclopedia], edited by Hattori Yukio et al. rev. ed. (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 2000), 93; Samuel L. Leiter, *New Kabuki Encyclopedia: A Revised Adaptation of Kabuki Jiten* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1997), 198; Waseda Daigaku Engeki Hakubutsukan, ed., *Engeki Hyakka Daijiten* [Theatre Encyclopedia] (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1963), 1: 169; Yamagawa Kazuo, "Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki" [Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki], in *Sengô Geinô-shi Monogatari* [Stories of Postwar Performance History] (Tokyo: Asahi Shinbun Gakugei-bu, 1987), 76-79; Shinhen Toyokawa-shi Henshû Inkai, ed. *Toyokawa-shi-shi* [Toyokawa City History] (Toyokawa: Toyokawa-shi, 2001), 9: 1133-1134; "Ichikawa

all of its complexity, from its formation as a provincial dance club in the wake of Japan's defeat in World War II through its meteoric rise as a professional *kabuki* company.

Composed of two common Chinese ideographs, the “Ichikawa” of the troupe's name was anything but ordinary.³ It had been bestowed by Ichikawa Sanshō V (later Ichikawa Danjūrō X, 1882-1956) of the Naritaya house, which, like all grand *kabuki* acting families, is exclusively male.⁴ Arguably the most illustrious *kabuki* dynasty, the Naritaya house comprises the Ichikawa Danjūrō line of actors, the first of whom is credited with the creation of the bravura (*aragoto*) acting style in the late seventeenth century.⁵ The *aragoto* style is associated with such favorite plays as *Shibaraku*, *Sukeroku*, *Narukami*, and *Kanjinchō*, which have been canonized as the Naritaya house's “family

Shōjo Kabuki,” <http://www.naritaya.jp/learn/jiten/a.html#i01> (accessed 5 February 2006).

³ In Japanese, the name of the troupe reads 市川少女歌舞伎.

⁴ All grand *kabuki* (*ōkabuki*) actors are organized into houses (sometimes translated as schools), and Naritaya is the shop name (*yagō*) of the Ichikawa Danjūrō actor-family. All *kabuki* actors have a *yagō*, which refers to a guild, business, or other organization to which their predecessors were connected in some fashion during the Tokugawa period (1603-1868). The Naritaya house is named in honor of the Narita Temple in Narita, Japan, which is patronized by the Danjūrō family. Actors can have the same family name, but have a different shop name. Ichikawa Danjūrō's, for example, is “Naritaya,” Ichikawa Sadanji's is “Takashimaya,” and Ichikawa Ennosuke's is “Omodakaya.” Many of these guilds are now defunct, but the *yagō* tradition remains to this day. *Yagō* are the names that are generally called out by fans at distinct moments in the performance to show their appreciation. See Leiter, *New Kabuki Encyclopedia*, 692.

⁵ Actors never perform under their private names, but are given stage names (*geimei*, literally “art names”) that are usually inherited from senior actors in the acting family. Several top-rank names, such as Danjūrō, were repeated within families, and the recipient was also designated with an ordinal number marking his generation. Thus, Ichikawa (family name) Danjūrō (stage name) IX (ordinal). Since the time of Danjūrō IX, the private family name of holders of the Ichikawa Danjūrō stage name has been Horikoshi, which had been the private name of Ichikawa Danjūrō I (1660-1704). Hattori Yukio, *Ichikawa Danjūrō Dai Dai* [Generations of the Ichikawa Danjūrō Line] (Tokyo: Kodansha, 2002), 153.

art” (*ie no gei*).⁶ Of all the great acting dynasties that have earned a place in the contemporary *kabuki* theatre world, the Naritaya house continues to receive the greatest approbation, and, as we shall see in the pages that follow, the stellar reputation that Ichikawa Girls’ Kabuki earned throughout the 1950s cannot be disassociated from this connection.

Occupying the highest seat of power in all *kabuki* houses is the *iemoto* (headmaster); the *iemoto* decides who is admitted to the house, oversees the repertory, and serves as the house’s representative in business and management decisions. For the Naritaya house, the *iemoto* has been the actor customarily holding the name Ichikawa Danjûrô, a celebrated name that has been passed down from father to son—either biological or adopted—since the late seventeenth century. In the 1950s, when the troupe was given the Ichikawa name, however, the *iemoto* was Ichikawa Sanshō V, who would be posthumously named Ichikawa Danjûrô X. Hence, the troupe could be remembered as one generation of “Danjûrô’s Girls” (Danjûrô Musume). The title of a popular *kabuki* dance piece from the 1950s, “Danjûrô’s Girls” refers here, and in this dissertation’s title, to the dozens of women who have been affiliated with the Naritaya house.⁷

Before delving into the history of Ichikawa Girls’ Kabuki, I must clarify that its members were not the first women to be associated with the Ichikawa Danjûrô line of actors. The Naritaya house’s patronage of actresses began in the late nineteenth century

⁶ Although protocol has become more relaxed since the Tokugawa period when *kabuki* flourished as Japan’s popular theatre, it is still considered proper for actors outside the Naritaya house to ask the headmaster (*iemoto*) for permission to perform any of the Naritaya *ie no gei* pieces. All of the plays listed are considered part of the “eighteen favorite plays” (*jûhachiban*) of the Ichikawa Danjûrô acting family.

⁷ See “Danjûrô Musume,” in Nihonbuyôsha, ed., *Nihon Buyô Zenshû*, vol. 3 (Tokyo: Buyô-sha, 1982), 695-700.

when headmaster Ichikawa Danjûrô IX (1838-1903) admitted a woman, later called Ichikawa Kumehachi (1846?-1913), to the Naritaya house and announced that his two daughters, too, would become *kabuki* actresses (see figures 1 and 2).⁸ Danjûrô IX's 1888 announcement preceded the 1890 Tokyo Metropolitan Police Edict that officially overturned the seventeenth-century ban on female performers and, in turn, "tolerated" mixed performances of men and women onstage.⁹ The reasons for overturning the ban concerned the convention of men playing women and women playing men, which the Meiji period (1868-1912) elite felt was an "extremely bad" custom and "the object of foreign ridicule."¹⁰

As most histories of *kabuki* attest, the convention of the male female-role player (*onnagata*) had developed into an intricate art form after the seventeenth-century ban on female performers and the start of men's (*yarô*) *kabuki*, when acting became more

⁸ For the announcement that Danjûrô had accepted Kumehachi as his apprentice and planned to train his daughters as actresses (*joyû*, the term Danjûrô used), see *Yomiuri Shinbun*, 21 June 1888 and *Tôkyô Nichi Nichi Shinbun*, 11 July 1888. Hasegawa Shigure incorrectly notes that Kumehachi joined the Naritaya house in 1884. Hasegawa Shigure, "Ichikawa Kumehachi," *Kindai Bijin Den* [Tales of Modern Beauties] (Tokyo: Sairensha, 1936), 178. See also Kamiyama Akira, "Kumehachi no Zanzô: Onna Yakusha to Joyû no Aidai" [Images of Kumehachi: Between Female Actor and Actress], *Geinô* [Performing Arts] 34 no. 9 (September 1992): 23.

⁹ For a full copy of the text, see Ihara Seisei'en, *Meiji Engekishi* [History of Meiji-Period Theatre] (Tokyo: Kuresu Shuppan, 1933), 700-701. Matsumoto Shinko provides the best commentary on the passage of this edict. Matsumoto Shinko, *Meiji Engekironshi* [A History of Meiji Theatre Discussions] (Tokyo: Engeki Shuppansha, 1980), 156-158. It should be noted that the edict was not a national law; it was a Tokyo ordinance, but it would influence the direction of theatre in other parts of the country as well. In actuality, this edict merely took a laissez-faire stance regarding women on the stage, stating quite simply that the police's policy henceforth will be "not to make an issue of it" (*fumon ni fusu*). In other words, it would neither prohibit nor promote men and women performing together, but leave all decisions concerning mixed casting "up to the theatre owners and actors." Ibid.

¹⁰ Ihara, *Meiji Engekishi*, 700-701; Matsumoto, *Meiji Engekironshi*, 156-158. In 1868, the Meiji emperor was declared the sole ruler of Japan, and the seat of imperial authority was moved from Kyoto to Edo, renamed Tokyo (Eastern Capital).

important than good looks and charm.¹¹ Before this time, single-sex groups of young men (*wakashu*) and women (*onna*) had performed *kabuki* publicly, imitating and embellishing the theatre of Izumo no Okuni, the woman who is believed to have been the founder of *kabuki*.¹² It was Okuni, an acolyte (*miko*) from the great Izumo Shrine, who is said to have been the first to perform some wildly original dances and skits, based on traditional ones, on the banks of the Kamo River in Kyoto in 1603, the year of the establishment of the Tokugawa military government (*bakufu*). Though there is some extant evidence regarding Okuni's career, much of what has been written about her is apocryphal.¹³ As the legend of Okuni is told, her slightly askew, "queer" choreography excited spectators to the extent that her performances were called *kabuku*, the verb for something new and

¹¹ Studies focusing on the *onnagata* include Mette Laderrière, "The Technique of Female Impersonation in *Kabuki*," *Maske und Koturn* 27 (1981): 30-35; Mette Laderrière, "The Early Years of Female Impersonators in *Kabuki*," *Maske und Koturn* 35 (1985): 31-37; Samuel L. Leiter, "From Gay to Gei: The *Onnagata* and the Creation of *Kabuki's* Female Characters," in *A Kabuki Reader: History and Performance*, ed. Samuel L. Leiter (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2002), 211-229; Katherine Mezur, "The *Kabuki Onnagata*: A Feminist Analysis of the *Onnagata* Fiction of Female-likeness" (PhD diss., University of Hawaii, 1998); Mark Oshima, "The Keisei as a Meeting Point of Different Worlds: Courtesan and the *Kabuki Onnagata*," in *The Women of the Pleasure Quarters*, ed. Elizabeth de Sabato Swinton (Worcester, MA: Worcester Art Museum, 1995), 86-105; Watanabe Tamotsu, *Onnagata Hyakushi* [One Hundred Poses of the *Onnagata*] (Tokyo: Seiabo, 1978).

¹² Maki Morinaga offers an alternate viewpoint that premises that *wakashu* and subsequently men's (*yarô*) *kabuki* was not a direct descendent of Okuni and women's *kabuki*. She argues that the *wakashu* played a more salient role than Okuni in the invention of the *onnagata*. Maki Morinaga, "The Gender of *Onnagata* as the Imitating Imitated: Its Historicity, Performativity, and Involvement in the Circulation of Femininity," *positions: east asia cultures critique* 10:2 (2002): 247-252.

¹³ For one of the more blatant attempts to pass off Okuni legends as historical fact, see the essays in Shibuya Kyûsuke, ed., *Izumo Okuni Sanka* [Songs of Praise for Izumo Okuni] (Matsue: Eitei Fôram Shuppan, 2003), a special publication honoring Okuni's four-hundredth anniversary. For an account that is clearly specified as fiction, see James R. Brandon's translation of Ariyoshi Sawako's *Izumi no Okuni* entitled *Kabuki Dancer: A Novel of the Woman Who Founded Kabuki* (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1994).

flashy, which literally “tilted” in a new direction.¹⁴ Her performance of the *nenbutsu odori*, a twist on the Buddhist prayer, became an overnight sensation, earning her a reputation as the “world’s best dancer.” Her alleged love affair with the dashing rebel Nagoya Sanza captivated the public’s imagination. After he died, Okuni is said to have conjured his ghost in a parody of the austere *nô* drama and to have danced with a crucifix, introduced by the Portuguese traders who had yet to be banished by the new Tokugawa government. Her performances were so successful that she was invited to dance before the shogun, and within years, new female troupes sprouted up, in imitation of her once-famous dances.

But Okuni’s female successors, known as women’s (*onna*) *kabuki*, were soon banned from the stage, ostensibly because of their licentious behavior as prostitute-performers. Indeed, Tokugawa *bakufu* edicts aiming to disperse women performers were promulgated beginning in 1603 and continued with outright bans on women performers through the 1640s.¹⁵ While 1629 is often given as the definitive date for the ban, it is likely, as Donald Shively has suggested, that it “was not always strictly enforced,” since

¹⁴ For a discussion of *kabuki* as queer theatre, see Ayako Kano’s *Acting Like a Woman in Modern Japan: Theatre, Gender, and Nationalism* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 58-60. The word *kabuki* is composed of three Chinese ideographs for song (歌), dance (舞), and skill (伎); before the Meiji period, the character for “prostitute”(妓) was used instead of “skill.” During Okuni’s time, however, the word *kabuki* was written in the hiragana script (かぶき). The verb *kabuku* can be translated as “to slant,” though by the time of the Tokugawa period, it had become slang for unconventional manners of dress or anti-conformist modes of behavior. Benito Ortolani, *The Japanese Theatre: From Shamanistic Ritual to Contemporary Pluralism*, rev. ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 164.

¹⁵ Yoshida Setsuko, *Edô Kabuki Hôrei Shûsei* [Collection of Edo *Kabuki* Ordinances] (Tokyo: Ôfûsha, 1989), 1:6 and 22-24; Yoshida Setsuko, *Edô Kabuki Hôrei Shûsei* (Tokyo: Ôfûsha, 1997), 21-30. Yoshida has undertaken the mammoth task of compiling all the *bakufu* edicts concerning *kabuki* that were promulgated in Edo (now Tokyo) during the Tokugawa period.

it was repeatedly issued through the 1640s.¹⁶ Although the *bakufu* edicts, as compiled by Yoshida Setsuko, do not always provide the reasons why certain regulations were initiated, the ban on female performers appears to stem from two major reasons: the concern that *kabuki* was lowering social morals, because of its connection to prostitution, and that it was the source of fighting among spectators, which mixed samurai and commoners and therefore violated the *bakufu*'s policy of class separation.¹⁷ It appears that as far as the *bakufu* was concerned, women's *kabuki* had deteriorated to an erotic preview of the intimate relations between spectator and performer that could take place after the show. Still, as several studies have demonstrated, the sexually titillating elements were never fully excised from *kabuki*, even after men came to monopolize the commercial stage.¹⁸

While men dominated the public theatres, women continued to perform on private stages as *gidayū* musicians and geisha, a profession that came into its full flowering in the mid-eighteenth century.¹⁹ Contrary to their popular image as prostitutes, geisha were

¹⁶ See Donald H. Shively, "Bakufu versus Kabuki," in *A Kabuki Reader: History and Performance*, ed. Samuel L. Leiter (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2002), 36.

¹⁷ Yoshida, *Edō Kabuki*, 1989, 1:22, 51. For further discussion, see Gregory M. Pflugfelder, *Cartographies of Desire: Male-Male Sexuality in Japanese Discourse, 1600-1950* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 112-113.

¹⁸ See, for example, Leiter, "From Gay to Gei," 211-229; Pflugfelder, *Cartographies of Desire*, 113-122; Donald H. Shively, "The Social Environment of Tokugawa Kabuki," in *Studies in Kabuki: Its Acting, Music, and Historical Context* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1978), 10; Mezur, "The Kabuki Onnagata," 97-104; 190-263.

¹⁹ See, for example, Liza Dalby, *Geisha* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), esp. 48-75. Cecilia Segawa Seigle, *Yoshiwara: The Glittering World of the Japanese Courtesan* (Honolulu: Hawaii, 1993), 170-175; A. Kimiko Coaldrake, *Women's Gidayū and the Japanese Theatre Tradition* (London: Routledge, 1997), 8-13. *Gidayū* are the musical narratives for puppet plays developed by the chanter Takemoto Gidayū (1651-1714) and are one form of *jōruri*, a broader genre of musical narratives recited by a narrator with *shamisen* accompaniment that became popular starting in the late sixteenth century.

skilled dancers and musicians, though sexual service was not outside the scope of their employment.²⁰ Precisely how the female geisha and *gidayû* performers' private repertory corresponded to that of the male, commercial actors (*yakusha*) has yet to be studied in full. The women whose repertory overlapped more significantly with the commercial actors' appear to be the *okyôgen-shi* (honorable theatre artists), who performed *kabuki* plays and dances in the homes of feudal lords (*daimyô*) and even played at the Edo castle for ladies of the shogun's inner court from as early as the 1750s.²¹

One of the most famous *okyôgen-shi* was Ichikawa Kumehachi, mentioned earlier as the first woman admitted to the Naritaya house and subsequently referred to as the "female Danjûrô." According to Kumehachi's own published accounts, she served as an apprentice to Bandô Mitsue, one of the foremost *okyôgen-shi*, in the late 1850s or early 1860s.²² Kumehachi describes how *okyôgen-shi* of Mitsue's troupe gave private performances several times a month for *daimyô*, their wives, and associates. Specifically,

²⁰ Seigle, *Yoshiwara*, esp. 179-182.

²¹ Regarding the *okyôgen-shi*, see Norizuki Toshihiko, "Okyôgen-shi to iu Edo no Joyû" [The Edo Period Actress Called Okyôgen-shi], *Geinô* [Performance] (September 1992): 10-16. This article appeared in a special issue of *Geinô* that was dedicated to "Women in the History of *Kabuki*" [Kabuki-shi no Naka no Onnatachi]. My translation of *okyôgen-shi*, and many other theatrical terms that appear in this dissertation, is taken from Leiter, *New Kabuki Encyclopedia*, 503. See also Andrew C. Gerstle, "Eighteenth-Century *Kabuki* and Its Patrons," in *A Kabuki Reader: History and Performance*, ed. Samuel L. Leiter (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe), 2002 [1987], 101; Koike Shôtârô, "Daimyô Nikki ga Egaku aru Edo Joyû" [An Edo Actress as Portrayed in a Daimyô's Diary], *Rekishi to Jinbutsu* [History and Individuals] 10, no. 11 (1980): 214-218; Waseda Daigaku Engeki Hakubutsukan, ed., *Engeki Hyakka Daijiten*, 1: 426.

²² Bandô Mitsue's dates are unknown. Kumehachi's two essays that discuss her experience as an *okyôgen-shi* apprentice are Ichikawa Kumehachi, "Meika Shinsôroku" [Discussions with People from Famous Families], *Engei Gahô* (September 1907): 107-122 and Ichikawa Kumehachi, "Geidan Hyakuwa" [One Hundred Sayings About Art], *Engei Gahô* [Theatre Illustrated] (April 1907): 79-86. Precisely when Kumehachi served as Mitsue's apprentice is unknown. According to Kumehachi's own account, she was between the ages of sixteen and eighteen, but because it is unclear when Kumehachi was born, it is difficult to know the precise years she served.

her troupe was contracted to the *daimyô* from Kaga (present day Kanazawa), Sanuki (Kagawa), and Aki (Hiroshima).²³ These exclusive affairs took place in the privacy of the *daimyô*'s estate, which housed a lavish theatre that often rivaled public ones.²⁴

According to Kumehachi, it was requisite for the *okyôgen-shi*—who, on average, were around forty years old—to remain unmarried; it is unclear if they were to remain chaste, although it does seem that sexual services were neither provided nor expected, as she underscores the necessity for the female performers to practice impeccable decorum.²⁵ They were professional and received a “reward” (*fuchi*), most likely monetary, that was occasionally supplemented with gifts like kimono or rice.²⁶

In the highly stratified, feudal Tokugawa political system in which *kabuki* actors were classified as *hinin* (non-persons), *okyôgen-shi*, like *nô* and *kyôgen* actors—who were also supported by samurai—possessed a special status that enabled them to transcend some of the sumptuary edicts aimed at *kabuki* actors.²⁷ *Okkyôgen-shi* who performed during Kumehachi's time, for example, were permitted to wear silk.²⁸ Such costly fabric enabled the women to create gorgeous costumes and outfits, but apparently posed a problem when it came time to play characters from the lower classes who would have worn run-of-the-mill cotton and less desirable fabrics. Though Kumehachi noted

²³ Ichikawa, “Meika Shinsôroku,” 107.

²⁴ For a description of the lords' stages, see Ichikawa, “Geidan Hyakuwa,” 82; “Meika Shinsôroku,” 107-113.

²⁵ Ichikawa, “Meika Shinsôroku,” 108.

²⁶ Ichikawa, “Geidan Hyakuwa,” 81; Ichikawa, “Meika Shinsôroku,” 108-110.

²⁷ See, for example, Donald Shively, “Sumptuary Regulation and Status in Early Tokugawa Japan,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 25 (1964):123-164.

²⁸ Ichikawa, “Geidan Hyakuwa,” 82; “Meika Shinsôroku,” 110.

that the *okyôgen-shi* were forced to mar their silk kimono when playing such roles, the likelihood of *okyôgen-shi* actually performing lowly characters was minimal.²⁹

Indeed, unlike the commercial actor, the *okyôgen-shi*'s repertory was confined to those *kabuki* dances and dramas that exemplified the noblest feudal values, such as obligation to one's lord, self-sacrifice, and vengeance for the family namesake—themes that were most apparent in the plays that had been adapted from the puppet theatre (*ningyô jôruri*, later called *bunraku*) repertory.³⁰ As an apprentice for Bandô Mitsue, Kumehachi saw her first *Ehon Taikôki*,³¹ *Honchô Nijûshikô*,³² and *Kagamiyama Kokyo no Nishikie*,³³ *ningyô jôruri* history plays in which straight acting was privileged over dance.³⁴

With the collapse of the Tokugawa *bakufu* and the *daimyô* system in the early 1860s and the advent of the Meiji period, however, the *okyôgen-shi* lost their patrons, and many subsequently sought work as *onna yakusha* (female actors), playing in Tokyo's small commercial theatres (*koshibai* or *shôgekijô*), as opposed to the grand commercial

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid. The *okyôgen-shi* never performed *kizewamono* (raw domestic plays), such as the nineteenth-century plays by Tsuruya Nanboku IV (1755-1829), which parodied many of these themes in a dark, sometimes lewd, comical fashion. Ichikawa, "Geidan Hyakuwa," 82.

³¹ Samuel L. Leiter, trans., "The Picture Book of the Taikô," in *Kabuki Plays On Stage: Villainy and Vengeance, 1773-1799*, eds. James R. Brandon and Samuel L. Leiter, 352-375 (Honolulu: University of Hawaii, 2002).

³² Paul M. Griffith, trans., "Japan's Twenty-Four Paragons of Filial Piety," in *Kabuki Plays On Stage: Brilliance and Bravado, 1697-1766*, eds. James R. Brandon and Samuel L. Leiter, 326-352 (Honolulu: University of Hawaii, 2002).

³³ Mark Oshima, trans., "Mirror Mountain: A Woman's Treasury of Loyalty," in *Kabuki Plays On Stage: Villainy and Vengeance, 1773-1799*, eds. James R. Brandon and Samuel L. Leiter, 172-212 (Honolulu: University of Hawaii, 2002).

³⁴ Ichikawa, "Geidan Hyakuwa," 82.

theatres (*ôshibai*) reserved for male actors who possessed the proper backing or family lineage.³⁵ Out of a job and a future as an *okyôgen-shi*, Kumehachi, like several of her colleagues, successfully transitioned to life as an *onna yakusha*, the term generally used to categorize the dozens of women who began to perform on the commercial stages of Tokyo during the Meiji period.

Years before Kumehachi caught the attention of Danjûrô IX, she had an active career as an *onna yakusha*, playing at small theatres in Tokyo; indeed, by April 1868, at the opening of the Satsuma-za, she rose to the major challenge of playing two of the leading characters, Masaoka (a woman) and Nikki Danjô (a man), in *Meiboku Sendai Hagi*, a feat that was immortalized in an 1868 woodblock print.³⁶ With such plum roles under her belt, Kumehachi announced, “I became an *onna yakusha* when I was twenty-three years old.”³⁷

³⁵ The precise date when the *okyôgen-shi* lost their jobs is unclear, but I would argue that the year was most likely 1862, when the alternate attendance system collapsed. Instituted in 1634, alternate attendance (*sankin kôtai*) required the nation’s feudal lords to maintain residences in Edo where their families would remain hostages when they returned to their domains. For more on the *sankin kôtai* system, see Constantine N. Vaporis, “To Edo and Back: Alternate Attendance and Japanese Culture in the Early Modern Period,” *Journal of Japanese Studies* 23:1 (Winter 1997): 25-67. It should be noted that *nô* and *kyôgen* actors also lost their *bakufu* and samurai patrons at this time.

³⁶ See Ichikawa, “Geidan Hyakuwa,” 83. At this time, she was known by the name “Iwai Kumehachi,” since she had become a disciple of Iwai Kumesaburô III (later Iwai Hanshirô VIII, 1829-1882). She wrote that she played the roles in rotation with Jidô, another actress in the troupe. See Matthew Johnson, trans., “The Precious Incense and Autumn Flowers of Sendai,” in *Kabuki Plays On Stage, Villainy and Vengeance: 1773-1799*, eds. James R. Brandon and Samuel L. Leiter, 48-71 (Honolulu: University of Hawaii, 2002). The print can be viewed at <http://133.9.157.146/web41/enpakunishik> (accessed 30 November 2004).

³⁷ Morizui Kenjiki, “Ichikawa Kumehachi Debunki I: Aru Onna Yakusha no Kojitsu” [Rumors about Kumehachi: Things That Female Actor Said, part I], *Jissen Bungaku* [Practical Literature] (March 1971): 40.

It would take another two decades, however, for the Society for Theatre Reform (Engeki Kairyô-kai) to petition for women to replace the *onnagata*.³⁸ The Society believed that the addition of actresses would enable *kabuki*—long considered a déclassé albeit popular entertainment—to become a respectable drama on a par with Western theatre, which Japanese diplomats and business leaders had experienced on missions abroad.³⁹ Danjûrô IX became the Society’s *de facto* actor representative, publicly expressing his support for women to play the female roles in *kabuki*, and, as mentioned above, taking concrete steps to welcome women into the Naritaya house. This earned him the Society’s praise, but many, such as the novelist Nagai Kafû in the quotation that opens this chapter, mourned the fact that the great actor had produced only daughters and was intent on training actresses.⁴⁰

Although the Society fizzled just a few years later, it undoubtedly influenced the promulgation of the 1890 edict tolerating mixed performances of men and women. In the

³⁸ For a discussion of the twentieth-century actress debates, see Kano, *Acting Like a Woman*, 15-24. For a discussion of the actress debates before 1900, see Matsumoto, *Meiji Engekironshi*, 153-162.

³⁹ For more on the tension between the low and high classes in reforming *kabuki*, see Seidensticker, *Low City*, 149-155; Jean-Jacques Tschudin, “Early Meiji *Kabuki* and Western Theatre: A Rendez-vous Manque,” in *Kabuki: Changes and Prospects*, ed. International Symposium on the Conservation and Restoration of Cultural Properties (Tokyo: Tokyo National Research Institute of Cultural Properties, 1996), 187; Matsumoto Shinko, *Meiji Zenki Engekironshi* [A History of Early Meiji Theatre Discussions] (Tokyo: Engeki Shuppansha, 1974), 387; Kamiyama Akira, “Kindai ni Okeru *Kabuki* no Henyô” [The Transition of *Kabuki* in Modernization (sic)], in *Kabuki: Changes and Prospects*, ed. International Symposium on the Conservation and Restoration of Cultural Properties, 159-170 (Tokyo: Tokyo National Research Institute of Cultural Properties, 1996).

⁴⁰ Danjûrô IX’s only biological son died at birth, before he was given a name. He had previously adopted his younger brother’s son, Akabei (1864-1877), the biological son of Danjûrô VII’s sixth son, Ichikawa Kôzo (d. 1875), but he died when he was thirteen. Hattori, *Ichikawa Danjûrô*, 153; Nojima Jusaburô, *Kabuki Jinmei Jiten* [Biographical Dictionary of *Kabuki*], rev. ed. (Tokyo: Nichigai, 2002), 99; Ichikawa Suisen III, *Kudai-me Danjûrô to Watashi* [Danjûrô IX and Me] (Tokyo: Rikugei Shobo, 1966), 12.

aftermath, several all-female and some mixed troupes formed, and for years, Kumehachi led a troupe of women at the Misaki-za (later, Kanda Gekijō [Theatre]), one of the many small theatres.⁴¹ These women paved the way for the Imperial Theatre's (Teikoku Gekijō) short-lived, but popular experiment to mix male and female actors in *kabuki* plays.⁴² Why these actresses did not succeed on the grand public stages is difficult to discern, but perhaps the most compelling reason is not that women lacked sufficient training and patronage—which they may very well have—but that *kabuki* audiences never had adequate time to accept them.

To understand this point, we can look to the transition that occurred in Restoration England in 1660, when actresses began to perform in the commercial playhouses for the first time and quickly supplanted the Elizabethan custom of men playing female roles.⁴³ One of the reasons this transition was made so seamlessly was because the commercial theatres had been closed for some eighteen years during Oliver Cromwell's interregnum,

⁴¹ *Yomiuri Shinbun*, 1 August 1893; 5 December 1893; 9 December 1893; 11 December 1893. Kumehachi's connection with the Misaki-za is noted in *Kabuki*, September 1913, quoted in Morizui, "Debunki I," 46; Okamoto Kidō, *Ranpu no Moto Nite* [Under the Lamp: Discussions on Meiji Theatre] (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1965 [1935]), 151. According to Toita Yasuji, members of her Misaki-za troupe included Matsumoto Kinshi, Ichikawa Sumihachi, Sawamura Kikuhachi. "Ichikawa Kumehachi no Sarashi Momen" [Ichikawa Kumehachi's Cotton Wrap], *Naki Dokoro Jinbutsu Shi* [People Who Hit a Nerve] (Tokyo: Bungei Shunjū, 1987), 111. Sugiura also states that Ichikawa Wakahachi was a member. Sugiura Zenzō, *Joyū Kagami* [Actress Mirror] (Tokyo: Sugiura Shuppanbu, 1912), 75.

⁴² Mine Takashi, *Teikoku Gekijō Kaimaku: Kyo wa Teigeki Ashita wa Mitsukoshi* [The Opening of the Imperial Theatre: Today the Imperial, Tomorrow Mitsukoshi] (Tokyo: Chūhō Ronsha, 1996), 221-222. Despite the objections of critics to the mixed *kabuki* productions in 1912, he notes that the upper middle-class audience welcomed the experiment. Unfortunately, he does not provide his source.

⁴³ Samuel L. Leiter examines many shared features of the English Restoration and Tokugawa-period *kabuki* stage. See his "From the London Patents to the Edo *Sanza*: A Partial Comparison of the British Stage and *Kabuki*, ca. 1650-1800," in *Frozen Moments: Writings on Kabuki, 1966-2001* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell East Asia Series, 2002), 297-320.

and audiences, in turn, had sufficient time to distance themselves from the all-male acting customs and were receptive to the introduction of actresses. The boy players of female roles had grown up, so there was no pressure to hire them. And, while there were still male actors, such as Edward Kynaston who specialized in female roles, he was overtaken by actresses by the 1661-1662 season when he played his last part as a woman.⁴⁴ Over the next hundred years, England would witness some of its most renowned actresses: Nell Gwyn, Elizabeth Barry, Anne Oldfield, and Sarah Siddons. The all-male stage convention, instead of being the accepted theatrical norm that it had been in the Renaissance, had become a curiosity.⁴⁵ Furthermore, as Elizabeth Howe states, “at the beginning of 1662 the casting of women in women’s roles became not merely the popular choice but law.”⁴⁶

In Japan during the beginning of the Meiji Period, the theatres underwent a slight dip in popularity, but were never threatened to the point of closure. Indeed, theatres not only stayed open, but grew in number, providing an opportunity for theatergoers to see even more theatre than before.⁴⁷ In this way, there was never an enforced break as in the interregnum, which had the effect of forcing theatergoers to forget, and, in the process,

⁴⁴ Elizabeth Howe, *The First English Actresses: Women and Drama 1660-1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 19-26.

⁴⁵ Cross-dressing did not disappear from the Restoration stage, but it was generally, though not exclusively, limited to women performing “breeches” roles that enabled them to reveal their shapely legs usually concealed under long dresses. John Harold Wilson, for example, notes that between 1660 and 1700, eighty-nine of the nearly 375 new or altered plays produced in London for the first time included roles for women dressed as men. See his *All the King's Ladies: Actresses of the Restoration* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 73.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 25.

⁴⁷ Brian Powell, *Japan's Modern Theatre: A Century of Change and Continuity* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2001), 2-19.

change their past theatre tastes. The same people, let alone critics, who saw theatre regularly before the Meiji Restoration, most likely frequented the theatre on a regular basis after 1872. Moreover, there was never a shortage of *onnagata*. Unlike their English counterparts, the female roles in *kabuki* were (and are) not played by young boys, but by mature men well into their twilight years. On the contrary, in England, an entirely new generation of theatregoers who had never even seen male players of female roles filled the theatres, along with members of the royal court of Charles II, who had lived in exile on the continent during Cromwell's rule and thus had been exposed to years of women playing female roles.⁴⁸ And, finally, the 1890 edict concerning actresses that was promulgated in Japan never carried the weight of law; it merely stipulated that women performing on the public stage would not be subjected to punishment; ultimately, whether or not women would perform was at the discretion of (male) actors and theatre owners.⁴⁹ This, too, was quite different from the English situation, and thus must have contributed to the demise of the *onna yakusha*.

Despite their inability to remain permanent fixtures on the stage, the Meiji period *onna yakusha* inspired the future Naritaya patronage of the Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki troupe and its successor, Nagoya Musume Kabuki (Nagoya Girls' Kabuki), the contemporary all-female troupe that is currently supported by Danjûrô XII. Indeed, while there is not a direct relationship between Kumehachi and Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki and Nagoya Girls' Kabuki, the precedent of Kumehachi's relationship with Danjûrô IX

⁴⁸ See Howe, *The First English Actresses*, 23.

⁴⁹ See note 9.

provided the impetus for succeeding generations of women to become affiliated with the Naritaya house.

By focusing on one generation of Danjûrô's Girls, the Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki Troupe, this dissertation aims to re-open the question of women in *kabuki* and to document a story that has been forgotten. On another level, it is a response to the de-historicized, essentialist refrain that *kabuki* is performed by only men, as well as to the sexist contention that women are inferior performers, who merely play themselves instead of create roles.⁵⁰ Most scholarship on *kabuki* has been focused on professional male actors, and when attention is turned to women, it invariably involves studying female characters or focusing on the aesthetics of the *onnagata* (the female-role player) and building a case that only an *onnagata*, rather than a "real" woman, can play a female role in *kabuki*. Virtually everyone who has written on the *onnagata* has dismissed categorically the notion of women's performing *kabuki* without ever seriously discussing the valiant attempts of women to act in *kabuki* plays over the past hundred years.

Theatre historians are not the only ones guilty of such assertions. In their introduction to the recently published *Gendering Modern Japanese History*, the editors recapitulate a claim that has been proffered by many critics of the Japanese stage:

. . . it was acceptable, indeed it was art for men to act as women on stage in the *kabuki* theatre; some even said that female impersonators (*onnagata*) performed a

⁵⁰ Leslie Ferris, *Acting Women: Images of Women in Theatre* (New York: New York University Press, 1989), xi. Laurence Senelick exemplifies this kind of rhetoric with his claim that "the *onnagata* must not be a woman, because a woman is physically herself: an *onnagata* is suggestion" (*The Changing Room*, 100).

more perfect femininity than could have been enacted by women had they been permitted to perform on the stage.⁵¹

This statement, which reads as axiomatic to anyone who has heard only about the all-male *kabuki* theatre, is used to support the contention that in early modern Japan “there was no necessary one-to-one correspondence between sex and sexuality, whether in male-female sexual relations or in same sex liaisons.”⁵² Thus, in the fashion of innumerable gender theorists, the editors make the important claim that gender, as well as sex, is a social construct.⁵³ While such theorizing is welcome, as it unquestionably opens up new vistas for thinking about gender and performance, it forecloses the possibility that women ever performed on the stage. It very well may have been the case that men performed one version of femininity—what Katherine Mezur would call “fictions of female-likeness”—better than women.⁵⁴ Yet, what cannot be overlooked is the condition “had they [women] been permitted to perform on the stage.”⁵⁵ By now it should be clear that women *did* perform on the *kabuki* stage, even during the time when they were not “permitted.” Thus, this study seeks to add another dimension to the field of Japanese

⁵¹ Barbara Molony and Kathleen Ueno, eds., *Gendering Modern Japanese History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2005), 23.

⁵² *Ibid.* For an historicized discussion of changing definitions of gender in modern Japan, see Kano, *Acting Like a Woman*, 1-35.

⁵³ Judith Butler is largely responsible for challenging conventional views of gender in the U.S. academy. She has proposed that “being” a gender is impossible; rather both sex and gender are constructed through “compulsory heterosexuality.” See her *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of “Sex”* (New York: Routledge, 1993); *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990).

⁵⁴ Mezur, “The *Kabuki Onnagata*.”

⁵⁵ Molony and Ueno, *Gendering Modern Japanese History*, 23.

history, which will continue to benefit from engendered analyses of theatrical characters, both off and on the stage.

Methodology

This dissertation fuses the principles of archaeo-historicism, as discussed by Robert D. Hume in *Reconstructing Contexts*, together with the aims of feminist historiography, which has encouraged, in the words of Tracy Davis, “endeavors to recover data about women and fill in the ‘female blanks’ of history.”⁵⁶ As Hume explains, archaeo-historicism “attempts to reconstruct specific contexts that permit the present-day interpreter to make sense of the cultural artifacts of the past and the conditions in which they were produced.”⁵⁷ In line with the feminist agenda to recover women’s history, Hume suggests that “archeo-historicists aim to discover new documents and to bring neglected ones to attention.”⁵⁸ While researching the subject in Japan during 2003 and 2004 as a Japan Foundation Doctoral Fellow, I drew on numerous “neglected” materials available at the Ôtani Shôchiku Library, Misono-za Library, Oya Soichi Library, Waseda Theatre Museum, Tokyo Metropolitan Library, National Diet Library, the Hamamatsu Central Library, and the Sakuragaoka Museum in Toyokawa City, the troupe’s hometown. My discovery of the latter was particularly fortuitous, since it had sponsored a 1995 exhibition on the troupe and serves as the troupe’s archive. Among its holdings are programs, photographs, copies of handwritten letters from Sanshō V and Ebizō IX, and a

⁵⁶ Tracy Davis, “Questions for a Feminist Methodology in Theatre History,” in *Interpreting the Theatrical Past: Essays in the Historiography of Performance*, edited by Bruce McConachie and Thomas Postlewait (Iowa City: Iowa Press, 1989), 63

⁵⁷ Robert D. Hume, *Reconstructing Contexts: The Aims and Principles of Archaeo-Historicism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 9.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 30.

transcript and tape recording of a lecture delivered by the troupe's director, Ichikawa Masujûrô (1913-1998).⁵⁹ Contemporary critical accounts of the troupe's activities published in national and city newspapers (*Asahi Shinbun*, *Mainichi Shinbun*, *Yomiuri Shinbun*, *Tôkyô Shinbun*, *Ôsaka Nichi Nichi Shinbun*, etc.) and theatre magazines, such as *Engekikai* (Theatre World) and *Makuai* (Intermission), provide insight into how the troupe's performances were received in the 1950s and early 1960s. An 8-mm film produced by the troupe that has been preserved on VHS, housed in the Misono-za Library and Sakuragaoka Museum, provides the best visual evidence of the troupe's performance style, and a random collection of television footage, assembled over the years by actress Ichikawa Baika, offers further clues about how the troupe was received in its time.

Moreover, published autobiographies by Ichikawa Masujûrô, Hamamatsu-za owner Ono Haruyoshi (1905-1981), and Ichikawa Baika (b. 1936), as well as journalist Kurokawa Mitsuhiro's 1984 twenty-article *Chûnichi Shinbun* series on the troupe, figure prominently in my reconstruction of the troupe's genesis and subsequent development.⁶⁰ This body of work provides the foundation for my study, as it would be virtually impossible to obtain such accounts today, since so many of the writers and sources have

⁵⁹ Ichikawa Ebizô IX to Ichikawa Masujûrô, 23 February 1956, no. 26, Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki collection. Sakuragaoka Museum, Toyokawa, Japan; Ichikawa Sanshō V to Ichikawa Masujûrô. Letters, 28 February 1953-6 January 1956, no. 1-25, 28, 30, Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki collection. Sakuragaoka Museum, Toyokawa, Japan; Sakuragaoka Museum, ed., "Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki Ten" [Exhibition on Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki] (pamphlet, Sakuragaoka Museum, Toyokawa, Japan, 28 April-28 May 1995). Ichikawa Masujûrô, "Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki Kôenkai: Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki Are Kore" [Symposium on the Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki: Pondering Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki] (lecture, Sakuragaoka Museum, Toyokawa, Japan, 7 May 1995). Transcript courtesy Sakuragaoka Museum.

⁶⁰ Ichikawa Masujûrô, *Kabuki Jinsei* [A Kabuki Life] (Toyohashi: Hôbundô, 1983); Ono Haruyoshi, *Ono Haruyoshi Jidenshō Mizube Danwa* [Autobiographical Discussions by Ono Haruyoshi] (Kyoto: Shirakawa Shoin, 1978); Ichikawa Baika, "Matsuba-Botan no Ki" [Journal of Small Peonies], *Mainichi Shinbun*, 1993; Kurokawa Mitsuhiro, "Maboroshi no Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki" [Phantom Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki], *Chûnichi Shinbun*, 1984.

since died. None of these works, however, presents an in-depth, comprehensive study of the troupe. The writings rarely describe what Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki looked like onstage, nor do they discuss how the troupe's efforts were perceived in the male-dominated *kabuki* world. Furthermore, additional context about the historical postwar period, *kabuki*, and competing popular theatre troupes (*taishû engeki*), such as the all-female Takarazuka Kageki (Takarazuka Revue), is missing from these studies.

I have been able to supplement this written archive with more than twenty taped interviews that I conducted with former members of the troupe as well as with several senior male *kabuki* actors, who, as young men in their teens and early twenties, saw them perform. These discussions both confounded and clarified the written account. Perhaps the widest gulf between the extant written texts and oral testimonials concerns the alleged behavior of Ichikawa Masujûrô during his tenure as the troupe's local leader. While the written accounts portray Masujûrô as an ambitious, occasionally lewd, and exceedingly strict teacher, none goes so far as to raise the taboo topic that he engaged in sexual relations with several girls while they were members of the troupe.

This allegation initially came to my attention from a third-party source, who was not a member of the troupe, and while it took me months to muster up the courage to confront members with what I regarded as an odious charge, members, including one of Masujûrô's daughters, did not attempt to conceal what has been the troupe's "secret" for many years.⁶¹ Yet, at the same time, members were quick to downplay what many have long regarded as part and parcel of membership in an all-female, touring performance troupe. While I accept the contention that Masujûrô's philandering was not viewed as

⁶¹ A fuller discussion of these allegations will be provided in chapter 5.

particularly unusual for the time in question, I think that continuing to bury old secrets fails to enhance our understanding of why the troupe ultimately did not become a permanent fixture on Japan's stage.

I raise the issue here neither to sensationalize it nor to call attention to what some might see as muckraking, but to note that it was perhaps my most daunting problem, as I attempted to track down former members and ask for interviews. Indeed, a couple of members initially declined my requests for interviews, and while I, at first, could not comprehend why members would not want to discuss their association with the troupe, I now understand that the reason for some members' hesitation stemmed from their past relationship with Masujûrô. In the end, everyone whom I contacted spoke to me either in person or over the phone, and more often than not, provided me with the contact information for members whom I had not yet met.

Organization

My study proceeds chronologically to document the history of Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki. Chapter 1 details the troupe's origins as a girls' extracurricular dance club in Toyokawa City, Aichi Prefecture. Here I argue that the formation of the troupe in 1948 was, in many ways, part of a local, grass-roots effort to maintain Japanese traditional performing arts in the wake of the Allied Occupation of Japan that sought to censor much of the *kabuki* repertory. I describe the environment of postwar *kabuki*, in which the actor Ichikawa Masujûrô, a distant disciple of Kumehachi, returned to his hometown and began to lead an all-female *kabuki* club, a move that was highly welcome since there had been a dearth of amateur rural theatre productions after the war.

After four years of performing on the amateur circuit, the troupe went professional. Chapter 2 documents the steps it took to acquire this status. First, in 1952, the headmaster of the Naritaya house, Ichikawa Sanshō V, the son-in-law of Danjūrō IX, granted his family name to all of the troupe members. Second, the troupe was “acquired” by the newly built Hamamatsu-za in Hamamatsu City in Shizuoka Prefecture, which gave it a home base and the financial capital to pursue Masujūrō’s dream for it to perform on Japan’s first-class city stages.

Chapter 3 investigates the troupe’s 1953 Tokyo debut and the subsequent critical response. The chapter moves swiftly through the troupe’s early peak years, documenting its productions, co-sponsored by the Shōchiku Entertainment Company, at major theatres in Tokyo, Osaka, Kyoto, and Nagoya. Drawing on some twenty-seven unpublished letters written by Sanshō to Masujūrō, the chapter investigates how the Ichikawa headmaster’s suggestions played a significant role in shaping the troupe’s repertory and artistic direction.

Chapters 4 and 5 break from the dissertation’s chronological approach to reflect on the troupe’s reception in the press, its acting style, and its offstage hierarchical structure. It is in the latter chapter that I take up the allegations of Masujūrō’s sexual behavior, showing that the girls were, in fact, not the innocent troupe of smiling teenagers that the press and photographs suggested, but a highly “dysfunctional family” in which members harbored fears, anxiety, and rivalry.

Chapters 6 and 7 document the gradual disintegration of the troupe. With the death of Sanshō in 1956 and the subsequent leadership of Ebizō IX (later, Danjūrō XI, 1910-1965), the troupe was forced to break from its longtime financial sponsor, the

Hamamatsu-za, in 1958. As an independent troupe—renamed the Ichikawa Joyû-za (Ichikawa Actresses Company) in 1960—its membership changed and its audiences declined markedly. While the advent of television affected Japanese performing arts at all levels, I argue that the troupe’s demise resulted more from clashing personalities, hard-line business tactics, and even the seemingly superficial name change.

In my concluding chapter, I discuss the legacy of Ichikawa Girls’ Kabuki: Nagoya Musume Kabuki, an all-female troupe founded in 1983 and still active today. The troupe, however, has taken a remarkably different path from its predecessor. Although Ichikawa Girls’ Kabuki/Ichikawa Actress Company was recognized nationally as a major professional female *kabuki* troupe, Nagoya Musume Kabuki has never obtained this status. In closing, therefore, I reflect on what has prevented women from attaining the same professional standing on the *kabuki* stage as men today. While other once-exclusively male Asian traditional performing arts have permitted actresses to perform on the same stage as men, professional *kabuki* remains almost entirely male dominated. My conclusion explores why *kabuki*’s gender traditions persist so strongly at the beginning of the twenty-first century and offers some thoughts on the future prospects for women in *kabuki*.

Chapter 1

The Formation of the Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki Troupe

Historian Kamiyama Akira has written that *kabuki onna yakusha*, the heirs to Kumehachi, died together with the more than one hundred thousand killed in the Great Kantô Earthquake of 1923.¹ In one morning, most of the city's theatres were destroyed, irreparably transforming the capital's theatre scene.² Among the most prominent venues was the Imperial Theatre, which had pioneered women's *kabuki* in the early 1910s. Through the early Shôwa period (1926-1988), the successors to Kumehachi's original Misaki-za troupe continued to perform at the renamed Kanda Gekijô.³ Nakamura Kasen (1889-1942) frequently appeared, playing her roles not as an *onna yakusha* who bound her chest but as a woman oozing with feminine sex appeal.⁴ She played many of the same roles as Kumehachi, but their manner of acting was utterly different.

Ironically, the female actor's style, as performed by Kumehachi, may have been best inscribed on the body of the male *shinpa* actor player of female roles, Kitamura Rokurô (1871-1961), who "idolized her and copied her speech patterns," in what Ayako

¹ Kamiyama Akira, "Kumehachi no Zanzô: Onna Yakusha to Joyû no Aidai" [Images of Kumehachi: Between Female Actor and Actress], *Geinô* [Performing Arts] 34 no. 9 (September 1992): 20; Koike Shôtarô, "Okyôgen-shi," in *Kabuki Jiten* [Kabuki Encyclopedia], ed. Hattori Yukio et al. rev. ed. (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 2000), 93.

² Brian Powell, *Japan's Modern Theatre: A Century of Change and Continuity* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2001), 58.

³ See Hasumi Seitarô, "Onna Yakusha no Hanashi" [Talk about Female Performers] *Gendai no Kabuki Haiyû* [Contemporary Kabuki Actors], special issue, *Engekikai* [Theatre World] (December 1955): 46-47; Toita Yasuji, "Ichikawa Kumehachi no Sarashi Momen" [Ichikawa Kumehachi's Cotton Wrap], *Naki Dokoro Jinbutsu Shi* [People Who Hit a Nerve] (Tokyo: Bungei Shunjû, 1987), 107.

⁴ Toita, "Sarashi Momen," 107; see also Waseda Daigaku Engeki Hakubutsukan, ed., *Engeki Hyakka Daijiten* [Theatre Encyclopedia] (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1963), 4: 239.

Kano calls “the endless circle of citation of performed femininity.”⁵ By the early twentieth century, traditional *onnagata* had regained a place in *kabuki* that, in retrospect, they had never lost, despite heated debates on women in *kabuki*.⁶ Men continued to play the female roles in grand *kabuki* and many *shinpa* plays.⁷ An important exception to this phenomenon was the itinerant *onna yakusha* who had no home base and performed with men in mixed companies on the small theatre circuit. While the historical record provides scanty information about these wandering troupes, women such as Botan⁸ and Momiji became famous, and the Genji Bushi all-female company became well known in certain parts of the country.⁹ Other *onna yakusha* such as Ichikawa Beiju (dates unknown) and

⁵ Ayako Kano, *Acting Like a Woman in Modern Japan: Theatre, Gender, and Nationalism* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 32.

⁶ For a discussion of the twentieth-century actress debates, see Ayako Kano, *Acting Like a Woman*, 15-24; for a discussion of the actress debates before 1900, see Matsumoto Shinko, *Meiji Engekironshi* [A History of Meiji Theatre Discussions] (Tokyo: Engeki Shuppansha, 1980), 153-162. See also J. Thomas Rimer, *Toward a Modern Japanese Theatre: Kishida Kunio* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), 7-55.

⁷ Izumi Kyôka, for example, an important *shinpa* playwright, tended to prefer “*onnagata* over actresses, whose voices (he wrote in a 1920 essay) grated on his ears ‘like nails scratching against a pane of glass.’” Quoted in Cody M. Poulton, *Spirits of Another Sort: The Plays of Izumi Kyôka* (Ann Arbor: Center for Japanese Studies, University of Michigan, 2001) 36. Representative male *onnagata* of *shinpa* included Kitamura Rokurô, Kawai Takeo (1877-1942), and Hanayagi Shôtarô (1894-1965). Incidentally, it should be noted that the *onnagata* convention was initially used in film as well.

⁸ To my knowledge, the only other woman beside Ichikawa Kumehachi to be called the “female Danjûrô” was Ichikawa Botan (1886-1943), a popular *kabuki* female actor who led her own all-female *kabuki* troupe (“Onna Kabuki no Ichikawa Botan Ichi-za”) from 1912 until her death, performing throughout Japan and in Manchukuo during the Japanese occupation. Her master teacher, however, was not Danjûrô, but Ichikawa Tsuruzô. See Nichigai Asoshietsu, ed., *Geinô Jinbutsu Jiten: Meiji Taishô Shôwa* [Dictionary of Performing Artists from the Meiji, Taishô, and Shôwa Periods] (Tokyo: Nichigai Asoshietsu, 1998), 58.

⁹ I have not been able to locate background information on “Momiji,” but several members of Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki remembered her name (for example, Ichikawa Sanpuku, interview). Genji Bushi, a rival of the *onna* (female) *gidayû*, was a popular performance genre that developed in the late nineteenth century. The troupes, hailing largely from Nagoya, were comprised of women, who played the *shamisen*, sang, and put on plays. These plays were banned

Ichikawa Sumihachi (b. 1925)—discussed in this chapter—played a crucial role in the formation of the Ichikawa Girls’ Kabuki Troupe.

Moreover, some women were given the chance to play female roles in the burgeoning film industry as well as in *shingeki* (new theatre), which for its first decades of existence mainly adapted the work of European playwrights, from Shakespeare to Chekhov.¹⁰ Many thus claimed that women were necessary for *shingeki*, but unnecessary for *kabuki*.¹¹ Aspiring actresses, too, often opted to train for the new theatre that was free from the strictures of the feudalistic “old school” and would give them the opportunity to depict modern women. Matsui Sumako’s acclaimed portrayal of Nora in Ibsen’s *A Doll House* in 1911 heralded a new age for women on the stage.¹² Thus, with the demise of the first Imperial Theatre, the formation of the all-female Takarazuka Girls’ Opera, and the consolidation of women in *shingeki*, the issue of women in *kabuki* was, with a few exceptions, moot.

For the Naritaya house, Danjûrô IX’s vision for his female disciple, Kumehachi, and his daughters to become *kabuki* actresses was not, in the end, entirely realized.

for their sexual content by the Tokyo Metropolitan Police in 1905, though relics of the genre could still be seen well into the Taishô period (1912-1926). See Waseda Daigaku Engeki Hakubutsukan, ed., *Engeki Hyakka Daijiten* [Theatre Encyclopedia] (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1963), 2: 409. For more on women’s *gidayû*, see A. Kimi Coaldrake, *Women's Gidayû and the Japanese Theatre Tradition* (London: Routledge, 1997).

¹⁰ The term *shingeki* was coined by Osanai Kaoru (1881-1928), who would achieve fame in 1924 with the opening of the Tsukiji Little Theatre, Japan’s first modern theatre. For the first two years, the theatre performed exclusively Western plays in translation. See Rimer, *Toward a Modern*, 27-32.

¹¹ See Kano, *Acting Like a Woman*, 15-24.

¹² *Ibid.*, 184-199. See also Phyllis Birnbaum, “Slamming the Door, Scaring the Neighbors,” in *Modern Girls, Shining Stars, The Skies of Tokyo: 5 Japanese Women* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 1-52.

Kumehachi was shunned by Danjûrô's wife after his death, and, perhaps because of her age, found it increasingly difficult to secure *kabuki* roles; she ultimately turned to teaching at the new training school for actresses at the Imperial Theatre and continued to perform *kabuki*-style dances at the small theatres.¹³ Danjûrô's daughters' acting careers had fizzled out in the meantime, but at least his eldest, Suisen II, had become known for her traditional dancing and was named the headmaster of the Ichikawa dance school.

It is possible that Danjûrô's only grandchild and last descendent of his bloodline, Horikoshi Kikue (later, Ichikawa Suisen III, 1913-1978), could have tried to become a *kabuki* actress. She had been given several opportunities to perform *kabuki* dance-dramas at the Kabuki-za and even had received the support of the great star Onoe Kikugorô VI (1885-1949), who had gone so far as to disclose that "The Ninth's last words were that his grandchild, be it a boy or girl, perform on stage."¹⁴ Yet, the stage she chose was *shinpa*. *Kabuki*, Suisen III must have realized from witnessing her mother's and aunt's abortive careers, was for men. Like Kumehachi, she would curse her sex as the barrier to *kabuki* stardom, yet she also realized that a woman who wanted a successful stage career needed to embrace the new theatre.¹⁵

¹³ Morizui Kenjiki, "Ichikawa Kumehachi Debunki I: Aru Onna Yakusha no Kojitsu" [Rumors about Kumehachi: Things That Female Actor Said, part I], *Jissen Bungaku* [Practical Literature] (March 1971): 43-44; Kamiyama, "Kumehachi no Zanzô," 21; Ihara Seisei'en, *Kabuki Nenpyô* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1956-1963), 8: 244.

¹⁴ Ôe Ryotarô, "Shinpa no Hitobito: Ichikawa Suisen no Koto" [People in Shinpa: Things about Ichikawa Suisen], *Engekikai* (May 1962): 86-87. Ôe jokes that at five-years-old the young Horikoshi Kikue prophesied her future as a *shinpa* actress, as she "refused to speak in the stylized [*kabuki*] manner in which she had been taught, but in a loud, realistic voice." *Ibid.*, 86.

¹⁵ She wrote: "Watching the now-deceased "Eleventh" [Danjûrô XI] while he was still Ebizô perform Sukeroku in such an elegant manner, I found myself thinking, 'How envious I am. Had I been born a man, they would have let me perform this role'" (Ichikawa Suisen III, *Kudaiime Danjûrô to Watashi* [Danjûrô IX and Me] (Tokyo: Rikugei Shobo, 1966), 11). She, however, is quick to note that that is the "only" time she felt that way.

Even if Danjûrô had been able to predict that his granddaughter might become a *shinpa* actress, he never could have envisioned that his son-in-law, a banker, would become an actor. It was the banker-turned-actor who would produce the next generation of Ichikawa *kabuki* actresses, the Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki Troupe. The girls who eventually came to earn this title were not of *kabuki* lineage, nor had they ever seen a city production of *kabuki* until after they had performed in a dozen or so plays of their own. One member even recalled that she did not know that *kabuki* was “all-male” until years after she had played starring roles in the troupe's productions.¹⁶ Indeed, the troupe's roots were unabashedly provincial; born in a small town west of the Kantô plain, it would emerge as a city sensation in just a few years time.

Like Kumehachi, the troupe spent its formative years without the benefit of Ichikawa family patronage. Its cause was championed initially by the performers' parents and dance teachers, and then by an ambitious local actor, who would eventually live his big-city dreams vicariously through them. Though it would be the Naritaya family whose support would prove so critical to the girls' eventual success, recognition must be given to the individuals who first envisioned a girls' *kabuki* troupe. This chapter, therefore, focuses on the genesis and early development of the troupe, setting the stage for its historic meeting with the new Naritaya leader, to whom chapter 2 is largely devoted.

A Girls' Club

Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki Gekidan (Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki Troupe) was born in Toyokawa City in Aichi Prefecture in 1948, some three years after Japan's defeat in World War II. Like a famous grand *kabuki* actor who takes different stage names over the

¹⁶ Ichikawa Baika, interview by author, 4 March 2004, Toyokawa, Japan.

course of his career, the troupe would change names several times before being granted the prestigious “Ichikawa” name from the Naritaya house. In the beginning, however, the troupe was nameless, since it was just an after-school girls’ club. The notion of it one day becoming a professional company, let alone a famous one that would play to packed houses in Japan’s premiere theatres, was nonexistent.

Nestled between the Mikawa-sanchi mountain range and the Toyokawa River, about ten kilometers from the Pacific Ocean, Toyokawa was protected, for the most part, from the confusion, disarray, hunger, poverty, and panic that characterized the immediate postwar experience for many Japanese.¹⁷ Toyokawa’s expansive farmlands produced a respectable crop throughout World War II and the subsequent Allied Occupation, so that the majority of local residents were decently fed. They still had to forego the desired polished white rice in favor of barley and had to make do during the Occupation with *meri-ko* (A-meri-can wheat) in their soup, but it was a luxury compared to the fate of many of their city brethren who were hard-pressed to come by even one adequate meal.¹⁸

Before the war, amateur theatre, sometimes referred to as farmers’ *kabuki*, had flourished in Toyokawa.¹⁹ The town was known as a great place to see *kabuki* plays and dances, and many local folk could chant lines by heart from *gidayû* plays.²⁰ According to

¹⁷ John W. Dower, *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1999).

¹⁸ Ichikawa Baika, interview.

¹⁹ For a general overview of “peasant” *kabuki* during the early nineteenth century, see Anne Walthall, “Peripheries: Rural Culture in Tokugawa Japan,” *Monumenta Nipponica* 39, no. 4 (Winter 1984): 379-382. See also Samuel L. Leiter, “Gimme that Old-Time *Kabuki*: Japan’s Rural Theatre Landscape,” in *Frozen Moments: Writings on Kabuki, 1966-2001* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell East Asia Series, 2002), 257-294.

²⁰ Noguchi Tatsuji, “Ichikawa Shôjo *Kabuki* no Ayumi” [Development of Ichikawa Girls’ *Kabuki*], in “Gendai no *Kabuki* Haiyû” [Contemporary *Kabuki* Actors], special issue, *Engekikai*

one report, there were more than two hundred *kabuki* actors—ranging from amateur to professional—in the neighboring city, Toyohashi, before the war.²¹ Many locals, furthermore, participated in an amateur theatre club called “Manninkô” (ten thousand plays) in which participants pooled their money every year, so the winners could travel to major theatres in Tokyo, Nagoya, or Osaka to see *kabuki*.²² Their mission resonated with that of nineteenth-century peasants’ *kabuki*:

Peasants spent considerable time and money on entertainments. They practiced during the long winter months to put on plays at the first sign of spring. Their theaters ranged from simple platforms separating the players from the audience to elaborate stages designed to replicate all the theater technology available in urban areas. Peasants did not write their own plays; instead they went to the cities, where they bought librettos and costumes and studied the techniques of acting and make-up.²³

In a similar fashion, Manninkô representatives were each responsible for a different aspect of production—dialogue, movement, costumes, scenery, props—so that upon

(December 1955): 134-136. His article was later reprinted, without any attribution, in the *Tôkai Tenpô* [Tôkai News] as “Hamamatsu de Sodatta Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki [Raised in Hamamatsu: Ichikawa Girls’ Kabuki] (July 1956): 44-46.

²¹ Ichikawa Masujûrô, “Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki Kôenkai: Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki Are Kore” [Symposium on the Ichikawa Girls’ Kabuki: Pondering Ichikawa Girls’ Kabuki] (lecture, Sakuragaoka Museum, Toyokawa, Japan, 7 May 1995). Transcript courtesy Sakuragaoka Museum, 2.

²² Ichikawa Masujûrô, *Kabuki Jinsei* [A Kabuki Life] (Toyohashi: Hôbundô, 1983), 10-12. Masujûrô’s autobiography is vague on how many winners were selected each year to serve as Manninkô representatives, but former Ichikawa Girls’ Kabuki actress Ichikawa Baika said that enough winners were selected to assure mastery of all aspects of theatrical production. Ichikawa Baika, interview.

²³ Walthall, “Peripheries,” 382.

returning to Toyokawa, they reported on every aspect of the play, imitated the actors' voices and movement, and applied their newfound knowledge to town festivals and amateur plays.²⁴

As the home to the headquarters of the Inari Shrine, Toyokawa was also a mecca for pilgrims who would pay their respects to the gods during the day and relax at night at one of the many excellent restaurants and tea houses (*ochaya*). These establishments offered an intimate setting to mingle with geisha, watch dances, and listen to *shamisen* ditties.²⁵ In this way, the town developed a reputation as the “pleasure quarters” of the Mikawa region where men, at least, could take care of both religion and relaxation.²⁶

As the war progressed, however, Toyokawa's riverfront was converted to navy dockyards, and, when an artillery storage facility was bombed, most merchants were forced to evacuate to the outlying towns. Pilgrimages all but ceased, crippling the local economy. Luxuries such as artistic lessons for most students came to a halt during 1945, the final year of the war. Meanwhile, one of the most beloved establishments, Yuki-san, had been forced to close. Before the war, it had been a prosperous restaurant, catering to the groups of pilgrims descending on Inari Shrine, thanks to its convenient location across the street from the Toyokawa Station. During the war, however, business had slowed, and it had become a “snack” house, serving appetizers and drinks; by the end of

²⁴ See Ichikawa, *Kabuki Jinsei*, 10-12. See also Kurokawa Mitsuhiro, “Musume no Oyatachi wa Geisuki datta” [The Girls' Parents Liked Performing Arts], “Maboroshi no Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki” [Phantom Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki], *Chûnichi Shinbun*, no. 1, 6 January 1984.

²⁵ Noguchi, “Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki no Ayumi,” 134.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

the war, it had shut down entirely, leaving the spacious second-floor tatami-matted room empty.²⁷

It was against these bleak circumstances that the girls' *kabuki* club was formed, as, shortly after the war, the restaurant's proprietor, Ishiguro Tatsunosuke, proposed that his young daughters and their friends use the spacious room as a dance studio. Like many merchants in the area, Ishiguro was a performing arts aficionado and an amateur student of *gidayû*, who took every opportunity to see the *kabuki* adaptations of puppet plays that were performed during the annual harvest festival and at other times during the year in Toyokawa. A member of the generation and class that prided itself on learning a traditional musical instrument, be it *shamisen*, *koto*, *taiko*, or studying Japanese dance (*nihon buyô*), he had taken part in several community *kabuki* productions. According to his daughter, even the embarrassment of his wig falling off while playing Bannai in Act III of *Kanadehon Chûshingura* did not dampen his enthusiasm for theatre.²⁸

Yet, only the last of his eight children, Ikuyo (b. 1938, later Ichikawa Masuyo),²⁹ had demonstrated any interest in the performing arts.³⁰ Ishiguro had enrolled her in formal dance lessons while she was still a toddler; unhappy to be left alone, her older sister, Hiroe (b. 1936, later Ichikawa Misuji), surprised the family and began lessons as

²⁷ Ichikawa Masuyo, interview by author, 23 March 2004, Tokyo, Japan.

²⁸ Ichikawa Misuji, "Shôjo Kara Onna e no Nayami" [Concerns (about going) from a Girl to a Woman], *Fujin Gahô* [Ladies Illustrated] (September 1958): 232.

²⁹ Birthdates for troupe members were published in Tsuchiya Chikashi, "Shôjo Kabuki no Jûnen" [Girls' *Kabuki's* Ten Years], in "Kabuki Haiyû Hyakka" [Directory of *Kabuki* Actors], special issue, *Engekikai* (December 1959): 172-173.

³⁰ Years later, Ikuyo would remember that her inspiration to dance came from watching the geisha at her parents' restaurant. Ichikawa Masuyo, interview.

well.³¹ Their teacher was a woman, Bandô Minotoyo, a disciple of the actor Bandô Mitsunojô (1896-1966), who was a disciple of Bandô Mitsugôrô VIII (1906-1975), one of grand *kabuki*'s leading actors and the headmaster of the Bandô school, from which Kumehachi also had received her earliest training. Due to the war, Minotoyo had returned to Toyokawa, where she found eager and diligent pupils in Hiroe and Ikuyo, who participated annually in local dance recitals and contests and were consistently named the Bandô school regional champions.³² The girls were satisfied, but their father was not content. The regional competitions always seemed to feature the same dances. Why was it that every teacher felt compelled to teach the same old *Sagi Musume*³³ and *Tomo Yakko*?³⁴ Why couldn't the girls learn a play from the *kabuki* repertory? Not *kabuki* per se, but something *kabuki*-like. Most important to him was that no one else in the competition perform the same pieces as his daughters, but he also imagined his daughters forming an all-girls' *kabuki* club.

³¹ Kurokawa Mitsuhiro, "Ryôriya no Nikai de Keiko" [Practice on the Second Floor of the Restaurant], "Maboroshi no Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki" [Phantom Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki], *Chûnichi Shinbun*, no. 2, 7 January 1984. Masuyo stated that she started taking dance lessons at age two or three, and Kurokawa noted this as well in his newspaper article (*ibid.*). But Misuji wrote that her younger sister started formal dance lessons at age nine (Ichikawa Misuji, "Shôjo Kara Onna e," 231-234). In an interview with her, she clarified that her younger sister had started dancing when she was two or three years old. Ichikawa Misuji, interview by author, 4 October 2004, Nagoya, Japan.

³² Noguchi, "Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki no Ayumi," 134. See also Tsuchiya Chikashi, "Shôjo Kabuki no Jûnen," 172-173; Ichikawa Masuyo, interview; Ichikawa Misuji, "Shôjo Kara Onna e," 231-234.

³³ Cody M. Poulton, trans., "The Heron Maiden," in *Kabuki Plays On Stage: Brilliance and Bravado, 1697-1766*, eds. James R. Brandon and Samuel L. Leiter, 315-324 (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2002).

³⁴ See Kurokawa, "Musume no Oya-tachi," 6 January 1984; Ichikawa "Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki Kôenkai," 2.

The notion of a “children’s *kabuki*” troupe (*kodomo kabuki*, *kodomo shibai*, *chinko shibai*) was not a new one. Children, generally boys, took the children’s parts (*ko-yaku*) in *kabuki* plays, both on the major and minor circuits, and from the Tokugawa period through the beginning of the Meiji period, *kodomo kabuki* troupes had flourished.³⁵ The difference was that on major-league stages only boys were cast, whereas on the minor circuit, girls and boys performed.³⁶ Twentieth-century stars such as Nakamura Ganjirô II (1902-1983) and Nakamura Kichiemon I (1886-1954), for example, had become known, thanks to their respective experiences in *kodomo kabuki*. It is possible that the decline of *kodomo kabuki* in the late Meiji period was influenced by Danjûrô IX and Kikugorô V, arguably the two most influential actors of the time, who opposed the practice and refused to permit their students to perform in “children’s theatre,” since they believed child actors would lose their incentive to develop their skills as adults, having already played the most challenging roles.³⁷ Still, during the Tokugawa period, *kodomo kabuki* had been an important first step for child performers to launch their careers as professional actors. Performing what was often referred to as *kubi furi shibai* (neck-movement theatre), young boys would perform pieces from the puppet

³⁵ See Ihara Seisei’en, *Meiji Engekishi* [History of Meiji-period Theatre] (Tokyo: Kuresu Shuppan, 1933), 697-698; Okamoto Kidô, *Ranpu no Moto Nite* [Under the Lamp: Discussions on Meiji Theatre] (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1965 [1935]), 222-226; Miyake Saburô, *Koshibai no Omoide* [Memories of Small Theatre] (Tokyo: Kokuritsu Gekijo Geinô Chôshitsutsu, 1981); Hattori Yukio et al., eds., *Kabuki Jiten* [Kabuki Encyclopedia], rev. ed. (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 2000), 186.

³⁶ This custom would slowly begin to change in the mid-twentieth century with an increasing number of girls, generally daughters of *kabuki* actors, taking the *ko-yaku* roles in grand *kabuki* productions (Onoe Umeno, interview by author, 20 August 2004, Tokyo). As a young girl in the 1950s, Umeno played *ko-yaku* roles in the troupe of Onoe Baikô VII (1915-1995).

³⁷ See Okamoto, *Ranpu no Moto Nite*, 226. Though not a child at the time, Kumehachi had played a *kôken* (onstage actor’s assistant) in 1897 at the Shintomi-za *kodomo kabuki* production. Miyake, *Koshibai no Omoide*, 25.

repertory; that is, they would gesticulate, move, and even dance to the accompaniment of the *shamisen*, leaving the speaking to the *gidayû* narrator.³⁸ Commentators would describe it as puppet theatre without the puppeteers, a phrase that would later be used to describe the acting of the young girls in question.

That there was no precedent for an all-female girls' *kabuki* troupe did not appear to trouble Ishiguro. He was eager to revive the now-stagnant prewar theatre scene that had been such an inextricable part of his childhood, and, most important, he had confidence that his girls could fill the void.³⁹ Rehearsals could take place at Yuki-san on the spacious second floor that once had been used for the geisha dance performances

The real problem, thus, was not the girls' sex, but finding a suitable teacher. For a town with such an excellent reputation for amateur theatre, the pickings were surprisingly slim. Since Bandô Minotoyo could teach dance, but not direct full-scale *kabuki* plays, Ishiguro asked *gidayû* narrator Furukawa Yoshiishi to teach the girls. Furukawa had worked as a local bureaucrat through the end of the war, but had retired in his mid-forties due to illness. He had, however, been learning *gidayû* since he was sixteen and had taken the stage name Takemoto Nishiki-dayû. Moreover, he had performed in plays with Katsukawa Matazô, a local star, who had bequeathed him the name Katsukawa Matanojô. Since his convalescence, he had volunteered as a makeup artist on the local theatre circuit, where he first met Ishiguro's daughters and agreed to teach them something from his arsenal of *gidayû* plays.⁴⁰

³⁸ Ihara, *Meiji Engekishi*, 696.

³⁹ See Kurokawa, "Musume no Oya-tachi," 6 January 1984.

⁴⁰ See Noguchi, "Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki no Ayumi," 134; Ichikawa Masuyo, interview.

As far as Furukawa was concerned, the girls would just imitate *kabuki* as best they could; he never envisioned them actually able to perform genuine *kabuki* plays. Within weeks, though, he taught the girls excerpts from his favorite *gidayū* pieces from the puppet theatre repertory: “Terakoya”⁴¹ and “Kuruma Biki”⁴² from *Sugawara Denju Tenarai Kagami*,⁴³ as well as short scenes from *Awa no Naruto* and *Shinrei Yaguchi no Watashi*.⁴⁴

In addition to the Ishiguro sisters, three others joined the extracurricular practice sessions. Takatsu Keiko (b.1937, later Ichikawa Baishō), whose parents owned a large *okiya*, a house that contracted out geisha, had studied dance with the sisters before the war.⁴⁵ Hikosaka Sachiko (b. 1936, later Ichikawa Baika), who lived in neighboring Kozakai Town, some four kilometers away, had studied dance with a teacher of the new dance (*shin buyō*) Nanjō school, which attempted to fuse Japanese and Western dance styles. As part of the school’s curriculum, she had studied ballet and tap, and *nihon buyō*. A month or so after the four girls had already begun dancing, Kobayashi Yoshiko (b.

⁴¹ Samuel L. Leiter, trans., “The Village School,” in *The Art of Kabuki: Five Famous Plays* (Mineola, NY: Dover, 1999), 100-140.

⁴² Samuel L. Leiter, trans., “Pulling the Carriage Apart,” in *The Art of Kabuki: Five Famous Plays* (Mineola, NY: Dover, 1999), 86-99.

⁴³ Stanleigh H. Jones Jr., trans., *Sugawara and the Secrets of Calligraphy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985).

⁴⁴ Stanleigh H. Jones Jr., trans. and comm., “Miracle at Yaguchi Ferry: A Japanese Puppet Play and Its Metamorphosis to *Kabuki*,” in *A Kabuki Reader: History and Performance*, ed. Samuel L. Leiter, 284-328 (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2002 [1978]).

⁴⁵ Ichikawa Baishō, interview by author, 28 April 2004, Toyokawa, Japan.

1936, later Ichikawa Fukushô) joined, only to feel that she had to “catch up” quickly since the others already had learned four dance plays.⁴⁶

While many others would come and go, these five girls would become the troupe’s leading players. Indeed, it would be fair to say that the troupe grew up around them. Though other talented girls would join, it would prove difficult to eclipse the chief positions that Ikuyo, Hiroe, Sachiko, and Yoshiko had secured by virtue of being the troupe’s founding members. Even Keiko, who had been part of the original group, would be relegated to the second tier of performers, arguably for taking a leave of absence during the troupe’s formative years.

Though the girls and their teacher were not thinking in such stratified terms in the late 1940s, looking back, it is clear that grooming for stardom began in those early days at Yuki-san. From the outset, the girls were character typed based on their physical builds: Ikuyo, as the youngest and lightest, played the *musume* (daughter) roles; Sachiko, slightly taller, played mother roles; Hiroe, with her slender, androgynous build, played the romantic male roles; Yoshiko, with her broad shoulders and hips, played the *aragoto* (bravura) tough-guy roles. Fittingly, the first role Furukawa taught her was the warrior Mitsuhide in the “Amagasaki” scene of *Ehon Taikoki*.⁴⁷ Through this intensive introduction, the girls became intimately acquainted with *kabuki*’s various role types—*wagoto* (gentle man), *aragoto*, *jitsugoto* (noble man)—getting a sense of what felt comfortable and what did not. Sachiko, for example, would recall bursting into tears

⁴⁶ Ichikawa Fukushô, interview by author, 30 April and 3 May 2004, Gero, Japan.

⁴⁷ Samuel L. Leiter, trans., “The Picture Book of the Taikô,” in *Kabuki Plays On Stage: Villainy and Vengeance, 1773-1779*, eds. James R. Brandon and Samuel L. Leiter, 352-375 (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2002).

when she looked at herself made up as the villainous Shihei in “Kuruma Biki” at a local elementary school production. Though she later acknowledged that her hysterics “greatly upset everyone around her,” her reaction effectively released her from playing evil characters for the rest of her stage career.⁴⁸

The girls remember Furukawa as a gentle-natured grandfatherly figure who never raised his voice.⁴⁹ Parents, pleased with their daughters’ progress, continued to request that he teach them.⁵⁰ But Furukawa felt the girls were moving too quickly for him to keep pace. He recommended that they learn from someone who could teach them *kabuki*, not “*kabuki*-like pieces”; they needed a teacher who had experience as a *kabuki* actor, not only as a chanter and makeup artist.

As Furukawa told the story to journalist Kurokawa Mitsuhiro in 1984, his original idea was to introduce the girls to his former teacher, Katsukawa Matazô.⁵¹ But, as he was changing trains on his way to ask Matazô to take charge of the troupe, he bumped into Ichikawa Dankichi II (later Ichikawa Masujûrô). Furukawa had worked with Dankichi when he was still known by his private name (*honmyô*), Nakada Daiji, when he was a local student in the nearby town of Hirao.

⁴⁸ Ichikawa Baika, “Honkaku Gekijô de Ronguran” [A Long Run in a Real Theatre], “Matsuba-Botan no Ki” [Journal of Small Peonies], *Mainichi Shinbun*, no. 2, 18 January 1993.

⁴⁹ Ibid. See also Kurokawa, “Ryôriya no Nikai,” 7 January 1984; Kurokawa Mitsuhiro, “Nomikomi no Hayai Onna no Ko” [The Girls who Learned Quickly], “Maboroshi no Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki” [Phantom Ichikawa Girls’ Kabuki], *Chûnichi Shinbun*, no. 3, 9 January 1984. According to Kurokawa’s articles, Furukawa gave his stage name, “Katsukawa” to the girls, but Ikuyo and Sachiko had no recollection of ever taking their first teacher’s stage name (Ichikawa Masuyo, interview; Ichikawa Baika, interview). Since Furukawa is no longer alive, it is impossible to verify whether or not he gave his stage name to the girls at this time.

⁵⁰ Noguchi, “Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki no Ayumi,” 134.

⁵¹ Kurokawa Mitsuhiro, “Nomikomi no Hayai Onna no Ko,” *Chûnichi Shinbun*, 9 January 1984.

Daiji had come to Furukawa seeking advice on how to get started in theatre, and they had performed together many times in rural amateur productions. But that had been in the late 1920s; in recent years, Dankichi had been running his own traveling *kabuki* troupe, the Ichikawa Dankichi Ichi-za; and for the ten years prior to that, he had been a member of other itinerant troupes. Japan's defeat in the war, however, had brought him back to his childhood district of eastern Aichi Prefecture. He was now living in Toyohashi City, just eight kilometers away, with his wife, a fellow *kabuki* performer.

Forgetting that he was on his way to pay his teacher a visit, Furukawa blurted out his request: Would Dankichi teach the girls *kabuki* acting? Dankichi hesitated. He was not opposed to the idea of girls in *kabuki* per se—for several years, he had been a member of a troupe led by Ichikawa Beiju, a female *kabuki* actor, but teaching “little girls” was not the type of opportunity for which he was looking.⁵² Furukawa attempted to describe how the girls had grasped his teachings much more quickly than he had expected and explained that he wanted to give them a real opportunity to excel. Dankichi would be the perfect teacher, he argued. The object of his pleas hesitated, but Furukawa somehow managed to extract a promise from him to stop by Yuki-san later that week.⁵³

Striving for the Majors

It was only natural that Dankichi would shy away from such a job offer. He had been dreaming of performing in Tokyo as a grand *kabuki* actor for more than two decades. As he reveals in his autobiography, *Kabuki Jinsei* (A Kabuki Life), Dankichi, then known as Daiji, graduated from the upper-level primary school in 1927 at age fourteen, after

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ichikawa Masujûrô, *Kabuki Jinsei*, 120-121, 189.

which he performed in several local amateur productions of the previously discussed Manninkô Association (see figure 3).⁵⁴ His acting was complimented, especially his portrayal of Munetô in Act III of *Ôshû Adachigahara*, and he was encouraged to try his luck on the small theatre provincial circuit.⁵⁵ His parents, both farmers, were opposed to him becoming an actor, but at fifteen, in 1928, he left home and joined the Honda-based *kabuki* troupe run by Ichikawa Beiju.⁵⁶ The troupe included men and women and played on the small-town theatre circuit. According to Dankichi, Beiju had been a student of Ichikawa Kumehachi. This is possible—Kumehachi had many students—but there is no written record that can serve as evidence; one must accept his word.⁵⁷ If he is correct, it would mean that Daiji became the disciple of a “direct disciple” of the Ichikawa Danjûrô family line.⁵⁸ Thus began his long devotion to the Ichikawa Danjûrô family, and, in particular, to its head at the time, Ichikawa Sanshō V, who would be awarded the coveted Danjûrô name posthumously. Daiji’s cousin Shizuka (his mother’s eldest sister’s daughter) had been a member of the troupe, which helped him strike a deal in which he became Beiju’s live-in apprentice. In exchange for cleaning the bath, sweeping the house, and running errands, he received room, board, and the chance to learn the theatre from

⁵⁴ Ibid., 37-38, 43-50. In prewar Japan, students not bound for college went to an upper primary school instead of middle school. Middle school corresponded roughly to the postwar high school and was mainly attended by college-bound men.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 57; Ichikawa Masujûrô, “Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki Kôenkai,” 1.

⁵⁶ Ichikawa, Masujûrô, *Kabuki Jinsei*, 189; “Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki Kôenkai,” 2.

⁵⁷ He was not, however, a direct disciple of Ichikawa Danjûrô IX, as was occasionally reported in the press. See, for example, “Otana ni Natta Shôjo Kabuki” [Girls’ *Kabuki* That Has Become Adult], *Sande Mainichi* [Sunday Mainichi], 10 June 1956, 39-41.

⁵⁸ Ichikawa, *Kabuki Jinsei*, 59, 65.

the inside out.⁵⁹ Beiju was a strict teacher—Daiji later wrote that one in three of her senior disciples dropped out since the training was so rigorous. After a mere six months, he was allowed to tour with the company and even landed small but notable parts.⁶⁰ Eventually, he took the stage name Ichikawa Kokaku, the latter meaning “crimson crane,” a name considered somewhat soft, but one that he liked.⁶¹ After five years with the troupe, Kokaku, as he was now called, felt that it was time to be moving on. Beiju was getting on in years, and several of the women in the troupe had quit to get married or to change careers.⁶² He believed that he had mastered the fundamentals of *kabuki* acting and now dreamed of finding success in Tokyo. He was keenly aware that if he were to make something of himself, now was the time to leave.⁶³ Moreover, he later recalled, as a live-in, he was privy to the constant bickering that went on between Beiju and her husband.⁶⁴ And so, after his army examination—required of all male Japanese adults—he left the company in 1934, at twenty-one, and returned to Hirao.⁶⁵ There, he joined a local acting troupe, but had difficulty getting cast in any interesting parts.⁶⁶

⁵⁹ Ibid., 63.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid., 88.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ichikawa Masujûrô, “Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki Kôenkai,” 2.

⁶⁵ He reported that he received the second grade (*nishû-otsu*) on his army examination, which was perhaps partly responsible for the fact that he was put into the army reserves. He was enlisted later in 1943, but only then to take a communications course. See Ichikawa Masujûrô, *Kabuki Jinsei*, 114.

⁶⁶ Ichikawa Masujûrô, “Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki Kôenkai,” 2.

Down on his luck, Kokaku sought out the actor Ichikawa Ebijûrô III (1874-1954, see figures 4 and 5).⁶⁷ He had first met Ebijûrô at Beiju's house years before and had immediately recognized him as different from the run-of-the mill country performer.⁶⁸ Formerly known as Ichikawa Misunojô, Ebijûrô had taken his current stage name in 1912 at the Imperial Theatre and had gone on to star in several *rensageki* (live-cinema) productions.⁶⁹ After *rensageki* were banned in 1917 by the Metropolitan Police as a fire precaution, Ebijûrô worked as a stage actor under contract to the Shôchiku Company, performing on major stages in Tokyo, and by the end of the Taishô period, he had

⁶⁷ Nichigai Asoshietsu, ed., *Geinô Jinbutsu Jiten: Meiji Taishô Shôwa* [Dictionary of Performing Artists from the Meiji, Taishô, and Shôwa periods] (Tokyo: Nichigai Asoshietsu, 1998), 47. This dictionary states that after Taishô 6 (1917), Ebijûrô's whereabouts are unknown, but Masujûrô (Dankichi II) in *Kabuki Jinsei* records that Ebijûrô died 16 February 1954, at eighty-one, the age that corresponds with the birth date provided in *Geinô Jinbutsu Jiten* if one follows the Japanese traditional practice of giving a new-born baby the age of one-year old (173). See also Haga Noboru et al., eds., "Gendai Haiyû Meikan" [Contemporary Actors' Directory], in *Nihon Jinbutsu Jôhō Taikēi* [Japanese People Information Data] (Tokyo: Kôseisha, 1999 [1918]), 81: 223.

⁶⁸ According to Masujûrô, Ebijûrô had been a disciple of Danjûrô IX (hence his association with Beiju), but, unfortunately for posterity, his stage name from this time, Ichikawa Misunojô, was not included in Ichikawa Sanshō V's purportedly definitive list of Danjûrô IX's disciples, published in 1950 (Ichikawa Sanshō V, *Kyusei Danjûrô o Kataru* [Talking about Danjûrô IX] (Kyoto: Suiko Shoin, 1950), 321-323). Sanshō V, however, recorded the name of Ebijûrô's teacher, Ichikawa Sumizō VII, as one of Danjûrô IX's disciples, so perhaps Masujûrô intended to say that Ebijûrô was a distant disciple of Danjûrô IX. Just because Ebijûrô is not on Sanshō V's list, however, does not mean that he should be dismissed from being considered one of Danjûrô IX's disciples. Indeed, Ichikawa Ebimaru, who became Ebijûrô's disciple in 1948, said that Ebijûrô had told her that he was an apprentice of Danjûrô IX. Moreover, she said it was possible that Sanshō V excluded Ebijûrô from this list due to his political fallout with Shôchiku president Ôtani Takejirô (Ichikawa Ebimaru, interview by author, 16, 28 April 2004, Toyokawa, Japan). Indeed, in 1953, the *Shûkan Sankei* reported that Ebijûrô was a member of Danjûrô IX's school (Watanabe Sabûrô, "Shôjo Bakari no Kabuki" [The All-girls' Kabuki], *Shûkan Sankei* [Industrial and Commerce Weekly], 22 February 1953, 56). In any case, Ebijûrô, as we shall see, would prove to be highly instrumental in cementing the future relationship between Sanshō V and the Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki Troupe.

⁶⁹ For a description of this genre, see Powell, *Japan's Modern Theatre*, 45-46.

received star billing.⁷⁰ But his alleged decision to appear in a film with the famous actress Tanaka Kinuyo (1909-1977) at a rival film company apparently upset Shôchiku president Ôtani Takejirô (1877-1969) so greatly that Ebijûrô was thereafter banned from working at a Shôchiku theatre in a major city.⁷¹ The story, as passed down by members of the Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki Troupe, is that Ebijûrô found work as an actor on the small theatre circuit, as part of the touring Jitsukawa Yaozo Ichi-za Company, which was based primarily in rural Aichi prefecture.⁷² It was there that he met Kokaku, whom he advised to try his luck in the big city.⁷³

For the next sequence of Kokaku's life, two rather different stories emerge. According to the one he penned in his 1983 autobiography, he became a popular actor on the small theatre traveling circuit in Nakamura Utazô's troupe, based near Tokyo. According to this self-aggrandizing account, everyone doted on him, he became a sought-out actor whom the ladies adored, and he even garnered the highly coveted roles of Jûjirô in *Ehon Taikoki*, Kokingo in *Yoshitsune Senbon Zakura*, and Shirai Gonpachi in "Suzugamori," not to mention another chance at Munetô, the role he had first played back

⁷⁰ *Geinô Jiten*, 47. This dictionary notes that the *rensageki* films were banned in 1916; Powell gives the date as 1917. Powell, *Japan's Modern Theatre*, 46. Kurokawa Mitsuhiro, "Dai Ikkai Happyôkai wa Daiseiko" [The First Recital is a Success], "Maboroshi no Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki" [Phantom Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki], *Chûnichi Shinbun*, no. 7, 23 January 1984.

⁷¹ Ichikawa Ebimaru, interview. I was unable to find Shôchiku's account of this incident.

⁷² Ibid. See also Kobayashi Katsunojô, "Wasurareta Haiyû-tachi" [Forgotten Actors], *Engei Gahô* (September 1940): 68. The article notes that Ebijûrô was active on the Tôkaidô touring circuit.

⁷³ Ichikawa Masujûrô, "Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki Kôenkai," 2.

in his hometown.⁷⁴ With respect to his experience in this troupe, he wrote that he felt there was no greater happiness.

Yet, in 1995, some twelve years after he published his autobiography, at a special symposium on the Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki Troupe, Kokaku (then known as Masujûrô) briefly touched on this part of his acting career.⁷⁵ According to this more plausible account, after leaving Beiju's troupe, he traveled to Tokyo with Ebijûrô's letter of recommendation. While the letter opened doors to the closed *kabuki* world, he could not overcome the firmly entrenched hierarchy. "It was so much worse than the countryside. I spent a year running around carrying people's tea and sandals," he recalled.⁷⁶ That he had been working diligently as a rural small theatre actor made no difference in Tokyo. In the eyes of the major-league *kabuki* actors, who were licensed to perform on Shôchiku's grand stages, he was nothing more than a drop-curtain actor (*donchô yakusha*), the demeaning term still used for an actor outside the major-league system, with no name lineage, who was only eligible to perform at the rural small theatres.⁷⁷

⁷⁴ See Ichikawa, *Kabuki Jinsei*, 98-100.

⁷⁵ Ichikawa Masujûrô, "Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki Kôenkai, 2.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ The small theatres were pejoratively referred to as drop-curtain theatres (*donchô shibai*), since a pull-curtain (*hikimaku*) was prohibited in these theatres before 1895. Actors who performed in the small theatres were derogatively called drop-curtain actors (*donchô yakusha*). While the legal difference between the two classes was repealed in 1895, the social distinction had not yet faded. The distinction between Broadway and off-Broadway or the major and minor leagues might be useful in helping to sort through the differences of the two theatre classes. *Koshibai* were not necessarily physically smaller than their "grand theatre" brethren, but were required to abide by different requirements concerning theatre architecture, production schedule, geography, and management. See Faith Bach, "Breaking the *Kabuki* Actors' Barriers: 1868-1900," in *A Kabuki Reader: History and Performance*, in *A Kabuki Reader: History and Performance*, ed. Samuel L. Leiter, 162-164 (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2002).

Whichever of these two stories is closer to the truth, whether he was truly dissatisfied or whether he merely wanted yet another adventure—the reason he gives in his autobiography—Kokaku quit Nakamura Utazô’s troupe after two years.⁷⁸ At his parents’ request, he returned to Hirao and married a woman of their choosing. In 1936, their first daughter, Nakada Eriko, was born.⁷⁹ Kokaku, however, became a long-distance father (and husband), as he decided once again to join yet another itinerant troupe, the Ichikawa Dankichi Ichi-za.

He later recalled that he was eager to join this troupe because he shared the same “Ichikawa” namesake with the main actor, Dankichi I. But he learned the hard way that the troupe was neither associated with the Ichikawa Danjûrô family nor was it a genuine *kabuki* company. Dankichi, in fact, in a rather irreverent move, had given himself his stage name, Ichikawa Dankichi, without bothering to consult the Ichikawa family, and, to Kokaku’s irritation, he performed a hodgepodge of three different genres: *kabuki*, *kengeki* (sword fighting), and *shinpa*, advertising his troupe as a “Sanmen-geki” (literally, a three-faced theatre).⁸⁰ To Kokaku’s distress, but to the audience’s apparent delight, the same actor who played Kanpei in the *kabuki* play *Kanadehon Chûshingura* played the prince in a *shinpa*-style play; even more distressing for the pure-*kabuki* trained Kokaku, the other actors seemed to think that all there was to *kabuki* was cutting a *mie* pose.⁸¹ Kokaku no

⁷⁸ Ichikawa Masujûrô, *Kabuki Jinsei*, 101.

⁷⁹ Masujûrô does not provide the name of his first wife. Eriko subsequently became a member of Ichikawa Girls’ Kabuki.

⁸⁰ Ichikawa Masujûrô, *Kabuki Jinsei*, 104. Purists, including Masujûrô, believe these genres are mutually exclusive, requiring different actors and different acting skills.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 104-105. Samuel L. Leiter describes a *mie* as a “nonrealistic, sculpturesque, dance-like pose taken by one or more actors at a climactic moment in a play to make a powerful

doubt looked down on these unsophisticated “*kusai-gei*” (literally, smelly art) colleagues. He wrote that he spent time practicing alone, determined to make something of his career. Still, as he does throughout his autobiography, he attempted to look on the bright side. He says it was during this time that he learned one of the most valuable lessons: the importance of performing “for 1,000 ‘seeing’ spectators and 1,000 ‘blind’ spectators”—in other words, the need to play to people who could and could not comprehend his art.⁸² The troupe toured along the old Tōkaidō highway, throughout the Kantō and Kansai regions, and even to Kyūshū. Conditions were poor, but as a young man in his twenties, he was not bothered.⁸³

But his touring was interrupted when, in 1943, he was called up to take a military communications course in Mishima City, Shizuoka Prefecture.⁸⁴ When he was released later that year, he learned that the Dankichi troupe had disbanded. Kokaku, however, decided that this was an opportunity to try his hand at running a troupe. He asked the retired Dankichi for permission to use his name, and Dankichi heartily agreed, stating that since he had thought of the name himself, no other actor would have a problem with Kokaku using it.⁸⁵ Thus, with no further ado, Kokaku became Dankichi II and ushered in the second phase of the Dankichi troupe, renaming it the Hanagata Kabuki Ichikawa

impression” (*New Kabuki Encyclopedia*, 403). See also his essay “The Frozen Moment: A *Kabuki* Technique,” in *Frozen Moments: Writings on Kabuki, 1966-2001* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell East Asia Series, 2002), 59-73.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 105. He invokes the idiom “*me aki sennin mekura sennin*,” for everyone who understands, there is someone who does not.

⁸³ Ichikawa Masujūrō, “Ichikawa Shōjo Kabuki Kōenkai,” 2.

⁸⁴ Ichikawa Masujūrō, *Kabuki Jinsei*, 189.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 107.

Dankichi Ichi-za (The Star Ichikawa Dankichi Company) and striking the “three-faced theatre” slogan.⁸⁶ In addition to performing at local festivities, the troupe was called on to play at events for the imperial army and navy. Like all *kabuki* troupes during the war years, it was required to obey the new censorship regulations that strongly “suggested” that love stories or love suicide (*shinjū*) plays were to be avoided in favor of plays that fueled nationalism and wartime spirit.⁸⁷ But this, too, was not to last; he disbanded the troupe and became, for the next couple of years, a freelance actor, wandering on the island of Kyūshū from one troupe to another.⁸⁸

It was there that he met Ichikawa Sumihachi, a young *kabuki onna yakusha* who would become his common-law wife and produce his second daughter, Emiko.⁸⁹ Born Takamatsu Tatsuko in Yamaguchi Prefecture to rural *kabuki* performers, Sumihachi had studied acting with the female actor Arashi Yachio in Osaka before the war heated up.⁹⁰

⁸⁶ Ibid., 108.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 115. On *kabuki* wartime regulations, see; James R. Brandon. “*Kabuki* and the War of Greater East Asia, 1931-1945,” *Mime Journal: Theatre East and West Revisited* 22 (2002-2003): 19-39; Marlene J. Mayo, “To Be or Not to Be: *Kabuki* and Cultural Politics in Occupied Japan,” in *War, Occupation and Creativity: Japan and East Asia, 1920-1960*, eds. Marlene Mayo and J. Thomas Rimer, 272-275 (Honolulu: University of Hawaii, 2001); Okamoto Shiro, *The Man Who Saved Kabuki: Fabion Bowers and Theatre Censorship in Occupied Japan*, trans. and adapt. Samuel L. Leiter (Honolulu: University of Hawaii, 2001).

⁸⁸ Ichikawa Masujūrō, *Kabuki Jinsei*, 112-114.

⁸⁹ Masujūrō does not discuss the fate of his first marriage in his autobiography, but according to his daughter, Ichikawa Emiko, he and his wife never officially divorced, and his marriage to Sumihachi was never registered in the Japanese National Family Registry (Ichikawa Emiko, interview by author, 2 June 2004, Toyohashi, Japan). In his autobiography, he called Sumihachi his “*sōkō-tsuma*,” “a poor wife who marries her husband before he becomes successful” (*Kabuki Jinsei*, 117). She and Masujūrō would eventually separate, and he would marry a third time, this time to Suzuki Sachiko (b. 25 November 1937, later Ichikawa Suzume), a member of the Ichikawa Girls’ *Kabuki* Troupe. Ichikawa Suzume, interview by author, 5 April 2004, Toyohashi, Japan.

⁹⁰ Ichikawa Emiko, interview.

It had been rumored that she was a former disciple of Ichikawa Kumehachi, since both of their names shared the character 八 (*hachi*), but she denied this was the case.⁹¹ Dankichi II and Sumihachi were in Kumamoto Prefecture in Kyûshû on 15 August 1945 when news reached them of Japan's surrender. Shortly thereafter, the couple returned to eastern Aichi Prefecture and rented a house in Toyohashi, not far from Hirao, Dankichi's hometown. Dankichi tried to resurrect his troupe, but found the rapidly changing conditions facing the *kabuki* theatre insurmountable.

In the name of democratizing Japan, General Douglas MacArthur, the Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers (SCAP), had issued strict theatre regulations banning any plays that smacked of bloodthirsty cruelty, the glorification of war, revenge, the suppression of women, or feudalism, which just about covered the entire category of *gidayû* plays that emphasized obligation (*giri*) over personal feeling (*ninjô*).⁹² Given the small number of actors in Dankichi's troupe, he wrote that he felt he was left with performing dance plays like the "Okaru Kanpei Michiyuki" scene from *Kanadehon Chûshingura* (though not the play itself, as it was on the banned list) or *Tsubosaka Reigenki*,⁹³ the sweet love story of a wife and her blind husband whose sight is restored.⁹⁴ But the plays failed to attract audiences. He longed to perform in Tokyo in a grand *kabuki*

⁹¹ Ôe Ryôtarô, "Hamamatsu no Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki," *Engekikai* (December 1952): 76-78; Ichikawa Masujûrô, *Kabuki Jinsei*, 117.

⁹² Ichikawa Masujûrô, *Kabuki Jinsei*, 117; Mayo, "To Be or Not to Be," 272-275; 275-296; Okamoto, *The Man Who Saved Kabuki*, 43-65.

⁹³ Jane Marie Law, trans., "The Miracle of Tsubosaka Kannon," in *Traditional Japanese Theatre: An Anthology of Plays*, ed. Karen Brazell, 408-417 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998).

⁹⁴ Ichikawa Masujûrô, *Kabuki Jinsei*, 117.

theatre. Ichikawa Sanshō, the leader of the Naritaya house, had responded courteously to a letter that he had written earlier, but did not go so far as to offer him work.⁹⁵ There were no particularly encouraging signs. The Kabuki-za and other major metropolitan theatres had been bombed and burned in 1945, and meanwhile, theatre along the small theatre circuit had come to a standstill. In its wake developed strip shows for Japanese men and GI soldiers and silly sing-along tunes like “The Apple Song” (*ringo no uta*).⁹⁶ After years of struggling to lead his small theatre company, he finally decided to disband it formally, probably sometime in late 1947.⁹⁷

By New Year’s 1949, Dankichi had sunk into a depression. With no work and time on his hands, he had taken to hunting sparrows everyday with his air gun. The meeting with his old friend Furukawa had cheered up him a bit, but the prospect of teaching elementary and junior high girls was too depressing for words. Here he fancied himself a Tokyo star actor, but the reality facing him was that of a school master trying to entertain girls in an extracurricular dance club.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 118.

⁹⁶ See Brandon, “Kabuki and the War,” 30; Ichikawa, *Kabuki Jinsei*, 117; for a discussion of “The Apple Song,” see Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, 172-173 and Alan M. Tansman, “Mournful Tears and Sake: The Postwar Myth of Misora Hibari,” in *Contemporary Japan and Popular Culture*, ed. John Whittier Treat, 103-133 (Honolulu: University of Hawaii, 1996).

⁹⁷ Ichikawa Masujūrō, *Kabuki Jinsei*, 118. In his autobiography Masujūrō wrote that he disbanded his troupe, but according to his second cousin, Ichikawa Sanpuku, even after disbanding it, he assembled members for festival performances on occasion (Ichikawa Sanpuku, interview by author, 5 April 2004, Toyohashi, Japan). Marilyn Ivy offers an alternative view that itinerant variety theatre troupes (*taishū engeki*) flourished between the years 1945-1953 and were able to escape censorship regulations imposed on larger troupes. See her *Discourses of the Vanishing* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 198. Dankichi would not have classified his theatre as *taishū engeki* per se, but he gives no indication in his autobiography that there was a flourishing small theatre scene after the war.

Compromised Ambitions

The disappointment—and embarrassment—of Furukawa’s request was so overwhelming that Dankichi sent his wife in his place.⁹⁸ Sumihachi, a student of the Fujima dance school—was the better dancer, after all, and what more were the girls going to learn besides a few dances, he figured.⁹⁹ As he later recalled in his autobiography, Sumihachi, too, was not thrilled with the prospect of teaching “little girls,” but after the first lesson, she experienced a 180-degree change in opinion. “The girls were excellent. They could easily go pro,” Dankichi recalled her raving.¹⁰⁰ To top off the elation of teaching enthusiastic, talented students, she had been given a hearty portion of sweet broiled eel (*kabayaki*), presumably as payment, from the girls’ parents. After days of eating sparrows and bulbuls, the eel was a welcome treat for the couple, who had been short on cash and savings since the war’s end.

But, despite her excitement, she made it clear that she had introduced herself as Dankichi’s “apprentice”; the girls were still waiting for the real master. When Dankichi showed no intention of going the next day, she returned to Yuki-san and continued to teach them. But on the third day, she told her husband—Dankichi would recall years later—that he would be expected that afternoon. “We’re going to finish [the piece] today. It will be something for you to see, and besides, you owe it to Furukawa.”¹⁰¹

⁹⁸ Ichikawa Masujûrô, *Kabuki Jinsei*, 121.

⁹⁹ Masujûrô noted that Sumihachi was a student of the Fujima school of Japanese dance, referred to in Japanese as the Fujima-ryû (Meiji-za program, May 1953, 26). At this writing, Sumihachi is still alive, but has been diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease and was unable to be interviewed. Ichikawa Emiko, interview.

¹⁰⁰ Ichikawa Masujûrô, *Kabuki Jinsei*, 121.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

Dankichi's sense of guilt—and gratitude to Furukawa for past favors—finally kicked in, and that afternoon, he took the train north to Toyokawa City. He had been to the restaurant Yuki-san before the war, when the shoes occupying the cubby holes in the entrance were mainly men's. Now, he noted the half-dozen girls' shoes tucked away neatly. The place was eerily quiet, no thumping of feet or shrill laughter that he would expect of young girls. As he stood in the foyer, contemplating what he was getting himself into, he heard the closing notes of *Hidakagawa*. The girls had just finished the dance. This would be as good a time as any to make an entrance.

The only written account of this first meeting is by Dankichi, and, similar to his descriptions of touring with his traveling troupe, it is self aggrandizing. Considering that he was a local boy who had gone off to make his acting career elsewhere, he very well might have received a hero's welcome on the second floor of Yuki-san that day. More than thirty years after the incident in question, he vividly recalled the proprietress introducing him to the girls as “the master.”¹⁰²

To the intense plectrum beats of the *shamisen* emanating from a record, four girls were practicing *Hidakagawa*, the dance piece on which the more famous *Musume Dôjôji* was based. Like all of the pieces Furukawa had taught, it was from the puppet theatre repertory. Similar to parts of *Shinrei Yaguchi no Watashi*, it required mastery of a basic, yet difficult, technique of puppet movement called *ningyô buri*. Practitioners of this technique must act as if they are bereft of all life, responding only to the movement commands of the operator, who often wears the same black-hooded robe as the *bunraku* puppeteer. In this way, each “puppet” character is seemingly manipulated by one or more

¹⁰² Ibid., 122.

“puppeteers”: the Ishigoro daughters, Ikuyo and Hiroe, were playing the boatman and an operator, respectively, while Sachiko played Kiyohime, and Yoshiko, her operator.

Sitting off to the side, several other girls observed Kiyohime, the maiden desperately in love with the celibate priest Anchin, transform from a beautiful girl into an angry serpent.

Dankichi could not fail to be impressed that in just three days, the foursome had mastered the entire dance. “I was shocked,” he would recall many years later. “They were too good. I felt humbled. I knew instantly they had what it takes. They could go pro.”¹⁰³ In his eyes, the girls were tall for their age, had good form, and were talented.¹⁰⁴

He had not come with a lesson plan, but Dankichi recalled that he stepped up to the task at hand: he gave the girls a pep talk and taught them the “Nozaki Mura” scene from *Shinpan Utazaimon*.¹⁰⁵ Years later, he would state: “I was truly surprised at how good they were. They had already been dancing for a couple years, so they moved beautifully, and they were incredibly enthusiastic. And I began to think that teaching them was enjoyable.”¹⁰⁶ In that moment, he later recalled, he felt as if he had found his life’s calling. It wasn’t the bright lights of Tokyo, but it was a job, and the girls—and their parents—respected him.

¹⁰³ Kurokawa Mitsuhiro, “Hatsu Geiko de Shishô mo Zessan” [Praise too from the Master at the First Practice], “Maboroshi no Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki” [Phantom Ichikawa Girls’ Kabuki], *Chûnichi Shinbun*, no. 5, 11 January 1984.

¹⁰⁴ Ichikawa Masujûrô, *Kabuki Jinsei*, 123.

¹⁰⁵ Cody M. Poulton, trans., “Nozaki Village,” in *Kabuki Plays On Stage: Villainy and Vengeance, 1773-1799*, eds. James R. Brandon and Samuel L. Leiter, 106-133 (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2002).

¹⁰⁶ Ichikawa Masujûrô, “Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki Kôenkai,” 2.

In fact, it initially appeared to Dankichi that the parents were more excited about the prospect of their daughters learning *kabuki* than the daughters themselves. All the mothers had accompanied their daughters to the rehearsal and watched eagerly as Dankichi instructed their girls how to become limp like the inanimate body of a puppet.¹⁰⁷ Proprietress Ishiguro went to great lengths to tell Dankichi how she wanted her daughters to become “something.” Years later Sachiko (later Ichikawa Baika) would recall that she herself had little interest in *kabuki*. She confided that she was particularly resentful that now she would have to actually speak onstage—she had preferred the dances in which the *gidayû* narrator vocalized characters’ lines. But her mother—who had become a *kabuki* fan after entertaining Onoe Kikugôrô VI and the former Sawamura Sojûrô VII (1875-1949) during her restaurant days—insisted that Sachiko continue, even threatening to terminate her dance lessons if she quit the *kabuki* club.¹⁰⁸ Indeed, Sachiko remembered that every day her mother carried her on the back of her bicycle and cycled the four kilometers from her village to Yuki-san, often humming the lyrics from a *gidayû* play.¹⁰⁹

The memories of the girls—at this writing the “girls” are now in their late sixties—are somewhat fuzzy. Keiko recalled that the first day Master Dankichi came to Yuki-san, he was wearing a kimono and a hunting cap, a combination that struck her as rather odd; Sachiko could not remember anything remarkable about Dankichi that day as

¹⁰⁷ See Kurokawa, “Hatsu Geiko,” 11 January 1984.

¹⁰⁸ Ichikawa Baika, interview.

¹⁰⁹ Ôki Yutaka, “Shishunki ni Tasshita: Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki” [Ichikawa Girls Kabuki Reaches Puberty], *Shûkan Tôkyô* [Tokyo Week], 5 July 1958, 82; Ichikawa Baika, “Ôatari, Shôjo Kabuki” [Smash Success, Girls’ *Kabuki*], “Matsuba-Botan no Ki” [Journal of Small Peonies], *Mainichi Shinbun*, no. 1, 11 January 1993.

much as she recalled that it was the first day she began menstruating.¹¹⁰ “I was crying and when people asked me why, I couldn’t say anything. Finally, I told Fukushô [Kobayashi Yoshiko],” she said, laughing at the memory. “She was six months older, and she explained everything to me.”¹¹¹ What everyone remembers is that Dankichi was a very different breed from the sweet, mild-mannered Furukawa. He was stricter and more demanding, and as they improved, he would come to expect even more from them. The girls quickly realized that if he had cast them in a certain part, there was no getting around it. Sachiko later recalled having the most difficulty with the transition from the gentle style of Furukawa to the harsh, vulgar style of Dankichi. “It was no longer the case where we could say ‘yes’ or ‘no,’ she wrote.¹¹² Still, she was relieved that as Kiyohime in *Hidakagawa*, she would not have to speak any lines, but could rely on the *gidayû* narrator to sing on her behalf.

Dankichi, however, was unaffected by the girls’ hesitation. To him, they were the perfect receptacles for his challenging instruction. He wrote:

During rehearsals, they would become different people. When I would say something, they would immediately absorb it, like ink-blotting paper, and it would become their own. They surprised me every day.¹¹³

Furthermore, he felt perfectly free to tell the girls what they were doing wrong:

¹¹⁰ Ichikawa Baishô, interview; Ichikawa Baika, interview.

¹¹¹ Ichikawa Baika, interview.

¹¹² Ichikawa Baika, “Honkaku Gekijô,” 18 January 1993.

¹¹³ Ichikawa Masujûrô, *Kabuki Jinsei*, 125.

Whenever I would criticize the girls and tell them something like human beings should be cleverer, they would apologize and agree that they were stupid.¹¹⁴

The girls also astounded Dankichi with their endurance:

Criticizing them was like pissing on a wet frog's face. They didn't care in the least. They took criticism amazingly well. They were so intense; they would just practice again and again.¹¹⁵

The girls, in truth, however, hardly thought of themselves as wet frogs or blotting paper. In the short term, they threw themselves into practice even more, but over time, they would come to see Dankichi as a frightening power figure.

For the first month or so, eight girls showed up for after-school practice, but within weeks, rumors began to spread that a “real” pro was teaching *kabuki* to girls, and more parents brought their daughters to Yuki-san. Among them was Kawakami Masako (b. 1938, later Ichikawa Sanpuku).¹¹⁶ The daughter of Shizuka, Dankichi's cousin, Masako had performed as a child-role actor frequently with her mother, who was a rural circuit *onna yakusha*. Having heard about the formation of an all-girls' troupe, Masako went to watch a rehearsal and was inspired to join, despite her mother's warnings that an actor's life was rough.¹¹⁷ Meanwhile, Dankichi and Sumihachi had become part of Ishiguro's adopted family. Realizing that even the couple's short fifteen-minute train

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 126.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Tsuchiya lists her private last name as Matsuoka, not Kawakami. “Shôjo Kabuki no Jûnen,” 173. This was her adopted name; her birth name, which she currently uses, was Kawakami. Ichikawa Sanpuku, interview by author, 5 April 2004, Toyokawa, Japan.

¹¹⁷ Ichikawa Sanpuku, interview.

commute between Toyokawa and Toyohashi had become a burden, Ishiguro invited them to live in the annex behind the restaurant, presumably for no cost, to which they readily agreed.¹¹⁸ Coaching the family's two daughters and the other local girls had become the focus of all their energy.

The troupe's first public recital was held 18 April 1949, the third Sunday of the month, from 10 a.m. at the Shôwa-za Theatre in the Ushikubo district of Toyokawa. Built in 1928, the theatre featured *tatami*-mat seating. It had survived the war unscathed and was used regularly for small theatre performances.¹¹⁹ The girls performed four plays: *Hidakagawa*, "Nozaki Mura," "Ninokuchi Mura" from *Koi no Tayori Yamato Ôrai*,¹²⁰ and the "Ôkura-kyô" scene from *Kiichi Hôgen*.¹²¹ All of the pieces were from the puppet repertory and all of them, Dankichi was proud to boast, were genuine *kabuki* plays performed by mainstream, male actors.

Parents, mainly the mothers, were enlisted as the backstage crew. Posters needed to be made, costumes and wigs fitted, scenery painted, and props prepared. The task of folding and unfolding the heavy kimonos alone was a full-time job. Shôwa-za, like most

¹¹⁸ Ichikawa Masujûrô, *Kabuki Jinsei*, 125. In both his autobiography and in Kurokawa's articles, Masujûrô speaks of living in Toyohashi, but in a May 1953 interview printed in the Meiji-za program, he stated that he and Sumihachi were living in Ushikubo, a section of Toyokawa, at the time.

¹¹⁹ Toyokawa Chihô no Gekijô [Toyokawa Regional Theatres] (unpub. documents, Toyokawa: Sakuragaoka Museum, box 1). The theatre was demolished and the land was turned into a parking lot in 1973.

¹²⁰ James R. Brandon, trans., "A Message of Love from Yamato," in *Kabuki Plays On Stage: Vengeance and Villainy, 1773-1799*, eds. James R. Brandon and Samuel L. Leiter, 284-317 (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2002).

¹²¹ According to *Engekikai*, the troupe also performed "Kuruma Biki," with Misuji playing Matsuo, Fukushô as Umeo, and Masuyo as Sakuramaru. It is highly likely, though, that the periodical is conflating the Shôwa-za production with a recital that had taken place several months earlier. Tsuchiya, "Shôjo Kabuki no Jûnen," 172.

theatres before the war, owned standard *kabuki* scenery, properties, and costumes and had its own painter and costumer.¹²² The biggest hurdle, Dankichi remembered, was adjusting the costumes, wigs, and props to fit the girls:

I had no conception of this difficulty. *Kabuki*'s costumes and props are made for adult men, not seven and eight-year-old children. But thanks to the parents, we were able to hem the costumes and sew our own. It was really tough.¹²³

It is worth remembering, however, that the lead performers were teenagers who were considered tall for their age, so the adult costumes were not so big for them. Furthermore, as one member would recall in an interview, the average size of male adults was not so much bigger than females in the immediate postwar period, so there was not such a difference.¹²⁴

Among the issues discussed in preparation for the performance was the ticket price. Dankichi and Sumihachi had hoped to solicit donations from the local school PTA, the Women's Club, and the Youth Club in order to offer free admission.¹²⁵ But many parents were opposed to such a policy, believing it would pressure families to contribute

¹²² The *kabuki* sets and properties used by the troupe for this and other small theatre productions, however, should not be conflated with that seen on the *kabuki* stage today. Generally, cloth curtains were used for the backdrop, and flats were used to cover the sides—many such properties can still be seen today on the *ji-shibai* (rural) theatre circuit. The troupe began to use more elegant costumes and properties when it started performing at larger theatres, such as Tokyo's Mitsukoshi Gekijō and Meiji-za.

¹²³ Ichikawa Masujūrō, *Kabuki Jinsei*, 127.

¹²⁴ Ichikawa Baika, interview. Kumehachi too recalled that she fit into a costume that had been made for a male *kabuki* actor. See Ichikawa, "Meika Shinsōroku," 119.

¹²⁵ In an article about the troupe's establishment, the *Mainichi Shinbun* reported that Dankichi was initially opposed to charging admission, since it was only an "amateur troupe." The troupe's astonishing success led him to change his mind later about admission costs. "Daigekijō ni Deta Shōjo Kabuki" [Girls' *Kabuki* Appears on a Big Stage: How their Art was Born], *Mainichi Shinbun* (evening), 4 May 1953.

to cover costs, leading to unwanted competition among the parents. How would one of the girls feel if her parents had not contributed and she was still cast in a lead role?¹²⁶ Several members came from affluent families, but this was not the case with everyone. Thus, Dankichi was persuaded to charge a nominal fee, 50-yen per person, a fraction of the cost of seeing the grand *kabuki* star Kikugorô VI at Nagoya's Misono-za that same year.¹²⁷ To their surprise, the 50-yen admission was no obstacle to attracting spectators. The house was sold out and the response was overwhelmingly positive. Spectators were surprised that the girls were doing *kabuki* and not performing a string of dances. "It's 'genuine' theatre, not just some kids' theatre," many agreed.¹²⁸

What Dankichi and the girls had underestimated was the pent-up nostalgia that spectators harbored for these plays, which until very recently had been under attack and on the verge of extinction. For many spectators, the sight of young girls performing *kabuki* was much needed validation that the traditional values of Japan, which *kabuki* had come to embody, would not die out, despite Japan's defeat, the deaths of loved ones, and the present U.S. occupation. Most of the middle-aged and older folks in the audience had grown up attending festive *kabuki* productions and had missed them during the later part of the war. It is unclear how many in the audience knew that *kabuki* was just beginning to recover from censorship that had been imposed during and immediately after the war, but

¹²⁶ Ichikawa Masujûrô, *Kabuki Jinsei*, 129.

¹²⁷ Kurokawa, "Dai Ikkai Happyôkai," 23 January 1984. In April 1948, first-class seats at the Minami-za theatre to see *kabuki* stars Nakamura Kichimon II and Bandô Mitsugôrô VII cost 180 yen. Minami-za program, April 1948.

¹²⁸ Noguchi, "Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki no Ayumi," 134.

there is no doubt that the performance conjured up memories of the past.¹²⁹ As Dankichi later recalled, even if the girls had been awful, the audience still would have been enraptured. “Of course, at that time, it had been right after the war, and people had fallen on hard times and had trouble finding enough to eat, so looking at these eight or nine kids perform made them incredibly happy.”¹³⁰ Indeed, looking back years later, in 1995, he would suggest that the troupe’s great success could be attributed to the aftermath of the war:

Nowadays you have popular young actors like Tamasabûrô [Bandô Tamasabûrô V, b. 1950], but during the time of Ichikawa Girls’ Kabuki, all the young *kabuki* actors had been called up and sent to the front; the only people left were the old ones. And so when twelve and thirteen-year-old kids started to perform *kabuki*, there was this sense of freshness, and that, I believe, led to their sudden popularity.¹³¹

Spectators were not simply engaging in what Japanese scholars have termed “*nostarujii*,” a neologism and an example of an imported word, which Jane Marie Law defines as a

¹²⁹ By the time of this 1949 production, SCAP had relaxed its policy concerning *kabuki* censorship. Such policies seemingly ended in November 1947, after a period of twenty-seven months, with the production of *Kanadehon Chûshingura*, but the Civil Censorship Detachment (CCD), which principally oversaw the censorship of plays, was not disbanded until October 1949. See Mayo, “To Be or Not to Be,” 269-309, esp. 292; Okamoto, *The Man Who Saved Kabuki*, 103-114. On nostalgia and its role in the revival of the Awaji puppet tradition, see Jane Marie Law, *Puppets of Nostalgia: The Awaji Puppet Tradition: The Life, Death, and Rebirth of the Awaji Ningyô Tradition* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), 204-255.

¹³⁰ Ichikawa Masujûrô, “Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki Kôenkai,” 3. Only the names of five of these “eight or nine kids” are known: Ishiguro Misuji, Ishiguro Ikuyo, Takatsu Keiko, Hikosaka Sachiko, and Kobayashi Yoshiko. There is no extant program (it is unclear if programs were used).

¹³¹ Ibid. Note that the transcript differs in places from Masujûrô’s recorded remarks, available on cassette tape. Several *kabuki* actors were killed in action abroad or during the air raids. See Okamoto, *The Man Who Saved Kabuki*, 26.

“general cultural phenomenon of romanticizing the past,” in which “Japanese are likely to be referring to a cultural and political trend in which a fictionalized past is invoked to further a particular political agenda (usually a conservative one).”¹³² Rather, their feelings resonated with what she calls “*natsukashii*,” the term that evokes “feeling,” “yearning for or missing someone,” and “becoming attached to someone.”¹³³ For spectators, the performance connected them to the very plays with which they had grown up. Such a performance, further, served as a form of psychological healing, an antidote to the postwar trauma.¹³⁴ This was true not only for this first production, but for subsequent ones as well. Watching *kabuki* was one way in which spectators, especially older ones, could find solace in their lives that had been so terribly upset by the war.

The fact that young girls—not boys—were performing *kabuki* hardly mattered to the locals. Though they had never seen an all-female *kabuki* troupe, they had been accustomed to seeing women—the famous Botan and Momiji—perform on the small theatre circuit, and some must have had memories of the now-defunct all-female Genji Bushi plays.¹³⁵ No one thought to link what the girls were doing to the Japanese feminist movement, or even to the newly written constitution, promulgated 3 May 1947 that gave women the same rights as men.¹³⁶

¹³² Law, *Puppets of Nostalgia*, 214.

¹³³ *Ibid.*

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

¹³⁵ See notes 8 and 9.

¹³⁶ For a history of feminism in Japan, see, for example, Gail Bernstein, ed. *Recreating Japanese Women, 1600-1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991); Sandra Buckley, *Broken Silence: Voices of Japanese Feminism* (Berkeley: University of California, 1997); Kano, *Acting Like a Woman*, Vera Mackie, *Feminism in Modern Japan: Citizenship, Embodiment, and Sexuality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Sharon L. Sievers, *Flowers in Salt:*

While the audience enjoyed the show, Dankichi and Sumihachi ran back and forth from the auditorium to visit with spectators to the dressing room to check on the performers. They were veterans on the *kabuki* tour circuit, but this was an entirely new endeavor. Dankichi recalled that it was difficult to keep from crying. “This was the first time that we felt this much excitement and emotion,” he wrote.¹³⁷ That neither of them had gotten a full-night’s sleep in days did not matter. At that moment, they felt like there was no greater reward than to see their young charges perform *kabuki* before a paying audience.

After the performance, the participants reconvened at Yuki-san for the cast party. Local residents, from the station master to the shop owners, joined them, bringing congratulatory gifts.¹³⁸ To many, it was unbelievable that the girls drinking orange juice and playing childish rock-paper-scissors games were the same ones who just hours before had maturely acted out love stories in “Nozaki Mura” and “Hidakagawa.” Over *sake*, parents toasted Dankichi, Sumihachi, and their own daughters, who had become local celebrities.

Among the spectators in the audience was the eleven-year-old Suzuki Sachiko (b. 1937). Sachiko had been appearing as a child-role actor in local Manninkô productions over the past two years and found herself surprised to see girls the same age as herself playing all of the roles, child and adult, on stage. “The production made a huge

The Beginnings of Feminist Consciousness in Modern Japan (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1983).

¹³⁷ Ichikawa Masujûrô, *Kabuki Jinsei*, 133.

¹³⁸ Kurokawa, “Dai Ikkai Happyôkai,” 23 January 1984.

impression on me,” she recalled years later.¹³⁹ She remembered being moved by the love-triangle in “Nozaki Mura,” and the acting of Hikosaka Sachiko as Omitsu and Ikuyo as Osome. She also remembered previously seeing Dankichi dance in her village and being particularly struck by his eccentric habit of wearing a glow-in-the-dark ribbon over his kimono at night. Watching the production, she resolved to join the troupe. Her father had worked backstage at several local amateur productions and was keen to give his daughter the opportunity to do the same, despite her mother’s belief that acting was a dirty business. Suzuki Sachiko’s father was an acquaintance of Hikosaka Sachiko’s mother, however, and so undertook arrangements for his daughter to attend rehearsals after school at Yuki-san. Within the same week, Tanaka Keiko (b. 1940, later, Ichikawa Himeshō) began attending lessons as well.¹⁴⁰

One success led to more. From the day after the recital, Dankichi reported that he was inundated with requests from organizations asking if they could book “the girls.” Most of the calls came from people who had seen the girls perform at the Shōwa-za, but there were also callers who had heard of the troupe through word of mouth. Dankichi was eager to have the girls perform regularly, so, after securing the parents’ consent, he set about arranging the performance schedule. A couple of girls, including Takatsu Keiko, had decided to quit, since the club was now conflicting with their academic studies, but most members, Dankichi remembered, were delighted with the prospect of performing more frequently.¹⁴¹ Sumihachi and Dankichi, therefore, resolved to think of the troupe as

¹³⁹ Ichikawa Suzume, interview.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Ichikawa Masujūrō, *Kabuki Jinsei*, 136.

their profession. “I made a 180 degree life-change. . . . I was thirty-seven years old, but that year, I turned one,” he wrote, indicating a rebirth.¹⁴² No one, at this point, was saying anything about becoming a professional troupe, but Dankichi had his sights set high.

What to Call a Girls’ *Kabuki* Troupe?

With a new mission, the troupe took on a name: the Toyokawa Shôjo Kabuki Gekidan (Toyokawa Girls’ Kabuki Troupe). Who gave the troupe its first name is unknown. It cannot be considered a particularly creative effort. Toyokawa, of course, designated the troupe’s hometown, and *shôjo* (literally, “little female”) was a popular modifier for other female troupes, most notably Takarazuka Shôjo Kageki Yôseika (Takarazuka Girls’ Opera Training Association)¹⁴³ and the Shôchiku Shôjo Kageki (Shôchiku Girls’ Revue). Interestingly, though, both of these troupes would eventually remove the *shôjo* term—Takarazuka, for example, excised it in 1940, largely to acknowledge the “more ‘adult’ content” of its productions,¹⁴⁴ and to enable older, unmarried women, in their late twenties or early thirties, to remain in the troupe. Had Dankichi’s troupe paid heed to the reasons why Takarazuka had cut “*shôjo*” from its name, it might have saved itself from any number of future headaches. Just like the Takarazuka *shôjo*, the Toyokawa *shôjo* would age to the point that critics would question

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Founder Kobayashi Ichizô (1873-1957) first called the troupe Takarazuka Shôkantai (Takarazuka Choir), but changed the name to Takarazuka Shôjo Kageki Yôseika five months later. Jennifer Robertson, *Takarazuka: Sexual Politics and Popular Culture in Modern Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 5.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 63. The other reason for the name change that Robertson gives was “to prepare for the inclusion of the male chorus,” which “would apparently help to deflect allegations of deviant behavior among Takarasiennes and their fans” (ibid.). Adding men, however, was never a goal of the Toyokawa troupe, and, to my knowledge, it was never subjected to “allegations of deviant behavior.”

whether members were, in fact, still *shôjo*, a debate that would have serious repercussions for the troupe a decade later.

A late nineteenth-century addition to the Japanese lexicon, the word *shôjo* is defined as “young girls,” who are between four and sixteen years old. Generally, however, the term is used to denote adolescence, from the onset of menses through marriage, which was to be understood as one’s first sexual experience. As Jennifer Robertson suggests, the term *shôjo*, created “for unmarried girls and women,” means literally a “not-quite-female” female.¹⁴⁵ Following up on this argument, John Whittier Treat explains that “one might well argue that *shôjo* constitute their own gender, neither male nor female but rather something importantly detached from the productive economy of heterosexual reproduction.”¹⁴⁶ Many members, like Sachiko, would mark their entry into the troupe with their first menses, but, as we shall see, they would not be ready to leave upon reaching what was considered to be “marriageable age.” The troupe would stretch the age limit for *shôjo* but eventually find, like Takarazuka, that the term would need to be exchanged for something else.

But for now, the name was a shield against sexuality.¹⁴⁷ Similar to Takarazuka’s motto “clean, pure, and beautiful,” the *shôjo* were expected to be asexual and to exude a cute, innocent charm. By calling itself *shôjo*, the troupe was, perhaps wisely, putting a

¹⁴⁵ Jennifer Robertson, *Takarazuka*, 64-65.

¹⁴⁶ John Whittier Treat, “Yoshimoto Banana Writes Home: The *Shôjo* in Japanese Popular Culture,” in *Contemporary Japan and Popular Culture*, ed. John Whittier Treat (Honolulu: University of Hawaii, 1996), 282-283.

¹⁴⁷ Karen Nakamura and Hisako Matsuo make this point regarding Takarazuka, noting that all members of that troupe are referred to as “students,” and that “this very childhood status is critical in maintaining the fundamental asexuality of the performance space.” “Female Masculinity and Fantasy Spaces: Transcending Genders in the Takarazuka Theatre and Japanese Popular Culture,” in *Men and Masculinities in Contemporary Japan: Dislocating the Salaryman Doxa*, ed. James E. Roberson and Nobue Suzuki (London: Routledge/Curzon, 2003), 62.

barrier between itself and the many past female performers, from Okuni to Kumehachi. By calling themselves *shôjo*, they were also distinguishing themselves from the term *onna yakusha*, “with its historical connotations of itinerant actresses who were associated with unlicensed prostitution,” as well as from the newer term *joyû* (actress), which also conjured up loose sexual morals.¹⁴⁸ As Ayako Kano states, “An actress is valued in so far as she can distance herself from sex work, but . . . she is constantly suspected of being no different from those women who sell sexual performances.”¹⁴⁹ Including the word *shôjo* in its name would help to deflect criticism that the troupe was similar to *kabuki onna yakusha* of the past.

Dankichi later recalled that he never had a “specific plan” for the troupe, but he decided after the Shôwa-za production that the girls would not perform on a volunteer basis. The troupe would always request that the audience pay something; sometimes it would collect 20,000 yen, sometimes 30,000 yen. It was enough to cover expenses and to pay Dankichi and Sumihachi a modest salary—at least now they were able to pay rent to the Ishiguros. Sumihachi managed the troupe’s schedule, while Dankichi oversaw the artistic direction. Rehearsals took place in the early afternoon every day for three or four hours. Attendance was mandatory at all practice session; long-distance commuters were discouraged. Amazingly, when the girls began to miss school, the principal refrained from asking Dankichi to restrict the girls’ schedule; rather, he suggested hiring a private tutor.¹⁵⁰ The girls’ performances were valued and encouraged.

¹⁴⁸ Robertson, *Takarazuka*, 8.

¹⁴⁹ Kano, *Acting Like a Woman*, 26.

¹⁵⁰ Ichikawa Masujûrô, *Kabuki Jinsei*, 137.

From this period on, the troupe performed almost every day that the girls were not in school, generally on weekends and holidays, at women's meetings and neighborhood gatherings in Toyokawa and throughout other towns in Aichi Prefecture and in the neighboring prefecture of Shizuoka, not far from Mount Fuji. A two-minute undated film clip, which, from the context, must have been filmed sometime in 1950, shows the girls shepherded by Dankichi from "town to town," from one small theatre to the next, dressed in identical knee-length skirts and long overcoats.¹⁵¹ All these performances had been day trips, but by the summer of 1950, Dankichi felt the troupe was ready for a longer tour. Relying on contacts from his days on the road, he arranged for the girls to perform in many of the rural theatres he had once frequented.

Before they left, Ebijûrô, Dankichi's dear friend and mentor, advised the troupe to change its name to the Tôkyô Shôjo Kabuki Troupe. "You're doing real *kabuki*, so none of this Toyokawa Shôjo Kabuki," he urged. "The difference between Toyokawa and Tokyo on the bill will make a difference."¹⁵² If a potential spectator heard that the troupe was from some countryside backwater like Toyokawa, he would likely pass; there was more likelihood that *shôjo* from Tokyo would sell. None of the members had ever been to the capital, let alone spoke with a Tokyo accent, but virtually overnight, the Toyokawa

¹⁵¹ Mainichi News, undated footage, courtesy Ichikawa Baika (copy in author's collection). I believe that the clip must have been filmed in 1950, because no mention is made of Hamamatsu-za, which would acquire the troupe between 1951 and 1952. In the footage, the troupe is presented as an itinerant, all-girls' *kabuki* troupe based in Toyokawa.

¹⁵² Kurokawa Mitsuhiro, "Nojuku mo Shita Nagaki Jungyô" [Also Spending the Night Outside on a Long Tour], "Maboroshi no Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki" [Phantom Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki], *Chûnichi Shinbun*, no. 8, 24 January 1984.

Girls' Kabuki Troupe became the Tokyo Girls' Kabuki Troupe.¹⁵³ Traveling in their school uniforms, however, the girls looked like they were on a school trip, not a performance tour. The most memorable performances were held in the small town of Ine, a remote fishing village on the Japan Sea. There they took part in a three-day festival in which all the performances were held on boats. The girls were happy to be praised by the fishermen and to receive a small stipend.¹⁵⁴

All was well until the girls toured the Ise Peninsula. Despite the troupe's new name, audiences were not fooled. "The theatres were empty; everywhere we went there was a lack of spectators," one member recalled.¹⁵⁵ Four girls were sent off in a three-wheeled truck to drum up interest for the performances. "It was miserable. We went around town, yelling 'hear ye, hear ye' (*tôzai tôzai*)," she wrote.¹⁵⁶ Still, the theatres remained empty. Dankichi neglected to mention the tour in his autobiography, but when asked about it in 1984, he acknowledged:

Yes, well, there were times when only fifteen people showed up. What can I say?

That circuit saw *kabuki*, *rôdoku* (recitations), *iromono* (vaudeville-type shows).

¹⁵³ According to the *Sande Mainichi*, the troupe, at one point, was also called "Musume Kabuki," but none of the troupe members interviewed recalled this ever being a name that the troupe used. "Otana ni Natta Shôjo Kabuki," 39-41.

¹⁵⁴ Kurokawa, "Nojuku mo Shita Nagaki Jungyô," 24 January 1984.

¹⁵⁵ Ichikawa Baika, "Gonan, Yobikomi Mimau Aotake" [Difficulties, Being Screamed at and Hit with a Green Bamboo Pole], "Matsuba-Botan no Ki" [Journal of Small Peonies], *Mainichi Shinbun*, no. 3, 25 January 1993.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.* *Tôzai tôzai* is the conventional phrase used to begin most *bunraku* plays, and is literally translated as "East West, East West."

Performers were coming through all the time, so audiences had gotten used to professionals. They looked down on us as a kids' troupe.¹⁵⁷

The girls were tired and hungry, but since the troupe was earning practically nothing from performances, there was little to go around. Dankichi recalled joking that since no one had showed up to see them perform, they didn't have any money to pay for train tickets home. At that, the girls burst into tears, making it nearly impossible for Dankichi to take control of the situation.¹⁵⁸

The troupe, however, eventually returned to Toyokawa, but not without Sumihachi swearing that she would never take the girls on the road again. It had reminded her all too vividly of the unpleasantness of past years spent with an itinerant troupe. She absolutely refused to return to that type of life.¹⁵⁹ Besides, it was unfair to impose the rigors of such a lifestyle on the daughters of town merchants. Dankichi was of the same mindset, though he also saw the experience as a way to dispose of the weaker, unfit girls. Using the metaphor of a sieve, he would later boast that the performers who stayed in the troupe were the ones who had not fallen through the cracks. Only the ones tough enough to survive this process of "natural selection" were fit for any troupe that he

¹⁵⁷ Kurokawa, "Nojuku mo Shita Nagaki Jungyô," 24 January 1984.

¹⁵⁸ Kurokawa Mitsuhiro, "Ise Jungyô wa Sansan na Kekka" [Disastrous Results for the Ise Tour], "Maboroshi no Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki" [Phantom Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki], *Chûnichi Shinbun*, no. 9, 25 January 1984. Dankichi told Kurokawa that he was merely joking, but Noguchi, several years later, reported that the troupe actually had been stranded in Ise since it did not have money for the train ride home. "Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki no Ayumi," 135.

¹⁵⁹ Ichikawa Masujûrô, *Kabuki Jinsei*, 138.

was leading.¹⁶⁰ Still, it must not have been reassuring to see so many of the young girls quit after he had already put so much effort into training them.

Parents continued to help Sumihachi with backstage chores; Furukawa oversaw the troupe's finances and often performed as a *gidayû* chanter, while Dankichi played the dual roles of artistic director and PR representative. His contacts from former years on the road were helpful, but he was also finding it necessary to work through third-party producers in order to receive invitations from some of the more exclusive theatres.

He knew from experience that many of these producers were just out to exploit performers, but it often took several meetings with them to separate the wheat from the chaff. Such was the case with a Mr. Nakatsubo from Yokohama. He had asked to be kept abreast of the troupe's future performances, and Dankichi had promptly notified him that the troupe had been invited by a local PTA to perform at an elementary school. Much to his delight, Dankichi discovered before the performance that Nakatsubo had sent a man called Nakano, the vice-president of Performing Arts for the Shôchiku Company. Shôchiku was the *kabuki* production company that owned most of the famous *kabuki* theatres; most major *kabuki* actors were contracted to it. "I've heard about your troupe from Mr. Nakatsubo," Nakano told Dankichi as a way of introduction. "And, if I think it's appropriate, we'd like to have the troupe perform at the Tokiwa-za theatre in Tokyo. We'll be able to give you an immediate reply."¹⁶¹ Dankichi was elated; he himself had never actually performed in Tokyo, but it was his dream to bring the girls there to perform one day. The Tokiwa-za, in the Asakusa district, had opened in 1886, primarily

¹⁶⁰ "Otani ni natta Shôjo Kabuki," 41.

¹⁶¹ Ichikawa Masujûrô, *Kabuki Jinsei*, 149-150.

for *kabuki*, but had become a popular venue for the comedians Enoken and Roppa, as well as the female sword masters Fuji Yôko and Ôe Michiko.¹⁶² Since the war, it had been used by young *kabuki* actors and female sword masters. It was amazing to think that his troupe could perform there as well; hardly able to contain his excitement, Dankichi broke the news to the girls.

But his enthusiasm only lasted as long as the show. Nakano was far from enthralled. A girls' troupe had interested him, but not one performing traditional *kabuki* in an innocent, sweet fashion. He confessed that he was looking for a risqué entr'acte for a strip show. "Since the war, Asakusa has become something of a haven for cruder entertainment, something showier," he said apologetically. "Your production won't work."¹⁶³ After giving the girls an obligatory souvenir package of Asakusa's famous rice candy, he excused himself.

Dankichi recalled that he felt like throwing the entire box of sweets at him. He could only wonder, "Is this the reputation of my troupe?"¹⁶⁴ Little did he know at the time that the girls were on the verge of being discovered by another producer, who would determine the troupe's future direction and create the conditions for its professional success.

¹⁶² The dates of these performers are as follows: Enomoto Kenichi, 1904-1970, Furukawa Roppa, 1903-1961, Fuji Yôko, 1912-1980, and Ôe Michiko, 1910-1939.

¹⁶³ Ichikawa Masujûrô, *Kabuki Jinsei*, 151.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

Chapter 2

Name Recognition

After the disappointment with Shôchiku, Dankichi had the great fortune to catch the attention of the Ono Productions Company (Ono Kôgyô-sha) based in Hamamatsu City.¹ The owner, Ono Haruyoshi (1905-1981), a Shizuoka prefectural Diet representative, had become the president of a 700-seat theatre, the Hamamatsu-za, in April 1950 and was looking for new talent to promote.² Though he had never envisioned promoting or even owning a *kabuki* company, let alone an all-girls' one, he eventually was persuaded to acquire the troupe and make his theatre its home base. This chapter explores how Ono made such a significant decision, one that would influence the next decade of the troupe's development, leading to the much sought-after backing of the Naritaya house. With the financial sponsorship of the Hamamatsu-za and the artistic patronage of Ichikawa Sanshō V, the headmaster of the Ichikawa acting family, the troupe would jettison its rural roots, transforming itself from a regional semi-amateur club to a professional company.

¹ Ichikawa Masujūrō, *Kabuki Jinsei* [A Kabuki Life] (Toyohashi: Hôbundō, 1983), 137.

² Ibid.; Toshikura Yoshikazu, "Hamamatsu no Shôjo Kabuki" [Hamamatsu's Girls' Kabuki], *Engekikai* (October 1952): 34-35. Kaneko Seiji inherited the task of managing the Hamamatsu-za from his uncle, who had owned the theatre before the war. According to Ono Haruyoshi, Kaneko had asked him if he would become the president and joint owner of the theatre, since he felt the older Haruyoshi, as the director of his own production company, had more experience in the performing arts. See Ono Haruyoshi, *Ono Haruyoshi Jidenshō Mizube Danwa* [Autobiographical Discussions by Ono Haruyoshi] (Kyoto: Shirakawa Shoin, 1978), 150-152.

The Hamamatsu-za Theatre and Ono Haruyoshi

Besides the Atomic bomb ravaging Hiroshima and Nagasaki, B-29 bombing destroyed much of the Tōkaidō highway between Tokyo and Osaka. Among the cities almost entirely leveled was Hamamatsu. Before the war, Hamamatsu had been known for its geisha district in the Chitose neighborhood, where the original Hamamatsu-za had been located. At the entrance to the theatre was a Chinese medicine shop, which was said to sell the appropriate potion for healing venereal disease that one might contract after spending a night or two in the neighborhood.³ The city also boasted an active entertainment scene: in addition to the Hamamatsu-za, there was the Kabuki-za, which showcased *kabuki* and *shinpa*, as well as two “small” (*koya*) theatres, a vaudeville (*yose*) house, and ten movie theatres.⁴ For *kabuki* lovers, Hamamatsu had taken on particular significance ever since the playwright Kawatake Mokuami (1816-1893) had immortalized it in his famous play *Shiranami Gonin Otoko*, in which chief bandit Nippon Daemon announces that he “was born at Hamamatsu in Enshū” (*umare wa Enshū Hamamatsu zai*).⁵

The Hamamatsu-za was among the buildings to burn to the ground, but, like dozens of playhouses after the war, it was rebuilt as a movie theatre. The tycoon Igaso

³ Hamamatsu Shōten Kairenmei, ed., *Hamamatsu Shōten Renmei Setsuritsu Sanjū Shūnen Kinenshi* [The Thirtieth Anniversary of the Hamamatsu Commercial Federation] (Hamamatsu: Shōten Kairenmei, 1 February 1979), 33.

⁴ Ono Haruyoshi, *Ono Haruyoshi Jidenshō*, 146.

⁵ Uchiyama Tsuneo, “Hamamatsu to Jūdai-me Danjūrō: Ichikawa Shōjo Kabuki Sodate no Oya” [Hamamatsu and Danjūro X: The Parent who Raised Ichikawa Girls’ Kabuki], *Tōtōmi* [The Far Lake] 25 (March 2002): 9-18. Enshū is the former name for Shizuoka Prefecture in which Hamamatsu City is located. For an English translation of the scene in question, see Samuel L. Leiter, *The Art of Kabuki: Five Famous Plays*, rev. ed. (Mineola, NY: Dover, 1999), 1-43.

Hachi had bought nine movie theatres in Hamamatsu City, and on the plot of land where the Hamamatsu-za had once stood, he built the Hirabara Gekijô (later called the Daei Gekijô), which showed American films. For reasons that remain unclear, Igaso sold it to the Tôei Gekijô company, which renamed it the Hamamatsu Cinema (later renamed the Chitose Gekijô) and showed European films. But for reasons that are once again unclear, the company sold the building to Ono Haruyoshi, who restored its prewar name, the Hamamatsu-za. Instead of showing films like his predecessors, he planned to present live acts, as the theatre had done before the war.⁶

In his autobiography, Ono confided that he had been thinking of owning his own theatre troupe one day. He was familiar with the examples of Takarazuka (his niece in Ninomiya City would later join that troupe) and Shôchiku's Girls' Opera, but that did little to excite him about female *kabuki* performers. Indeed, how Ono came to own the troupe is not unlike the story of how Dankichi came to be the troupe's director and teacher. In the same way that Dankichi refused to believe the girls could perform *kabuki*, Ono Haruyoshi could not envision hiring young girls for his theatre's main entertainment. Before the war, he had produced some of the big names in Japanese entertainment history, such as the Korean modern dancer Saishôki and the boxer "Piston" Horiguchi. He had the further distinction of having given Misora Hibari (1937-1989), Japan's beloved postwar pop-star, the stage name Hibari (he had suggested "Aoizora Hibari," but it was decided that "Misora" [beautiful sky] was softer and more fetching than the inflected "Aoizora"

⁶ *Tôkai Tenpô* (February 1968): 80-83; see also Takasago En, ed., *Takasagoya: Sôritsu Sanjûnen Kinen: Sanjûnen no Ayumi* [The Thirty-Year Anniversary of the Takasago Inn: A History of Thirty Years] (Oda Kogeisha, 1979). According to Ichikawa Kobotan, Ono was producing "strip shows" at the theatre (Interview by author, 29 April 2004, Gifu City). I have not been able to find any written documentation confirming this.

[blue sky]; incidentally, Hibari means “skylark”). Therefore, he had become somewhat selective over whom to promote.⁷

If the choice had been left up to Haruyoshi, the Toyokawa girls never would have been selected as Hamamatsu-za’s resident troupe—at least not initially. It was his brother-in-law, Ono Kakutarô, the president of press relations for Ono Productions, who had helped to organize a series of successful performances for the troupe in Shizuoka Prefecture in 1950, who made the recommendation.⁸

The earliest record of the girls performing at the Hamamatsu-za is 21 October 1950. This date was recorded by a local city resident, Saitô Sadaichirô, whose unpublished, handwritten scroll is the best source for 1950s theatre productions in Hamamatsu.⁹ According to Saitô, the troupe performed three pieces: Act VII of *Kanadehon Chûshingura*, “Nozaki Mura,” and the “Taki” scene from *Hakone Reigenki*,

⁷ Ono, *Ono Haruyoshi Jidenshō*, 148-149.

⁸ Ichikawa Masujûrô, *Kabuki Jinsei*, 137.

⁹ Saitô Sadaichirô, “Hamamatsu Jôen Kabuki Shibai Kiroku” [A Record of *Kabuki* Plays Performed at Hamamatsu] (unpub. scroll, Hamamatsu Chuô Toshokan [Hamamatsu Central Metropolitan Library], ref. no. 775:29: K, 1960). From around 1950 until the early 1960s, Saitô recorded all the *kabuki* productions he saw at Hamamatsu City’s Kabuki-za and Hamamatsu-za on a handwritten scroll. Unlike Samuel Pepys, the famous diary keeper of late seventeenth-century London who sprinkled his account of daily life with remarks about his theatregoing, Saitô recorded only the theatre productions that he saw, paying no attention to how he spent his days in Hamamatsu. For each entry, he methodically noted the theatre’s name, the troupe’s name, the performance dates, the troupe members’ names, and the pieces presented. In the case of the Ichikawa Girls’ Kabuki Troupe, Saitô recorded three productions he saw: a performance on 21 October 1950, the sixty-day summer run from 22 July-20 September 1952, and a three-week run, 13 August-8 September 1957. Since there are no extant programs from this time, Saitô’s scroll occupies an important place in the troupe’s early history. After Saitô’s death, the scroll was bequeathed to his friend, Atsumi Seichiro. When he died in 1960, his wife, Atsumi Kikue, donated the scroll to the Hamamatsu Central Metropolitan Library, where it remains today.

and admission was 50 yen, the same price charged at the 1949 Ushikubo recital.¹⁰ A cast list is not included with this entry (see figure 6).

Saitô, however, does provide a new name for the troupe during this time, the “Katsukawa Ikuyo Ichi-za: Onna Kodomo Shibai” (The Katsukawa Ikuyo Company: Women and Children’s Theatre). It is unclear if this was the actual name of the troupe, or something that Saitô made up in lieu of an official name. Chances are that it is the former, but a 1958 source would later claim that the troupe’s name at this time was the “Katsukawa Hiroe Ichi-za,” after the name of Ikuyo’s older sister.¹¹ Ikuyo, as noted earlier, was the youngest daughter of Ishiguro Tatsunosuke, who had been so instrumental in the troupe’s foundation. Katsukawa refers to Katsukawa Matanojô, the stage name of the troupe’s first teacher, Furukawa. It is perfectly plausible that Furukawa gave his stage name, Katsukawa, to the Ishiguro sisters, but neither they nor other members of the troupe have any recollection of the troupe ever going by this name. Moreover, the sisters, in interviews some fifty-four years after the performance in question, said that they had no recollection of ever receiving Furukawa’s stage name.¹² Ikuyo’s best explanation is that Saitô believed that she was a strong performer and made up the name himself. In either case, it serves as further testimony to her skill as an actress.

¹⁰ See Saitô, “Hamamatsu Jôen Kabuki.”

¹¹ Ôki Yutaka, “Shishunki ni Tasshita: Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki” [Ichikawa Girls’ Kabuki Reaches Puberty], *Shûkan Tôkyô* [Tokyo Week], 5 July 1958, 82.

¹² Ichikawa Masuyo, interview by author, 23 March 2004, Tokyo; Ichikawa Misuji, interview by author, 4 October 2004, Nagoya, Japan. At the performance in question, they would have been twelve and fourteen, respectively.

Ono Haruyoshi apparently did not see the troupe perform on 21 October, as he made no mention of it in his autobiography, which provides his version of how he came to own the troupe. According to this account, he first heard about the girls from his brother-in-law, Kakutarô, who confidently announced to him that, “You could put the troupe on any stage and you wouldn’t be embarrassed.”¹³ Haruyoshi, however, remained skeptical that country girls could perform *kabuki*. “Even if people said they were good, there were limits,” Haruyoshi recalled telling his brother-in-law, as a way of saying no to the question of bringing the troupe to Hamamatsu.¹⁴ Indeed, Haruyoshi wrote that he was ashamed that, in his mind, Japanese traveling troupes fell below what he considered to be “international standards.” How would an all-girls’ troupe from some rural town be any different?

Several days after this exchange, however, Kakutarô notified him that he had promised the troupe the chance to perform at an upcoming three-day private event at the theatre. Needless to say, Haruyoshi was furious and promptly rebuked him:

You just told me before about this amateur troupe. But we never decided on anything. Isn’t it just an amateur kids’ company? Don’t you remember that companies have put their trust in us! This cannot be. Retract your promise.¹⁵

In the end, however, it was Haruyoshi who reconsidered his position. Kakutarô was Haruyoshi’s younger sister’s husband, and he considered him to be closer than any

¹³ Ono, *Ono Haruyoshi Jidenshō*, 152.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 153.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

biological brother.¹⁶ Moreover, he recognized that Kakutarô had a sterling reputation as a producer, and it would mean the loss of face if he broke a promise, even for an obscure all-female *kabuki* troupe.

Exactly what the troupe performed on this occasion is difficult to discern from Haruyoshi's and Dankichi's respective accounts.¹⁷ Again, the dates are fuzzy—according to Sakuragaoka Museum documents culled from oral testimonials, the three-day production took place in June 1951.¹⁸ According to Haruyoshi, the girls' troupe performed at a three-day invitational production at the Hamamatsu-za; yet, according to Dankichi, the three-day affair was officially billed as a “Kabuki Class,” but had all the trappings of a regular *kabuki* performance.¹⁹ The troupe performed twice a day, offering the same type of program that it usually did. Moreover, according to Dankichi's autobiography, people waited in line the day of the performance to buy tickets, so it is possible that it was open to the public, which contradicts Haruyoshi's memoir.²⁰

It was not Tokyo, but Dankichi was thrilled that his troupe would be performing on such a large stage, at a theatre that he perceived as equal in prestige to Nagoya's

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ono Haruyoshi, for example, wrote that he believed that “Kuruma Biki” was one of the pieces, but, given that there is no extant written evidence, this is difficult to confirm.

¹⁸ See Kurokawa Mitsuhiro, “Ôatari, Hamamatsu-za Kôen” [Smash Hit, The Hamamatsu-za Production], “Maboroshi no Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki” [Phantom Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki], *Chûnichi Shinbun*, no. 10, 28 January 1984; see also “Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki Nenpu” [Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki Biographical Sketch] (unpub. documents, Toyokawa: Sakuragaoka Museum, 4 February 1995).

¹⁹ Ono, *Ono Haruyoshi Jidenshō*, 154; Ichikawa, *Kabuki Jinsei*, 141; Kurokawa, “Ôatari,” 28 January 1984.

²⁰ Ichikawa Masujûrô, *Kabuki Jinsei*, 141.

Misono-za.²¹ After months of performing at half-empty theatres, he was relieved to see the performances sell out. He wrote that curtain was not until noon, but by 9 a.m. there was a long line of people waiting to get tickets, and people who were there for the evening performance had to wait for a good part of the afternoon. “I was stunned to see so many people lining up—I had to pinch myself. It wasn’t a lie; it wasn’t a dream—it was really happening,” Dankichi recalled.²²

Meanwhile, Ono Haruyoshi was sitting in the last row of the house, experiencing what he had least expected: a sweeping success. The girls were superb, the audience spellbound. He later recalled:

You could hear a pin drop, no one coughed, the spectators looked like they were eating a feast; everyone was so enchanted, you could hear only astonished voices. I was sitting in the last row in the auditorium watching these girls perform something that even adults could not match, watching in admiration—something that I will never forget. I believe it was the end of the act of “Kuruma Biki” when [the theatre’s executive director] Kaneko Seiji came over to my side, brimming with excitement, “Who would have expected this? They’re great. Look at this reaction. We can take them,” he said, confirming my thoughts.²³

Haruyoshi quickly admitted his error: “The result was proof that Kakutarô had a brilliant eye for discerning his audience’s taste; while, I, in a gentlemanly way, acknowledged

²¹ Ichikawa Masujûrô, “Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki Kôenkai: Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki Are Kore” [Symposium on the Ichikawa Girls’ Kabuki: Pondering Ichikawa Girls’ Kabuki] (lecture, Sakuragaoka Museum, Toyokawa, Japan, 7 May 1995). Transcript courtesy Sakuragaoka Museum, 3.

²² Ichikawa Masujûrô, *Kabuki Jinsei*, 142.

²³ Ono, *Ono Haruyoshi Jidenshō*, 154.

defeat.”²⁴ Thus, it was decided that the girls would become the Hamamatsu-za’s resident troupe.

Dankichi’s reaction was a mixture of shock and elation. In his autobiography, he recalled that President Ono had called him into his office after the performance and inquired about the troupe’s future plans. He, in turn, discussed his main goals: to arrange for the troupe to perform in major cities, to have the girls take the stage name “Ichikawa,” and to direct the girls until they reached “marriageable age.”²⁵ Kaneko, who was present at the meeting, told him that his plans would require financial support, which the Hamamatsu-za would help to provide. The troupe, Kaneko said, was brilliant, full of talent and promise. And with that, Haruyoshi said, “Okay, you’ll belong to the Hamamatsu-za.” In his customary hyperbole, Dankichi recalled, “To my ears, this was like a boat to save a drowning man. I had no money. All I could do was bow my head at the end of the table.”²⁶ Haruyoshi, who remembered the story slightly differently, recalled asking Kakutarô to break the good news, noting that Dankichi was so overjoyed that he grabbed Kakutarô’s hand and shouted, “Thank you. Truly thank you. This is thanks to you. There is nothing more to say. I leave everything up to you.”²⁷ Any fear that the girls’ troupe was forever doomed to a life of backwater touring evaporated, and as far as Ono Haruyoshi was concerned, the prepubescent country-hick amateurs were about to

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ichikawa Masujûrô, *Kabuki Jinsei*, 144.

²⁶ Ichikawa Masujûrô, “Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki Kôenkai,” 3; Ichikawa Masujûrô, *Kabuki Jinsei*, 144-145.

²⁷ Ono, *Ono Haruyoshi Jidenshô*, 155.

go pro.²⁸ The parties would sign a contract to that effect in the months following this initial interaction. Thus, the early history of Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki became inextricably connected to the Hamamatsu-za, which, as we shall see, survived as a theatre only as long as the troupe remained under its sponsorship.

In those weeks following this performance, Dankichi must have sensed the transformation of his entire world. He knew that the troupe would be able to accomplish his ambitious goals only if it had a patron, but a sponsor in the form of a major theatre was more than he had ever expected. He had all but abandoned the idea of becoming a first-class *kabuki* actor, but he was still eager to live his dream vicariously through his girls. As someone who had spent the bulk of his professional career on the small theatre circuit, he was particularly sensitive to the acute difference in status between the “drop-curtain” actors who had to make their living touring on the rural circuit and grand *kabuki* actors who could appear on the so-called cypress stages (*hinoki butai*), a code word for the premiere theatres of the big cities. He had bigger hopes for his girls; he envisioned them performing on Japan's major stages: Kabuki-za (Tokyo), Minami-za (Kyoto), and Misono-za (Nagoya). For this to happen, he knew that the troupe needed not only financial capital—that would come, at least initially, from Hamamatsu-za—but *social* capital, that is, someone or something that, by way of prestige and connectedness, would help the troupe overcome two potential disadvantages: their lack of direct *kabuki* lineage and their female sex.²⁹ The proper dosage of social capital would give the troupe the

²⁸ Ichikawa Masujûrô, *Kabuki Jinsei*, 145.

²⁹ Pierre Bourdieu defines social capital as “the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition—or in other words, to membership in a group—which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectivity-owned capital, a ‘credential,’ which entitles

necessary gravitas to perform *kabuki* on a major city stage. For that reason, the idea of Dankichi, or even Ebijûrô, passing on the name “Ichikawa” to the girls, in the same manner as Daiji had received his different stage names (Kokaku, Dankichi II), would not do. Indeed, Dankichi was seasoned enough to grasp that in the closed, hereditary world of grand *kabuki*, a name, particularly a name that had been transmitted by a top actor from a top acting family, would give the troupe intangible validity in the eyes of fellow performers and audiences. Social capital in the form of the Ichikawa name, officially mandated by the leader of the Ichikawa family line, would be precisely what would marshal the troupe into the limelight. Thus, without waiting for the news to settle, Dankichi returned to Toyokawa, and, together with his old mentor Ebijûrô, drafted a letter to Ichikawa Sanshō V, headmaster of the Ichikawa acting family, asking permission for the troupe to use its name.

The Naritaya Connection

Danjûrô IX, as discussed earlier, had died without an heir; though his daughters had performed on stage, they failed to become full-fledged performers, and though Danjûrô had trained several actors, none of them were deemed worthy of succeeding him. The emergence of Kamiyagi Fukusaburô (1882-1956) as the heir to Danjûrô IX’s legacy

them to credit, in the various senses of the word.” He further sees such social capital as a “product of investment strategies, individual or collective, consciously or unconsciously aimed at establishing or reproducing social relationships that are directly usable in the short or long term.” Though social capital is related to, and frequently derived from, economic capital, it cannot be reduced to an economic form. Furthermore, the acquisition of social capital can be potentially helpful in acquiring economic and cultural capital, which, incidentally, is acquired more through taste, pedigree, and scholastic investment. Pierre Bourdieu, “The Forms of Capital,” trans. Richard Nice, http://www.viet-studies.org/Bourdieu_capital.html (accessed 23 March 2005), 248-249. Originally published as “*Ökonomisches Kapital, Kulturelles Kapital, Soziales Kapital*,” in *Soziale Ungleichheiten* [*Soziale Welt, Sonderheft 2*], ed. Reinhard Kreckel (Goettingen: Otto Schartz & Co., 1983), 183-98.

was never even considered a possibility (see figure 9). Fukusaburô, after all, had come from a prosperous merchant family, and, as a career banker, he had never voiced any aspirations of becoming an actor, let alone a future headmaster of the Ichikawa acting family, when he married Danjûrô IX's oldest daughter, Ichikawa Suisen II (née Horikoshi Jitsuko), and took her family name, Horikoshi, in 1901.³⁰ But some seven years after Danjûrô IX's death, in 1910, at twenty-eight, an age considered a ridiculously late start for a *kabuki* actor, he decided to give the stage a try and to assume the role of the head of the Ichikawa family. Looking back after his death, his niece, Suisen III, would write: "It was not a matter of wanting to or not wanting to [become the headmaster]. [My uncle] took the position that he had to protect the important position of the Ichikawa family leader."³¹ He considered it his duty to continue the artistic work that his father-in-law had started.

At the time, the Osaka star Nakamura Ganjirô I agreed to cast him in a minor role on tour, and later that year at the Naka-za in Osaka, he officially made his stage debut, using his married name, Horikoshi Fukusaburô. In 1919 he starred in one of the great Naritaya *aragoto* plays, *Ya no Ne*,³² and took the stage name Ichikawa Sanshô V.³³

³⁰ It was common for a man to take his wife's family name when her family did not have a male heir.

³¹ Ichikawa Suisen III, *Kudai-me Danjûrô to Watashi* [Danjûrô IX and Me] (Tokyo: Rikugei Shobo, 1966), 13.

³² See Laurence R. Kominz's translation in *Avatars of Vengeance: Japanese Drama and the Soga Literary Tradition* (Ann Arbor: Center for Japanese Studies, 1995), 201-217.

³³ Hattori Yukio, *Ichikawa Danjûrô Dai Dai* [Generations of the Ichikawa Danjûrô Line] (Tokyo: Kodansha 2002), 129-130. The name had never been used by the headmaster of the Naritaya house, but nevertheless it was still an important one, as it virtually spelled out the Ichikawa acting crest: three *masu*. According to Kodama Ryuichi, the name Sanshô had been pronounced Sanjô by previous holders of this name. Lecture, May 2004, Tokyo, Asahi Cultural Center.

Despite his determination, however, Sanshō never earned a particularly good reputation as an actor; his impersonations were considered weak and shallow—to be perfectly candid, he was called a “*daikon*,” or white radish, the Japanese equivalent to a “ham” actor. One account even notes that spectators screamed “*ginkōin*” (banker!) when he appeared on stage.³⁴ Indeed, if he had had no name backing, he would have been laughed out of the theatre; if he had had talent but no name and had attempted to find work on the *kabuki* stage, chances are he never would have passed the phase of carrying other people’s tea and slippers. But because of his family backing, he was able not only to play leading roles, but to assume the enviable position of headmaster of the Naritaya house.

In addition to managing the organizational duties incumbent on any important *kabuki* actor-family leader, he set to work on several major scholarly undertakings: a biography of Danjūrō IX, notes of flagship productions of Danjūrō IX, such as *Kagamijishi*, and the theatrical exercise of reviving the Ichikawa line’s “*kabuki jūhachiban*,” the eighteen favorite plays that had been codified by Danjuro VII.³⁵ Many of these works had fallen out of the repertory entirely, and after the Great Kantō Earthquake of 1923, many of the scripts, costumes, and props had been destroyed. Together with his wife, Suisen II, Sanshō had spent many years attempting not only to resurrect the scripts and business, but to produce these long-forgotten plays and scenes.

³⁴ Seki Yōko, *Ebizō soshite Danjūrō* [Ebizō and then Danjūrō] (Tokyo: Bungei Shunjū, 2004), 24.

³⁵ These revivals were *Gedatsu* (1932), *Fuwa* (1933), *Zōhiki* (1933), *Oshimodoshi* (1933), *Uwanari* (1933), *Nanatsumen* (1933), and *Jayanagi* (1933). Hattori believes that Sanshō’s revivals influenced other actors to undertake similar projects in the late twentieth century. Hattori, *Ichikawa Danjūrō*, 129-132. It should be noted, however, that most of the works listed here are rarely performed today.

During his lifetime he revived and starred in seven of the *jûhachiban*.³⁶ His poor acting notwithstanding, Sanshō was a “Renaissance Man”: learned in the Japanese classics, an adept poet, a skilled painter, and, according to one source, a student of the English language.³⁷ Thanks to his life-long devotion to restoring the memory of his father-in-law, Danjūrō IX, he was granted the stage name Ichikawa Danjūrō X after his death in 1956, the first and only Danjūrō to receive that name posthumously.³⁸

Given the skeptical reaction of Dankichi and Haruyoshi upon hearing about the girls, it would have been reasonable to expect that Sanshō would refuse to permit the girls to use the Ichikawa name. But, on the contrary, Sanshō wrote back shortly that “If Ebijūrō believed that the troupe was worthy of the Ichikawa name, it would be fine for the troupe to use it.”³⁹ In his letter, he expressed his hope that the girls would not do anything to soil the family name, and at some future point, he hoped to see them perform. Furthermore, he alluded to the possibility that one day the girls might even be worthy of receiving individual stage names.⁴⁰ Sanshō’s readiness to accede to Dankichi’s request suggests how much individual power he wielded. Yet, it also raises questions about such seemingly hallowed traditions of taking a revered stage name. Apparently, receiving such

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ichikawa Ebimaru said that she had once overheard Sanshō speaking English to foreign visitors in Tokyo, but it is unclear how fluent he actually was. Ichikawa Ebimaru, interview by author, 16, 28 April 2004, Toyokawa, Japan.

³⁸ The name had been in abeyance for fifty-three years.

³⁹ Ichikawa Ebimaru, interview. See also Ichikawa, *Kabuki Jinsei*, 146, Kurokawa Mitsuhiro, “Sōke ga Ichikawa no Na o Menkyō” [The Headmaster Grants the Ichikawa Name], “Maboroshi no Ichikawa Shōjo Kabuki” [Phantom Ichikawa Girls’ Kabuki], *Chūnichi Shinbun*, no. 11, 30 January 1984.

⁴⁰ Ichikawa, *Kabuki Jinsei*, 146.

a prized name from a genuine artistic family was not a major obstacle for an ambitious performer, who could prove his or talent. However, as we shall see, Sanshō would have reservations about giving troupe members individual stage names.

Though the Sakuragaoka Museum documents indicate that the troupe at this point changed its name to the Ichikawa Shōjo Kabuki Gekidan (Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki Troupe), it, in actuality, appears that Sanshō did not grant this name until the following year. At this time, the troupe appears to have called itself after its lead actor, becoming the "Ichikawa Hiroe Ichi-za" (The Ichikawa Hiroe Troupe).⁴¹ Ichikawa Ebimaru (née Ikeda Masuyo, b. 1941), who would join the troupe two years later, remembered attending a special performance to commemorate this new name at the Shōwa-za in Ushikubo, Toyokawa, in the spring or fall of 1951.⁴² Sanshō, however, she recalled, was not present for this performance.

Meanwhile, a contract was negotiated that formally brought the troupe under the aegis of the Hamamatsu-za. The date the contract was signed is unclear; though Dankichi and Haruyoshi discuss the troupe's relationship with the Hamamatsu-za at length in their respective autobiographies, neither specifies the date on which the formal contract was signed, and there is no extant copy.⁴³ Problems of dates aside, Haruyoshi wrote that the

⁴¹ See Ichikawa Misuji, "Shōjo Kara Onna e no Nayami," 232; Ōki, "Shishunki ni Tasshita," 82; Tsuchiya Chikashi, "Shōjo Kabuki no Jūnen" [Girls' *Kabuki's* Ten Years], in "Kabuki Haiyū Hyakka" [Directory of *Kabuki* Actors], special issue, *Engekikai* (December 1959): 172-173. As discussed earlier, it is possible that, depending on the program, the troupe would have also called itself the "Ichikawa Ikuyo Troupe."

⁴² No written documentation of this performance exists, but Ichikawa Ebimaru said that she was in the audience and remembers this special production in honor of the troupe's new name. Ichikawa Ebimaru, interview.

⁴³ There are differing accounts as to when precisely the contract was signed. The most convincing account is Ichikawa Misuji's, who stated that the troupe was acquired by the Hamamatsu-za after it performed an "unexpectedly successful" full-length version of *Kanadehon*

contract was a “gentleman’s agreement,” a euphemism for an ambiguously worded contract. It was decided that Dankichi would be paid as an employee of the Hamamatsu-za, but matters of the girls’ salaries and how they were to be treated were left unstated.⁴⁴ Two items, however, were treated rather seriously.

The first was the matter of the girls’ formal education. The national law stipulated that all children were required to complete elementary and three years of junior high school. How would members be able to complete their mandatory schooling and perform on tour if they would miss school on a regular basis? This was the subject of many discussions among parents, teachers, and administrators. Ultimately, it was agreed, in principle, that the troupe would perform during school vacations, but it also was

Chûshingura (Ichikawa Misuji, “Shôjo Kara Onna e no Nayami” [Concerns (about going) from a Girl to a Woman], *Fujin Gahô* [Ladies Illustrated] (September 1958): 233-234). She does not specify the date, but according to Kurokawa, this production took place in December 1951 (Kurokawa, “Sôke ga Ichikawa no Na o Menkyo,” 30 January 1984). A second scenario, however, is suggested by the Sakuragaoka Museum exhibition, which notes that the contract was signed after the 1951 sixty-day summer production. Yet, this is problematic, since it appears that the production discussed occurred during the summer of 1952, not 1951. A third scenario is that the contract was signed before December 1951, given that Kurokawa reported that the Hamamatsu-za management was active in trying to convince Sanshō to attend the December 1951 production, something it might have done only if the troupe was already under contract. The fourth scenario is that the contract was not signed until after the summer of 1952, since Haruyoshi wrote that Dankichi signed the contract using the name Masujûrô, the name he would receive from Sanshō on 27 July 1952. However, before concluding that the troupe did not sign a contract with the Hamamatsu-za until after July 1952, the possibility must be considered that Haruyoshi, writing in 1978, a quarter of a century after the contract negotiations had taken place, was merely substituting Masujûrô’s then-current stage name for his past one.

⁴⁴ It is possible that Furukawa also became a paid employee of the theatre, since he told Kurokawa in 1984 that he received a monthly salary from the Hamamatsu-za. He is quoted as saying, “The best thing about moving to the Hamamatsu-za was that we received a monthly salary. My head hurt from doing all the calculations [while the troupe was independent]. I went down this path because I love the *shamisen* [not math]. It was to the extent that I neglected my own family in Toyokawa” (Kurokawa, “Sôke ga Ichikawa no Na o Menkyo,” 30 January 1984). Neither Ono Haruyoshi nor Dankichi, however, discussed Furukawa’s salary in their respective works, so I am unable to confirm this.

stipulated that if the girls were absent from school for more than one week, the troupe would hire a teacher, who would offer group lessons and individual tutorial sessions.⁴⁵

The second item stipulated: “In addition to performing at Hamamatsu-za, the Ichikawa Girls’ Kabuki Troupe will *definitely* perform in Tokyo as well as on all the major cities’ best stages during the period of this contract.”⁴⁶ For President Ono, this proviso was bizarre, if not downright frightening. As he wrote in his autobiography, “I believe this contract contained some rare contents. If you looked all over Japan and through the world, I doubt you’d be able to find one like it.”⁴⁷ It was one thing for the troupe to *wish* to perform in Tokyo, Kyoto, and Osaka, but it was another matter entirely to have this spelled out in the contract. But Dankichi had insisted on it. “Please, president, give us a helping hand here,” Haruyoshi recalled him pleading. “Please make these country girls the best in Japan. Please help us.”⁴⁸ Ono remembers Dankichi clapping his hands in supplication, as if he were praying at the Inari Shrine in Toyokawa. In the end, Haruyoshi caved in; at best, he thought it would be fitting to show up Tokyo cultural snobs who assumed that a provincial troupe would not be able to perform *kabuki*.

Dankichi, however, was not relying on Ono Haruyoshi alone to make his dream a reality; he wanted the blessing of the headmaster of the Naritaya house, Sanshō V. In his mind, the girls needed to have not only the stage name Ichikawa as a last name, but first-name stage names as well. Up until this point, all members continued to appear in plays

⁴⁵ Ono, *Ono Haruyoshi Jidenshō*, 156.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 157.

under their private first names, which Dankichi probably believed was inappropriate for rising stars, who needed a first and last name *geimei*. He thus ventured to ask Sanshō if he would bestow individual stage names upon each member of the troupe. Such an important request could not be conveyed by letter, so Dankichi, together with the Hamamatsu-za executive director Kaneko Seiji, and troupe member representative Ishiguro Hiroe traveled to Tokyo to speak to Sanshō directly.⁴⁹

According to Kurokawa's account, based on an interview with Kaneko, the meeting lasted six hours and did not produce the desired effect.⁵⁰ Despite his warm response to Ebijūrō's initial request for permission to use the Ichikawa name, Sanshō was skeptical about the troupe's ability to perform *kabuki* plays. "Children perform *kabuki*? I don't think so," Dankichi later recounted him saying. "You mean that they perform the dances, right? They're not able to do *kabuki*."⁵¹ Given the ease with which Sanshō had agreed for the girls to use the Ichikawa name, it appears that he had misunderstood from Dankichi's previous correspondence that the girls performed *nihon buyō* dance and that they were interested in becoming part of the Ichikawa Dance School, not part of the more exclusive, male acting house.

Looking back, the Hamamatsu-za representatives felt slighted by the grand *kabuki* performer at the Tokyo meeting. "He did not treat us as equals," Kaneko recalled.⁵² Sanshō was not convinced that the girls were really performing *kabuki* plays, and he had

⁴⁹ Kurokawa, "Sōke ga Ichikawa no Na o Menkyo," 30 January 1984. It should be pointed out that Ishiguro Hiroe said she had no recollection of this meeting. Ichikawa Misuji, interview.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ichikawa Masujūrō, "Ichikawa Shōjo Kabuki Kōenkai," 3.

⁵² Kurokawa, "Sōke ga Ichikawa no Na o Menkyo," 30 January 1984.

somehow got it into his head that Kaneko's girlfriend was in the troupe, and that he was trying to do her a favor.⁵³ But the threesome must have left some impression, because, shortly thereafter, Sanshō sent Hori Kurakichi, famed *kabuki* actor Matsumoto Kōshirō VII's clerk, to appraise the situation. "Master, you'll be surprised," he told Sanshō upon his return to Tokyo. "They're not doing kids' stuff."⁵⁴ His recommendation persuaded Sanshō to travel to Hamamatsu City to see the girls perform a full-length version of *Kanadehon Chūshingura* in December 1951.⁵⁵

Once again, not hearing about the girls but seeing them perform did the trick. Just as Dankichi and Haruyoshi had radically changed their thinking about the girls, Sanshō was persuaded that they should be accepted into the Naritaya house. According to Kaneko, Sanshō's eyes never left the stage, and when it was over, he is reported as saying, "I am in a state of shock."⁵⁶ Haruyoshi remembered Sanshō telling him:

I'm surprised. Or rather, I should say I'm deeply ashamed of myself. These girls are so much better than the young people today at Kabuki-za in Tokyo. That they can do this alone is so impressive. They are truly this era's miracle.⁵⁷

Nowhere does Haruyoshi state why Sanshō was ashamed, but it is likely that he felt badly that he had been so dismissive of Dankichi in Tokyo. Now that he had actually seen the troupe perform, he felt comfortable permitting the girls to use the Ichikawa name and

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ichikawa Masujūrō, "Ichikawa Shōjo Kabuki Kōenkai," 3.

⁵⁵ Kurokawa, "Sōke ga Ichikawa no Na o Menkyo," 30 January 1984.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ono, *Ono Haruyoshi Jidenshō*, 158.

giving select members first-name *geimei*. It is also remarkable that he compared the girls to their male counterparts at the Kabuki-za. He expressed his feelings more clearly to a Hamamatsu journalist during the summer of 1952:

When I was first asked to teach them, I didn't think they would amount to much; half fearful of what I'd actually find, I went to watch one of their performances, but [there I discovered] that they didn't look like girls (*shôjo*); they were totally sound. On top of that, everyone was so enthusiastic, so pure, harmonious, and committed to getting along. So I was happy to consent to include them in my house [to give them my family name].⁵⁸

As we shall see, critics over the next decade would echo Sanshō's impressions of the troupe's acting, never failing to give their stamp of approval for the troupe's "pure" and "harmonious" manner. Indeed, these latter qualities, seemingly distinct from acting skills, would help to bolster the troupe's reputation and to set it apart from the sexually suspect performances of past female troupes.

The 1952 Long Run at the Hamamatsu-za⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Quoted in Uchiyama, "Hamamatsu to Jûdaime Danjûrô," 16. Uchiyama wrote for the *Hamamatsu Minpô* [The Hamamatsu Citizen News] in the early 1950s and interviewed Sanshō when he came to the Hamamatsu-za in July 1952.

⁵⁹ As noted briefly earlier, at least two sources (see Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki Exhibition brochure, Sakuragaoka Museum 1995; Kurokawa, "Ôatari," 28 January 1984) claim that the sixty-day production took place in 1951, but, after interviewing members of the troupe, I believe this is an error. To make matters more confusing, Dankichi wrote that the 1952 production lasted forty days (Ichikawa, *Kabuki Jinsei*, 151). Evidence that contradicts this account is found in Saitô's scroll, which contains the dates of the 1952 production along with the actual pieces performed every five days, and is arguably a better record than the autobiography penned some thirty years after the production in question. It is more likely that Dankichi mistakenly conflated the production of 1951 with the sixty-day long run of 1952. Indeed, Ichikawa Baika and other troupe members remember that there was only one long summer run, and it occurred during the summer of 1952 (Ichikawa Baika, "Honkaku Gekijô de Ronguran" [A Long Run in a Real Theatre], "Matsuba-Botan no Ki" [Journal of Small Peonies], *Mainichi Shinbun*, no. 2, 18 January 1993; Ichikawa Baika, interview by author, 4 March 2004, Toyokawa, Japan). The likely scenario is that the troupe performed at the

The collective support of Ichikawa Sanshō and the Hamamatsu-za coalesced during the summer of 1952 when the troupe performed at the theatre for a sixty-day production, from 22 July to 20 September, an unheard of feat in the modern *kabuki* world.⁶⁰ This time Sanshō booked a room at the Takasago Inn next to the theatre and stayed for ten days, during which time he reviewed the troupe's repertory, offered guidance, and, most extraordinarily, appeared on stage with them, making an official announcement (*kōjō*) that the troupe was a sanctioned component of the Naritaya house, a move that the magazine *Shūkan Sankei* pointed out was “wholly unprecedented.”⁶¹ It was on this occasion that the troupe formally took the name “Ichikawa Shōjo Kabuki Gekidan” (The Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki Troupe), the name it would use for the next eight years, and it was on this visit that Sanshō gave the so-called “top” four members of the troupe individual stage names.⁶²

Before looking in detail at Sanshō's relationship with the troupe, mention must be made of the extraordinary nature of this production. The names of the thirteen performers as well as a list of all the plays performed are known, thanks to Saitō Sadaichirō's

Hamamatsu-za during the summer of 1951, after the three-day “Kabuki Classroom” production, but on a much smaller scale than the sixty-day 1952 summer run. The 1952 summer production would take on a legendary status, with *Makuai*, a well-known *kabuki* periodical, misreporting that the production lasted “one hundred days.” Kimura Kikutarō, “Seijun na Ichikawa Shōjo Kabuki” [The Pure Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki], *Makuai* (February 1953): 52.

⁶⁰ Professional male *kabuki* productions generally ran for twenty-five days each month.

⁶¹ Watanabe Saburō, “Shōjo Bakari no Kabuki” [The All-girls' Kabuki], *Shūkan Sankei* [Industrial and Commerce Weekly], 22 February 1953, 56-57. Local press coverage included: “Koten no Fukyū: Ichikawa Shōjo Kabuki ni tsuite” [The Popularization of the Classics: About Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki], *Hamamatsu Minpō*, 24 July 1952; “Sanshō-shi Hamamatsu e” [Master Sanshō Comes to Hamamatsu], *Shizuoka Shinbun*, 27 July 1952.

⁶² Ichikawa Misuji, “Shōjo Kara Onna e no Nayami,” 233.

scroll.⁶³ Oral testimony bears out Saitô's record that the troupe performed for sixty days straight without any holiday; even more astonishingly, the repertory changed every five days, without any repeated pieces, so that, in total, forty-six (forty-seven including Sanshō's *kōjō* announcement) pieces were performed over the sixty days (see appendix III).⁶⁴

The majority of the pieces—an astonishing thirty-seven—were abridged *kabuki* plays that had been adapted from the puppet theatre (*bunraku*) repertory. These pieces are generally referred to as *maruhon-mono* (round books) due to the circular cursive style of the puppet chanter's scripts, but are also called *denden-mono*, an onomatopoeic term that mimics the sound of the plectrum striking the *shamisen*. The prevalence of *denden-mono* in the troupe's repertory reflects its geographic background, as well as the fact that it was still in the early stages of development. Closely situated to Kyoto and Osaka, Toyokawa residents were more inclined to identify with the plays of the puppet theatre. These were the plays that had been most frequently performed by farmers and amateurs along the rural small theatre circuit, and, not surprisingly, they were the pieces with which Masujūrō was most familiar. Yet, there was also a strong pedagogical reason for padding the program with puppet adaptations. Conventional wisdom has it that mastery of the puppets' movements (*kata*) is the best training for young performers.⁶⁵ Members of the

⁶³ There might have been more than thirteen performers, as a photograph of the troupe at the time includes three girls whose names were not listed on the scroll: Tanaka Keiko (Himeshō), Suzuki Sachiko (Suzume), and Matsuko (last name unknown).

⁶⁴ See Saitō, "Hamamatsu Jōen Kabuki"; Ichikawa, "Honkaku Gekijō," 18 January 1993; Kurokawa, "Ôatari," 28 January 1984; Toshikura Yoshikazu, "Hamamatsu no Shōjo Kabuki," 34.

⁶⁵ Ichikawa Baika, "Bunraku de Haragei Oshierare" [Being Taught Gut Acting from Bunraku], "Matsuba-Botan no Ki" [Journal of Small Peonies], *Mainichi Shinbun*, no. 8, 1 March 1993.

troupe even trained with the acclaimed *ningyô jôruri* puppeteer masters Yoshida Bungorô (1869-1962) and Kiritake Monjûrô II (1900-1970).⁶⁶ Grounding in *bunraku* was essential, as the same forms can be applied to dozens of plays. Even though the plot and dialogue change from play to play, the exterior movements remain more or less the same, enabling actors in rotating repertory to remember their parts, especially when they are playing the same stock character over and over.⁶⁷ Furthermore, the *jôruri* narrator, a staple in this category, aids the *kabuki* performer by chanting many of the actors' lines, which would have been terribly helpful to the girls during the sixty-day rotating production. The narrator could always cover for a girl who suddenly needed prompting—a situation that occurred not infrequently.⁶⁸

Furthermore, most of the plays performed were highlights (*midori*), the abridged famous sequences, from the most popular plays. Barbara E. Thornbury has noted that this approach is “more commercially appealing” to audiences, as opposed to presenting the full play (*toshi kyôgen*), a trend that would resume with the establishment of Japan's Kokuritsu Gekijô (National Theatre) in 1966.⁶⁹ In male mainstream *kabuki*, however, the ideal format was (and still is) to present a mixture of different kinds of *kabuki* on every bill, ideally from each of *kabuki*'s subgenres: pure *kabuki* (*jun kabuki*), plays from the

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ See the entry for “*kata*,” in Samuel L. Leiter, *New Kabuki Encyclopedia: A Revised Adaptation of Kabuki Jiten* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1997), 289.

⁶⁸ Ichikawa Sanpuku, interview by author, 5 April 2004, Toyohashi, Japan.

⁶⁹ Barbara E. Thornbury, “Restoring an Imagined Past: The Kokuritsu Gekijô and the Question of Authenticity in *Kabuki*,” *Asian Theatre Journal* 19:1 (Spring 2002): 173. The Kokuritsu Gekijô in recent years has changed policy to offer *midori*-style programming, for several reasons, namely it has “the advantage of being less expensive, less time-intensive, and less risky in terms of drawing audiences than *toshi kyôgen*.” Ibid.

puppet theatre (*ningyô jôruri*), dance plays (*shosagoto*), plays appropriated from the *nô* and *kyôgen* repertory (*matsubame*), and new *kabuki* plays (*shin kabuki*). At this stage, however, the troupe's program failed to achieve such balance. There were a handful of exceptions—so-called “pure *kabuki*” plays like the “Inasegawa” scene of *Shiranami Gonin Otoko*, “Taki no Ba,” from *Hakone Reigenki*, and “Suzugamori,” for example—but even these plays are heavily reliant on the actors' mastery of stylized movement. Arguably, the only play that did not emphasize dance was the *shin kabuki* play, *Tsuchiya Chikara*, which, not surprisingly, was one of the more difficult works for the girls.⁷⁰ In time, the troupe would respond to criticism regarding its unbalanced repertory by adding more pure *kabuki* domestic dramas, new *kabuki* plays, and dropping the lesser known ones like *Uguisuzuka* and “Soga Nakamura,” which hinted at their rural small theatre roots. But the bulk of the company's repertory remained the plays that had been adapted from the puppet theatre.

The sixty-day production was a hot ticket, perhaps, in part, because, at 50 yen, it was considerably cheaper than regular theater tickets to see *kabuki*.⁷¹ In his autobiography, Dankichi recalled that seventy percent of tickets had been sold in advance for the entire run and that every day people waited in a long line for the day's tickets to be released.⁷² Each performer's family, however, was provided with six tickets that were good anytime throughout the summer, so parents, relatives, and friends of the family

⁷⁰ Ichikawa Baika, interview.

⁷¹ Saitô, “Hamamatsu Jôen Kabuki.”

⁷² Ichikawa Masujûrô, *Kabuki Jinsei*, 146.

could return to see the girls perform in different plays.⁷³ In turn, families were expected to volunteer backstage. This work was almost always taken up by the girls' mothers. They were led by Hiroe and Ikuyo's mother, who, after years as the proprietress at Yuki-san, was experienced overseeing multiple tasks completed in a short time.

Despite the parental chaperoning, the girls had some autonomy. They were paired off in twos and threes in shared bedrooms adjacent to the dressing room. "It's better than home," Dankichi remembered them declaring.⁷⁴ Still, Sachiko recalled that the theatre was not air conditioned, that she was expected to arrive each morning by 6 a.m., and, as the production progressed, rehearsals became even stricter and more intense.⁷⁵

The pressure to succeed was heightened, no doubt, by Sanshō's presence and by the responsibility incumbent on receiving the Ichikawa name. As we have seen, Sanshō was content for the troupe as a whole to use the name Ichikawa, but he was much pickier about who would receive individual stage names. At this juncture, he decided to give bona fide first-name *geimei* only to four members of the troupe, as well as a new one to Dankichi. He did not give Sumihachi a new stage name, as he apparently felt that the name Sumihachi was appropriate.⁷⁶ Sanshō's new name for Dankichi, his third and final one, was Masujûrô, a name that appears to be original. As for the performers, Ishiguro Hiroe, Ishiguro Ikuyo, Hikosaka Sachiko, and Kobayashi Yoshiko became Misuji, Masuyo, Baika, and Fukushô, respectively. These were the members who had been in

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Kurokawa, "Ôatari," 28 January 1984.

⁷⁶ Ichikawa Emiko, interview by author, 2 June 2004, Toyohashi, Japan.

the troupe since its inception. As Baika would explain rather modestly years later, it was not a matter of the foursome being superior actors; what mattered was their seniority and the fact that Sanshō had seen them perform the leading roles. That, at least, is how troupe members would explain away any potential jealousy some fifty years later when interviewed.⁷⁷ Still, giving only four members *geimei* drove a wedge between the top performers and the rest of the troupe, a tension that will be explored in more depth in chapter 5. That money was paid for the names by the Hamamatsu-za is almost certain, given that in later correspondence Sanshō would remark on having received payment for names he bestowed on performers several years later from Kaneko of the Hamamatsu-za.⁷⁸ The precise amount of money exchanged for the names, however, is unknown. The fact that it received no attention in the press is undoubtedly because these requisite monetary gifts are such an ingrained part of the *iemoto* world of Japanese performing arts that to comment on them would be to point out the obvious.

A private naming ceremony took place at the Takasago Inn on 27 July 1952. Photographs from the day show all the girls wearing the same neatly pressed, short-sleeve, button-down, white shirt and knee-length skirt, while Sanshō, Masujūrō, Sumihachi, and Furukawa wore kimonos. Horii Kurakichi, who had convinced Sanshō to see the girls, acted as the Shintō priest-master-of-ceremonies, offering blessings and congratulatory remarks, after which Sanshō handed each girl a certificate with her new Ichikawa name printed on it. But as solemn as the occasion was made out to be, the girls could not keep

⁷⁷ Ichikawa Baika, interview.

⁷⁸ Ichikawa Sanshō V to Ichikawa Masujūrō, 9 April 1955, no. 13, Ichikawa Shōjo Kabuki collection. Sakuragaoka Museum, Toyokawa, Japan. As Bourdieu points out, economic capital can be useful in helping to acquire social (or cultural) capital.

from laughing. “We were at the age that when a chopstick dropped, we would burst into laughter. We couldn’t stop—it was awful,” Kawakami Masako recalled.⁷⁹ Indeed, Masujûrô remembered, “The toughest thing I had to do that day was try to stop the girls from giggling.”⁸⁰ Therein lay the unbridgeable gulf between the obsequious Masujûrô, who had spent his adulthood seeking recognition from the mainstream *kabuki* world, and the girls, who, at this time, still had yet to understand the privilege of the Ichikawa name.⁸¹

Like all Japanese names written in Chinese characters (*kanji*), the stage names imparted meaning. Direct disciples often receive the past stage names of their master. This is especially the case when the eldest son succeeds his father. Thus, for example, the name Ebizô has been often passed onto the actor in line for the future Danjûrô name.⁸² More prevalent, however, is the phenomenon by which a disciple’s name will feature at least one of the characters of the master’s name. For example, *Kikunosuke* 菊之助 is immediately understood by Japanese readers to be a disciple of *Kikugôrô* 菊五郎; *Tatsumi* 辰巳, a disciple of *Tatsunosuke* 辰之助, and *Shibajaku* 芝雀, a disciple of *Jakueemon* 雀衛門, since both names include an identical character. Shared characters impart a bond between master and disciple.

⁷⁹ Kurokawa, “Sôke ga Ichikawa no Na o Menkyo,” 30 January 1984.

⁸⁰ Ichikawa Masujûrô, “Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki Kôenkai,” 3.

⁸¹ See Kurokawa, “Sôke ga Ichikawa no Na o Menkyo,” 30 January 1984.

⁸² This has been the case with Danjûrô I, Danjûrô VI, Danjûrô VIII, Danjûrô XI, and Danjûrô XII. Danjûrô III, Danjûrô IV, and Danjuro VII took the name Danjûrô *before* taking the name Ebizô, and Danjûrô II, Danjûrô V, Danjûrô IX, and Danjûrô X never held the name Ebizô (See Kabuki-za program, May 2004). It is expected that the current Ebizô (XI) will succeed to the name Danjûrô XIII.

Sanshō followed this convention in deciding which names to impart to the chosen troupe members, taking, according to *Engekikai*, two full days to think of the stage names.⁸³ With the exception of the name “Masuyo,” none of these stage names had ever been used by previous *kabuki* actors, but all of them served to reinforce the links among Ichikawa Sanshō, the Ichikawa Danjūrō family, and the individual actors.⁸⁴ For the names Masujūrō 升十郎, Fukushō 福升, and Masuyo 升代, Sanshō 三升 used the character 升, which can be pronounced either as *shō* (the Chinese reading) or *masu* (the Japanese reading).⁸⁵ Masujūrō’s name, for example, is comprised of the characters 升 (*masu*) and the two characters for *jūrō* 十郎, which are the same characters used for the *jūrō* of Ebijūrō 海老十郎 and Danjūrō 團十郎. Years later, Masujūrō wrote that he would treasure this stage name, since it honored his relationship with these two masters.⁸⁶ Likewise, Masuyo’s 升代 name also used the *masu* character. The name Fukushō 福升 was comprised of the *fuku* 福 character from Fukusaburō (Sanshō’s private name), and the 升(*shō*) character of Sanshō 三升.⁸⁷

⁸³ Noguchi Tatsuji, “Ichikawa Shōjo Kabuki no Ayumi” [Development of Ichikawa Girls’ Kabuki], in “Gendai no Kabuki Haiyū” [Contemporary *Kabuki* Actors], special issue, *Engekikai* (December 1955): 135.

⁸⁴ The name Ichikawa Masuyo had been previously held by Ono Konosuke (1864-1906), a disciple of Ichikawa Danjūrō IX. Nojima Jusaburō, *Kabuki Jinmei Jiten* [Biographical Dictionary of *Kabuki*], rev. ed. (Tokyo: Nichigai, 2002), 113.

⁸⁵ These new stage names will be used henceforth for all of the performers, thus, for example, the former Daiji, Kokaku, and Dankichi will be referred to as Masujūrō.

⁸⁶ Ichikawa Masujūrō, *Kabuki Jinsei*, 172.

⁸⁷ As noted earlier, the character 升, which means “rice measuring cup,” is part of the Ichikawa family crest, which is comprised of three rice measuring cups, or three *masu*.

The names Misuji 美寿代 and Baika 梅香 did not borrow any of the characters from Sanshō's names, but drew from other actors of the Ichikawa acting family. The name Ichikawa Sumizō 寿美蔵, for example, is comprised of two of the characters that make up Misuji's name: 寿 (*su*), felicitous, and 美 (*mi*), beautiful. Moreover, Baika's name was given, in part, as a reflection on the actress's relationship with Sanshō's niece, whose first *geimei* was Kōbai (紅梅, later Suisen III). According to Baika, Kōbai had taken a liking to her and had asked Sanshō to give her the “*bai*” 梅 character from her name.⁸⁸

This foursome—Misuji, Baika, Fukushō, and Masuyo—became known officially as the troupe's first-division performers (*kanbu*), and, by virtue of their senior status, were virtually guaranteed the leading roles in all the productions. While other girls would come and go, this group would stick with the troupe for the next decade. Two years later, in August 1954, Sanshō would bestow personal stage names to five more performers: Kawakami Masako (Sanpuku), Suzuki Sachiko (Suzume), Takatsu Keiko (Baishō), Tanaka Keiko (Himeshō), and Kumazawa Junko (Kobotan). They had demonstrated tremendous promise and would come to play many of the leading roles, but they would never eclipse the original foursome. Still, critics expressed hope that the names would have a lasting impact, insofar as all of the new Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki stage names would be transmitted to future generations of performers, just as male *kabuki* stage names, such as Danjūrō, Kikugorō, and Ganjirō, have been carried on by the actors' respective

⁸⁸ Ichikawa Baika, interview. In May 1957, Ichikawa Kōbai took the stage name Ichikawa Suisen III. She was active in helping the troupe as well as supportive of Ono Haruyoshi's campaign for Diet representative.

sons or disciples.⁸⁹ The foursome, it was hoped and believed, would be the first of many Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki generations to come.

Lending his authority to the troupe, Sanshō made a public announcement from the stage, in between the troupe's performances of "Moritsuna Jinya"⁹⁰ and "Ninoguchi Mura."⁹¹ Uchiyama, the Hamamatsu journalist, remembered watching Sanshō address the audience during one of the 1952 summer performances.⁹² He recalled him sitting *seiza* style, with his ankles neatly tucked under his knees, in the middle of the stage flanked by the troupe members, stating the traditional lines: "Honored guests, please look upon this troupe with favor." It was the same perfunctory phrase used during all professional formal *kabuki* stage announcements, but Uchiyama stated that he felt that Sanshō was utterly sincere. "Sanshō desperately wanted the audience to support his girls. I could sense the strong connection between him and the troupe," he wrote.⁹³ It is possible that Sanshō, like Danjūrō IX during his daughter's 1893 Kabuki-za debut, departed from the conventional language of formal announcements, reciting a haiku that he had written in honor of the troupe:

Are these young buds

⁸⁹ See, for example, Katsurada Shigeharu, "Kiyō Binbo e no Kiken" [Danger of Being a Jack of All Trades and Master of None], *Makuai* (October 1956): 84.

⁹⁰ Stanleigh H. Jones, trans., "Moritsuna's Camp: An Eighteenth-Century Puppet Play from Japan's Puppet Theatre by Chikamatsu Hanji, Miyoshi Shōraku, and Takemoto Saburōbei," *Asian Theatre Journal* 2 (Fall 1985): 99-138.

⁹¹ Saitō, "Hamamatsu Jōen Kabuki."

⁹² According to Saitō's scroll, the *kōjō* announcement was performed as the third piece on a four-part program from 27 July to 31 July 1952.

⁹³ Uchiyama, "Hamamatsu to Jūdai-me Danjūrō," 16.

miniature peonies⁹⁴

fighting to bloom?⁹⁵

In the haiku, he compares the troupe members to the sweet *matsuba-botan* flower, which blossoms in the summer when it is exposed to direct sunlight. Unlike peonies, the flowers come in an array of hues—purple, red, and yellow—are tiny, and grow close to each other. Sanshō’s haiku implies that though the troupe was on the verge of blossoming, it had yet to do so. For the present, the girls were still fighting to bloom as full-grown performers. Not wanting to overdo the praise at the beginning of his tutelage, Sanshō surely hoped the girls would interpret the haiku as both a compliment and a challenge.

The Critics Respond

Happily for the troupe and Masujūrō, spectators and critics lauded the challenging program. As Saitō of Hamamatsu City wrote on his scroll:

May I say that they are prodigies? They are exceptional and do not look at all like young girls, performing pieces like *Kanjinchō*, *Kirare Yosaburō*, *Benten Kozō*, and *Bō Shibari*. They are truly a wonder.⁹⁶

⁹⁴ The *matsuba-botan* flower’s (*portulaca grandiflora*) common name is “sunglo orchid,” but I have taken creative license with my translation, since “*botan*” in Japanese means peony, which was the official flower of the Naritaya house. Surely Sanshō chose the flower *matsuba-botan* because of the word association with *botan*.

⁹⁵ There are at least two different versions of this haiku. The version noted above 競い立
つ松葉牡丹の蕾なり (*Kisoitatsu Matsuba-botan no Tsubomi Nari*) was reported by Ichikawa Misuji in “Shōjo Kara Onna e no Nayami,” 233; Tsuchiya Chikashi, “Shōjo Kabuki no Jūnen” [Girls’ *Kabuki*’s Ten Years], in “Kabuki Haiyū Hyakka” [*Kabuki* Performer Directory], special issue, *Engekikai* (December 1959): 172; Uchiyama, “Hamamatsu to Jūdai-me Danjūrō,” 16. Baika, however, reports that the haiku was written as 咲き争う松葉牡丹蕾かな (*Saki Arasō Matsuba-botan Tsubomi ka na*). Ichikawa Baika, “Ōatari, Shōjo Kabuki” [Smash Success, Girls’ *Kabuki*], “Matsuba-Botan no Ki” [Journal of Small Peonies], *Mainichi Shinbun*, no. 1, 11 January 1993.

⁹⁶ Saitō, “Hamamatsu Jōen Kabuki.” Unfortunately, *Kanjinchō* is not included in Saitō’s actual list, so it is unclear if the troupe actually performed it. It is likely that he later saw a production of it, after which he recorded his thoughts.

He noted that he attended the troupe's performances many times over the course of the summer, and that, on most days, the house was full. It is worth observing that this entry is the only place in the entire scroll for which Saitô used color: for all other entries, including those by mainstream male *kabuki*, he used black ink, but for this one, he used black ink to record the names of the plays the troupe performed and outlined them in blue, as if to further emphasize the troupe's startling achievement (figure 7).⁹⁷

Saitô's private accolades for the troupe were shared by one of the leading theatre critics of the day, Toshikura Yoshikazu, editor of the nationally distributed preeminent theatre periodical, *Engekikai*. He would be the first of many journalists to write about the troupe over the next ten years. Though the magazine would come to feature critical reviews of the troupe, its unflagging support and annual publicity would be critical to the troupe's success. Years later, he would reveal that he had joked at the time of the Hamamatsu-za production, "I'll hold onto this stock," adding, "And since then, [the value] has gone way up."⁹⁸ In his review of the production, Toshikura noted that he was present for a Sunday performance during which the troupe performed four pieces: "Amagasaki," *Sesshû Gappô ga Tsuji*,⁹⁹ and *Tsuchiya Chikara*, as well as a play about the lovers Osome and Hisamatsu.¹⁰⁰ The auditorium, he reported, was "eighty-percent

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Toshikura Yoshikazu, "Yonnen mae to" [Four Years Ago and], Tôyoko Hall Program, May 1956.

⁹⁹ C. Andrew Gerstle, trans. and comm., "Gappô at the Crossroads," in *Early Modern Japanese Literature*, ed. Haruo Shirane, 435-448 (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002).

¹⁰⁰ Toshikura, "Hamamatsu no Shôjo Kabuki," 34-35. Toshikura does not provide the exact date of the production he attended, but we can deduce that it was 24 August, the Sunday between August 22 and 26, since Saitô reported that the troupe performed these pieces between these dates. Saitô, "Hamamatsu Jôen Kabuki."

full,” and the troupe had become “incredibly popular.” The two-page *Engekikai* spread contained six photographs of the girls onstage and off, a paragraph or so about the troupe’s history, and unstinting praise. He wrote:

I was surprised when I saw the performance. They are excellent. The children’s sensitivity is sharp, and because they have learned everything perfectly, their manners are also good. There is no trace of anything bad, perhaps because [they harbor] no sensuality (*iroke*) or desires. Sanshō has put great effort behind the troupe, often coming all the way to train them.¹⁰¹

He also took the opportunity to praise their local leader:

Their teacher, Masujūrō, is known even in Tokyo. He is a disciple of Ebijūrō and has toured extensively in Kansai and Kyūshū. He is young, not yet forty years old, and some may say that he is a bit eccentric, but he is rather amazing for teaching the girls more than ninety plays.¹⁰²

Masujūrō would look back fondly on the editor’s praise, so different from future critics who would peg him as a Tokyo outsider, a mere second-rate director who had failed as an actor.

Yet, as much as Toshikura’s review endorsed the artistry of the members, he could not refrain from commenting on the troupe’s “cuteness.” Indeed, while most of the photos in this spread featured the troupe on stage as performers, the magazine also included a photograph of the “pretty” foursome in their dressing room, eating something as banal as curry rice. Their pretty, innocent faces, complemented by their excellent

¹⁰¹ Toshikura, “Hamamatsu no Shōjo Kabuki,” 34.

¹⁰² Ibid.

manners, would appear to have been worth as much as their talent, and down the road, lead to a host of problems once it became apparent that they were no longer fitting the stringent age limitations of a *shôjo*.

Still, the review in *Engekikai* created a buzz and led to bigger performance opportunities. New theatres were being built and renovated after the war, and producers were eager to display the troupe's talent. A month after the Hamamatsu-za sixty-day run, the troupe was invited to perform at the newly opened Shin Kabuki-za in the Ôsu district of Nagoya.

Dubbed “the little Asakusa” after Tokyo's famous entertainment district, Ôsu boasted several movie theatres as well as the Shin Kabuki-za.¹⁰³ The *kabuki* actor Kataoka Nizaemon XIII (1903-1994) had starred in the grand opening performance just a week before the troupe's debut. The theatre was not as large as the nearby Misono-za in central Nagoya, but, with its 831 seats—up to 1,000 if temporary seats were used—it was larger than the Hamamatsu-za and comparable to Kabuki-za of Osaka.¹⁰⁴ The theatre's facade featured a Momoyama period (1573-1603) design; inside, it was equipped with all the proper features of a *kabuki* stage, including a wide *hanamichi*, a revolving stage, and a stage trap (*seri*).¹⁰⁵

Though the troupe's engagement was only for seven days, the production attracted a number of well-placed critics, no doubt because of the theatre's status and

¹⁰³ Fujii Kôsei, “Sengo no Nagoya Geinô Kôshi: Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki to Fuji Kabuki o Chushin ni” [Postwar Nagoya Small Performance Movement: Focusing on Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki and Fuji Kabuki], *Nagoya Geinô Bunka* [Nagoya Performance Culture] 1 (1992): 3-10.

¹⁰⁴ Kimura, “Seijun na Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki,” 52.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

because the troupe was playing just after Nizaemon. Critic Ueno Senshu remembered that he was surprised by the high performance standards:

It was not just a “*maiko shibai*” (a geisha-in-training recital) or an overacted roadside show. I was stunned. Their production had dignity, correct interpretation, and was the real thing.¹⁰⁶

As if he were a PR agent for the troupe, he wrote that he went around town telling anyone he met, “They’re amazing. Go see them for yourself!”¹⁰⁷

The managers of the theatre, equally impressed, booked the troupe for an additional production in December. This time the run lasted last fourteen days, and included four pieces: “Sakaya,” “Suzugamori,” “Terakoya,” and “Ninoguchi Mura.”

Much to Sanshō’s delight, the girls’ run overlapped with the grand *kabuki* production at Misono-za. Anytime that he was at Misono-za, he would round up other actors and tell them that they had to see the girls perform. “You better perform well today or you’ll lose to my girls at the Shin Kabuki-za,” he challenged them.¹⁰⁸ Among the luminaries to see Ichikawa Girls’ Kabuki for the first time were the popular *shinpa* actor Kitamura Rokurō, the *shingeki* actresses Tamura Akiko and Sugimura Haruko, the Misono-za theatre director Hasegawa Eiichi, and two theatre critics who would play a key role in publicizing the troupe in Tokyo: Ōe Ryōtarō of *Engekikai* and Kimura

¹⁰⁶ Ueno Senshu, “Ichikawa Shōjo Kabuki ni Omou” [Thinking about Ichikawa Girls’ Kabuki], Misono-za program, February 1955, 27.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

Kikutarô of *Makuai*.¹⁰⁹ Both would write positive, but not unmeasured, reviews, which would be the first serious criticism directed at the troupe.

These critiques would not hurt the troupe's publicity. Both reviews made it clear that the troupe longed to perform in Tokyo, an idea that Toshikura had planted earlier.¹¹⁰ Just how much impact these reviews had is unclear; but, by the time Ôe's article went to press, a Tokyo venue had been selected. Backed by Shôchiku, the troupe would perform at the Mitsukoshi Theatre in February 1953. Masujûrô's dream had come true.

¹⁰⁹ Ôe Ryôtârô, "Hamamatsu no Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki" [Hamamatsu's Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki] *Engekikai* (December 1952): 76-78; Kimura, "Seijun na Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki," *Makuai*, 52.

¹¹⁰ Toshikura, "Hamamatsu no Shôjo Kabuki," 35. He stated: "Children have become so erased from today's society that I think people would be unexpectedly pleased to see them perform in Tokyo."

Chapter 3

Performing on Japan's Cypress Stage

The troupe's Tokyo debut was preceded by significant press, both in Hamamatsu and Tokyo. With the hype already created by articles in the major theatre journals, *Engekikai* and *Makuai*, the press continued to generate interest in the troupe before it even set foot in the capital.¹ This chapter examines how the troupe's first Tokyo production and subsequent "big city" programs were received by the popular press. While reviews were overwhelmingly positive, they were never free from criticism, an issue that was overlooked by Toita Yasuji in his 1953 scathing review—to be discussed in detail—in which he reduced the troupe to "neck-puppet" theatre. Drawing on Masujûrô's autobiography and letters from the troupe's great patron, Ichikawa Sanshō V, this chapter aims to show how the girls incorporated the criticism to develop into a mature, professional troupe. How the troupe worked with Sanshō is given special attention, as it is clear that, without his constant attention to its needs, "none of this would have come about."²

The Tokyo Debut

¹ See, for example, "Hamamatsu no Musume Kabuki: Ichikawa Shōjo Kabuki Gekidan o Miru" [Hamamatsu's Girls' Kabuki: Watching Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki], *Shufu no Tomo* [Housewife's Friend], January 1953, 42-43; "Tokyo de Hatsu Kōen: Ichikawa Shōjo Kabuki" [Tokyo Debut Production: Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki], *Shizuoka Shinbun* (evening), 20 January 1953; "Seifuku de Jungyō Suru Otome-tachi: Hiru wa Butai, Yoru wa Benkyō o Tsuzukeru [The Girls Who Tour in Uniform: Stage in the Morning, Studies in the Evening], *Sangyō Keizai Shinbun*, 7 February 1953. According to an essay in the February Mitsukoshi Gekijō program, the troupe was also featured on "Mainichi News," which would have been shown in the cinemas during the second week of January 1953.

² Ichikawa Baika, interview by author, 4 March 2004, Toyokawa, Japan.

One week before the troupe's Tokyo debut, the *Asahi Shinbun* ran two eye-catching stories. The first recounted the troupe's origins and attested to its talent: "Though they are children, their sensitivity is sharp, and they memorize their lines perfectly. They have mastered more than sixty plays—a tremendous feat."³ The second article, a shorter one, was accompanied by a picture of the troupe arriving at Tokyo Station with all the members dressed in identical one-piece jumpers, carrying matching black valises and winter overcoats.⁴ Shôchiku, for its part, ran a full-page ad in the Kabuki-za's February program, calling attention to the "teenage *kabuki* production."⁵ Curiously, no one seems to have thought of a new twist on the old advertisement, "Today the Imperial Theatre, Tomorrow Mitsukoshi." A perfect slogan for the production would have been: "*Yesterday* the Imperial Theatre, *Today* Mitsukoshi," given that the Imperial had been the place to see women perform *kabuki* before the 1923 earthquake, whereas now the Mitsukoshi was taking on the challenge.⁶

Indeed, by all accounts, it was a coup for the troupe to perform at the prestigious Mitsukoshi Theatre. After the war, with the closures of Shôchiku's main venues, the Nihonbashi district department store theatre had been the place to see *kabuki* in Tokyo, as it had featured stars such as Nakamura Kichiemon I (1886-1954), Nakamura Shikan VI

³ "Raigetsu Hatsu no Tokyo Kôen" [Tokyo Debut Next Month], *Asahi Shinbun* (evening), 25 January 1953.

⁴ "Seifuku no 'Shôjo Kabuki Dan' Nyûkyo" [Dressed in their Uniforms, 'Girls' *Kabuki* Troupe' Enters the Capital], *Asahi Shinbun*, 28 January 1953.

⁵ Kabuki-za program, February 1953.

⁶ See Mine Takashi, *Teikoku Gekijô Kaimaku: Kyo wa Teigeki Ashita wa Mitsukoshi* [The Opening of the Imperial Theatre: Today the Imperial, Tomorrow Mitsukoshi] (Tokyo: Chûkô Ronsha, 1996).

(later Utaemon VI, 1917-2001), Ichikawa Somegorô V (later Matsumoto Kôshirô VIII and Matsumoto Hakuô I, 1910-1982), Nakamura Ganjirô II (1902-1983), and Ichikawa Ebizô IX (later Danjûrô XI, 1910-1965).⁷ By 1950, however, the theatre began presenting more *shingeki*, and by 1953, with the subsequent re-openings of the Kabuki-za and Shinbashi Enbujô, *kabuki* productions had become less frequent at the Mitsukoshi.⁸ Mitsukoshi was no longer Tokyo's sole producer of *kabuki*, but it had garnered clout over the years as a premiere theatre. Thus, it appeared to be an ideal venue for the girls' Tokyo debut.

The time leading up to the opening day were spent at the nearby PL (Peace and Liberty) Hall, in intensive rehearsals overseen by Sanshô, who called on his *kabuki* colleagues for assistance. Ebizô IX, for one, was reported to have spent time teaching the troupe on "his days off."⁹ An important part of the troupe's pre-performance work was making the rounds to thank the executives and actors who had been instrumental in bringing them to Tokyo.¹⁰ At least one visit was paid to Shôchiku's headquarters in Tsukiji to thank President Ôtani Takejirô for his support; a photo, printed in *Makuai*, shows the elderly impresario presenting a bouquet of flowers to Misuji, who accepts them,

⁷ The Mitsukoshi Theatre had been built as an arena for young *kabuki* actors, but with the lack of functioning competition, it was graced with big-name players. See Shino Yôdarô and Uchiyama Mikio, *Nihon Koten Geinô to Genzai: Bunraku Kabuki* [Japanese Classical Theatre and the Present: *Bunraku* and *Kabuki*] (Tokyo: Iwanami Shôten, 1996), 194-196.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ "Raigetsu Hatsu no Tokyo Kôen," *Asahi Shinbun*, 25 January 1953; see also Watanabe Saburô, "Shôjo Bakari no Kabuki" [The All-girls' *Kabuki*], *Shûkan Sankei* [Industrial and Commerce Weekly], 22 February 1953: 56.

¹⁰ "Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki" [Ichikawa Girls' *Kabuki*], *Makuai* (March 1953): 67. Also quoted in Ichikawa Masujirô, *Kabuki Jinsei* [A *Kabuki* Life] (Toyohashi: Hôbundô, 1983), 157-158.

with Fukushô, Baika, and Masuyo bowing their heads behind her.¹¹ Just like the girls' first production at Shôwa-za in Toyokawa, Masujûrô sensed that he was much more anxious about the production than the performers. He recalled, "For the girls who rarely slept at night, they greeted the big day as if it wasn't any big deal. For me, it was really something."¹²

The debut production ran for twelve days, opening 3 February and closing on the fifteenth; only on the ninth was the theatre dark.¹³ While significantly shorter than grand *kabuki* runs, the production shared the same structure, with the troupe performing twice a day, at 11 a.m. and at 2:30 p.m. The program consisted of the troupe's most polished pieces: "Kuruma Biki," a scene from *Meiboku Sendai Hagi*, *Gappô*, the "inner quarters" scene from *Ôkura Ichijô Monogatari*, "Moritsuna Jinya," and "Ninoguchi Mura." Once again, the troupe, like its male counterparts, focused on performing shorter highlights (*midori*) than performing the plays in their entirety, but, unlike mainstream *kabuki*, the entire repertory consisted of plays from the puppet repertory, which critics would take as a sign of amateurism.

Sixteen girls, plus adult musicians (who were not noted in the program), appeared in the six plays the troupe performed. Two members from the summer production had dropped out, but five new girls had joined, including Kumazawa Junko, Takatsu Keiko, and Ichikawa Ebimaru. As discussed earlier, Ebimaru had been Ebijûrô's apprentice and

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ichikawa Masujûrô, *Kabuki Jinsei*, 155.

¹³ Mitsukoshi Gekijô program, February 1953. See also Nagayama Takeomi, ed., *Kabuki-za Hyakunen-shi* [One Hundred Year History of Kabuki-za] (Tokyo: Shôchiku Kabushiki Gaisha, 1993), 2: 124.

the only girl to enter the troupe with a stage name in hand. Keiko had been one of the original members of the troupe, but had dropped out when the performance schedule became too rigorous. Junko (b. 1936, later Ichikawa Kobotan) had grown up in Nagoya, studying *nihon buyô* and attending the theatre frequently with her parents, but after their house was destroyed during the war, the family took refuge in a small town near Toyokawa. She joined the troupe after attending a rehearsal at Yuki-san, while resuming her dance lessons.¹⁴ Both she and Keiko would be elevated to the elite second-tier division in 1954, when they would receive the respective stage names Kobotan and Baishô. Masujûrô had employed his eldest daughter, Eriko, for the production as well. Despite the small cast, the major roles were played by an even more select group: Misuji, Masuyo, and Fukushô were cast in leading roles in every piece, while Baika appeared as the main *onnagata* in every play with the exception of “Kuruma Biki,” the piece in which she had made her *kabuki* debut as the villain Shihei some four years earlier.

Compared to its previous performances when tickets were priced around 50 yen, admission to the troupe’s Mitsukoshi performance was relatively pricey at 240 yen a ticket. The house was reported to be sold out on most days, but critics also noted that many invitational tickets had been distributed, a well-known but under-reported phenomenon that has persisted in grand *kabuki* as well.¹⁵ Since the production was held at Mitsukoshi’s flagship department store, it had the potential to attract a cross-section of people, including those who might not ordinarily attend the theatre, but just happened to spot a program flyer while shopping.

¹⁴ Ichikawa Kobotan, interview by author, 29 April 2004, Gifu City.

¹⁵ “Ningyô Tsukai no Inai Ningyô Geki” [Puppet Plays without any Operators], *Asahi Shinbun* (evening), 7 February 1953.

Because of the special nature of the event, the Mitsukoshi theatre had commissioned several speakers to warm up the audience for what many figured would be a half-baked disaster. As Kawatake Shigetoshi (1889-1967), the Waseda University professor and renowned *kabuki* historian, wrote in his program notes: “there were sure to be some rough spots in the day’s performance.”¹⁶ Among the speakers was *shinpa* actor Kitamura Rokurô, who had seen the troupe perform at the Shin Kabuki-za in Nagoya. According to Kyoya Kôsei, a writer in attendance, he testified to the troupe’s talent, telling the crowd that he had broken another engagement in order to attend the girls’ performance. Writing in a future program, Kyoya stated: “Rokurô, a veteran theatregoer, rarely praised anyone but he unconditionally praised the troupe. It was at this point in the program that everyone in the audience realized this might be the ‘real thing.’”¹⁷ Kawatake’s remarks were followed by greetings from the current and future leaders of the Ichikawa line: Sanshō V and Ebizō IX. They most likely wore the official Naritaya house costume for such occasions: the persimmon-colored vest and warrior-style wig, and delivered their remarks in the formal announcement style, thanking spectators for their support and patronage. Perhaps Sanshō recited the haiku, printed in the program, which he had penned in honor of the troupe’s Tokyo debut:

Look at the buds
of red plum blossoms

¹⁶ Kawatake Shigetoshi, “Sôshu o Agete” [Offer your applause], Mitsukoshi Gekijô program, February 1953, 10. His specific words are not recorded, but it is likely that he reiterated his program remarks, which detailed Japanese women’s performance history, noting the troupe was a “rare phenomenon.”

¹⁷ Kyoya Kôsei, “Shôjo Kabuki to wa” [What is Girls’ Kabuki?], Meiji-za program, May 1953, 26.

Touched by the spring breeze¹⁸

Traditionally, the lunar calendar's first and second month—which roughly corresponds to February—was considered the beginning of spring. Like the orchards of plum (*ume*) trees that also bloom during this time, the girls were undergoing a transition of their own.

With the gentle breeze of the audience's applause, the troupe was certain to prosper as members evolved from girls to teenagers to young women. Thus, Sanshō, who had also drawn the February program's cover art—several branches of *ume* blossoms—asked the audience, in this symbolic fashion, to support the troupe.

The program lists “Kuruma Biki” as the first on the morning line-up, but Kyoya implied that *Meiboku Sendai Hagi* kicked off the program. She recounted:

Before the audience had time to digest all these greetings from famous people, it was time for *Sendai Hagi*. I was nervous before the curtain opened. I imagined the voice of a small cute girl, but the voice of the girl playing Masaoka [Baika] was truly that of *kabuki*. It harmonized perfectly with her gorgeous costume; her voice was rhythmical and came from her belly. Everyone in the audience was stunned.¹⁹

Regarding the climax in which Masaoka's own son, Senmatsu, is killed by Yashio, the villainous lady-in-waiting, Kyoya wrote:

The innocent, small Masaoka [Baika] appeared to me like Senmatsu's [Mineko] own mother. Masaoka walked well with her trailing kimono and used the tissues.

Yashio [Misuji] caught everyone's eye. . . . They were advanced in all of *kabuki*'s

¹⁸ In Japanese, the haiku reads: 春風を得つ 紅梅のつぼみかな (*Harukaze o Etsu, Kōbai no Tsubomi Kana*). Mitsukoshi Gekijō program, February 1953.

¹⁹ Kyoya, “Shōjo Kabuki to wa,” 26.

moves. When Masaoka became upset, and Yashio cruelly killed Senmatsu, Masaoka ran crying to embrace him.²⁰

Thoroughly impressed by the girls' performance, Kyoya added that her handkerchief was "so wet" that she could squeeze it.²¹

Kyoya's personal testimonial was met with an equally strong critical response. Quoting Moritsuna's famous line in "Moritsuna Jinya," critics lauded the troupe with cries of "the more you teach, the more you remember" (*oshie mo oshie, oboe mo oboe*).²² The *Tôkyô Shinbun* pronounced the performance, "Amazing Girls' Success," while the *Nippon Times* declared, "Teen-Age *Kabuki* Troupe of Girls is Making Hit."²³ The *Asahi's* was more descriptive, "Puppet Plays Without Operators," referring to the fact that the

²⁰ Ibid. In grand *kabuki*, Masaoka stoically resists embracing her son until after Yashio and her attendants have left her chambers. From Kyoya's remarks, it is unclear if any time has elapsed between the murder of Senmatsu and Yashio's exit. From watching video footage of the troupe's production of *Meiboku Sendai Hagi*, which most certainly occurred around the same time as the Mitsukoshi production, I can report that it is clear that the troupe followed the grand *kabuki* business. Mainichi News, undated footage, courtesy Ichikawa Baika (copy in author's collection).

²¹ Ibid.

²² See Andô Tsuruo, "Suitorigami no Yosa, Warusa: Meiji-za no Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki" [The Good and Bad about Blotting Paper: Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki at the Meiji-za], *Yomiuri Shinbun*, 6 August 1954; Tomito Yasuhiko, "Tadashii Seichô ni Kyôdan: Hôkensei Daha Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki" [Amazed at the Proper Dignity: Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki Breaks the Feudal System], *Ôsaka Nichi Nichi Shinbun*, 15 June 1953; Kawatake Shigetoshi, "Hisashiburi no Shôjo Kabuki" [Girls' Kabuki after a Hiatus], Tôyoko Hall program, 22 November 1957.

²³ "Tassha na Shôjo no Karada Atari Gei" [The Amazing Girls' Success], *Tôkyô Shinbun*, 7 February 1953; Robert A. Carson, "Teen-age *Kabuki* Troupe of Girls is Making Hit," *Nippon Times*, 13 February 1953. According to Masujûrô, other newspaper headlines included: "*Kabuki's* Wonder" (*Sangyô Keizai*), "Something Refreshing in the World of *Kabuki*" (*Asahi Shinbun*), and "Let This Be a Warning to Young *Kabuki* Actors" (*Tôkyô Shinbun*) (Ichikawa Masujûrô, *Kabuki Jinsei*, 156). He, however, did not provide the dates of publication, and I, in turn, was unable to find them. Masujûrô wrote that the review that appeared in the *Tôkyô Shinbun* was by Andô Tsuruo, but the one review that I found in the *Tôkyô Shinbun* was anonymous. Andô was the theatre critic for the *Yomiuri Shinbun*; he would review the troupe's Tokyo productions starting in August 1954.

entire program consisted of *kabuki* plays adapted from the *bunraku* repertory.²⁴ Like the earlier performance criticism of Saitô and Ôe Ryôtarô of *Engekikai*, the *Asahi*'s (unnamed) reviewer likened the players to puppets. But these comparisons read as more complimentary than critical. Indeed, the *Asahi*, like the other two dailies, was complimentary of the performers:

Misuji, 16, is the troupe leader, and she played Matsuô in “Kuruma Biki,” Yashio in *Sendai Hagi*, Gappô in *Gappô*, Ôkura in “Ôkura-kyô,” Moritsuna in “Moritsuna,” and Magoemon in “Ninoguchi Mura.” Baika, the troupe's female lead, has particularly mastered the dialogue. In this production, she plays Otsuchi [*Gappô*], Mimyô [“Moritsuna”], and Chûbei [“Ninoguchi Mura”]. She did particularly well playing Mimyô. Masuyo, Misuji's younger sister, is very pretty and has excellent form in whatever role she plays. As Wada Hyôei [“Moritsuna”], Irihei [*Gappô*], and Umeômaru [“Kuruma Biki”], Fukushô is one member that is absolutely essential to this troupe.²⁵

Members were lauded for their acting, and the production was deemed a success.

Despite the overwhelmingly positive response, the troupe did not escape from harsh criticism as well. Miyake Shûtarô, the critic for the *Mainichi Shinbun*, was, on the whole, much more critical than his colleagues. He advised the troupe to scrap “Kuruma Biki,” since it was “unsuitable” for girls and instructed it to receive “belly training”

²⁴ “Ningyô Tsukai no Inai Ningyô Geki,” *Asahi Shinbun* (evening), 7 February 1953. *Tôkyô Shinbun* also noted this fact. “Tassha na Shôjo no Karada Atari Gei,” 7 February 1953.

²⁵ “Ningyô Tsukai no Inai Ningyô Geki,” *Asahi Shinbun*, 7 February 1953.

(*haragei*).²⁶ This referred not just to the physical endurance necessary for performing, but to the capacity for understanding the interior of the various characters enacted. The troupe could not merely perfect *kabuki*'s *kata* or physical poses and movements, but had to study the psychological motivations behind every role. The latter had been considered an important component of *kabuki* acting since the times of Sakata Tōjūrō (1647-1709), but had been used as an important critical standard since Ichikawa Danjūrō IX, in the late nineteenth century, had introduced his ideas on *haragei* (internal art), a quieter, more restrained, realistic acting style.²⁷ In what appears to be a sincere suggestion, Miyake recommended the establishment of a *kabuki* training school to help overcome such problems.²⁸ As we will see, the issue of how much the girls actually comprehended the plays they performed would be debated in the coming years.

The *Asahi*, on the other hand, critiqued the adult musicians, not the girls. The reviewer noted that the *shamisen* and narrator needed to be improved, a lament shared earlier by Ōe of *Engekikai*. “If they could only get a better *chobo* [*gidayū* narrator and *shamisen* player team], the performance would be more enjoyable than *bunraku*, since there is no hindrance of the puppet operator,” the critic wrote, unabashedly indicating his

²⁶ Miyake Shūtarō, “‘Hara’ no Shūren: Mitsukoshi Gekijō no Ichikawa Shōjo Kabuki” [‘Belly’ Training: Mitsukoshi Theatre’s Ichikawa Girls’ Kabuki], *Mainichi Shinbun* (evening), 14 February 1953.

²⁷ See Samuel L. Leiter, *New Kabuki Encyclopedia: A Revised Adaptation of Kabuki Jiten* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1997), 153. As Hattori remarks, Danjūrō IX’s *haragei* theory would be one of his most lasting influences on modern *kabuki*; the principle has been used by generations of succeeding *kabuki* actors and critics to evaluate an actor’s performance (*Ichikawa Danjūrō*, 124). For a discussion of Sakata Tōjūrō, see Laurence R. Kominz, *The Stars Who Created Kabuki: Their Lives, Loves and Legacy* (New York: Kodansha International, 1997), esp. 147-154.

²⁸ Miyake, “‘Hara’ no Shūren,” *Mainichi Shinbun*, 14 February 1953.

taste for *kabuki* over the puppet theatre.²⁹ The names of the musicians are unknown, but it is likely that they were accustomed to performing in the more intimate environment of the rural small theatre circuit, rather than at first-class theatres where they would have been held to different standards.

Years later Masujûrô recalled—albeit rather subjectively—what he remembered to be the audience’s reaction:

There was a thundering of applause after the performances. . . . Master Ichikawa Sanshō was brimming with happiness. He came to the dressing room to encourage the girls. This happened every day. The Otowaya [Nakamura Kichimon I (1886-1954)], Harimaya [Onoe Baikō VII], and Kagaya [Nakamura Tōkizo IV (1927-1962)] houses sent gorgeous bouquets of flowers, and we received many gifts, along with a special congratulatory telegram. And I received so many calling cards.³⁰

Backstage guests included the *shinpa* actor Hanayagi Shōtarō, the painter Itō Shinsui (1898-1972), and the Tōei movie star (and former *kabuki* actor) Okawa Hashizō (1927-1984).³¹ If anyone in the weeks immediately following the performance thought the girls were overrated, they kept it to themselves.

²⁹ “Ningyō Tsukai no Inai Ningyō Geki,” *Asahi Shinbun*, 7 February 1953.

³⁰ Ichikawa Masujûrô, *Kabuki Jinsei*, 156.

³¹ Ichikawa Baika, “Shishō wa Ichi-ryū Mainichi Shonichi” [The Master’s Best: Every Day is the First Day], “Matsuba-Botan no Ki” [Journal of Small Peonies], *Mainichi Shinbun*, no. 4, 1 February 1993; Kurokawa Mitsuhiro, “Zessan o Haku-shita Tōkyō Kōen” [Tokyo Production Receives Acclaim], “Maboroshi no Ichikawa Shōjo Kabuki” [Phantom Ichikawa Girls’ Kabuki], *Chūnichī Shinbun*, no. 13, 3 February 1984.

With reviews published in Tokyo's major dailies, word spread quickly of the girls' achievement. Before the troupe returned home, plans were made for its next Tokyo production. There had been discussions even before the troupe performed in Tokyo that the next performance would be at the Meiji-za, an independent theatre and a frequent grand *kabuki* venue, and by the end of the performance run, it had been all but decided.³² Though there are no extant documents concerning the business discussions that led to the Meiji-za production, it was a sore point for the Mitsukoshi Theatre, which had apparently assumed that it would host the troupe's next Tokyo production. According to Kurokawa, it had hoped to book the troupe regularly—a decision it probably made after the successful February production.³³ Thus, the Mitsukoshi management was angry when it learned of the troupe's plans. Based on his interviews with the interested parties, Kurokawa wrote, "Kaneko had to mediate between the Mitsukoshi and the Meiji-za. Mitsukoshi had to save face. It was not just an issue of money, but tensions were exacerbated."³⁴ Ultimately, Hori Kurakichi, the man responsible for bringing the troupe to Sanshō's attention, stepped in and helped to ease the strain. As Kurokawa wrote, "The girls from Toyokawa had become so well known as to be the source of trouble."³⁵ Though Hori would propose for the troupe to play at the Mitsukoshi in the near future, it

³² See "Raigetsu, Hatsu no Tokyo Kōen," *Asahi Shinbun*, 25 January 1953. The Meiji-za broke from Shōchiku after the war, when it reopened in February 1950. Waseda Daigaku Engeki Hakubutsukan, ed., *Engeki Hyakka Daijiten* [Theatre Encyclopedia] (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1963), 5: 370.

³³ Kurokawa Mitsuhiro, "Zessan o Haku-shita Tokyo Kōen," 3 February 1984.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*

never performed there again.³⁶ Like their counterparts in the grand *kabuki* world, they had outgrown it.

Sanshō's Patronage

Sanshō, too, was pleased with the troupe. In an interview with the *Nippon Times*, he happily took credit for the troupe's early training: "The girls never intended to do this professionally. The whole idea started merely from their interest in *kabuki*. The girls began studying the classic dances with me, during the early part of the occupation."³⁷ The fact that Sanshō did not become involved with the troupe until the middle to late part of the Occupation is disregarded in his account—perhaps in the moment of the interview, he, like a proud parent, could not help but take full credit for such an accomplishment. He could only have felt that his decision to award the Ichikawa name to the girls had not been for naught. In a letter to Masujūrō, he wrote, "Mitsukoshi was highly praised, and I am quite pleased and full of pride."³⁸

The letter is the second in a collection of copies of twenty-seven unpublished letters written to Masujūrō from Sanshō, preserved in the Sakuragaoka Museum archive in Toyokawa City. Unfortunately, Masujūrō's responses are not extant, and it is likely that many more letters were exchanged between the two men before the Mitsukoshi production, but only the letters after March 1953 through Sanshō's death in 1956 are extant. Several of the letters were written by an unnamed third party, after Sanshō

³⁶ Ichikawa Sanshō V to Ichikawa Masujūrō, 23 January 1954, no. 6, Ichikawa Shōjo Kabuki collection. Sakuragaoka Museum, Toyokawa, Japan.

³⁷ Carson, "Teen-age *Kabuki* Troupe," *Nippon Times*, 13 February 1953.

³⁸ Ichikawa Sanshō V to Ichikawa Masujūrō, 23 March 1953, no. 2, Ichikawa Shōjo Kabuki collection. Sakuragaoka Museum, Toyokawa, Japan.

became too ill to write himself. Though Sanshō's handwriting is excruciatingly difficult to read, it is clear that he and Masujūrō carried on a warm correspondence and a close professional relationship. While the majority of the letters take a business tone to confirm a meeting time or re-schedule a rehearsal, all of them contain valuable information about Sanshō's personal views on the troupe, his reaction to specific pieces, and his concerns regarding the girls' health, well-being, and future. Interestingly, he almost never referred to the individual performers, but he frequently asked Masujūrō to relay his fond regards to the "children," cautioning them "not to drink too much water" and to take care of themselves. He regularly invited Masujūrō and the troupe to his home in Ninomiya, advised Masujūrō on appropriate gifts to send to master grand *kabuki* actors who had taught the troupe, and offered extensive advice on the troupe's programming. The only time he discussed the concept of "*ie no gei*" (family art) in his extant letters was at the end of the letter dated 10 February 1955, in which he wrote, "Please protect the Ichikawa family art."³⁹ The letters also reveal the severity of Sanshō's illness during the final year of his life, a fact that his family must have worked to conceal from the media, since it was reported otherwise.⁴⁰ Though newspapers and magazines of the time emphasized Sanshō's remarkable commitment to the troupe, the letters offer the best proof that this was truly the case.

Sanshō made it his responsibility to oversee the overall structure of the troupe's major productions. According to Baika, "In figuring out the order, he always put a severe

³⁹ Ichikawa Sanshō V to Ichikawa Masujūrō, 10 February 1955, no. 9, Ichikawa Shōjo Kabuki collection. Sakuragaoka Museum, Toyokawa, Japan.

⁴⁰ See, for example, Toshikura Yoshikazu, "Kinkyō Hōkoku" [Report on How Things Are Going], *Engekikai* (October 1955): 49.

piece (*karai-mono*), then a sweet one (*amai-mono*).⁴¹ In his letters from March and April 1953, Sanshō was most concerned with the pieces the troupe would perform for the upcoming Meiji-za production. He reminded Masujūrō, for example, that the Meiji-za had certain “preferences” regarding what it hoped the troupe would perform. Sanshō also made it clear that he needed to be consulted about any repertory decisions, since he saw himself as responsible for the troupe.⁴² In another letter, he worried that the troupe needed to use the correct props for *Izayoi Seishin*.⁴³ The props (and, most likely, the scenery) that the troupe had used for past *koshibai* productions were inappropriate for a Tokyo theatre and needed to be fixed. Thus, Sanshō wrote, “I’ve asked Fukunosuke [Ichikawa Fukunosuke III (1904-1990), Sanshō’s disciple] to send a photo of the correct props.”⁴⁴ Indeed, one of Sanshō’s concerns that would surface occasionally and also become a major issue with the Tokyo press was the troupe’s small theatre roots and itinerant lifestyle. Sanshō expressed his fear that the troupe’s rural touring would ruin its artistry and reduce it to a low-class provincial traveling show. Writing to Masujūrō who was overseeing the troupe’s production in Toyokawa, he warned, “You’ll be performing for people who will not know how to appreciate your theatre.”⁴⁵ He wanted the troupe to

⁴¹ Ichikawa Baika, interview. Leiter explains, *karai-mono* are those pieces that are “difficult, but high-caliber,” contrasted with “*amai-mono*,” pieces that “appeal to popular taste.” *New Kabuki Encyclopedia*, 13, 283.

⁴² Ichikawa Sanshō V to Ichikawa Masujūrō, 17 March 1953 (?), no. 30, Ichikawa Shōjo Kabuki collection. Sakuragaoka Museum, Toyokawa, Japan.

⁴³ Frank T. Motofuji, trans. and comm., *The Love of Izayoi and Seishin, A Kabuki Play by Kawatake Mokuami* (Rutland, VT: Tuttle, 1966).

⁴⁴ Ichikawa Sanshō V to Ichikawa Masujūrō, 28 March 1953, no. 3, Ichikawa Shōjo Kabuki collection. Sakuragaoka Museum, Toyokawa, Japan.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

perform in the established city theatres, where they could be seen by what Sanshō perceived to be more sophisticated audiences.

It is clear that Sanshō felt some urgency in bringing the girls up to speed in grand *kabuki* techniques now that the troupe was performing in the very same theatre as professional male *kabuki* actors. He worried that the troupe had been exposed primarily to rural performance styles, which could only be corrected by increased exposure to mainstream male *kabuki*. Though he probably never meant to conceal the troupe's Toyokawa roots, he did make a point of telling journalists that the girls were based in Hamamatsu, which "was a stopping-off place for the leading *kabuki* troupes on their way to and from Kyoto," making it easy for the girls to attend the theatre.⁴⁶ In a letter dated 28 February 1953, Sanshō requested that Masujūrō bring the girls to the March production of *Sukeroku* at the Kabuki-za, in which he was playing the villain Ikyū, and Ebizō, the future head of the Ichikawa line, was *Sukeroku* (Baikō VII played Agemaki and Fukusuke VII [later, Shikan VII, b. 1928] took the role of Shiratama).⁴⁷ He further encouraged them to take the opportunity to see grand *kabuki* whenever possible, even in middle of their own performance run (the girls had spent their one day off from Mitsukoshi to see Kikugorō's troupe perform). In his letters, Sanshō kept Masujūrō abreast of important productions (in December 1955, for example, *Kanadehon Chūshingura* was a must-see).

⁴⁶ Carson, "Teen-age *Kabuki* Troupe," *Nippon Times*, 13 February 1953.

⁴⁷ Ichikawa Sanshō V to Ichikawa Masujūrō, no.1, 28 February 1953, According to a later letter, it appears that Misuji, Baika, Masuyo, and Fukushō went to see this production. See no. 30, 17 March 1953 (?). For a note on this production, see Nagayama, *Kabuki-za Hyakunen-shi*, 2:126.

Sanshō admired the troupe, but it is clear that he still saw it as different from his grand *kabuki* house actors. He did not give permission, for example, for the troupe to use the Ichikawa symbol of a five-petal peony (*botan*) flower, but created a new crest for the troupe: the character 女, representing women, inside the authentic Ichikawa family *mimasu* crest (see figure 8).⁴⁸ It would resemble the Ichikawa family's one, but it would not be the same. Furthermore, he gave the troupe the house name (*yagō*) “Mimasuya” (“house of three-rice measures”), instead of the Ichikawa family's well-known “Naritaya” *yagō*. Though these moves may have appeared to distance or “other” the troupe from the Ichikawa line, they had the opposite effect of bringing it even closer, since *kabuki* aficionados could understand from looking at the troupe's crest that it constituted the official Ichikawa female acting branch. And, as far as the new *yagō* was concerned, no one bothered to use it; fans continued to scream “Naritaya” at the girls' productions. Baika recalled that Masujūrō apologized to Sanshō for the spectators' negligence, but that Sanshō had just laughed, saying it was fine.⁴⁹

Sanshō also wrote a “troupe song” modeled after the Waseda University fight song. The lyrics went as follows:

Long ago during the times of the gods
 When Uzume no Miko offered her dances
 In the Kagura Valley
 That still exists today

⁴⁸ Ichikawa Baika, “Ôatari, Shōjo Kabuki” [Smash Success, Girls' *Kabuki*], “Matsuba-Botan no Ki” [Journal of Small Peonies], *Mainichi Shinbun*, no. 1, 11 January 1993.

⁴⁹ Ichikawa Baika, interview; Ichikawa Masuyo, interview by author, 23 March 2004, Tokyo, Japan.

Izumo no Okuni passed down the arts [with which]

We are blessed. We honor her

We work hard, while still developing our mental and artistic ability

Focusing straight ahead

We give it all, for our *kabuki*

Kabuki, kabuki, for our *kabuki*⁵⁰

The song lacks the elegant finesse of the haiku—one critic suggested that it is downright “childish”⁵¹—but what should not be overlooked is Sanshō’s unadulterated support of the troupe. Here the Ichikawa leader incorporated the troupe into what he viewed as the long lineage of Japanese female performers, from Uzume no Miko, the goddess who is credited with creating the first dance in order to lure the sun goddess Amaterasu out of her cave, to Okuni, the female founder of *kabuki*. In this way, he saw the troupe as descendents of traditional performers and as worthy of the same canonization. Indeed, he boasted to a Hamamatsu journalist while he was in town for the naming ceremony, “It’s likely that they are a ground-breaking, unprecedented case. After Okuni Kabuki, this troupe is a true miracle.”⁵² As quoted at the beginning of the chapter, Ichikawa Baika

⁵⁰ Fujii Kōsei, “Sengo no Nagoya Geinō Kōshi: Ichikawa Shōjo Kabuki to Fuji Kabuki o Chushin ni” [Postwar Nagoya Small Performance Movement: Focusing on Ichikawa Girls’ Kabuki and Fuji Kabuki], *Nagoya Geinō Bunka* [Nagoya Performance Culture] 1 (1992): 4; Ichikawa Baika, interview.

⁵¹ Fujii, “Sengo no Nagoya Geinō,” 4.

⁵² Uchiyama Tsuneo, “Hamamatsu to Jūdaime Danjūrō: Ichikawa Shōjo Kabuki Sodate no Oya” [Hamamatsu and Danjūro X: The Parent who Raised Ichikawa Girls’ Kabuki], *Tōtōmi* [The Far Lake] 25 (March 2002): 16.

would recall, “We often say that if it wasn’t for Master Sanshō none of this would have happened.”⁵³

Singing the troupe song was mandatory anytime Sanshō came to the dressing room. “It was like the emperor coming to visit,” Baika remembered. “He would come and say, ‘Okay, sing the song.’ . . . We would sing it, and then he would call out, ‘Okay, makeup!’ You know, we were so busy, and this was the one time we would all be assembled.”⁵⁴ During the remainder of 1953 and the beginning of 1954, Sanshō became a familiar face backstage and in the auditorium, clearly taking much more than a casual interest in the troupe.

The Naritaya headmaster, however, recognized his limitations as a performer and teacher of *kabuki*. Though he could advise the troupe adeptly and offer suggestions about which plays to perform, he understood that he was not necessarily the ideal teacher for the troupe. Instead, he used his influence to enlist whichever *kabuki* actor he felt knew the particular play in question the best to teach the troupe. Masujūrō recalled:

Sanshō would immediately write me a letter: Don’t you think they can do

“Kawashō” [from Chikamatsu Monzaemon’s *Shinjū Ten no Amijima*].⁵⁵ If so,

⁵³ Ichikawa Baika, interview.

⁵⁴ Ibid. Baika remembered every word of the song even in 2004, more than fifty years later. She sang it for me during our meeting, remarking that the song is always sung as part of the troupe’s annual reunions.

⁵⁵ Donald Keene, trans. “The Love Suicides at Amijima,” in *Major Plays of Chikamatsu*, rev. ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 387-425; Donald H. Shively, *The Love Suicide at Amijima: A Study of a Japanese Domestic Tragedy by Chikamatsu Monzaemon*, rev. ed. (Ann Arbor: Center for Japanese Studies, 1991 [1953]).

they had better study with Narikomaya [Nakamura Ganjirô II, 1902-1983]. If not, it'll be all wrong. And so, he would write letters of introduction.⁵⁶

With just one phone call or letter, Sanshō would connect the troupe to the top grand *kabuki* actors. For any Chikamatsu Monzaemon play, he would send the girls to Ganjirô II (see figure 12); for *shin kabuki* plays like *Toribeyama Shinjū*, to Ichikawa Jukai III (1886-1971); and for *shosagoto* or *matsubame* dances, to either Onoe Baikō VII or Onoe Shōroku III (1913-1989).⁵⁷ Moreover, later he would introduce them to the well-known Fujima-school choreographer and dance teacher, Fujima Fujiko (1907-1998).⁵⁸ Sanshō made all the arrangements, and actors were loath to refuse his requests. Thus, the girls were put in the enviable position of studying with some of the top *kabuki* actors of the day. While, on the whole, critics acknowledged the troupe's improvement that came with these special master classes, the *Asahi's* critic wondered aloud if “too many cooks were spoiling the broth.”⁵⁹

The Meiji-za Production

Though there is no extant record of Sanshō's choosing which plays the troupe would perform at Meiji-za in May 1953, one can be fairly certain that he had the last word (figure 10). Several of the pieces were the same that the troupe had presented in its Hamamatsu-za homecoming production in March 1953, after the Mitsukoshi production,

⁵⁶ Kurokawa Mitsuhiro, “Yoi Shidōsha ni Megumareru” [Blessed with Good Teachers], *Maboroshi no Ichikawa Shōjo Kabuki* [Phantom Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki], *Chūnichī Shinbun*, no.17, 8 February 1984.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*; Ichikawa Baika, “Shishō wa Ichi-ryū,” *Mainichi Shinbun*, 1 February 1993.

⁵⁸ Fujima Fujiko would be awarded the honor of “Living National Treasure” (*ningen kokuhō*) in 1985.

⁵⁹ Akiyama Yasusaburō, “Toki doki Me ni Fureru ‘Kusasa’” [Sometimes “Overdone” Acting], *Asahi Shinbun* (evening), 4 May 1953.

but this time, the program was more varied. Perhaps because the troupe took into consideration the critics' concerns that its troupe's previous programs had been dominated by puppet play adaptations, three of the seven plays on the Meiji-za program were from outside the puppet play repertory: *Tsuri Onna*, a dance piece derived from the *kyôgen* repertory; *Sono Kouta Yume no Yoshiwara*, a domestic drama, apparently requested by Sanshō's niece, Ichikawa Kōbai (later Suisen III); and Mokuami's *Izayoi Seishin*, a pure *kabuki* play. The four puppet plays were highlights from *Kagamiyama Kokyô no Nishikie*, "Terakoya," the "puppet movement" scene from *Hidakagawa*, and the "Shigure no Kotatsu" episode from Chikamatsu's *Shinjû Ten no Amijima*.

Once again, Sanshō composed a haiku to honor the troupe:

From today
butterflies in the green field
stretch and fly.⁶⁰

Here he compares the troupe to butterflies in a wide field, where they are free to fly away. In just two months since the troupe was last in Tokyo, the troupe had sprouted from tiny buds to blossoms, and now to butterflies soaring to new heights.⁶¹ Commensurate with their experience, Sanshō now commands the troupe to spread its wings and fly.

For Masujûrô, however, the problem was that this new field of a theatre was far too large for the current size of the troupe. Years later, he recounted the problem:

Mitsukoshi didn't have that big of a stage, but the Meiji-za was huge, and with a cast of just fifteen or sixteen, we would look ridiculously small on stage. We

⁶⁰ In Japanese, the haiku reads: 今日からはこやの蝶よ伸びて飛べ (*Kyo Kara wa Koya no Chô yo Nobite Tobe*). Meiji-za program, May 1953.

⁶¹ Ibid.

needed some eight or so ladies-in-waiting (*koshimoto*), or else it wouldn't look good. So I told everyone I knew, "It doesn't matter who, but find some more people—of course, girls." We somehow scrambled together a cast of twenty-five. But, of course, all of those new girls were novices. They had never performed in a play before. I believe the play was *Sendai Hagi*.⁶² How would we ever please our audience? How could I direct it in such a way so that it wouldn't be an eyesore, or an obstacle to the production? I assigned a place to each of them and told them to fix their eyes on a certain spot, that they were not to look up or down, that they were not to raise or lower their head. With that, the show went on. Boy, was the press excited when they saw all those ladies-in-waiting lined up. They wrote in their articles: "Those girls have such good manners; *kabuki* actors could also learn something from them!"⁶³

Several of these "novices" went on to become permanent members of the troupe. Among them was Kobayashi Toshie, Fukushô's sister, who would remain a member of the troupe for the duration of its existence.

The added bonus was that Prince Takamatsu Miya (1905-1987) and his wife visited the troupe members backstage and reassured Masujûrô that the performance was a success. Baika remembered their visit, "The royal highness greeted us with 'Oh, you're

⁶²According to the program, the play in question was actually *Kagamiyama Kokyô no Nishiki-e*. Meiji-za program, May 1953.

⁶³ Ichikawa Masujûrô, "Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki Kôenkai," 6. I was unable to locate any reviews from this production that extolled the good manners of the actors playing ladies in waiting. However, future reviews of the troupe often noted such qualities of the supporting role players. See, for example, "Misuji-san ni Horebore, Masuyo no Dôjôji Hyôjo wa Mane Dekinu" [Enchanted by Misuji; Cannot Imitate Masuyo's Expression in *Dôjôji*], *Ôsaka Nichi Nichi Shinbun*, 7 July 1955.

so young.’ She was surprised, and the prince said that he was impressed with a girl playing such a solemn man. They praised us and made a big impression on us kids.”⁶⁴

The critics, as well, continued to applaud the troupe’s efforts. Akiyama Yasusaburô of the *Asahi*, who would cover the troupe’s Tokyo productions for the next ten years, noted that the performers handled the Meiji-za’s stage with skill;⁶⁵ Miyake Shûtarô of the *Mainichi* wrote, “many people are saying the troupe is great, and there are times when one even forgets the label girl (*shôjo*)”;⁶⁶ while Robert A. Carson of the *Nippon Times* declared that the troupe’s versatile program would “stagger a male troupe,” presenting “an amazing display of style, technique, and ability to interpret the old classics.” He also warmly praised the troupe’s male-role actors, Misuji and Fukushô, and lauded Baika’s Izayoi.⁶⁷ Meanwhile, the popular monthly magazine *Bunka Seigatsu* proclaimed that the troupe was “A Topic to Hurl at the Theatre World.”⁶⁸

Yet, despite these accolades, the troupe was not immune from criticism. As might be gauged from the headline, “Sometimes ‘Overdone’ Acting,” Akiyama (*Asahi*) wrote that several parts were overacted and smacked of rural technique. He called particular attention to places where the direction differed from that of grand *kabuki*, such as the

⁶⁴ Ichikawa Baika, “Shishô wa Ichi-ryû Mainichi Shonichi,” *Mainichi Shinbun*, 1 February 1993.

⁶⁵ Akiyama, “Toki doki,” *Asahi Shinbun*, 4 May 1953.

⁶⁶ Miyake Shûtarô, “Daigekijô ni Deta Shôjo Kabuki: Sono Gei wa ko shite Umareta” [Girls Kabuki Appears on a Big Stage: How Their Art was Born], *Mainichi Shinbun* (evening), 4 May 1953.

⁶⁷ Robert A. Carson, “Onna Kabuki Finishes Run at Meiji-za Today,” *Nippon Times*, 7 May 1953.

⁶⁸ “Gekikai ni Wadai o Nageta: Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki” [A Topic to Hurl at the Theatre World: Ichikawa Girls’ Kabuki], *Bunka Seigatsu* [Cultural Life], May 1953.

decision to forgo the much-anticipated feature of a horse in *Sono Kouta Yume no Yoshiwara*. He was also surprised that the troupe neglected to use a palanquin to carry the courtesan Komurasaki in the same play and the character Matsuô in “Terakoya.”⁶⁹ And, despite Masujûrô’s remarks that reviewers lauded the female-role specialists, Carson (*Nippon Times*) wrote critically that he believed the troupe’s “weakest fault” was its female portrayals:

The girls who portray the *kabuki* heroines appear weak and shrill in contrast to the male impersonators. No doubt the young ladies pitch their feminine characters’ voices as high as possible in order that the male impersonators will appear more convincing.⁷⁰

Carson acknowledged that all the plays “are enjoyable, with the girls excelling in the Chikamatsu [Monzaemon] and [Kawatake] Mokuami pieces,” but he also stated unambiguously that its “unattractive offering” was “Terakoya,” “where their work is at times inspired, but generally erratic.”⁷¹

Toita’s Backlash

Thus, from the beginning of its big-city career, the all-female troupe never escaped criticism. Yet, curiously, this is precisely what *kabuki* critic Toita Yasuji (1915-1993) would have had his readers believe. Toita, who was thirty-seven years old when he penned what was perhaps the most scathing critique directed at the troupe, would become one of *kabuki*’s most eminent critics. Writing in the July 1953 issue of the highbrow

⁶⁹ Akiyama, “Toki doki,” *Asahi Shinbun*, 4 May 1953.

⁷⁰ Carson, “Onna Kabuki Finishes Run at Meiji-za Today,” *Nippon Times*, 7 May 1953.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

Geijutsu Shinchō (Artistic New Tides), Toita penned an article that appeared almost two months after the Meiji-za production and five months after the Mitsukoshi's, enough time to digest the media's (and the public's) views of the troupe.⁷²

From Toita's perspective, the overarching reaction to the troupe's two Tokyo productions had been one of sheer mesmerism and uncritical pandering to "Kabuki's Girl Prodigies" (his quotations). Wondering aloud what all the fuss was about, he scolded readers for being surprised that contemporary women would perform *kabuki*, since after all, there had been several well-known *kabuki* actresses, including Kumehachi, Matsumoto Kinshi, and Nakamura Kasen. Times have changed in such a dramatic way, he noted cynically, that women, together with young men, wearing bean-specked headbands over permanent-waved hair now perform the once-taboo custom for women of carrying the portable shrine (*mikoshi*) during festivals. "There is nothing to be surprised at," he further admonished. "We live in an age in which [pop-singer] Misora Hibari charges more admission than [*shinpa* actor] Kitamura Rokurō, and Kinkakuji [temple] is burned to the ground, at the whim of a youth."⁷³ In such a topsy-turvy world, should the addition of a girls' *kabuki* troupe elicit such a furor? he asked. The girls too, he mused, must wonder what all the fuss is over.

While acknowledging that the Mitsukoshi production (it is unclear whether or not he attended the Meiji-za program) was "magnificent," he was quick to point out that the

⁷² Toita Yasuji, "Ichikawa Shōjo Kabuki: Kabuki no Kuni no 'Tensai Shōjo'" [Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki: *Kabuki World's* "Girl Prodigies"], *Geijutsu Shinchō* [Artistic New Tides] (July 1953): 70-72.

⁷³ Ibid. In 1950, Kinkakuji (The Temple of the Golden Pavilion) was set on fire and completely destroyed by a young man, who was attempting to protest the "degradation and commercialization of Buddhism." Stanley Weinstein, "Kinkakuji," *Kodansha Encyclopedia of Japan* (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1983), 4: 213.

“glowing” press was caused by reasons that had nothing to do with the girls’ performances.⁷⁴ As we have already seen, however, the reviews of the production, while positive, were hardly the obsequious PR that Toita made them out to be. Going to great lengths to set himself up as an objective critic, he wrote, “As for me, I don’t in any way bear any ill will against this troupe; more than [critics] treating the troupe’s production with silent contempt or feeling bitter about it, this [positive] reaction is more pleasant.”⁷⁵

Yet, a careful reading of his article suggests, on the contrary, that Toita would have preferred for the troupe not to have received such a rousing welcome in Tokyo. For, in his mind, the troupe’s unprecedented success in Tokyo stemmed from four major factors that were entirely unrelated to the troupe’s artistic talent: the pre-performance publicity, the Mitsukoshi venue, the current state of grand *kabuki*, and Ichikawa Sanshō’s patronage.

First and foremost, Toita believed that the pre-performance publicity was misguided. Because it was reported that the troupe was amazingly talented before it even arrived in Tokyo, critics, and by extension the public, naturally assumed that the troupe would be excellent. Yet, in the same breath, he noted paradoxically that one of the reasons the audience gave the troupe such hearty applause was because spectators’ “expectations were so low.”⁷⁶ Furthermore, he argued, critics had no standards by which to judge the troupe, since “never before in history has there been a girls’ *kabuki* troupe.” The performers’ young age alone would make critics want to write about the troupe, he

⁷⁴ Toita, “Ichikawa Shōjo Kabuki,” 72.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 71.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 72.

wrote, implying that its *shôjo* status made it an irresistible topic for reviewers and editors, who had granted “generous space” to the production. Moreover, he warned against applying current critical standards that had been popular since the time of Ichikawa Danjûrô IX. Though he did not enumerate what these standards were, one can surmise that he was referring to Danjûrô’s emphasis on *haragei* and probably to Miyake (*Mainichi*) for taking the troupe to task on this issue.

The Mitsukoshi venue was also a factor in the troupe’s success, since spectators would automatically assume that anything the theatre produced would be of high caliber. Moreover, he mused that spectators had become bored with grand *kabuki*, since top actors “have lost their popularity” and “spill their family artistic secrets to reporters.”⁷⁷ Finally, he proposed that the troupe’s success was wholly thanks to Sanshô. “Had the troupe just come from Aichi prefecture and used their private names, it’s unclear whether or not theatres would produce it,” he wrote.⁷⁸

It is perhaps unnecessary to note that grand *kabuki* performers, especially the scions of famous families, received, and continue to receive, all these advantages based on their birthright alone, something that Toita conveniently fails to mention. They receive pre-publicity, perform in the most prestigious theatres, and profit from the social capital of hereditary stage names. Take these so-called advantages away from the girls, and all that would be left on Toita’s list was the current damaged state of grand *kabuki*, a somewhat contentious charge. Though a significant number of senior actors, including the esteemed “Rokudaime” (Onoe Kikugorô VI), had died recently, several junior actors

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

such as Ebizô IX and Onoe Baikô VII (1915-1995) were earning critical and popular acclaim in new hits such as *Genji Monogatari* and old favorites like “Genyadana.”⁷⁹

But for Toita, the crucial issue was that the troupe did not meet *kabuki*’s artistic criteria. Though admitting that it was better than “student *kabuki*” (which he admitted left him “feeling cold”), the troupe’s performers were not any better than mechanical puppets. The troupe was merely calling itself *kabuki*, he argued, while in actuality doing “*kubi-furi shibai*” (neck-movement theatre). As discussed earlier, *kubi-furi shibai* was a popular Tokugawa-period theatre genre in which children would imitate puppets to the accompaniment of a *gidayû shamisen* player and narrator, who would be visible throughout the performance, reciting the actual dialogue and any exposition. Children, perhaps mimicking the stylized *mie* pose, would rotate their necks side to side and pantomime the action, mastering the movement without having to recite any of the dialogue, something that had come to be expected of *kabuki* actors performing plays from puppet theatre pieces. Toita undoubtedly intended for the label “*kubi-furi*” to be an insult. He wrote, “The *Asahi*’s headline summed up [the troupe’s performance] perfectly: “Puppet Plays Without Operators.”⁸⁰ A close reading of the *Asahi*’s review, however, reveals that this headline was intended to compliment the troupe’s precise rendering of puppetlike movements; Toita, taking the headline out of context, made it sound like the

⁷⁹ On occasion, critics did use their Ichikawa Girls’ Kabuki reviews to vent their frustration at the lack of talent in the male *kabuki* world. See, for example Tomita Yasuhiko, “Azayaka na “Noriaibune” [A Lively ‘Ferry’], *Ôsaka Nichi Nichi Shinbun*, 5 February 1955. For a translation of “Genyadana,” see A.C. Scott, trans., *Genyadana* (Tokyo: Hokuseido, 1953).

⁸⁰ Toita, “Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki,” 72.

newspaper had intended it as criticism.⁸¹ Even if one allows that the troupe at this stage was only doing so-called elementary *kubi-furi shibai* theatre, however, Toita never even acknowledged that such a convention was the norm for Tokugawa-period all-boy troupes.

At the heart of Toita's criticism raged the dialectic between *kata* (corporeal patterns) and *kokoro* (the heart), the warp and weft that are the basis for great acting in *kabuki*. With only the physical motions, the acting comes off as mechanical and empty; but with only psychological motivation, the foundational *kabuki* choreography is lost. At the beginning of an actor's training, emphasis is placed on mastery of the *kata*; only later, if ever, are the psychological components of acting taught.⁸² Indeed, it is widely believed that it takes at least ten years for an actor to master the *kata* "basics" before integrating the "*kokoro*." For Toita, only a performance that could fuse both of these elements was interesting. "When a cat sits on top of an electric piano an even more interesting sound emerges," he wrote, scolding the troupe for its so-called mechanical approach.⁸³ Did Toita, who made a point of stating that critics should not judge the girls by the same standards to which grand *kabuki* were held, really expect the troupe to have attained the same type of psychological mastery that would be expected of a senior performer? Surely,

⁸¹ Critic Tomita Yasuhiko, however, was much more accepting of *kubi-furi*-type theatre. He wrote that Misuji's portrayal of Sawaichi on the cliffs of Tsubosaka Shrine reminded him of "*kubi-furi shibai* performed in a colorful manner" and that "Bunraku-za is also attempting to revive *kubi-furi shibai*, which makes me nostalgic." (Tomita Yasuhiko, "Netsuen to Kyōwa no Kesshō: Hikaru Misuji, Masuyo no 'Tsubosaka'" [Enthusiasm and Harmony's Crystallization: Shinning Misuji, Masuyo's 'Tsubosaka'], *Ōsaka Nichi Nichi Shinbun*, 5 March 1956.) Some critics no doubt prized actors' attempts to act like puppets. It is possible that the difference in opinion between Tomita and Toita reflected an inherent bias between Osaka and Tokyo, the former still embracing, and even nostalgic for, the puppet theatre, which originally developed in the Kansai region.

⁸² See, for example, Samuel L. Leiter, "Four Interviews with *Kabuki* Actors," in *Frozen Moments: Writings on Kabuki, 1966-2001* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell East Asia Series, 2002), 11-31.

⁸³ Toita Yasuji, "Ichikawa Shōjo *Kabuki*," 72.

competent understanding of the roles, one component of *kokoro*, should have been demonstrated by the girls even at this early stage, but to peg the girls as “neck-movement” performers seems unduly harsh.

At the end of the day, the troupe simply failed him to move Toita. Indeed, he charged that *kabuki* spectators like to get drunk on performances; without intoxication, the pleasures were few. Though he acknowledged that the troupe was like a “fresh drink” in the *kabuki* world, it was, in his mind, a decidedly non-alcoholic one.⁸⁴

The troupe’s reaction to Toita’s article is not recorded. Though Sanshō never referred to Toita personally, he did take up the topic of “*kubi-furi shibai*” in a letter to Masujūrō several months later, which was probably more than just coincidental.⁸⁵ In short, he did not want the troupe performing *kubi-furi shibai*. If Masujūrō insisted on the troupe performing plays from the puppet repertory that were movement-heavy, he would recommend that they perform ones that had slightly more dialogue, such as Act VIII of *Kanadehon Chūshingura*, the second act of *Nijūshiko*, and the *michiyuki* from *Imoseyama Onna Teikin*.⁸⁶ “But for a piece like ‘Ninoguchi Mura,’” he advised, “where the direction and dialogue is changed around, it smacks of *kubi-furi*, so it will be a minus.”⁸⁷ In this way, it is likely that Toita’s criticism served as a wake-up call that the troupe could not rest on its laurels. Just because members were particularly skilled at performing the

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ichikawa Sanshō V to Ichikawa Masujūrō, no. 8, 7 February 1954.

⁸⁶ Andrew C. Gerstle, Kiyoshi Inobe, and William P. Malm, trans., *Theatre as Music: The Bunraku Play Mt. Imo and Mt. Se: An Exemplary Tale of Womanly Virtue* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1990).

⁸⁷ Ibid.

puppetlike movements from *bunraku*, they needed to expand their active repertory to include pieces that would show themselves as more versatile. What does seem clear is that Toita's criticism did not hurt the troupe. Though it would not perform again in Tokyo until the following summer, the troupe was busy in the meantime performing in western Japan.

Touring Japan, 1953-1955

Over the next eighteen months, the troupe performed at the Bunraku-za in Osaka three times, played at the Yachiyo in Kobe twice, and the Yasaka Kaikan in the festive Gion district of Kyoto three times, in addition to performing at the Hamamatsu-za and touring the countryside. In Osaka, the mayor attended a performance and congratulated the troupe in person, and in Kyoto, *maiko* (geisha apprentices) flocked to see girls their own age perform *kabuki*. The reviews radiated sheer joy at the troupe's prowess. Like many of the reactions already discussed, critics reflected on the preconceived notions that they held about a girls' *kabuki* troupe. Writing in *Kyôto Shinbun*, one critic commented:

You may have already heard about this troupe's content and power, but, in any case, it is truly excellent. . . . However, until one actually sees the troupe perform, no matter how much one says, it's difficult to believe. They are fifteen and sixteen-year-old girls, so I thought they would be handicapped by a lack of curiosity and by the fact that they are girls. However, when I saw them perform, I was surprised. Their acting is not at all disorderly; they displayed solid voices, clear preparation, and perfect staging.⁸⁸

⁸⁸ Goto, first name?, "Hatsu no Minami-za Kôen: Ichikawa Shôwa Kabuki," [Minami-za Debut: Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki], *Kyôto Shinbun*, 16 June 1954.

Almost one year later, the same critic reflected on the earlier Minami-za productions that he saw:

Before seeing the troupe perform, I thought that since all the girls would be in their teens it would just be imitation (*monomane*) or children's theatre (*chinko shibai*), but when I actually saw the troupe perform, I realized that they were excellent, to the extent that even adults could not reach. Their art was solid, they were innocent, cute, but serious. They surprised their audience, fascinated people, and everyone in the large Minami-za theatre just gushed with pleasure.⁸⁹

The *Ôsaka Nichi Nichi* was just as enthusiastic (in 1954, it would run five stories on the troupe in ten days), with the senior critic Tomita Yasuhiko going so far as to contend that the troupe was “breaking the traditional feudalistic structure of *kabuki*.”⁹⁰ Breaking the “feudalistic structure,” in this case, referred to the fact that girls lacking family connection had penetrated *kabuki*'s exclusively male world. As will be discussed in chapter 4, the fact that the troupe continued to perform plays that reflected a feudalistic mentality was not something with which Tomita, or anyone else for that matter, took issue.⁹¹

⁸⁹ Goto, Minami-za program, January 1955.

⁹⁰ Tomita Yasuhiko, “Tadashii Seichô ni Kyôdan,” *Ôsaka Nichi Nichi Shinbun*, 15 June 1953. Likewise, the movie star, Tsukikata Ryûnosuke, later wrote, “I think the day is not far when you will show us your great success in breaking the precedent [that pronounced] ‘Do Not cultivate Women’s *Kabuki*.’” Tsukikata Ryûnosuke, “Fuan no Kotoba” [A Word From a Fan], February 1955, Misono-za Program, 13.

⁹¹ In this respect, the troupe’s goals differed greatly from the independent, leftist Zenshin-za troupe that was founded in 1931. Though it originally strove to ban any policies that fostered a feudalistic, hierarchical system, it has largely retracted those initial goals, in favor of star billing and nepotism regarding casting practice. See Brian Powell, “Communist *Kabuki*: A Contradiction in Terms?” in *A Kabuki Reader: History and Performance*, ed. Samuel L. Leiter, 167-185 (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2002 [1979]), 167-185.

By June 1954, the troupe had graduated to performing at the prestigious Minami-za in Kyoto, and in August, the troupe had returned to Tokyo to play at the Meiji-za, in what was reported to be a “smash hit” (see figure 11) and “the most popular show of the month.”⁹² This production, however, also caused the troupe to go into debt. Financial records from the time are not extant, but Misuji recalled several years later that the troupe was severely rebuked, and accounts were henceforth more scrupulously scrutinized.⁹³ Sanshō, however, did not remark on this matter in his letters.

During each performance, a short “name taking” ceremony (*shūmei hiro*) was held at which Sanshō conferred professional stage names on five new members. Once again, he wrote a haiku to honor the troupe:

In the moonlight, one mistakes
 The maiden blossom
 For the male flower⁹⁴

Just as one could mistake the female flower for the male one, one had difficulty distinguishing Ichikawa Girls’ Kabuki performers from their male contemporaries. Their

⁹² Yamamoto, Yuki, “All-Girl Kabuki is a Smash Hit,” *Nippon Times*, 17 August 1954; Akiyama Yasusaburō, “Natsu Kare Fukitobasu Saikō no Iri” [The Highest Attendance Figures Blow Away the Dead Season], *Asahi Shinbun* (evening), 22 August 1954. It is only fair to mention that August is generally a slow month in the Tokyo theatre world.

⁹³ Ichikawa Misuji, “Shōjo Kara Onna e no Nayami” [Concerns (about going) from a Girl to a Woman], *Fujin Gahō* [Ladies Illustrated] (September 1958): 233.

⁹⁴ In Japanese, the *haiku* reads: 月に見紛う女郎花男郎花 (*Tsuki ni Mimagau, Ominaeshi Otokoeshi*). Meiji-za program, August 1954. Ichikawa Baika remembered the haiku as: 目に見まごう女郎花男郎花 (*Me ni Mimagō Ominaeshi Otokoeshi*), which can be rendered into English as: In the pupil of my eye, mistaking the maiden blossom for the male flower. Ichikawa Baika, “Suzume Hyaku Made Odori Wasurezu” [Never Forgetting the Customs that One Learned as a Child], *Mainichi Shinbun*, no. 15, 19 April 1993.

female sex, Sanshō felt, should not bar the girls from performing on the *kabuki* stage.⁹⁵ In turn, he later acknowledged payment for the names from the Hamamatsu-za.⁹⁶

As is the case with mainstream *kabuki* actors who take a new stage name, the troupe performed the naming ceremony in other major cities—Kyoto in September, Osaka in November, and Nagoya in December—in order to allow more spectators to witness the festivities. Dressed in matching costumes imprinted with the Naritaya crest, the girls would gather on stage and bow to the audience, asking for its support as they assumed their new stage names. Since the new names had been printed in the program, there was never any element of surprise, but audience members must have been delighted by the fact that the girls were performing the same venerable ritual practiced in grand *kabuki*.

After making another tour of Kyoto, Osaka, and Nagoya, the troupe returned to Tokyo in March 1955, but to a different theatre. From Sanshō's correspondence with Masujūrō, it is clear that he was hard at work trying to find a suitable venue.⁹⁷ His networking paid off, as this time the girls played at Tōyoko Hall. Located on the ninth

⁹⁵ Following the materialist feminist school practice, I distinguish between “sex” and “gender,” with the understanding that Judith Butler’s post-structuralist critique has challenged such categorization. Gayle Rubin is generally credited as the first theorist to conceptualize the difference between sex and gender. She wrote: “Every society also has a sex/gender system—a set of arrangements by which the biological raw material of human sex and procreation is shaped by human, social intervention and satisfied in a conventional manner.” See her “The Traffic in Women: Notes on the ‘Political Economy of Sex,’” in *Toward an Anthology of Women*, ed. Rayna Reiter, 157-210 (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975); Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990); *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of “Sex”* (New York: Routledge, 1993).

⁹⁶ Ichikawa Sanshō V to Ichikawa Masujūrō, 9 April 1955, no. 13, Ichikawa Shōjo Kabuki collection. Sakuragaoka Museum, Toyokawa, Japan.

⁹⁷ On Sanshō’s efforts to secure a Tokyo venue for the troupe, see Ichikawa Sanshō V to Ichikawa Masujūrō, no. 5, 21 January 1955; no. 6, 23 January 1954; no. 20, 14 September 1955. He had considered the Mitsukoshi Theatre again as well as the Hibiya Town.

floor of the Tōyoko department store in Shibuya, it was Shōchiku's newest and most fashionable theatre.⁹⁸ The theatre had opened its doors in December 1954 and had quickly become a popular place for young *kabuki* actors, and on occasion, more senior actors, to receive more time in the spotlight.⁹⁹ It did not have the established prestige of the Kabuki-za, Meiji-za, or Shinbashi Enbujō, nor was it an ideal *kabuki* theatre (it lacked a conventional, full-length *hanamichi*) but, situated in the heart of Tokyo's "youth" district, it was deemed the perfect place for the girls. Over the next four years, the troupe performed at Tōyoko Hall six times. To commemorate the troupe's new Tokyo home, Sanshō wrote in the program:

Below the new eaves

Perfumed with fragrant cypress

The swallow's nest¹⁰⁰

This time, Sanshō compares the troupe to the swallows who do not make Tokyo their permanent home, but migrate from one location to another. As noted earlier, cypress, a wood native to Japan, conveyed the idea that the troupe was performing at the very same theatres around the country as its grand *kabuki* counterparts.

It was widely agreed that Tōyoko Hall was an excellent venue for the troupe.

Writing in the program, Akiyama (*Asahi*) noted:

⁹⁸ Shino, *Nihon Koten*, 256-260. In 1969, Tōyoko Ho-ru (hall) became Tōyoko Gekijō (theatre), before closing in 1985. *Ibid.*, 256.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 256-260.

¹⁰⁰ In Japanese, the haiku reads: 新しき檜の香の軒やつばめの巢 (*Atarashiki Hi no Ka no Noki ya Tsubame no Su*).

Now it feels like the troupe has found an appropriate stage. The first stage they performed on at Mitsukoshi was too small, the second, Meiji-za, was too big. The stage at Tôyoko Hall seems to fit the troupe.¹⁰¹

With the capability to seat one thousand spectators, it was bigger than the Mitsukoshi (six-hundred seats), but smaller than the Meiji-za (approx. 1,552 seats).¹⁰²

Meanwhile, the troupe continued to receive excellent reviews, leading some critics to muse that it was performing a service to the greater *kabuki* world by expanding its potential audience base. For a critic of the *Kyôto Shinbun*, the troupe's burgeoning popularity was not a matter of the low ticket prices, but the fact that it presented *kabuki* in a more accessible manner than mainstream, male troupes:

It might have something to do with the cheap price of tickets, but the troupe's success does not have to do entirely with the price of tickets. It is because they do things to attract their audiences. I think that theatre personnel must recognize that this troupe has had the strength to mobilize so many spectators at present. This troupe introduces *kabuki* to people who have not seen *kabuki*, and we must praise its ability to get people interested in *kabuki*. While thinking that the troupe's performances are a wonder, people who come to see the troupe perform will deepen their understanding of *kabuki*.¹⁰³

The *Ôsaka Nichi Nichi Shinbun* echoed this sentiment, noting that the troupe's ability to attract "young girls," particularly the fans of Takarazuka and OSK (Ôsaka Shôchiku

¹⁰¹ Tôyoko Hall program, March 1955, 1.

¹⁰² Shino, *Nihon Koten*, 256; *Engeki Hyakka Daijiten*, 5: 370. The seat count for the Meiji-za is from the theatre that was rebuilt in 1919, which was destroyed in the 1945 Tokyo fire bombings.

¹⁰³ Minami-za program, January 1955.

Kageki), contributed to developing new spectators for mainstream *kabuki*.¹⁰⁴ This new, untapped audience was believed to comprise mainly young women, who were unfamiliar with *kabuki*, but would grow to appreciate it and begin to attend male productions as well. Therefore, the troupe was assisting grand *kabuki* by attracting new faces to the theatre.

It is impossible to confirm if using the troupe as bait to draw the non-*kabuki* theatregoer to mainstream *kabuki* theatres was part of Shôchiku's official strategy to co-sponsor the troupe, as these critics suggest. It is true that the troupe was occasionally commissioned to perform pedagogic “*Kabuki* Classroom Events” aimed at attracting high school audiences, in the same way that the Kokuritsu Gekijô (National Theatre) today offers a similar summer program.¹⁰⁵ Still, these “classroom programs” generally took place at non-Shôchiku theatres, such as Misono-za, Hamamatsu-za, or rural theatres, where it was assumed that spectators had fewer opportunities to see *kabuki*.¹⁰⁶ The only evidence that Shôchiku hoped to profit commercially from its association with the troupe is found in President Ôtani Takejirô's greeting printed in the troupe's February 1956 Minami-za program, in which he spent the bulk of his essay imploring the girls' audience to attend performances at the newly opened Bunraku-za in Dôtonbori in Osaka.¹⁰⁷ Program notes for Shôchiku's mainstream male productions were never used to promote

¹⁰⁴ Tomita Yasuhiko, “Netsuen to Kyôwa no Kesshô,” *Ôsaka Nichi Nichi Shinbun*, 5 March 1956. He noted that this has also been a contribution of the Zenshin-za.

¹⁰⁵ See, for example, Fujii, “Sengo no Nagoya Geinô Kôshi,” 3-4.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ The older Bunraku-za was located in Yodobashi Osaka. Ôtani Takejirô, “Minami-za no Nigatsu to Awasete Minasama ni Onegai no Koto” [February at Minami-za, and a Special Request for Everyone], Minami-za program, February 1956, 2. The new Dôtonbori Bunraku-za opened in January 1956 and was used for a variety of innovative *ningyô jôruri* productions, including *Hamuretto* (Hamlet) in July 1956. See Shino, *Nihon Koten Geinô*, 98.

Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki, but their productions were generally advertised in grand *kabuki* programs, along with any other productions scheduled to take place at Shôchiku-owned theatres.

A shift in the girls' production schedule can be discerned at the beginning of 1955. For its first few years of professional touring, the troupe had performed for various lengths of time: a week at the Mitsukoshi, twenty-three days at the Naka-za, ten days at the Misono-za, not to mention its unprecedented sixty-day production at the Hamamatsu-za. There had been several times when the troupe had performed frequently during the month, albeit at different theatres (in June 1953, the troupe had performed in Osaka, Kobe, and Kyoto, and, in August, in Osaka and Kyoto). Yet, beginning in 1955, runs became, on average, longer, with several, such as the May 1955 Minami-za production, stretching to twenty-five days, the standard length of Shôchiku grand *kabuki* productions. Every month was different; sometimes the run would begin on the first of the month, other times, the first part of the month was reserved for intensive rehearsals and dance lessons, and, occasionally, even a quick trip home to visit with family. Taking into account its heavy travel schedule, the troupe applied for accident insurance for 40 members—26 performers and 14 staff members—over the summer.¹⁰⁸ According to the newspaper, this was a “rare case,” but a necessary measure since the troupe had plans to spend more time out of town than in Hamamatsu City. Indeed, even though the Hamamatsu-za, in theory, owned the troupe, the majority of its productions were scheduled for out of town. It was just as Masujûrô had hoped.

¹⁰⁸ “Shôjo Kabuki Ichiryû ga Rôesai Hoken Kanyû” [Girls' *Kabuki* Leading Members Apply for Worker's Accident Compensation Insurance], *Enshyu* [sic] *Shinbun*, 13 July 1955.

Meanwhile, the troupe's membership grew, and the repertory expanded to include a larger variety of pieces. According to cast lists printed in programs, it appears that the company averaged around twenty-four members during the years 1954 and 1955.

Masujûrô, however, had to be persuaded by Sanshô to continue to audition and hire new recruits. As Sanshô instructed him, "There may be some who are talented, and so you will be able to choose good new additions for the troupe."¹⁰⁹ Many young girls with extensive dance and performance experience had seen the troupe perform, and several, such as Mori Mineko (b. 1937, later Ichikawa Kobeni), Kôchô, Nobuko, Mutsuko, and Sanae, auditioned and joined the troupe during 1954 and 1955.

The most pressing repertory issue facing the troupe was to master more pure *kabuki*, domestic dramas, and dance pieces. As discussed earlier, however, during its formative years, the girls' troupe offered an unbalanced program, performing mainly plays from the puppet repertory. But, as it matured, it began to attempt newer pieces drawn from genres outside of the puppet theatre. Notable additions were several dance pieces, including *Noriabune*, *Kotobuki Ayatsuri Sanbasô*, *Sannin Sanbasô*, *Kotobuki Sannin Sanbasô*, *Ninnin Dôjôji*, and *Musume Dôjôji*; pieces derived from *nô* and *kyôgen*: *Tsuri Onna*, *Sannin Katawa*, *Tsuchigumo*, and *Migawari Zazen*; as well as *Toribeyama Shinjû* and *Shuzenji Monogatari*, two *shin kabuki* (new *kabuki*) pieces by Okamoto Kidô, the most well-known playwright of the genre. The troupe also added *ningyô jôruri*

¹⁰⁹ Ichikawa Sanshô V to Ichikawa Masujûrô, no. 7, 4 February 1955.

(*bunraku*) pieces that it had never performed before, such as *Domo Mata*,¹¹⁰ *Kajiwara Heizô no Ishikiri*,¹¹¹ and scenes from *Imoseyama*.

Of course, many pieces that the troupe had debuted back in the summer of 1952 at the Hamamatsu-za became part of the troupe's permanent repertory. Pieces from the *ningyô jôruri* repertory that the troupe had performed previously, such as *Meiboku Sendai Hagi*, "Hikimado,"¹¹² "Moritsuna Jinya," "Sanemori Monogatari,"¹¹³ "Ninoguchi Mura," "Nozaki Mura," *Awa no Naruto*, "Amagasaki," *Gappô*, "Terakoya," "Hidakagawa," *Shinjû Ten no Amijima*, *Tsubosaka Reigenki*, *Shinrei Yaguchi no Watashi*, and "Sakaya," became the troupe's staples. Plays from the pure *kabuki* sub-genre, such as *Benten Kozô*, "Suzugamori," and *Ise Ondo*, also became a core part of the troupe's repertory. During the mid-1950s, at least one of these pieces invariably showed up on every program the troupe performed. At the same time, more obscure pieces, such as *Mito Kômonki* and *Zôhō Chûshingura*, were dropped from the repertory.

¹¹⁰ Holly A. Blumner, trans., "Matahei the Stutterer," in *Kabuki Plays On Stage: Brilliance and Bravado, 1697-1766*, eds. James R. Brandon and Samuel L. Leiter, 66-93 (Honolulu: University of Hawaii, 2002).

¹¹¹ William Lee, trans., "The Stone-Cutting Feat of Kajiwara," in *Kabuki Plays On Stage: Brilliance and Bravado, 1697-1766*, eds. James R. Brandon and Samuel L. Leiter, 112-139 (Honolulu: University of Hawaii, 2002).

¹¹² Cody M. Poulton, trans., "The Skylight," in *Kabuki Plays On Stage: Brilliance and Bravado, 1697-1766*, eds. James R. Brandon and Samuel L. Leiter, 234-259 (Honolulu: University of Hawaii, 2002).

¹¹³ Katherine Saltzman-Li, trans., "The Sanemori Story," in *Kabuki Plays On Stage: Brilliance and Bravado, 1697-1766*, eds. James R. Brandon and Samuel L. Leiter, 260-286 (Honolulu: University of Hawaii, 2002).

The most popular additions were undoubtedly *Narukami*,¹¹⁴ *Kanjinchô*, and *Ibaraki*,¹¹⁵ all of which had been featured at the Meiji-za in August 1954. Marveling at the number of splashy pieces on the program, the *Yomiuri* critic exclaimed, “It’s like going to see the Dan-Kiku festival.”¹¹⁶ *Ibaraki*, found in the Onoe Kikugorô family collection, includes a spectacular finale in which a demon disguised as an old woman reveals itself and engages in a riveting fight scene—a new challenge for the troupe, namely for Fukushô and Misuji.¹¹⁷ *Narukami*, and *Kanjinchô*, however, held particularly special significance for the troupe, since both were part of the *kabuki jûhachiban* (eighteen favorite plays) codified and passed down by Danjûrô VII. As discussed in the introduction, these plays were (and are) considered family art (*ie no gei*) “owned” by the Ichikawa Danjûrô house. Though actors from other families may perform the plays, protocol requires the permission of the Ichikawa headmaster.

Performing *Kanjinchô*, in particular, was a major coup for the troupe. Danjûrô IX had banished Ichikawa Ennosuke I (1855-1922) from the Naritaya house in 1874, after discovering that he had played Benkei in *Kanjinchô* without permission, only to readmit

¹¹⁴ James R. Brandon, trans., “Saint Narukami and the God Fudô,” in *Kabuki: Five Classic Plays* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1992), 95-164.

¹¹⁵ Leonard C. Pronko and Tomono Mitsu, trans., “The Demon Ibaraki,” in *Kabuki Plays On Stage: Restoration and Reform*, eds. James R. Brandon and Samuel L. Leiter, 234-257 (Honolulu: University of Hawaii, 2003).

¹¹⁶ Andô Tsuruo, “Sutorigami no Yosa,” *Yomiuri Shinbun*, 6 August 1954. The “Dan-Kiku-Sa,” sometimes called the “Dan-Kiku,” is held every May at the Kabuki-za in commemoration of the three great Meiji-period *kabuki* actors: Ichikawa Danjûrô IX, Onoe Kikugorô V, and Ichikawa Sadanji I. See Waseda Daigaku Engeki Hakubutsukan, ed., *Engeki Hyakka Daijiten*, 3: 538.

¹¹⁷ The Onoe Kikugorô collection is called the “Shinko Engeki Jûshshu” (Collection of Ten New and Old Plays). *Tsuchigumo* and *Migawari Zazen*, two other plays performed by the Ichikawa Girls’ Kabuki Troupe, are also included in this collection.

him many years later in 1886.¹¹⁸ Like Ennosuke, Kumehachi was excommunicated for performing Benkei in 1891.¹¹⁹ She, too, was later reinstated in the Naritaya house, but judging from this piece's troubled history, it would have been perilous for the troupe to perform it without Sanshō's permission.¹²⁰ As the *Asahi* wrote, "It is truly a rare event for the master to grant permission to perform *Kanjinchō*. . . . Doing *Kanjinchō* was risky. As for a woman performing Benkei in the past, Kumehachi only performed it with the title *Atakagawa*."¹²¹ The only time Sanshō discussed *Kanjinchō* in his extant letters, however, was when he stated that he needed more time to make a decision as to whether or not to have the troupe perform the piece at the upcoming August 1955 Meiji-za production.¹²² It is highly probable that he gave the troupe his consent, since the piece appeared on the program. What is confusing is that the troupe had already performed *Kanjinchō* four times previously: in June 1954 at the Minami-za, in August 1954 at the Meiji-za, in November 1954 at the Naka-za, and in December 1954 at the Misono-za.

¹¹⁸ Faith Bach, "Breaking the *Kabuki* Actors' Barriers: 1868-1900," in *A Kabuki Reader: History and Performance*, ed. Samuel L. Leiter, 152-166 (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2002 [1995]). According to Bach, this was the first time in history that an actor had been excommunicated over an artistic issue. Many years later, in the late 1880s, Ennosuke was readmitted to the Naritaya house, and in 1890, he performed with Danjūrō at Kabuki-za. At Danjūrō's five-year memorial production, his widow gave Ennosuke the costume that Danjūrō had worn as Benkei in *Kanjinchō*. Faith Bach, "The Contributions of Omodakaya to *Kabuki*," (PhD diss., St Anthony College, University of Oxford, 1990), 31-50.

¹¹⁹ The best account of this incident is in the *Yomiuri Shinbun*, 30 November 1891.

¹²⁰ According to Nojima, Kumehachi was reinstated in 1895, but it is possible that she was reinstated unofficially earlier. Nojima Jusaburō, *Kabuki Jinmei Jiten* [Biographical Dictionary of *Kabuki*], rev. ed. (Tokyo: Nichigai, 2002), 77.

¹²¹ Akiyama, "Natsu Kare Fukitobasu Saikō no Iri," *Asahi Shinbun*, 22 August 1954. I was unable to find any accounts of Kumehachi performing *Kanjinchō* under the title of *Atakagawa*. *Ataka* is the *nō* play's usual title.

¹²² Ichikawa Sanshō V to Ichikawa Masujūrō, no. 15, 30 May 1955.

Thus it is strange that Sanshō did not refer to its previous performances when noting that he needed more time to make a decision. Surely he knew that the troupe had performed such an important piece.

In the event, *Kanjinchō* became the troupe's most frequently performed piece; over the next eight years, it was performed on sixteen different bills at major theatres, not to mention the countless times the troupe performed it on provincial tours. Critics warmly praised it, with the *Yomiuri* writing, "*Kanjinchō*, with Fukushō (as Benkei) and Misuji (as Togashi), is one of the troupe's gems."¹²³ Fukushō, in particular, made the piece her own, as the *Asahi* reported that she put her own "girlish" spin on the final exit, "bowing to the audience on the left, in the center, and to the right, before executing a *roppō*—the six directional flying hop—down the *hanamichi*" (see figure 13).¹²⁴

Working with Sanshō from Afar

Yet, amid the troupe's growing success, news of an impending tragedy reached Masujūrō: Sanshō had become ill and was growing weaker, to the extent that, by January 1955, he was confined to his home in Ninomiya in Kanagawa Prefecture. At first, this did not appear to influence the troupe: Sanshō corresponded with Masujūrō through letters, watched several of the troupe's televised productions, and oversaw rehearsals when members visited him at home or, during the summer when he was in remission, at the seashore. Despite his illness, it is clear from his letters that Sanshō still wanted to be kept informed of the troupe's activities, becoming at times even more adamant about certain issues. He continued to propose program choices and expected Masujūrō to notify him

¹²³ Andō Tsuruo, "Tadashii Tehon o Ataeyo" [Give the Correct Patterns], *Yomiuri Shinbun* (evening), 10 August 1955.

¹²⁴ Akiyama, "Natsu Kare Fukitobasu Saikō no Iri," *Asahi Shinbun*, 22 August 1954.

personally of the troupe's schedule, as he did not take well to hearing of the troupe's plans from a third party. In a letter dated 10 February 1955, for example, Sanshō gently scolded Masujūrō for missing an appointment they had apparently scheduled in advance and cautioned him against producing any new material without his consent. He wrote, "I heard that you are doing a real dance like *Ninin Dōjōji*, but I will not feel at ease until I've seen you perform it first in front of me."¹²⁵ Yet, in the same letter, he said he was "at ease" with the troupe doing *Gappō*, and he relented to the troupe performing "Ninoguchi Mura," the very piece that several weeks earlier he had advised not doing, since it could be construed as "neck-movement theatre."¹²⁶ It appears, therefore, that Masujūrō was able to convince Sanshō to allow the troupe to perform pieces that he had initially opposed. Still, it is clear that Sanshō, throughout his illness, felt responsible for the troupe's productions.

There were several times when Sanshō questioned why the troupe would want to perform certain pieces. Regarding the pure-*kabuki* period piece *Toki wa Ima Kikyō no Hata-age*, which the troupe evidently planned to perform at the Minami-za in May 1955, Sanshō wrote, "Since even when adult *kabuki* actors perform this piece it isn't particularly good, who are you planning to have teach you? I fear it will smack of countryside overacting."¹²⁷ He also cautioned Masujūrō not to overstretch the troupe by performing too many new plays too quickly, due to the pressures of frequent appearances

¹²⁵ Ichikawa Sanshō V to Ichikawa Masujūrō, no. 9, 10 February 1955.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

at the same commercial venues.¹²⁸ At the same time, he warned Masujûrô against letting troupe members become too comfortable performing the same pieces so often that they would become stale.¹²⁹ Sanshô, furthermore, cautioned the troupe on such matters as the dangers of practicing to a record instead of live music,¹³⁰ complimented Masujûrô on the troupe's televised performance of *Gonin Otoko*,¹³¹ and advised them when he had heard poor reports, such as when Hori Kurakichi told him the actress playing Benkei (Fukushô) in *Kanjinchô* looked “too much like a female actor (*onna yakusha*).”¹³²

Nothing, however, irked him more than when he received word from a third party that the troupe was planning to perform the highly theatrical “Yuka no Shita” scene of *Meiboku Sendai Hagi*. Who, he wanted to know, would play the role of Otokonosuke? This is indeed curious, as the character, though significant, is only on stage for a few minutes during the scene in question. The answer lies not in the play time this character gets, but in the fact that with his bold lines of black-and-red *kumadori* makeup, fierce *mie* poses, and heroic posturing, Otokonosuke embodies *aragoto* acting, for which the Ichikawa Danjûrô line was (and is) famous. The role is not owned by the Naritaya house, but it is often associated with its members, since the actor playing it must be thoroughly versed in bravura acting and stylized fighting. For Sanshô, Masujûrô's alleged failure to notify him was a personal insult: he had played Otokonosuke recently, in February 1952,

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Ichikawa Sanshô V to Ichikawa Masujûrô, no. 28, n.d., circa post-1954.

¹³⁰ Ichikawa Sanshô V to Ichikawa Masujûrô, no. 11, 14 March 1955.

¹³¹ Ichikawa Sanshô V to Ichikawa Masujûrô, no. 24, 2 December 1955.

¹³² Ichikawa Sanshô V to Ichikawa Masujûrô, no. 19, 12 August 1955.

at the Kabuki-za, and considered himself to be an accurate, if not excellent, source, for learning the role.¹³³ Feeling betrayed, he rebuked Masujûrô sharply:

I am not pleased that I have not yet seen this piece, since I could have taught it, and I am not at ease with you doing it. I wish you had told me of your plans. So, who is teaching the role of Otokonosuke? I will teach you Otokonosuke in the future. Why didn't you tell me of your plans to do this role? I am not at all at ease with your doing it.¹³⁴

Just a few weeks later, Masujûrô received another letter, dictated by Sanshō to an amanuensis, possibly a niece or nephew.¹³⁵

My uncle is very upset regarding the Otokonosuke matter. Why didn't you have the headmaster [Sanshō] teach you the role of Otokonosuke? I fear the dialogue will smack of regionalism. Dialogue is not something that can be taught in a letter. . . . Putting on "Yuka no Shita" in this manner would be a disgrace, so I am asking you to not do it. . . . In the future, please let me know. This is a very difficult position for me to be put in.¹³⁶

But with the performance just a week away, pulling the piece from the program was not a realistic option. Instead, Sanshō proposed a compromise, recommending that the actor playing Otokonosuke perform the role, not in the *aragoto* style of the Danjûrô line, but

¹³³ For a note on this production, see Nagayama, *Kabuki-za Hyakunen-shi*, 2: 102.

¹³⁴ Ichikawa Sanshō V to Ichikawa Masujûrô, no. 13, 9 April 1955.

¹³⁵ The letter is written on stationery printed with the name 稲延 用箋, which could be read: Inanobu Yōsen. Though the writer refers to Sanshō as "uncle" (*ojiisan*), there might not have been any familial relationship, since the word "*ojiisan*" is frequently used in the *kabuki* world and Japanese society as a term of endearment for an older individual.

¹³⁶ Ichikawa Sanshō V to Ichikawa Masujûrô, no. 14, 22 April 1955.

“in the style of [Nakamura] Shikan IV [1830-1899], who played the role of the sumo wrestler Kanamisanzaemon, who wears a grey-speckled *kamishimo*.”¹³⁷ In other words, he condoned the troupe performing the piece, but wanted it to call Otokonosuke by another name in order to avoid criticism that an Ichikawa troupe did not know how to perform *aragoto* properly.

The program, however, lists Fukushô, the troupe member most skilled in *aragoto* technique as playing the role of “Otokonosuke,” not Kanamisanzaemon, so it appears that Masujûrô did not follow Sanshô’s instructions. Subsequent extant letters exchanged between Sanshô and Masujûrô do not refer to this topic, and it should be remembered, after all, that the headmaster’s harsh rebuke was atypical of the gentle style and warm demeanor that generally characterized his relationship with the troupe.

Indeed, looking back many years later, all the troupe members interviewed remembered Sanshô with complete fondness. He had nicknames for his favorite stars—Baika was De’chiri, Baishô was Oume—and he teased the girls about having a “unique odor.”¹³⁸ Emiko, one of Masujûrô’s daughters and the youngest member, recalled that Sanshô worried about her the time she left a rehearsal to play at a nearby park and took a special interest in training her for child roles. She had been instructed by Masujûrô to cry with her palms away from her face; Sanshô, however, gave her instructions to the contrary, telling her to cry in a more realistic fashion with her palms toward her face. Thus, she recalled performing to please whoever was present: “Whenever Sanshô

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Ichikawa Baika, interview; Ichikawa Baishô, interview by author, 28 April 2004, Toyokawa, Japan; Ichikawa Sanpuku, interview by author, 5 April 2004, Toyohashi, Japan.

watched the performance, I would play with my hands toward my face, but when my father was watching, I would do it the other way around,” she recalled.¹³⁹

Meanwhile, the older girls enjoyed introducing Sanshō to teenage culture. Baika recalled that one day instead of serving him his usual green tea, she gave him Ramune soda, a popular lemonade-flavored soft drink, famous for its bottles that contain a blue marble at the top. “The first time the blue marble really confused him—he didn’t know how to drink the soda, so we had to show him,” Baika remembered. “After that he always asked for Ramune.”¹⁴⁰ Baika further recalled, “Before every performance he would have us sing the song, and then shout three times ‘*Mainichi Shonichi*’ (Every Day is the First Day).” This mantra was always prominently displayed on the wall in the dressing room area as a reminder that each performance was a new opportunity.¹⁴¹

Sanshō, in return, was fully dedicated to the girls. He recognized that some members of the company were genuinely talented. As we have seen, he would not have given the nine members individual stage names if he had not felt that they were worthy of it, and he certainly would not have appeared on stage with them if he had not believed the entire ensemble was deserving of the Ichikawa headmaster’s patronage. In his eyes, the troupe was a valid addition to the already established male tradition of *kabuki*. He recognized a genuine historical precedent to women *kabuki* performers: Okuni was the founder of *kabuki*, and, in his own era, he had witnessed *kabuki onna yakusha*, from

¹³⁹ Ichikawa Emiko, interview by author, 2 June 2004, Toyohashi, Japan.

¹⁴⁰ Ichikawa Baika, interview; see also Kurokawa Mitsuhiro, “Sōke ga Kyōryoku ni Atooshi” [The Headmaster Powerfully Supports], “Maboroshi no Ichikawa Shōjo Kabuki” [Phantom Ichikawa Girls’ Kabuki], *Chūnichi Shinbun*, no. 12, 1 February 1984.

¹⁴¹ Ichikawa Baika, “Shishō wa Ichi-ryū Mainichi Shonichi,” *Mainichi Shinbun*, 1 February 1993.

Kumehachi to his own wife, Suisen II. Danjûrô IX, as we have seen, favored putting women on the *kabuki* stage, and, it is likely that his musings on the topic planted the idea in Sanshô's head that women, too, could one day be full-fledged *kabuki* performers.¹⁴² But unlike Danjûrô IX, who was born and bred in the *kabuki* world, Sanshô was a *kabuki* outsider. Though he would have been required to navigate through the old-boy network of *kabuki*, he also came to the art form with a fresh eye, which would enable him to support such a revolutionary scheme as an all-girls' *kabuki* troupe. To say that he had been raised in a world where women were considered men's equals would be an overstatement, but as the husband of a former *kabuki onna yakusha*, he saw first hand that women could aspire to become performers.¹⁴³ Finally, there is the practical reason behind Sanshô's devotion to the troupe. By the early 1950s, he was winding down his own performance schedule and had time to spare. With no children of his own, he probably thought of the girls as his own grandchildren.

The troupe's encounter with Sanshô was serendipitous. Had they met him years earlier, it is likely that his own performance career would have taken precedence; had they met him any later, he would have been too ill to commence a relationship. Sanshô's patronage of the troupe enabled it to cross the threshold between amateur and professional, rural and city, and child and adult. With his backing, doors opened, and the troupe was ushered into performance venues that Masujûrô had only dreamed of during

¹⁴² Regarding Danjûrô IX's views on actresses, see Matsui Shôyô, *Danshû Hyakuwa* [One Hundred Sayings by Danjûrô], Kinsei Bungei Kenkyû Sôsho series (Tokyo: Kuresu Shuppan, 1997 [1903]), 35; Ichikawa Sanshô V, *Kyusei Danjûrô o Kataru* [Talking about Danjûrô IX] (Kyoto: Suiko Shoin, 1950), 127.

¹⁴³ Playwright and theatre critic Takaya Shin, for example, mused that Sanshô's support was partly due to his having been married to Danjûrô IX's daughter, Suisen II. Minami-za program, February 1957.

his years on the small theatre circuit. What would happen without the support of Sanshō, when he passed away the following year, is the story to which we shall return in chapter 6.

Chapter 4

Defining Themselves; Being Defined: What Was Girls' *Kabuki*?

What exactly was *shôjo kabuki*? As the troupe swept across the country, making the day and night transition from a touring company that played at small rural theatres to one that performed on Japan's city stages, that was the question asked by critics and spectators alike. Long before it had become famous, the troupe had designated itself a "girls'" company, first calling itself the Toyokawa Girls' Kabuki Troupe, then the Tokyo Girls' Kabuki Troupe, only to be named later by the Naritaya house's headmaster, Ichikawa Sanshō V, as the Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki Troupe. But, as we have seen, it had always striven to perform "genuine" *kabuki*, despite calling itself a "girls'" company through presenting the very same plays in what it believed to be the very same manner as professional, established male actors.

For the troupe, being a *shôjo* and performing genuine *kabuki* were not mutually exclusive. Yet, for many critics, *shôjo kabuki* was irreconcilable with true *kabuki*.¹ Indeed, while the press raved that the troupe was "the Shōwa Kumehachis" or "*kabuki*'s Jeanne d'Arc," it stopped short of calling them, plainly and simply, *kabuki*.² Critics

¹ As noted earlier, the one notable exception was Noguchi Tatsuji, who reported that the troupe was performing "genuine *kabuki*." "Ichikawa Shōjo Kabuki no Ayumi" [Development of Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki], in "Gendai no Kabuki Haiyū" [Contemporary *Kabuki* Actors], special issue, *Engekikai* (December 1955): 134.

² Toshikura Yoshikazu, "Ichikawa Shōjo Kabuki," Tōyoko Hall program, March 1954; Noguchi, "Ichikawa Shōjo Kabuki no Ayumi," 134; Ōki Yutaka, "Shishunki ni Tasshita: Ichikawa Shōjo Kabuki" [Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki Reaches Puberty], *Shūkan Tōkyō* [Tokyo Week], 5 July 1958, 82. Shōwa refers to the reign of Emperor Hirohito, from 1926-1989. As noted in the introduction, Ichikawa Kumehachi was the first woman to be sponsored by the Naritaya house. These were not the most creative appellations; no less than Kawakami Sadayakko had been called the "Second Okuni." See Mine Takashi, *Teikoku Gekijō Kaimaku: Kyo wa Teigeki Ashita wa*

struggled to define the troupe, alerting readers to the gap between the troupe's productions and true *kabuki*. This chapter, therefore, considers the ways in which the troupe billed itself as “genuine,” as well as the obstacles—some of which related to its *shôjo* status, and some of which concerned its rural background—that prevented the troupe from being seen by critics as the “real thing.”

In the 1950s, the term *shôjo* conjured up only the most positive qualities. Judging from the media's usage of the word, it suggested not only teenage girls, but young ladies who were sweet, pure, and pretty. From the troupe's perspective, the term was an accurate reflection of its age and sex. Identifying themselves as *shôjo*, they believed, was a selling point, for which they would be rewarded at the box office, as they would attract the attention of young audiences, who would be amazed to see girls their own age performing in such a virtuosic manner.³ The press went further to present an image of the girls as the perfect embodiment of all of the *shôjo*'s ideals. “If one thing was true,” the *Mainichi Gurafu* reported, the girls were not representative of normal teenagers who “have the urge to run wild, listen to jazz . . . dance the mambo . . . and engage in sexual relations.”⁴ Troupe members, the writer pronounced, were “old-fashioned” in the best

Mitsukoshi [The Opening of the Imperial Theatre: Today the Imperial, Tomorrow Mitsukoshi] (Tokyo: Chûkô Ronsha, 1996), 225. Progressive women are frequently called “Jeanne d’Arc” in Japan. See, for example, Vera Mackie, *Feminism in Modern Japan: Citizenship, Embodiment, and Sexuality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 28, 32.

³ The appearance of Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki, not to mention a troupe like Takarazuka or SKD, contradicts John W. Treat's theory of unproductive *shôjo*. He writes, “The role of the *shôjo* in this service economy was not to make these products, but consume them (more precisely, to symbolize their consumption). The *shôjo* are, if you will, ‘off the production line’, lacking any real referent in the ‘economy’ of postmodern.” “Yoshimoto Banana Writes Home: The *Shôjo* in Japanese Popular Culture,” in *Contemporary Japan and Popular Culture*, ed. John Whittier Treat (Honolulu: University of Hawaii, 1996), 281. The *shôjo* of Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki, however, were, in fact, producers in the Japanese postwar service economy, not merely consumers.

⁴ “Shôjo Kabuki” [Girls' Kabuki], *Mainichi Gurafu* [Mainichi Chart], 14 September 1955, 8.

sense, due to their *kabuki* training on and off the stage. They were innocent, virginal, and cute; in short, the ultimate role models for how to be good girls.

As Toita Yasuji had noted, however, a girls' *kabuki* troupe was unprecedented.⁵ Therefore, critics took it upon themselves to describe, and to define, this new genre. For Toita, it was enough to show how the troupe's work resonated with "*kubi-furi shibai*," neck-movement theatre. For other critics, it was easier to juxtapose the troupe against other genres to show how it was different. In this way, they proclaimed that Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki was not a *nihon buyô* dance troupe, not a reincarnation of late nineteenth-century female *kabuki*, not a clone of Takarazuka, and not a derivation of "Genji Bushi," a late nineteenth-early twentieth-century all-female company of dancers, singers, and *shamisen* players that performed frequently in Nagoya and Tokyo before being censored and ultimately banned for its sexual content.⁶

Becoming like Genji Bushi elicited particular concern for critics, who could still remember attending performances while they were growing up. For Ôe Ryôtârô of *Engekikai* and Akiyama Yasusaburô of the *Asahi*, Genji Bushi conjured up decadence, waywardness, and unpolished performances. Even though Ôe admitted to admiring the all-female troupe in his youth, he cautioned the girls not to imitate its decadent itinerant style.⁷ Akiyama, in his ten years reviewing Ichikawa Girls' Tokyo productions, was

⁵ Toita Yasuji, "Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki: Kabuki no Kuni no 'Tensai Shôjo'" [Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki: *Kabuki* World's "Girl Prodigies"], *Geijutsu Shinchô* [Artistic New Tides] (July 1953): 70-72.

⁶ See chapter 1, note 9.

⁷ Ôe Ryôtârô, "Hamamatsu no Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki" [Hamamatsu's Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki], *Engekikai* (December 1952): 77.

more concerned about the troupe's imitating Genji Bushi's unpleasant aesthetic qualities. He wrote, "Whenever I hear [the troupe's gruff] voices, I am reminded of the once-popular Genji Bushi women's theatre, and I find myself listening to ugliness."⁸ He later cautioned, "It is essential that the troupe not force their voices, like they used to in the old Genji Bushi Shibai."⁹

Likewise, critics were eager to distance the troupe from the hardened, immoral, mature female actors (*onna yakusha*) of the late Meiji and early Taishō periods. Writing almost paternally, these commentators emphasized how Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki needed to craft a separate identity, distinct from these women of the past. In his first review, Miyake Shūtārō of the *Mainichi* sounded a sigh of relief that the members "have not been harmed by being exposed to the adult environment" and issued a warning: "the troupe should not try to learn from past female actors."¹⁰ Though there were certainly many *onna yakusha* who had played at the prestigious Imperial Theatre, most had achieved only middling reputations as players on provincial stages. As Akiyama wrote, "Those of us critics have one private worry about the troupe: With all the touring and praise, this troupe will become degenerate. That is, the time of the *shōjo* will expire, and it will become a female actors' company."¹¹ The comment echoed Sanshō's earlier warnings to

⁸ Akiyama Yasusaburō, "Hanatakashi Shōjo Kabuki: Hachigatsu no Meiji-za" [The High-Nosed Girls' Kabuki: August at Meiji-za], *Engekikai* (October 1955): 77.

⁹ Akiyama Yasusaburō, "Seiketsu na Ichikawa Shōjo Kabuki" [The Pure Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki], *Asahi Shinbun* (evening), 12 August 1955.

¹⁰ Miyake Shūtārō, "'Hara' no Shūren: Mitsukoshi Gekijō no Ichikawa Shōjo Kabuki" ['Belly' Training: Mitsukoshi Theatre's Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki], *Mainichi Shinbun* (evening), 14 February 1953.

¹¹ Akiyama Yasusaburō, "Ichikawa Shōjo Kabuki no Tōjō" [The Entrance of Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki], Tōyoko Hall program, March 1955, 2.

members about playing to rural audiences who could not fully appreciate its art. At the heart of these comments was not only a bias against itinerant women's troupes, but against the countryside, from which the leading players of Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki hailed.

The girls were also distinguished from *nihon buyô* dancers who specialized in the dance-drama (*shosagoto*) pieces of the *kabuki* repertory. The majority of *nihon buyô* dancers did not make a living from their art, but practiced it as a serious hobby. Unlike members of Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki, the amateur dancers spent longer periods working on one piece and, generally, had only one opportunity to perform it before a crowd of spectators.¹² The girls were privileged to perform the same pieces in numerous venues, all of which charged admission.

Takarazuka versus Girls' Kabuki

If there was one all-female troupe that Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki emulated, though, it was the Takarazuka Revue. Founded by Kobayashi Ichizô (1873-1957) in 1913 to provide clean, wholesome family entertainment, by the 1950s, the Revue had become famous for its glitzy, leggy line dances and showy musical numbers. All Takarasiennes, as they are called, were graduates of the two-year Takarazuka Music Academy (Takarazuka Ongaku Gakkô) in which they were schooled, according to Jennifer Robertson, "in voice, musical instruments, music history, Japanese, Western, and modern dance, acting and theatre theory, cultural history, and etiquette."¹³ With two grand

¹² Tomita Yasuhiko, "Misuji-san ni Horebore, Masuyo no Dôjôji Hyôjo wa Mane Dekinu" [Enchanted by Misuji; Cannot imitate Masuyo's Expression in Dôjôji], *Ôsaka Nichi Nichi Shinbun*, 7 July 1955.

¹³ Jennifer Robertson, *Takarazuka: Sexual Politics and Popular Culture in Modern Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 10.

theatres—one in Takarazuka, west of Osaka, and one in Tokyo—Takarazuka had secured a sizeable audience base in Japan’s most heavily populated regions.

For Ichikawa Girls’ Kabuki, Takarazuka represented both its principal model and chief rival.¹⁴ Ichikawa Baika even remembered that a popular slogan was “Girls’ Kabuki in the East; Takarazuka in the West,” while another source reported that the troupe was nicknamed “Takarazuka Shôjo Kabuki.”¹⁵ The troupe had modeled its kimono-*hakama* uniform after Takarazuka’s pre-war uniform, and, according to Baika, several members from both troupes formed friendships. Several of the troupe’s new Kansai-based recruits, furthermore, had grown up attending Takarazuka performances, and, like Ichikawa Kobeni, had even considered joining.¹⁶ From a business perspective, though, the troupes were rivals. Takarazuka, owned by Tôhôtô, was a direct competitor of Shôchiku, which co-sponsored many of Ichikawa Girls’ Kabuki’s major city productions. Still, critics noted that the troupes faced similar issues. Akiyama, for example, observed that the troupe’s male-role specialists “have the same problem as the girls in Shôchiku’s Revue [Shôchiku

¹⁴ Ôki, “Shishunki ni Tasshita: Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki,” *Shûkan Tôkyô*, 5 July 1958, 83.

¹⁵ Ichikawa Baika, “Maiko-san to Ikitô” [Hitting it off with Geisha Apprentices], “Matsuba-Botan no Ki” [Journal of Small Peonies], *Mainichi Shinbun*, no. 7, 22 February 1993. In Japanese, the slogan is: “Higashi no Shôjo Kabuki; Nishi no Takarazuka.” According to Ichikawa Baika, this was a popular slogan, but I was unable to locate any print references. It should be noted that Takarazuka built its Tokyo theatre in 1934, so it was based in both the East and West (see Takarazuka Gekidan Shuppan-bu, ed., *Takarazuka Kageki no Rokujûnen* [Takarazuka Revue’s Sixty Years] (Takarazuka: Takarazuka Kageki Shuppan-bu, 1974, 43). Concerning the nickname “Takarazuka Shôjo Kabuki” (Takarazuka Girls’ Kabuki), see “Otona ni Natta Shôjo Kabuki” [Girls’ Kabuki That Has Become Adult], *Sandê Mainichi* [Sunday Mainichi], 10 June 1956, 45.

¹⁶ Ichikawa Kobeni, interview by author, 4 May 2004, Yatomi Village, Japan.

Kagekidan] and Takarazuka when they take on male voices.”¹⁷ One critic mused that both Ichikawa Girls’ and Takarazuka attracted the same young female demographic,¹⁸ while another speculated that Ichikawa Girls’ Kabuki attracted a much broader audience thanks to its ability to “appeal to different classes.”¹⁹ Articles on Ichikawa Girls’ Kabuki, furthermore, invited comparisons between the two troupes. One twenty-two-year-old student, who was quoted in the *Sandē Mainichi*, stated:

[Ichikawa Girls’ Kabuki members] are not like the Takarazuka performers who are popular because they have nice voices and are pretty. Ichikawa Girls’ Kabuki has really got a grasp for *kabuki*, and both the main players and minor players have unified their hearts and minds. Due to their training, they have come a long way.²⁰

According to the article, the troupe had many fans, who were “intoxicated” with its art, and seemingly preferred it over Takarazuka.²¹

Curiously, while references to Takarazuka abound in Ichikawa Girls’ Kabuki critical reviews, essays, and performance notes, the troupe was not given much mention in the Takarazuka press. The more established Takarazuka is unlikely to have considered

¹⁷ Akiyama Yasusaburô, “Serifu no Mazusa ga Ki ni Naru: Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki” [Concerns about the Poor Dialogue: Ichikawa Girls’ Kabuki], *Asahi Shinbun* (evening), 15 May 1956.

¹⁸ Fukushima Shuji, “Shôjo Kabuki e no Kitai to Sunbyô” [Our Expectations, in short, for Girls’ Kabuki], Naka-za program, July 1955. Fukushima noted that the latter tended to attract a younger schoolgirl audience.

¹⁹ Katsurada Shigeharu, “Meazarashii ‘Kagami Yama’ Tôshi” [A Rare Full-Length ‘Mirror Mountain’], Naka-za program, March 1956.

²⁰ “Otona ni Natta Shôjo Kabuki,” *Sandē Mainichi*, 10 June 1956, 42.

²¹ *Ibid.*

Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki to be a serious rival. As Miyakoji Noburu (b. 1936), a Takarasienne active in the 1950s stated, "I knew about Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki, but I never went to see them perform."²² Just how frequently members of Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki attended Takarazuka productions is unknown, but that did not stop critics from comparing them to the Revue.

Of course Takarazuka had legions of loyal fans, who preferred that troupe's showy music-dance revues to what many considered traditionalist, stodgy *kabuki*. Yet, Takarazuka, too, ever since the 1920s, if not earlier, had adapted *kabuki* pieces, mainly ones from the *shosagoto* or *buyô-geki* dance repertory, to its own unique aesthetic and required every member to undergo training in *nihon buyô*, the foundational dance of *kabuki*.²³ Though Takarazuka sometimes referred to these pieces as "*kabuki*," they more frequently grouped them under the heading "*nihonmono*" (Japanese things) in contrast with its "*yômono*," or European and American-styled revue medleys.²⁴ Many of its *nihonmono* were inspired by *kabuki*, but originally choreographed with Western

²² Miyakoji Noburu, interview by author, 17 September 2004, Tokyo. Miyakoji was an *otoko-yaku* (male-role) player, who was a member of the Revue from 1953-1962, during the very same years that Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki/Joyû-za flourished. During our interview, she appeared annoyed that Takarazuka had been compared to the now-defunct Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki Troupe. Looking at the *Ôsaka Nichi Nichi Shinbun* article, which compared Takarazuka and Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki (which I had brought her), she said, "I could understand if Takarazuka was being compared to OSK (Ôsaka Shôchiku Kageki) or SKD (Shôchiku Kageki-dan), but not Girls' Kabuki." She later clarified that she did not necessarily think that members of Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki were any less talented, but that since the histories of the troupe were so different, it was strange that they invited comparison.

²³ Brian Powell notes that Takarazuka's founder had toyed with the idea of performing *kabuki* in the 1930s, but discovered it was not financially viable. See his *Japan's Modern Theatre: A Century of Change and Continuity* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2001), 85. The troupe, however, performed "*nihonmono*" *kabuki*-type pieces before and after the 1930s.

²⁴ For an overview of the troupe's repertory during the years in question, see Takarazuka Gekidan Shuppan-bu, ed., *Takarazuka Kageki Gojûnen-shi* [Takarazuka Revue's Fifty-year History] (Takarazuka: Takarazuka Kagekidan Shuppan-bu, 1964) and *Takarazuka Kageki no Rokujûnen*.

orchestration and dance features. According to Miyakoji Noboru, the Revue tended to incorporate more Japanese-style dance pieces in April, the traditional month for viewing cherry blossoms and for commencing new projects.²⁵ During the 1950s, Takarasiennes Amatsu Otome (1905-1980), Azusa Mayuki, and Kasugano Yachiyo (b. 1915) garnered praise for their distinctive renditions of *kabuki*.²⁶ All of Takarazuka's *nihonmono* pieces, however, were self-consciously described as different from grand *kabuki*. For example, the Takarazuka Revue's self-published *Fifty-year History* described its 1926 production of *Kokusenya Kassen*²⁷ and its 1935 production of *Funa Benkei*²⁸ respectively as “a *kabuki* piece done the Takarazuka way”; its 1935 production of *Sanbasô*, a staple piece in *kabuki*, *nô*, and ritual puppet repertoires, was entitled “Takarazuka Sanbasô”; and its *Kagamijishi*—a revue favorite performed frequently in the 1950s—was called an “elegant-styled dance.”²⁹ Indeed, in its official histories, Takarazuka appeared to take great pride in setting its *kabuki*-styled productions apart from the *kabuki* that was being played by men at Shôchiku's theatres.

This was in distinction to Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki, which quickly took the opportunity to show how it differed from the Revue and how it was similar to grand *kabuki*. The *Ôsaka Nichi Nichi Shinbun*, a newspaper that had already given the troupe

²⁵ Miyakoji Noburo, interview.

²⁶ Ibid. See also *Takarazuka Kageki no Rokuju-nen*, 17.

²⁷ Donald, Keene, trans., “The Battles of Coxinga,” in *Major Plays of Chikamatsu*, rev. ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 195-269.

²⁸ Paul M. Griffith, trans., “Benkei Aboard Ship,” in *Kabuki Plays On Stage: Restoration and Reform, 1872-1905*, eds. James R. Brandon and Samuel L. Leiter, 280-301 (Honolulu: University of Hawaii, 2003).

²⁹ See *Takarazuka Gojûnen-shi 1964*, front matter, numbers 57, 103, and 110, in particular.

flattering reviews, sponsored a November 1954 roundtable discussion in which the Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki Troupe was asked if its performance goals were similar to Takarazuka's. Ichikawa Baika's response is particularly telling:

No. Even though we are an all-female troupe, we do not try for a Takarazuka *kabuki* revue-type atmosphere. In that way, we are not all-female *kabuki*. As for our staging, we perform *kabuki* in the same style as genuine *kabuki*.³⁰

Baika's comment reveals the troupe's artistic stance. The troupe might be called *shôjo*, but that in no way excluded it from performing the same *kabuki* as male *kabuki*. There was nothing in her mind particularly "female" or "feminist" about the troupe, save for the fact that it was comprised of girls.

Later, in February 1955, two days after it had closed its four-day run at Naka-za in Dôtonbori, Osaka, Ichikawa Masujûrô had an opportunity to speak further about the troupe's artistic direction. This time, the *Ôsaka Nichi Nichi Shinbun* invited him and a Takarazuka *kabuki* director, Zeniya Nobuaki, to discuss the differences between the troupes' approaches to *kabuki*. As Zeniya notes, Takarazuka had no intention of performing pure *kabuki*:

Unlike Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki we cannot do genuine *kabuki*. I think that's fine. Takarazuka's aim is to not to perform classical plays in the classical manner, but to make things fresh and new. Moreover, Takarazuka does not perform *kabuki* 365 days a year, but performs ballet, voice, and *nichibu* (Japanese classical dance). So, at the appropriate time, we master whatever style is necessary. So, in that way, our *nihon buyô* looks at times like dance, and we've mixed ballet technique with

³⁰ "Suta o Kakonde: Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki to Fuan" [Surrounding the Stars: Ichikawa Girls Kabuki and its Fans], *Ôsaka Nichi Nichi Shinbun*, 3 November 1954.

nihon buyô. This is the Takarazuka flavor. That is why the *kata* (patterns) of Amatsu Otome and Kasugano [Kasugano Yachio] are fine. We go forward, making new creations out of conservative forms—this is Takarazuka’s main goal. The other day at a research session, I directed *Hakone Reigenki*. I experimented with the lighting during the transitions, taking the slow-tempo fight scenes at a quicker pace in *kengeki* fashion, and covering for the sad lack of flips. We are working hard to create a *kabuki* that fits Takarazuka. Our number one characteristic is a sophisticated *kabuki*.³¹

According to Miyakoji, Zeniya was one of several dance teachers at Takarazuka, not a spokesperson (or senior administrator), but that should not detract from his position as one of the Revue’s representatives.³² In many ways, his statement was more about Ichikawa Girls’ Kabuki than Takarazuka: the former, he noted, is “genuine,” while Takarazuka neither presented genuine *kabuki* nor cared to present *kabuki* in this manner, for it was intentionally trying to deviate from and experiment with *kabuki*.

Masujûrô, on the other hand, took the opportunity to explain why he believed his girls were in the purist *kabuki* camp:

The girls are mirroring and performing the exact same style as the *kabuki* currently done on *kabuki*’s grand stages. But at the moment they are not putting their own individual stamp on roles like [grand *kabuki*] actors today. While saying this, however, it is not mere imitation. After all, it is said that the power of

³¹ “Musume Bakari no Kabuki” [All-Girls’ Kabuki], *Ôsaka Nichi Nichi Shinbun*, 6 February 1955.

³² Miyakoji Noburo, interview.

expression passed down by mirroring is the power of the acting in classical *kabuki*.³³

Like Baika, Masujûrô's stance was that the troupe was doing *kabuki*. He distinguished mirroring (*utsushi*) from imitation (*monomane*). The difference, at first glance, appears superficial. Indeed, the words can be viewed as synonyms, and since Zeami Motokiyo (1363?-1443) wrote about the imitative components of acting in his *nô* treatises, *monomane* has been a valued and accepted component of an actor's most fundamental techniques.³⁴ In *kabuki*, the word *monomane* is often used to explain the manner in which children or junior actors acquire fundamental acting skills from their seniors. Masujûrô, however, consciously or not, inverts the terms. For him, *utsushi* (mirroring) was the way in which actors acquired the fundamentals; *monomane* indicated something closer to mimicry or aping in which an actor failed to internalize the role in a meaningful manner. In this way, he implied that the girls had a deeper understanding of *kabuki*, one that went beyond vapidly imitating forms.

Though his use of terminology was unorthodox at best (and meaningless at worst), in hindsight it seems clear that Masujûrô was responding to charges that the troupe was merely imitating *kabuki*. After all, the troupe's scripts, stage business, direction, music, theatre building, stage, teachers, and, often, backstage staff, was the same as (or very similar to) mainstream *kabuki*'s; the crucial difference was that teenage girls, not boys

³³ "Musume Bakari no Kabuki," *Ôsaka Nichi Nichi Shinbun*, 6 February 1955.

³⁴ See, in particular, "Fûshikaden" in which he states, "In general, Role Playing involves an imitation, in every particular, with nothing left out." Thomas J. Rimer and Yamazaki Masakazu, trans., *On the Art of Nô Drama: The Major Treatises of Zeami* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 10. See also Samuel L. Leiter, *New Kabuki Encyclopedia: A Revised Adaptation of Kabuki Jiten* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1997), 420.

and men, were performing. What critics who dismissed the troupe as merely imitating *kabuki* failed to acknowledge, Masujûrô explained, was that *kabuki*, by its very nature as a classical theatre passed down from generation to generation, is a theatre of “mirroring.” All *kabuki* actors must mirror, or, as Marvin Carlson would say, “ghost” past actors in order to perform any role, from the lowly messenger to the samurai warrior.³⁵ *Kabuki* actors are consciously aware of ghosting past—usually dead—actor’s performances, since almost all the acting business and texts of classic *kabuki* plays are pre-determined, and largely set, similar to classical Western opera and ballet. In Japanese, these fixed forms are called *kata*, and refer to everything from a subtle gesture to a speech pattern, from costume choice to set design.³⁶ *Kata* may be associated with an individual performer, an entire acting family, a particular role, or a group of plays. An action, gesture, or facial expression does not technically become a *kata* until it has been repeated a number of times, becomes recognized as a new entity, and is transmitted to the next generation of actors. One of the most important differences from most Western theatre forms is that certain elements of these *kata* have been preserved, thanks to the father-son or master-disciple training system that requires imitation of corporeal movement and vocalization before innovation.³⁷ Thus in every generation ghosts of the past reappear, a phenomenon that *kabuki* audiences anticipate, generally with pleasure. Indeed, if a *kabuki*

³⁵ Marvin Carlson, *The Haunted Stage: The Theatre as Memory Machine* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001).

³⁶ See Leiter, *New Kabuki Encyclopedia*, 288-289.

³⁷ During the heyday of *kabuki* in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, *kata* were constantly being re-worked and changed, but today many *kata* have become standardized. See Samuel L. Leiter, “Kumagai’s Battle Camp: Form and Tradition in *Kabuki* Acting,” in *Frozen Moments: Writings on Kabuki, 1966-2001* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell East Asian Series, 2002), 157-182.

actor suddenly made up new stage business for a new play, as Takarazuka did, it would not be *kabuki*, but something else.

Ownership of Parts

Perhaps the clearest way the troupe signaled its genuine approach was by appropriating grand *kabuki*'s "ownership of parts" system. Like Restoration period and eighteenth-century English actors, *kabuki* actors were regularly given sides (*kakinuki*), which they would own for the duration of the production, if not for the rest of their performance careers.³⁸ In what has been called *ie no gei* (family art), parts were handed down in the *kabuki* world by the family patriarch; generally, if one's father had played a role, his son could assume that it would be his to learn and perform in the future.

Professional *kabuki* actors were further divided into two broad groups: *onnagata*, players of female roles, and *tachiyaku*, players of male roles, though, ever since the late eighteenth century, there have been any number of versatile actors (*kaneru yakusha*) who have taken pride in being able to play both male and female parts. Within the two broad role-type divisions, roles are further subdivided. *Tachiyaku* roles include bravura male (*aragoto*), romantic male (*nimaimé*), dignified male (*jitsugoto*), elder man (*oji*), and villain (*kataki*); female roles include daughter (*musume*), wife (*nyôbô*), aged woman (*rôjo*), princess (*hime*), and lady-in-waiting (*koshimoto*). There are male and female comical (*sanmame*) characters and child (*ko-yaku*) roles as well. It is rare for an *onnagata* to play only daughter roles, but it would be equally strange for a star *onnagata* to play both princess and lady-in-waiting roles, since the latter are considered minor characters. Generally (but not always), the troupe leader in grand *kabuki* troupes was, and

³⁸ On ownership of parts in Restoration England, see Peter Holland, *The Ornament of Action: Text and Performance in Restoration Comedy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

is, a *tachiyaku* who, together with the theatre manager, assigned all the roles, generally according to role type and family lineage.³⁹

Unlike the male *kabuki* world, where the leading roles are distributed based largely on family lineage, the girls were cast based first on the number of years they had been a member of the troupe, and second, on body type. The nine founding members played the leading roles, while the fifteen to twenty other girls were cast in smaller parts. A girl with a petite figure and small face was generally cast in female roles, while girls who were slightly taller and broader played the male ones. All roles were determined by Masujûrô, with input from Ebijûrô, Sanshô, and later, Ebizô IX. Auditions were never held, and troupe members never would have thought to question role assignments. Baika recounted, “We girls had no say in the matter. There was never any discussion of liking or disliking the role. We were encouraged to master all types of roles.”⁴⁰ In actuality, a survey of the different kinds of roles the top four performers played reveals that each had a clearly demarcated line of business, which helped them to master so many plays in such a short time.

All four first-division members—Misuji, Baika, Fukushô, and Masuyo—garnered top roles and clocked significant stage time, but Misuji probably played the most varied assortment of roles. Best known for playing leading men, she wrote in 1958 that she had played “more than one hundred different roles,” a statement that is easily supported by

³⁹ In recent years, Ichikawa Ennosuke III has hired graduates of the National Theatre’s training school and cast them in major parts. See Faith Bach, “The Contributions of Omodakaya to *Kabuki*” (PhD diss., St Anthony College, University of Oxford, 1990), 31-50.

⁴⁰ Ichikawa Baika, interview by author, 4 March 2004, Toyokawa, Japan.

surveying the extant programs from this period.⁴¹ Androgynous and slightly taller than her fellow members, she was quickly dubbed “beauty in male disguise” (*dansô no reijin*). She specialized primarily in romantic male leads (*nimaimé*), such as Chûbei (“Ninoguchi Mura”) and Seishin (*Izayoi Seishin*), and dignified roles (*jitsugoto*), such as Moritsuna, Yuranosuke (*Chûshingura*), and Kajiwara (*Ishikiri*). She even made her mark playing elderly roles, such as Gappô (*Gappô*) and Magoemon (“Ninoguchi Mura”), leading the *Ôsaka Nichi Nichi Shinbun* critic to remark, “Even without drawing wrinkles on her face, she plays the old characters well.”⁴² Considered the troupe’s most versatile actor, she played comical men, such as the wily servant Jirô Kaja in the humorous dance *Bô Shibari*, and excelled at performing rough male characters such as Benten Kozô (*Gonin Otoko*), Kirare Yosaburô (“Genyadana”) and Igami no Gonta (“Sushiya”) (see figure 14). She also played several evil women (*akuba*), such as Yashio of *Meiboku Sendai Hagi* and Iwafuji of *Kagamiyama*, and later, she would play more *aragoto* roles such as the spider in *Tsuchigumo*. However, it was generally presumed that Misuji played a much better boy than girl. Indeed, even though Miyake (*Mainichi Shinbun*) called her demon in *Ibaraki* “genius-like,” he recommended that if she wanted to play characters that require a transformation from female to male-style acting, she should stick to the more aggressive lion role of *Kagamijishi*.⁴³ Her female sex in no way limited her range of parts.

⁴¹ Ichikawa Misuji, “Shôjo Kara Onna e no Nayami” [Concerns (about going) from a Girl to a Woman], *Fujin Gahô* [Ladies Illustrated] (September 1958): 234.

⁴² Tomita Yasuhiko, “Tadashii Seichô ni Kyôdan,” *Ôsaka Nichi Nichi Shinbun*, 15 June 1953.

⁴³ Miyake Shûtarô, “Hisa Biza no Ichikawa Joyû-za: Bunan na ‘Numazu’” [It’s been a Long Time Ichikawa Actress Troupe: A Safe ‘Numazu’], *Mainichi Shinbun* (evening), 20 February 1962.

She was considered to be the most all-around actor in the troupe, often starring in every play.

Fukushô, as the troupe's most "masculine-looking" member, was trained primarily in *aragoto* acting. Critics, not to mention her fellow troupe members, were shocked at her ability "to pass" as a man on stage (see figure 15). As Baika recalled, "We absolutely could not tell if she was a man or woman when she performed on stage."⁴⁴ Writing in the *Ôsaka Nichi Nichi Shinbun*, Tomita further raved, "There is a special girl in the troupe, who is large, who can be mistaken for a man."⁴⁵ She was considered indispensable. Indeed, while several troupe members could play *nimaimé* roles, Misuji's specialty, no one could replace Fukushô. The parts she played were almost identical to the ones owned by or associated with the name "Danjûrô." She was given special notice for her rendition of the consummate Naritaya role: Benkei. Writing what was otherwise a fairly critical review of the troupe's 1954 Meiji-za production, Miyake noted: "Fukushô's Benkei was splendid—it really suits her. Her eyes sparkle. It can be said that Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki is a troupe that has Fukushô's eyes and Misuji's aptitude."⁴⁶ On the other hand, her characterization of Watanabe Tsuna (*Ibaraki*) earned her poor reviews from at least one critic: Andô Tsuruo simply said "it gave [him] a bad feeling."⁴⁷ Other frequent *aragoto*-type roles included Narukami (Misuji had played it once initially), Umeômaru

⁴⁴ Ichikawa Baika, interview.

⁴⁵ Tomita, "Tadashii Seichô ni Kyôdan," *Ôsaka Nichi Nichi Shinbun*, 15 June 1953.

⁴⁶ Miyake Shûtarô, "Misuji no Soshitsu, Fukushô no Me" [Misuji's Aptitude, Fukushô's Eyes], *Mainichi Shinbun*, 9 August 1954.

⁴⁷ Andô Tsuruo, "Suitorigami no Yosa, Warusa: Meiji-za no Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki" [The Good and Bad about Blotting Paper: Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki at Meiji-za], *Yomiuri Shinbun* (evening), 6 August 1954.

(“Kuruma Biki”), Mitsuhide (*Ehon Taikôki*), Tonbei (*Shinrei Yaguchi*), and the contentious Otokonosuke in “Yuka no Shita” (unfortunately, no critic appears to have commented on her ability to play this role).

Baika, who was known as the *tachi-oyama*, the highest-ranked *onnagata*, was versatile enough to play soft male roles (*wagoto*), such as Yoshitsune (*Kanjinchô*), Yaosuke (aka Koremori, “Sushiya”), and Motome (*Imoseyama*), but, on the whole, she played the chief female roles in all the troupe’s major plays. On occasion, she played opposite Misuji in young lovers’ melodramas or tragedies, but she was lauded most for her wifely roles, such as Otoku (*Domo Mata*) and Misao (*Ehon Taikoki*); “motherly” roles, such as Shigenoi (*Shigenoi Kowakare*) and Masaoka (*Sendai Hagi*); and grandmother-types, such as Mimyô (*Moritsuna Jinya*). From the *Ôsaka Nichi Nichi Shinbun* critic she earned high praise as Shigenoi: “She shows us many beautiful things. Her line is never ugly . . . one thinks that adults are performing, with [Baika] playing in an elegant manner.”⁴⁸ Her favorite role, though, was the one she had mastered first: Kiyohime in *Hidakagawa*.⁴⁹

The youngest of the four leading players, Masuyo played mainly daughter, princess, and mother roles. Frequently lauded for her good looks and excellent form, she excelled at playing young, female lovers like Omiwa (*Imoseyama*, see figure 16) and Umegawa (“Ninoguchi Mura”) as well as stronger, more daring women like the loyal servant Ohatsu (*Kagamiyama*) and the duplicitous Taema (*Narukami*). On occasion, she

⁴⁸ Tomita Yasuhiko, “Dôtonbori no Kyô: Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki” [Dôtonbori’s Miracle: Ichikawa Girls’ Kabuki], *Ôsaka Nichi Nichi Shinbun*, 7 November 1954.

⁴⁹ Ichikawa Baika, “Bunraku de Haragei Oshierare” [Being Taught Gut Acting from Bunraku], “Matsuba-Botan no Ki” [Journal of Small Peonies], *Mainichi Shinbun*, no. 8, 1 March 1993.

would be paired opposite her older sister Misuji in pieces like *Sonezaki Shinjû* in which she played Ohatsu to Misuji's Tokubei.⁵⁰ She starred in many of the festive Sanbasô dances with other top-tiered members, but one of her best remembered pieces was *Ninin Dôjôji* (she played Sakurako and Baika played Hanako). Unlike Baika, Masuyo almost never played male characters. Though she received plum roles, of which any low-ranking grand *kabuki onnagata* would be envious, she remembered that she was the only top tier member to play a bit part, that of a guard in *Kanjinchô*. The role, she correctly pointed out, would never be performed by a grand *kabuki* top-ranking actor.⁵¹

To some extent, the second-ranking division members also had their own lines of business, though it was slightly more fluid, depending on the needs of the performance. Sanpuku, for example, specialized in grandmotherly and comic roles. She had started out playing more princess-type roles, until Himeshô joined and usurped them. (The *geimei* “Himeshô” literally means “princess of the rice measure”). If Masuyo or Baika were already engaged, Himeshô played the princess or female lover characters. She was viewed as one of the prettiest members of the troupe, and it is no wonder that she was given the role of the “beautiful woman” in *Tsuri Onna* and other ingénue-type parts. She was generally paired with Suzume, who specialized primarily in *nimaiime* lover roles. Many of the roles that Misuji had played originally were eventually bequeathed to Suzume, partly to give Misuji a break, partly to allow her to continue to experiment with new roles.

⁵⁰ Donald Keene, trans., “The Love Suicides at Sonezaki,” in *Major Plays of Chikamatsu*, rev. ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 39-56.

⁵¹ Ichikawa Masuyo, interview by author, 23 March 2004, Tokyo, Japan.

Meanwhile, Baishô was able to carve out a special niche as the troupe's favorite villain. With the exception of Iemon, which Misuji played in the troupe's sole production of *Yotsuya Kaidan*,⁵² Baishô was the one chosen to play the scoundrels: Nangô (*Gonin Otoko*), Kuheiji (*Sonezaki Shinjû*), Rokuzô (*Shinrei Yaguchi*), and Iruka (*Imoseyama*). She also had the reputation of being one of the troupe's strongest dancers, as she was given the challenging roles of the child lion in the dance *Renjishi*⁵³ and Tarô Kaja in *Bô Shibari*, together with Misuji (see figure 17). She apparently thrived on the diversity of roles, as Tomita of the *Ôsaka Nichi Nichi Shinbun* lauded her ability to play each role in a unique manner.⁵⁴

Kobotan played an assortment of roles; it was rare for her to repeat the same role (exceptions were Hayase ["Moritsuna"], black cloud [*Narukami*], and Ugenta [*Ibaraki*]). She was generally cast in supporting roles, such as a lady-in-waiting or the store owner Kôbei in *Gonin Otoko*. Of all the second-tier performers, however, she would come to receive the most critical notice for her acting (see figure 18).⁵⁵

⁵² See, for example, Mark Oshima, trans., "Ghost Stories at Yotsuya," in *Early Modern Japanese Literature*, ed. Haruo Shirane, 844-884 (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002); Paul B. Kennelly, trans., "The Ghost Stories at Yotsuya on the Tôkaidô," in *Kabuki Plays On Stage: Darkness and Desire, 1804-1864*, eds. James R. Brandon and Samuel L. Leiter, 134-163 (Honolulu: University of Hawaii, 2002).

⁵³ Paul M. Griffith, trans., "Two Lions," in *Kabuki Plays On Stage: Restoration and Reform, 1872-1905*, eds. James R. Brandon and Samuel L. Leiter, 38-54 (Honolulu: University of Hawaii, 2003).

⁵⁴ Tomita Yasuhiko, "Tassai na Kyôgen ni Seichô Shimesu" [Showing Growth in a Variety of Pieces], *Ôsaka Nichi Nichi Shinbun*, 10 July 1955.

⁵⁵ See Miyake Shûtarô, "Seiseiki Karyô no 'Roben Sugi'" [High marks for "Roben Sugi"], *Mainichi Shinbun* (evening), 15 May 1956; Miyake Shûtarô. "Chikamatsu-mono no Shûsaku" [Excelling with Chikamatsu Pieces], *Mainichi Shinbun* (evening), 16 March 1959; Akiyama Yasusaburô, "Ushinawanu Kawai-rashisa" [Not Lacking in Cuteness], *Asahi Shinbun*, 19 December 1959.

For the first several years, critics made reference to the gap in ability between the four leading members and everyone else. The *Chûnichi Shinbun* critic observed, for example, that Himeshō's performance of Shûrinosuke (*Domo Mata*) “was at the level of a girls' high school performance.”⁵⁶ Though the gap between the first and second divisions never closed entirely, critics would write more positively of the second-division tier over the next few years.

Depending on the play, the second-tier actors and others would be assigned bit parts and grappler-type (*karami*) roles: lady-in-waiting, policemen, firemen, soldiers, farmers, priests, or palanquin runners. As Akiyama wrote about “Terakoya”: “The troupe is short of actors, so as soon as the farmers are done, they race back to the dressing room for a quick change into soldiers. And just as [the character] Matsuô begins reciting dialogue, they are back on, which causes some laughter.”⁵⁷ Though, years later, a former member would claim that they were merely used as supernumeraries—in her words, “bodies on the stage”⁵⁸—critics lauded them for taking their roles, no matter how small, seriously. It was unheard of for a new actor to receive a speaking part until she had been a member of the troupe for several months. Though they never were given leading roles at any of the major city productions, many of the lower-ranked actors had an opportunity to play a starring role at least once at the periodic “study productions” held at the

⁵⁶ Fujino Yoshio, “Seichō Miseta Shōjo Kabuki” [Girls' Kabuki Shows Improvement], *Chūbu Nihon Shinbun*, 11 December 1955.

⁵⁷ Akiyama Yasusaburō, “Toki doki Me ni Fureru ‘Kusasa’” [Sometimes “Overdone” Acting], *Asahi Shinbun* (evening), 4 May 1953.

⁵⁸ Ichikawa Toshie, phone interview by author, 27 April 2004.

Hamamatsu-za.⁵⁹ *Ko-yaku* or children's roles were given to the youngest (and youngest-looking) members. Until Masujûrô's daughter, Emiko, was old enough to do the roles competently, Mineko (b. 1942) and Ebimaru, two of the younger members, played the children's parts.

Over time, the girls mastered roles and movements that they had avoided until now. As noted in the previous chapter, the troupe had been criticized for omitting the horse and palanquin from *Sono Kouta Yume no Yoshiwara*, but in a short time, the girls were trained for the minor but ever-salient roles of palanquin bearers and horse's legs.⁶⁰ This was not enough, however, to appease Masujûrô. He urged the girls to learn how to flip, since he recognized that such stunts would be appreciated by fans and praised by critics.⁶¹ Members began learning how to flip under the guidance of Ebizô IX's apprentices during the troupe's run at Meiji-za in August 1955.⁶² Though everyone was required to try to master the flying somersaults, these feats became the domain of lower-ranking actors, the same as in the grand *kabuki* world. "We trained every morning of the run, from 8 a.m. to 10 a.m.," Kobeni recalled.⁶³ Like their male counterparts, they practiced over a sandy pit, wearing flesh-colored underwear (*sutteko*). By the end of the summer, five members—Kobeni, Toshie, Setsuko, Mieko, and Ebimaru—had learned

⁵⁹ Ichikawa Kobotan, interview by author, 29 April 2004, Gifu City; Ichikawa Kobeni, interview.

⁶⁰ Ichikawa Misuji, "Shôjo Kara Onna e no Nayami," *Fujin Gahô*, September 1958, 233.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² See "Shôjo Kabuki," *Mainichi Gurfu*, 14 September 1955, 8. The article includes a photo of the girls practicing flips.

⁶³ Ichikawa Kobeni, interview.

how to perform forward flips, one of the many varieties of flips performed by grand *kabuki* actors.⁶⁴ As a result, their newfound talents were promptly displayed in plays like “Yoshino Yama” (*Yoshitsune Senbon Zakura*) and *Imoseyama*.⁶⁵

Still, no one doing anything even as spectacular as a flying somersault could overshadow Misuji’s performances. From the troupe’s inception, she and Masuyo had been dubbed the sister stars of the troupe, but Misuji was ultimately the one to garner the most praise. Her acting, fellow troupe members remembered, was head and shoulders above everyone else. Kobotan recalled, “When Misuji performed, spectators screamed ‘god of acting,’” an especially complimentary designation.⁶⁶ Critical response reflected popular sentiment. From the beginning, the press had commented on Misuji’s “splendid” face, “somewhere in between Ichikawa Jukai and Nakamura Baishi (later Nakamura Tokizô IV, 1927-1962).”⁶⁷ Headlines, ranging from “Looking at the Genius Misuji” to “Enchanted by Misuji,” proclaimed her the troupe’s top star.⁶⁸ Though Miyake of the *Mainichi* would write that he wished she would research her parts more, he lavished praise on her versatility. Reviewing her performance of six different roles at the troupe’s Tôyoko Hall debut, he wrote, “There is no other young *kabuki* actor who can match her

⁶⁴ According to Leiter, there are “about twenty varieties” of flips that remain in the repertory, “which is about one third of the number once available.” *New Kabuki Encyclopedia*, 658.

⁶⁵ Ichikawa Toshie, interview; Ichikawa Kobeni, interview; Fujino, “Seichô Miseta Shôjo Kabuki,” *Chûbu Nihon Shinbun*, 11 December 1955.

⁶⁶ Ichikawa Kobotan, interview.

⁶⁷ Miyake, “‘Hara’ no Shûren,” *Mainich Shinbun*, 14 February 1953.

⁶⁸ Miyake Shûtarô, “Shûsai Misuji ni Nozumu” [Looking at the Genius Misuji], *Mainichi Shinbun*, 15 March 1955; Tomita, “Misuji-san ni Horebore,” *Ôsaka Nichi Nichi Shinbun*, 7 July 1955.

skill.”⁶⁹ This should be viewed as no less than an enthusiastic show of respect from one of Tokyo’s top critics, since he was not only praising her, but comparing her to young professional male *kabuki* actors. Tomita in the *Ôsaka Nichi Nichi Shinbun* would offer similar comments, asking rhetorically, “I would like to hear who among the young [male] *kabuki* actors today has the power to perform *Kanjinchô* and *Ibaraki*,” two plays that Misuji was thought to have mastered so well.⁷⁰ Film star Tsukikata Ryûnosuke (1902-1970), moreover, would write a heartfelt endorsement of the troupe in which he, too, called Misuji a “genius,” who “even without a handicap [for being female], is among the first-ranked actors of the day.”⁷¹ Most movingly, he discussed how he had admired her in the troupe’s production of “Moritsuna”:

I played Moritsuna in a movie, and I had always wanted to do it on stage. The now-deceased Harimaya [Kichiemon I] taught me the role, but I never did it. Recently, I gave the “severed dummy head” [required for the head inspection scene], which I had held dear for some twenty years for the purpose of playing the role, to Misuji.⁷²

Why, he implied, would he even think of playing the role onstage, since Misuji would inevitably perform it in such a superior fashion?

⁶⁹ Miyake, “Shûsai Misuji ni Nozumu,” *Mainichi Shinbun*, 15 March 1955.

⁷⁰ Tomita Yasuhiko, “Dôtonbori no Kyô,” *Ôsaka Nichi Nichi Shinbun*, 7 November 1954.

⁷¹ Tsukikata Ryûnosuke, “Nobi yo Shôjo Kabuki” [Grow, Girls’ Kabuki], *Ôsaka Nichi Nichi Shinbun*, 9 November 1954.

⁷² *Ibid.*

Many *kabuki* troupes, from Okuni's in the early seventeenth century to the independent Zenshin-za troupe today, have thrived largely because of a singular performer. Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki was no different. It had a core group of talented, handsome, and committed performers that revolved around the brightest star. In traditional grand *kabuki*, that star is commonly born into his position; Ichikawa Misuji, however, assumed that title through her hard work, innate talent, and sheer performance charisma. It was due, in no small part, to her light that the troupe continued to shine through the 1950s.

Playing Women; Playing Men

Trained by professional *kabuki* artists, troupe members were keen to perform their roles in the very same manner as their teachers. As discussed in chapter 3, Sanshō encouraged the troupe to attend grand *kabuki* productions at every opportunity, and during the years that he was alive, Shōchiku permitted the girls to see the shows for free. According to Akiyama (*Asahi*), their presence was noticed:

So there they go—like female students wearing their uniform and makeup, they go to Kabuki-za, Shinbashi Enbujō, and Meiji-za to see grand *kabuki*. They are quite diligent about their theatregoing. So in that way they have become quite familiar with Tokyo. So get to know their faces well today, because next time you are at Kabuki-za, look around. In the seat next to you, you might find Misuji, and behind you Masuyo and Fukushō, watching the play enthusiastically. In this way, you will feel like they are your daughters or your younger sisters.⁷³

⁷³ Akiyama Yasusaburō, “Ichikawa Shōjo Kabuki Tōjō” [The Entrance of Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki], Tōyoko Hall program, March 1955, 2.

Members agreed that watching great actors at grand theatres was the best way to learn. In response to a fan letter, Ichikawa Masuyo wrote that she tried to visit Tokyo at least once every two months. “I always first go to Kabuki-za to watch genuine *kabuki*. More than anything else, watching good *kabuki* is the best study,” she wrote.⁷⁴ Ichikawa Sanpuku recalled even taking notes on the acting at the grand theatres.⁷⁵ As far as the girls were concerned, their techniques and interpretations were faithful to professional, male actors, several of whom were their teachers.

How then did they perform femininity and masculinity on stage? At the November 1954 roundtable sponsored by the *Ôsaka Nichi Nichi Shinbun*, Baika stressed the troupe’s claim to authentic *kabuki*; she further stated that when playing female roles (*onnagata*), the girls could not think of themselves as women.⁷⁶ As early as its Tokyo debut at the Mitsukoshi, the troupe acknowledged that playing female characters was potentially more of a challenge for women and girls than for men and boys.⁷⁷ In this way, the troupe’s view on playing female roles resonates with contemporary material feminists who have disassociated sex from gender. They were not relying on their innate characteristics, which would appear too realistic and without the proper aesthetic quality necessary for *kabuki*; rather they were engaged in the art of playing a role—playing a woman. Indeed, Baika suggested that just because she was a woman did not mean that playing a woman was easier or more natural than playing a male role. This is a crucial

⁷⁴ “Dokusha Kadai: Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki ni Kiku” [Reader’s Issues: We Ask Ichikawa Girls’ Kabuki], *Engekikai* (December 1957), 99.

⁷⁵ Ichikawa Sanpuku, interview by author, 5 April 2004, Toyohashi, Japan.

⁷⁶ “Suta o Kakonde,” *Ôsaka Nichi Nichi Shinbun*, 3 November 1954.

⁷⁷ “Meiboku Sendai Hagi,” Mitsukoshi Program, February 1953, 7.

component of the troupe's artistic theory, which serves as a direct response to the myriad of theorists who, in the words of Min Tian, have denied "actresses the possibility of acting stylistically or artistically because, supposedly, they are inclined to exploit their natural endowments."⁷⁸

Instead of seeing themselves as women, the girls who played the *onnagata* roles, or what Katherine Mezur aptly calls "fictions of female-likeness," were instructed to think of themselves as a neutral slate onto which they could refashion their bodies, movements, and gestures to conform with how men played women on the *kabuki* stage.⁷⁹ To accomplish this goal, they practiced what some *onnagata* have referred to as "killing the body"⁸⁰ to describe the process they must undergo in order to learn how to manipulate their bodies as *kabuki* women. The girls playing female roles stood with their knees bent, their toes pointed inward. All hand and arm gestures were controlled, with the hands kept close to the body. Head movement was small and precise. As Masujûrô proclaimed, the troupe aimed to perform "without damaging the special characteristic manner in which men have performed women in *kabuki*."⁸¹ Toward this end, the biggest difficulty of becoming "fictions of female-likeness" was adopting the same artificial falsetto-like voice as their *onnagata*

⁷⁸ Min Tian, "Male Dan: the Paradox of Sex, Acting, and Perception of Female Impersonation in Traditional Chinese Theatre," *Asian Theatre Journal* 17 no. 1 (Spring 2000): 90.

⁷⁹ Katherine Mezur, "The *Kabuki Onnagata*: A Feminist Analysis of the *Onnagata* Fiction of Female-likeness" (PhD diss., University of Hawaii, 1998).

⁸⁰ Gunji Masakatsu, *Kabuki no Bigaku* (Tokyo: Engeki Shuppansha, 1963), 315. Gunji states, "As for an *onnagata*, if he does not throw away the consciousness of male representation, it is not the real thing." See also Katherine Mezur, "The *Kabuki Onnagata*," 238.

⁸¹ "Musume Bakari no Kabuki," *Ôsaka Nichi Nichi Shinbun*, 6 February 1955.

counterparts.⁸² Masujûrô reiterated this point, noting that he directed his female *onnagata* “to kill their voices.”⁸³ “I would never permit them to do it in their own natural voices,” he stated.⁸⁴ Thus, the troupe was not in any way trying to alter how men had developed *kabuki*. In Masujûrô’s view, there was absolutely nothing wrong with the girls’ appropriating male *kabuki* technique because that was what *kabuki* actors did.⁸⁵

There were times, however, when the girls’ “natural” properties were not concealed underneath their makeup and costumes. When the *Chûnichi* critic complimented Masuyo’s Omiya (*Imoseyama*), it was because “she played in a way that no adult could match. Her age fits this role perfectly.”⁸⁶ Thus, while Masujûrô made every attempt to “kill” the girls’ natural features, he was not always so successful, as some so-called innate characteristics, such as youth, were revealed from time to time in performance.

As for playing male roles, members reasoned that playing a man should not necessarily be more difficult for girls than for male actors, since the stylized acting resulted from a finite variety of fundamental patterns (*kata*) that they had been trained to

⁸² Mezur, “The *Kabuki Onnagata*.” As noted earlier, the term “fictions of female-likeness” is attributed to Mezur.

⁸³ Gunji does not talk about killing the voice, but of “killing the male existence.” *Kabuki no Bigaku*, 315. See also Mezur, “The *Kabuki Onnagata*,” 195.

⁸⁴ “Musume Bakari no Kabuki,” *Ôsaka Nichi Nichi Shinbun*, 6 February 1955.

⁸⁵ This has been one of the main arguments put forth for women’s “inability” to perform *kabuki*. As Leonard Pronko, for example, has stated, “Were a woman to attempt to play a *kabuki* female role she would have to imitate the men who have so subtly and beautifully incarnated Women before her.” *Theatre East and West* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 195. For Masujûrô and the troupe, the point was irrelevant, since that is precisely what they aimed to do.

⁸⁶ Fujino, “Seichô Miseta Shôjo Kabuki,” *Chûbu Nihon Shinbun*, 11 December 1955.

master. Relying in part on their *onnagata* partners to speak in a higher voice, so theirs would appear lower, the female male-role players (*tachiyaku*) worked to deepen their voices, often speaking in a low register both off and on stage.⁸⁷ Their range of motion was much larger; they were not as constrained by their costumes and were free to use a more vulgar form of speech. They were further aided by wearing the very same costumes and wigs as their male colleagues. So convincing was the transformation that many believed they “passed” for the male performers who usually depicted such characters (see figures 19 and 20).

Moreover, just because they were girls did not preclude them from doing the same so-called unladylike *kata* as the boys. If Misuji, for one, was going to play the role of the gender-bending Benten Kozô, she too would hike up her *kimono* and strip it off to reveal a bare chest (though like male actors, it would be wrapped with a skin-colored cloth).⁸⁸ While many critics, as we shall see, found this controversial—akin to a vulgar female strip-show—Misuji justified her actions, noting, “I’m just immersing myself in the role.”⁸⁹ For the troupe to omit this stage business was to perform something other than *kabuki*.

By performing in this manner, the troupe reified gender roles as they had been constructed by male *kabuki* actors and passed down through the years to their sons and disciples. Notably, the Ichikawa Girls’ Kabuki Troupe inserted itself into this process, with members learning many of their roles directly from male *kabuki* actors. In this way,

⁸⁷ See Carson, “Onna Kabuki Finishes Run at Meiji-za Today,” *Nippon Times*, 7 May 1953.

⁸⁸ “Suta o Kakonde,” *Ôsaka Nichi Nichi Shinbun*, 3 November 1954. It should be pointed out that even when performed by a man, the scene has been considered controversial.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

they too perpetuated not only many of the plays' feudal values, but also the feudalistic ideal of how men and women should move, speak, and behave. Indeed, despite naming themselves an all-girls' company, the Ichikawa Girls Kabuki Troupe approached *kabuki* by acting like men.

Critical Obstacles

Needless to say, critics had difficulty accepting the Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki Troupe on the same terms as men's grand *kabuki*. While they certainly compared the troupe to male actors and judged it against the plays performed in the grand *kabuki* world, critics were loath to accept the girls doing the same thing as their male counterparts. They criticized the girls for their play selection, their inability to go beyond the forms, and for their lingering regionalism.

First and foremost for several critics, performing the same plays as men was unacceptable. "Kuruma Biki," *Narukami*, the "Sushiya" scene from *Yoshitsune Senbon Zakura*, and *Benten Kozô* were among those plays viewed as downright "impossible" for the girls.⁹⁰ Critics, moreover, were particularly wary of any "masculine" business appropriated by the girls which required them to bare their "skin," even if all they were showing was the skin-colored cotton wrap. Therefore, not only was *Benten Kozô*'s "strip" out of bounds, so was the moment in *Imoseyama* when Fukashichi throws off his trailing *nagabakama* trousers in a split-second costume change (*hikinuki*), the highlight of

⁹⁰ See Miyake Shûtarô, "'Hara' no Shûren," *Mainichi Shinbun*, 14 February 1953; "Misuji no Soshitsu," *Mainichi Shinbun*, 9 August 1954; "'Numzu' to Odori," *Mainichi Shinbun*, 13 November 1957; Andô Tsuruo, "Sawayakana 'Kokaji' no Misuji" [A Fresh 'Kokaji's' Misuji], *Yomiuri Shinbun* (evening), 8 November 1957.

the scene. This was business that “*shôjo* should best avoid,” a critic for *Makuai* wrote.⁹¹ Similarly, another critic stated, “I fear that the evening’s “*Genyadana*” (*Kirare Yosa*) and “*Hamamatsu-ya*” (*Gonin Otoko*) fell to the level of an *onna kengeki* (female sword fighting) strip show. This is unacceptable.”⁹²

In addition to harboring anxiety about the girls baring their skin, critics worried that the girls were playing roles that were unbecoming to young ladies. One critic voiced his annoyance that Masuyo was cast as the jealous lover Omiwa. “The part should only be played by a mature, not to mention, famous actor, not a girl who has not reached marriageable age,” he wrote.⁹³ Perhaps he thought that audiences would actually mistake her for the jealous girl. Furthermore, Andô (*Yomiuri*) was uncomfortable with company members crawling through each other’s legs in a brief excerpt from *Sukeroku*. “This is detestable,” he exclaimed. “In this regard, girls’ *kabuki* has its limitations.”⁹⁴ Thus critics imposed a double standard that dictated a very different set of principles for the girls to follow.

⁹¹ Katsurada Shigeharu, “Kiyô Binbo e no Kiken” [Danger of Being a Jack of All Trades and Master of None], *Makuai* (October 1956): 82. He clarified, however, that he was impressed that a girl (Fukushô) had performed the role so well. It also should be noted that the *Chûbu Nihon*’s critic called Fukushô’s performance “brilliant” and did not comment about her Fukashichi strip. Fujino, “Seichô Miseta Shôjo Kabuki,” *Chûbu Nihon Shinbun*, 11 December 1955.

⁹² Masuya Jisaburô, “Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki [Ichikawa Girls’ Kabuki], *Makuai* (August 1955): 91. Interestingly, the troupe never performed *Natsu Matsuri* [Summer Festival] in which the character Danshichi reveals his loincloth under his kimono.

⁹³ Katsurada, “Kiyô Binbo e no Kiken,” *Makuai*, 82.

⁹⁴ Andô Tsuruo, “Buyô ni Shinpo: Tassha na Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki” [Improvement in Dance: The Amazing Ichikawa Girls’ Kabuki], *Yomiuri Shinbun* (evening edition), 11 March 1959.

The reasons for the critics' concern were myriad. For many, playing such titillating, sensual characters was anathema to the idea of a good girl. If the girls performed such odious characters, would they not lose their well-earned reputation as sweet, pure, little girls? Performing men or women who exuded sensuality, critics believed, was dangerous for the girls, including Baika and Fukushô, who had turned twenty in 1955. When critics attempted to justify their double standard, they often relied on the essentialist argument about men being stronger, and, therefore, more capable of playing *aragoto*-type roles. As Andô remarked:

Performing pieces like the *aragoto Narukami* and *Benten Kozô* was beyond the limitations of Girls' Kabuki; these pieces surpass the level of the girls. *Benten Kozô* in particular is absolutely not suited for children's theatre. It ends up taking away from the other pieces. It is a mistake to move in the direction of performing impossible pieces.⁹⁵

The girls—and their director—were thus admonished to remember their place.

Critics also justified applying different standards to the girls because they believed they lacked the requisite erotic allure (*iroke*) to perform certain roles.⁹⁶ Comprised of the two *kanji* ideographs for “color” (*iro*) and “spirit” (*ke*), *iroke* can be translated as eros, sensual charm, or beauty. This has been a salient concept in *kabuki* dating back at least to Yoshizawa Ayame (1673-1729), who, following Zeami, wrote that “the essence of the *onnagata* is *iro*.”⁹⁷ There is little doubt that most spectators (and

⁹⁵ Andô, “Suitorigami no Yosa, Warusa,” *Yomiuri Shinbun*, 6 August 1954.

⁹⁶ See Mezur, “The *Kabuki Onnagata*,” 192-203.

⁹⁷ Gunji Masakatsu, “Zeami no Jotairon” [Zeami's Discourse on the Female Body], *Zeami no Zuihitsu: Zeami Seitan Ropyyaku Nen Ni* [Collected Writings on Zeami in Honor of his

critics) found the troupe members pretty, but what no one wanted to believe was that the adolescent girls were even capable of being erotic. Indeed, if what the critics had said about the girls was correct, that they were truly innocent and sheltered from sexual experience and romantic love, how were they supposed to act in *kabuki*, which paradoxically required them to be erotic?

While never directly confronting this question, just about every critic writing about Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki felt compelled at some moment to say something about whether troupe members did or did not possess *iroke*. *Ôsaka*'s critic felt strongly that Masuyo lacked this vital ingredient when she played the courtesan Umegawa ("Ninoguchi Mura"), while Ôe (*Engekikai*) wrote that her Umegawa "evoked sensuality (*iroke*) and melancholy" that reminded him of Nakamura Utae's (dates unknown) legendary performance before the 1923 Great Kantô Earthquake.⁹⁸ Miyake (*Mainichi*), Andô (*Yomiuri*), and Fujima Shôju, a *nihon buyô* dancer, believed the girls lacked *iroke*, to the point that they needed to avoid sensual roles that showed parts of the "bare" body.⁹⁹ Tomita (*Ôsaka*), on the other hand, agreed that the troupe lacked eroticism, but did not think that this fact detracted from its acting. Regarding Masuyo's Princess Taema

Six Hundredth Anniversary] (Tokyo: Hinoki Shôten, 1984), 18-19. Yoshizawa Ayame is considered the most renowned *onnagata* of the eighteenth-century. See Charles Dunn and Torigoe Bunzô, trans. and eds., *The Actors' Analects* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969).

⁹⁸ "Shibai o Satotteiru no ni Kanshin" [Impressed at the Perceptive Staging], *Ôsaka Nichi Nichi Shinbun*, 8 August 1953; Ôe Ryôtarô, "Hamamatsu no Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki," 76. Ôe further lauded Masuyo's ability to turn her *iroke* on or off as needed. "Her Tonami was a sexless school mistress," he wrote in reaction to the 1953 Shin Kabuki-za production, favorably noting the contrast with her Umegawa. *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ Miyake Shûtârô, "Misuji no Soshitsu," *Mainichi Shinbun*, 9 August 1954; Andô Tsuruo, "Mô Hitotsu Migaki o: Tôyoko Horu no Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki" [Polishing One More Thing: Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki at Tôyoko Hall], *Yomiuri Shinbun* (evening), 12 November 1956; Tomita, "Misuji-san ni Horebore," *Ôsaka Nichi Nichi Shinbun*, 7 July 1955.

in *Narukami*, he wrote, she “did not exude any *iroke*, but I must highly laud her performance as a young teenage girl who performs the *aragoto* piece of this big classic so well.”¹⁰⁰ For him, there was no need to use *iroke* as a litmus test.

Unfortunately, critics never pushed the question further than to say the troupe should avoid performing certain roles, like Benten Kozô, *Narukami*, and Princess Taema. Miyake, who argued vociferously against the girls performing these roles, simply noted that an ability to perform these erotic roles was dependent on possessing “male instinct.”¹⁰¹ In other words, men had the monopoly on eroticism simply because they were men, an essentialist argument that holds up the male body as not only superior, but as the *only* body that can perform this role, not unlike Katherine Mezur’s argument that a “male body beneath” is a requisite for the *onnagata*.¹⁰²

By this reasoning, Miyake also should have criticized the girls for performing the character Osato in “*Sushiya*,” whose playful sexual innuendo in trying to get Yaosuke (Koremori) into bed requires a fair helping of *iroke* as well. Yet he made no mention of this character when the troupe performed the piece the following year in August 1955. Initially, he even lauded Ichikawa Misuji for her “braveness” in playing the uncouth Gonta, who, like Benten Kozô, bares his chest in a moment of masculine bravado. Yet, at

¹⁰⁰ Tomita Yasuhiko, “Azayaka na “Noriaibune” [A Lively ‘Ferry’], *Ôsaka Nichi Nichi Shinbun*, 5 February 1955.

¹⁰¹ Miyake Shûtarô, “Misuji no Soshitsu,” *Mainichi Shinbun*, 9 August 1954.

¹⁰² Mezur, “The *Kabuki Onnagata*,” 10. She writes, “I propose that a woman cannot play an *onnagata* even through imitation of a man, because she does not have a male body beneath the kimono and therefore the ambience of the difference between female gender acts and the male body beneath is not possible. Indeed, the presence of male sexual organs underneath the kimono is a requirement for *kabuki onnagata* performance, because the spectator must be able to imagine a male body beneath the feminine costuming. I suggest that this is the only valid reason Japanese women cannot play *onnagata* roles.” *Ibid.*, 35.

the same time, he recommended that instead of playing Gonta in “Sushiya,” she should perform Kanpei in *Kanadehon Chûshingura*, Act V or VI.¹⁰³ While he did not elaborate, surely his reason had to do with understanding Kanpei as a victim of misunderstanding, not to mention that his *kata* does not require stripping off the kimono in the same vulgar manner. Similarly, Miyake would urge the troupe to stop playing “Sushiya,” since performing the unsavory Gonta casts a shadow “on the excellent upbringing of the troupe.”¹⁰⁴ The troupe could best control its reputation as beautiful, pure, and naïve by depicting characters who embodied such traits.

As discussed in the previous chapter, one refrain heard from critics was that although the girls had mastered the *kata* (forms), they were incapable of expressing the *kokoro* (heart or interior psychology). Critics like Miyake had chided the troupe for lacking a deep psychological understanding of the plays,¹⁰⁵ while others had commented on the singular importance that “form” played in the troupe’s productions. Andô (*Yomiuri*) had called the troupe members “blotting paper”¹⁰⁶ and Ôe (*Enggekikai*) had commented earlier, “All of them performed the roles just as they were taught, with great loyalty, and with the correct *kata*. It was as if they were just following the conductor’s

¹⁰³ Miyake Shûtarô, “Bunan na ‘Shuzenji Monogatari’: Meiji-za no Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki” [A Safe ‘Tale of Shuzenji’: Ichikawa Girls’ Kabuki at the Meiji-za], *Mainichi Shinbun* (evening), 10 August 1955.

¹⁰⁴ Miyake Shûtarô, “‘Numazu’ to Odori: Tôyoko Hôru no Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki” [“Numazu” and Dance: Ichikawa Girls’ Kabuki at Tôyoko Hall], *Mainichi Shinbun* (evening), 13 November 1957.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.* In this review, he noted, “All of the girls have grown up, and on one level their acting has really improved; however, they are form actors. . . . I wish they would read acting treatises (*geidan*) and strengthen their knowledge of *kabuki*.”

¹⁰⁶ Andô, “Suitorigami no Yosa, Warusa,” *Yomiuri Shinbun*, 6 August 1954.

baton or diligently concentrating on how to draw beautiful calligraphic brushstrokes.”¹⁰⁷ Their comments were not meant so much as criticism, but in recognition of the girls’ stunning ability to memorize the various combinations of *kata*.

Even Masujûrô, as noted earlier, acknowledged that troupe members had yet to internalize the roles in the same manner as adult male *kabuki* actors. The girls, too, admitted that they often did not understand some of the difficult feudal morals presented in the very plays they performed. While some values, such as filial piety and hard work, made sense to the girls, others did not. Indeed, revenge, self-sacrifice, and lovers’ suicide, staple themes of the *kabuki* repertory, had become anathema in postwar Japanese society.¹⁰⁸ How were the girls to perform a play like “Terakoya,” in which a child, not much younger than the leading stars, was killed with his parents’ consent? How could they justify the character Moritsuna’s request that his very own mother kill his nephew (her grandson) in order “to protect” his brother? How was the troupe to reconcile the seemingly gratuitous suicide of Tamate Gozen? These were (and remain) difficult questions that every spectator of these plays must confront. Yet the girls apparently did not lose sleep over these wrenching issues (not to imply that male *kabuki* actors did). Responding to a question about the extent to which members understood the feudal mentality emulated in the plays, Baika stated, “I’m reading many books in order to learn more, but I don’t think about it too deeply. . . . We’ve learned *kabuki* through starting with

¹⁰⁷ Ôe, “Hamamatsu no Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki,” 76.

¹⁰⁸ The majority of *kabuki* plays that deal with these themes are ones that have been appropriated from the *ningyô jôruri* (*bunraku*) repertory. As discussed in earlier chapters, these were the very plays that dominated the troupe’s repertory.

the *kata*, and I think that's fine.”¹⁰⁹ Her comment reveals that the troupe approached *kabuki* from an aesthetic standpoint, one that did not analyze the plays' ideas, but prioritized mastery of the stylized movement and dances. Indeed, there was never any attempt to perform *kabuki* in a manner that would question or critique *kabuki*'s feudalistic system, despite the *Ôsaka Nichi Nichi Shinbun*'s proclamation a year earlier that it was “breaking the feudalistic structure of *kabuki*.”¹¹⁰ The troupe had no aspirations to question whether or not it was perpetuating some of these very same feudalistic morals on stage; performing to make a statement about *kabuki*'s ideology, be it gender relations or hierarchical class structure, was not a goal of the troupe—an approach that resonates, on the whole, with that of male *kabuki* performers, especially ones who are in the early stages of their careers.¹¹¹

From Masujûrô's perspective, time constraints and commercial pressures required the troupe to perform scenes that they did not necessarily understand and that he did not necessarily feel comfortable explaining. This was particularly true in the case of *kabuki*'s notorious sex scenes. He recalled:

There's a lot of dirty talk in *kabuki*. For example, in Act VII of *Chûshingura*, when Yuranosuke is chatting up Okaru on the ladder and making sexual overtures to her, what was I supposed to tell the girls? How do you teach that to young

¹⁰⁹ “Suta o Kakonde,” *Ôsaka Nichi Nichi Shinbun*, 3 November 1954.

¹¹⁰ Tomita Yasuhiko, “Tadashii Seichô ni Kyôdan: Hôkensei Daha Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki” [Amazed at the Proper Dignity: Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki Breaks the Feudal System], *Ôsaka Nichi Nichi Shinbun*, 15 June 1953.

¹¹¹ One notable exception is the left-wing Zenshin-za theatre troupe, which has produced several *kabuki* plays with the intention of foregrounding questions of ideology. See Brian Powell, “Communist *Kabuki*: A Contradiction in Terms?,” in *A Kabuki Reader: History and Performance*, ed. Samuel L. Leiter, 167-185 (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2002 [1979]).

girls? I couldn't explain it. There's a lot of dirty words in *kabuki*. It was very difficult to make them say those sorts of things.¹¹²

A study of the troupe's repertory reveals, however, that Masujûrô made no effort to avoid plays with more "adult" content. The troupe performed double-suicide plays (*shinjû*) in which lovers resolve to die together, as well as plays, such as "Sushiya" and *Narukami*, which have overtly erotic moments.

When left to their own devices, without any clearly defined *kata* on which to draw, the girls were often stumped. One of the most famous (and amusing) troupe legends is one in which Kawarazaki Gonjûrô III (1918-1995) was coaching the sales clerks in the "Hamamatsu-ya" scene of *Gonin Otoko*. According to Baika, he instructed the girls, many of whom were new recruits, to "chat among themselves," using the onomatopoeic-like expression, "*gaya gaya gaya*," a sound that imitates people engaged in conversation. When the girls repeated the scene, they took his advice literally, saying to each other, "*gaya gaya gaya*," or roughly translated into English as "blah, blah, blah." Gonjûrô, Baika noted, "had a great laugh over it," but in the end, ordered that the improvised dialogue be scripted for them.¹¹³ "As kids we couldn't always figure out an adult's mental state. . . . It was difficult for us to do," she said.¹¹⁴ The result was an avoidance of performing *shin kabuki* plays that required new dialogue and more of a psychological understanding of character. It is true that the troupe came to perform several plays in this

¹¹² Ichikawa Masujûrô, "Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki Kôenkai: Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki Are Kore" [Symposium on the Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki: Pondering Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki] (lecture, Sakuragaoka Museum, Toyokawa, Japan, 7 May 1995). Transcript courtesy Sakuragaoka Museum, 4.

¹¹³ Ichikawa Baika, interview.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

genre, including Okamoto Kidô's *Toribeyama*, *Banchô Sarayashiki*, and *Shuzenji Monogatari*, but Baika would note that, "If you ask why we did it, it was because Ichikawa Jukai wanted to teach us these pieces."¹¹⁵ Pragmatics, more than questions of moral cleanliness or psychological suitability, dictated the troupe's repertory selection. If a professional *kabuki* actor was keen on teaching members a play, that is what they learned.

Small or Grand *Kabuki*?

Just as there was certain stage business that critics believed the troupe should not do, there was also business that they insisted the troupe should do. Specifically, critics charged that the troupe should perform standard grand *kabuki* (*ôkabuki* or *ôshibai*) *kata*. Now that the troupe was appearing on such sophisticated stages, *kata* passed down on the small theatre circuit (*koshibai* or *shôgekijô*) was deemed unacceptable. As noted in chapter 3, this was a concern voiced by Sanshō, who worried that the troupe's rural touring would affect it adversely. If it played only for provincial, unsophisticated audiences (not that the two necessarily went together), how would it ever improve and please urban aficionados?

In truth, the majority of the troupe's plays were modeled on grand *kabuki* productions. Its "Terakoya," for example, had incorporated staging originated by the esteemed Nakamura (Kichimon I and Onoe Kikugorô VI) combination. Moreover, the troupe was taught by top grand *kabuki* actors and their disciples, and it had spent many hours watching mainstream productions in Nagoya, Hamamatsu, Osaka, and Tokyo.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

Under Sanshō's watch, it made a concerted effort not just to see grand *kabuki* but to see the very best that grand *kabuki* offered in the immediate postwar period.

Yet, there was no escaping the reality that the troupe also had been immersed in the small theatre tradition. Masujūrō and Sumihachi, after all, had spent decades on the rural circuit, so it was only natural that the troupe's repertory would reflect this bias. As Ichikawa Kobotan recalled years later, "Masujūrō had toured in the rural areas, so he was used to doing stunts (*keren*) and putting on lots of loud, colorful spectacle, but that was considered inelegant in grand *kabuki*, so conforming to such tastes was tough."¹¹⁶ The troupe occupied an intermediary position between the two opposite poles of grand and small *kabuki*. It aspired toward the former, but it could never quite overcome its humbler, country origins.

As a result, Masujūrō was the troupe's fall guy. Reviewers, from Akiyama to Miyake, never tired of treating Masujūrō like a drop-curtain actor, who just happened to give birth to legitimate offspring. As Miyake (*Mainichi*) charged, accusatorily, "You should not teach the old way of small theatre to girls who do not know dirty ways."¹¹⁷ Writing in *Engekikai*, Akiyama arrogantly stated that the troupe "reeks of small theatre, which I have instructed it to fix."¹¹⁸ In the same article, however, Akiyama, would add that other critics were equally dismayed at Masujūrō's direction and could be overheard gossiping during intermission:

¹¹⁶ Ichikawa Kobotan, interview. Interestingly, she further mused, "Today, Ennosuke III (b. 1939) and other actors do many stunts, which are considered totally acceptable, but back then things were different."

¹¹⁷ Miyake Shūtarō, "Seiseiki Karyō no 'Roben Sugi,'" *Mainichi Shinbun* (evening), 15 May 1956.

¹¹⁸ Akiyama Yasusaburō, "Hanatakashi Shōjo Kabuki," *Engekikai*, 77.

Who taught them that? They have not mastered the basics. They have made many mistakes. . . . Those kids who learned that are really to be pitied. Isn't it a pity for the children that they have an instructor like that?¹¹⁹

Akiyama also reported that he overheard another critic say that “he did not have the courage to go teach the girls the proper way.”¹²⁰ But, from Akiyama's tone, it is clear that he harbored similar thoughts. Masujûrô, not the girls, was the one to blame.

How much of the criticism was truly due to Masujûrô's small theatre style is difficult to say. Several critics, such as Akiyama and Miyake, appear to have taken a dislike to Masujûrô for personal reasons that, seemingly, have little to do with his “drop-curtain” (*donchô shibai*) background.¹²¹ Akiyama, for one, entitled his September 1955 review of the troupe, “The High-Nosed Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki troupe,” punning on the Japanese idiom “*hana takashi*” to mean both that the troupe's noses are literally “high,” referring to plastic surgery recently undertaken by two troupe members in order to enlarge their noses, and to his belief that the troupe was actually “high” on itself—in other words, arrogant.¹²² Even Sanshō, in a letter to Masujûrô, told him that “there is a rumor circulating among critics that you are acting too self-assured.”¹²³ Masujûrô's rural

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ See chapter 1, note 75.

¹²² Akiyama Yasusaburô, “Hanatakashi Shôjo Kabuki,” *Engekikai*, 77. Apparently, the girls felt their respective noses were too flat and that a larger nose would enhance their looks.

¹²³ Ichikawa Sanshō to Ichikawa Masujûrô, 12 August 1955. no. 19, Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki collection. Sakuragaoka Museum, Toyokawa, Japan. Sanshō further stated that if he had the opportunity to see the troupe perform, he would be sure to find fault with it, so Masujûrô should stop acting so smug. Ibid.

touring roots, together with what was perceived to be an arrogant personality, were loathsome to Tokyo critics.¹²⁴

Precisely how different the small theatre productions were from grand *kabuki*'s is unclear; one could even argue that the similarities outweighed the differences. Since 1895, when the ban prohibiting grand *kabuki* actors from performing in small houses (and vice versa) had been lifted, actors probably had become more familiar with different *kata*. Moreover, as noted in chapter 1, even rural communities were exposed to grand *kabuki*'s *kata*, thanks to “Manninkô”-type amateur theatre clubs whose members would go to the cities to study theatre. There was some irony in this. Up until the Meiji-period, *kabuki kata* had been fairly fluid. For every play, there were several different ways of performing the business, which further enticed fans to see productions performed by different actors. Yet, with the fear that *kabuki*'s *kata* would be lost with the advent of competing new genres of theatre at the end of the nineteenth century, *kabuki kata* became codified, and, in the process, much of the minor business that had been performed on the rural small circuit was lost.¹²⁵

Some plays the troupe performed, such as *Toyokawa Risshoki*, *Mito Kômonki*, and *Uguisuzuka* were confined to the small *kabuki* repertory. Others were plays that were performed by both the grand and small house theatres, but exhibited special small theatre characteristics. Among these plays that the troupe performed were *Tsubosaka Reigenki*,

¹²⁴ Tomita Yasuhiko, for example, regularly complimented Masujûrô. See, for example, his “Jitsu o Musunda Hachi Nen no Shûgyô” [Reaping the Efforts of Eight Years], *Ôsaka Nichi Nichi Shinbun*, 5 July 1957.

¹²⁵ See Leiter, “Kumagai’s Battle Camp,” 157-182.

the “Yoshino Yama” travel scene from *Yoshitsune Senbon Zakura*, *Tsuchigumo*, and “Ninoguchi Mura.”

Tsubosaka arguably becomes much more interesting when performed using the small theatre business, as a new gangster character, Gankurô, appears. He is the wealthy would-be paramour of Osato, who is married to the blind *shamisen* player, Sawaichi. In the small theatre, the actor who plays Sawaichi also plays Gankurô, giving him ample opportunity to show off his acting skills. Misuji, not surprisingly, took on this challenge, toggling between the two characters in one quick change after another.

Critics neither panned nor lauded *Tsubosaka*. They tended to find fault more with plays in which a favorite piece of business, regularly performed in grand *kabuki*, was excised from the girls’ production. *Chûnichi Shinbun* critic Fujino Yoshio, for example, was annoyed that in “Yoshino Yama,” Lady Shizuka’s attendant Tadanobu did not perform the onstage instant costume change, in which he transforms from his human to his fox form. “In *kabuki*, it is a rule to change the entire outfit in making a transformation,” he scolded, adding, “perhaps this is the way it was done in the small theatre, but by taking out the instant costume change it is not interesting.”¹²⁶ Miyake, writing much later in 1959, would also chide the troupe for cutting the part of Fukashichi’s messenger in *Imoseyama*.¹²⁷ Akiyama (*Asahi*) was distraught, not about the troupe cutting, but about adding business from the small theatre. “In *Tsuchigumo*, they swing their heads around like the *hiragana* ‘no’ (の) character, something that many

¹²⁶ Fujino Yoshio, “Seichô Miseta Shôjo Kabuki,” *Chûbu Nihon Shinbun*, 11 December 1955.

¹²⁷ Miyake Shûtarô, “Shôjo Kara Onna e” [From Girl to Woman], *Mainichi Shinbun*, 16 December 1959.

believe is taboo in Tokyo.”¹²⁸ Just like a girl stripping off her kimono, it was a move that was best avoided.

The troupe performed, however, not only for critics and city spectators, but for rural audiences as well. Toward this end, many fans looked forward to seeing the small theatre *kata*. Seki Itsuo explained why he liked the troupe’s small *kabuki* version of “Ninoguchi Mura”:

In the case of “Ninokuchi Mura,” at the end of the play, in the grand theatres—and in *bunraku* as well—after Umegawa and Chûbei retreat, Magoemon is left alone in what is a rather sullen moment. But, the Ichikawa Girls’ Kabuki Troupe makes full use of the *dangire* [the closing melody of the *shamisen*], performing a three-person tableau, which demonstrates each person’s sad, gloomy fate. And, in the end, they use the old *kata*, in which Umegawa and Chûbei pose outside the curtain. Of course, the former is more logical and realistic, and it agrees with the original. The latter lacks logic and eggs on the *ômukô* (fans in the gallery), but getting the *ômukô* involved is a good thing.¹²⁹ Over-exaggerated *kata* are fine.

These too should be passed down, I believe. That is what *kabuki* is about.¹³⁰

Thus, while the troupe was reviewed by critics who were accustomed to the grand *kabuki* staging, the actors could never forget that one of its core constituencies was rural audiences, who anticipated the stage business of the small theatres.

¹²⁸ Akiyama Yasusaburô, “Serifu no Mazusa,” *Asahi Shinbun*, 15 May 1956.

¹²⁹ The *ômuko* are the enthusiastic fans who sit in the cheapest seats but attend the theatre frequently and shout the actors’ names in appreciation.

¹³⁰ Seki Itsuo, “Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki ni tsuite” [About Ichikawa Girls’ Kabuki], Minami-za program, February 1957.

For the big city critics, more exasperating than the small theatre *kata* was the members' regional dialects. Even Masujûrô had acknowledged that teaching the girls how to speak properly was his biggest challenge.¹³¹ Their thick accents irked city theatre reviewers to no end, and if the girls were cognizant of any one complaint, it was that every time they opened their mouths, out came the "Mikawa dialect." Ichikawa Sanpuku recalled, "We all spoke with the Mikawa dialect, and so when we went to Tokyo, our voices would always be a topic of conversation. Sanshô really wanted us to get rid of it."¹³² The southeastern Aichi drawl, which can still be heard in cities like Toyokawa and Toyohachi, differs from "standard" Japanese in that the ends of words are elongated in a more songlike manner, making the speakers sound, in the words of Andô, "like country bumpkins."¹³³ The accent, which "really hurt the ears," was a dead-giveaway that the troupe was from the provinces.¹³⁴ Such problems needed to be cleaned up immediately.

Once again, Masujûrô was deemed the cause behind the problem. "Their troupe leader is also from the Mikawa region and is used to that way of speaking, so it seems that he is blind to this matter," one critic charged.¹³⁵ Indeed, the troupe was not spared any criticism when it performed outside of Tokyo. Critics in Osaka, Kyoto, and Nagoya also pointed to the accent as problematic. And, this time round, they did not spare the

¹³¹ Ôe Ryôtarô, "Hamamatsu no Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki," *Engekikai*, 78.

¹³² Ichikawa Sanpuku, interview.

¹³³ See Andô, "Suitorigami no Yosa, Warusa," *Yomiuri Shinbun*, 6 August 1954; Andô Tsuruo, "Buyô ni Shinpo: Tassha na Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki" [Improvement in Dance: The Amazing Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki], *Yomiuri Shinbun* (evening), 11 March 1959.

¹³⁴ Ichigawa Tsutomu, "Ai Suru Otome-tachi" [The Girls I Love], Naka-za program, March 1956, 6. The article notes that it was reprinted from the *Ôsaka Nichi Nichi Shinbun*.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

performers' feelings. Among the first-division performers, Misuji's accent was deemed the strongest while Fukushô's was declared the weakest, and, hence, less problematic.¹³⁶ Worse, Misuji was frequently singled out. "Misuji has beautiful form, but because of her voice, she comes across as unsophisticated," one critic wrote.¹³⁷ Likewise the *Kyôto Shinbun* noted, "If she could just get over the accent, her Tokubei (*Sonezaki Shinjû*) would be excellent."¹³⁸ She was taken to task for playing quintessential Edo characters like Yosasaburô and Benten Kozô, whose dialogue was intended to reflect the fast-paced city slang, with her Mikawa twang. The dialogue of Benten Kozô is especially challenging, as his voice changes from a high-pitched townswoman to that of a low-life gangster. Advising Misuji not to perform this role, Andô (*Yomiuri*) wrote, "Since you have worked so hard to hide your accent, here it comes flying out, just like in rural theatre."¹³⁹ Entitling his reviews "Concerns about the Poor Dialogue" and "Pleasures of the Dialogue are Scarce," Akiyama (*Asahi*) listed four problems with the girls' voices: they croak, are thick, squeaky, and shrill.¹⁴⁰ He also noted that it was difficult to hear the performers, a criticism frequently hurled at male *kabuki* players as well. As noted earlier, the company members' forced voices reminded Akiyama of the "gruff" and "unpleasant" sound of the all-female Genji Bushi

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ "Shinkyô Miseta Fukushô to Masuyo: Minami-za Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki" [Fukushô and Masuyo Show Great Promise: Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki at Minami-za], *Kyôto Shinbun*, 22 August 1959.

¹³⁹ Andô Tsuruo, "Sawayakana 'Kokaji' no Misuji," *Yomiuri Shinbun*, 8 November 1957.

¹⁴⁰ Akiyama, "Serifu no Mazusa," *Asahi Shinbun*, 15 May 1956; Akiyama Yasusaburô, "Serifu ni Kaikan ga Tobashii" [Pleasures of the Dialogue are Scarce], *Asahi Shinbun* (evening), 12 November 1956.

troupe. Though he mused that the speech defects “probably have something to do with the vocal cords,” he allowed for the possibility that it was not an innate biological difference between men and women, since certain girls, such as Kobotan and Sanpuku, did not force their voices.¹⁴¹

In order to standardize its speech, one critic advised the troupe to limit its *gidayû* programs and to increase the number of *tokiwazu*-school pieces, since the former smacked of the emotionalism and regionalism of the greater Osaka area. “Practice with Ichikawa Jukai, and in Tokyo with Ichikawa Ebizô [IX] and with other actors. Try to increase these interactions,” he advised.¹⁴² Akiyama also suggested that the troupe spend more time studying with leading grand *kabuki* actors, but noted that the troupe had difficulty “learning new *kata* [and by extension, the proper dialogue], since they were so wedded to the way they were taught.”¹⁴³ Years later, several girls from Tokyo would join the troupe, which gave it several in-house vocal models for Edo speech. As for performing Chikamatsu plays, in which the Osaka dialect was required, recruits from that city were deemed invaluable as well.¹⁴⁴

Critical Acceptance

Like everything subjective, there was no consensus regarding the troupe; some accepted it wholeheartedly, others did so begrudgingly. The voice of opposition, however, was never as harsh as Toita’s 1953 review. If opposition was voiced, it was done behind

¹⁴¹ Akiyama, “Hanatakashi Shôjo Kabuki,” *Engekikai*, October 1955, 77.

¹⁴² Ichigawa, “Ai Suru Otome-tachi,” Naka-za program, March 1956, 6.

¹⁴³ Akiyama, “Serifu no Mazusa,” *Asahi Shinbun*, 15 May 1956.

¹⁴⁴ Ichikawa Sanpuku, interview.

closed doors, or it was “relayed” in the press by critics who stated that they were not speaking for themselves, but for critics whom they had overheard. Goto Akira of *Kyôto Shinbun*, for example, summed up the negative rumors floating in the air:

They have done the plays well, the dialogue is solid, but it would be a lie not to admit that there are critics who say that they are not the “real thing.” To cut to the chase, the troupe lacks depth. . . . There is the physical problem of being a *shôjo* and the fact that the troupe has not been able to cultivate the charms of one who has spent many years in the *kabuki* world. They have not been able to engender this type of atmosphere. However, this is unavoidable for the girls. But the girls display their top level of performance. So, on this matter, they just have to go for it. We have great hope and expectations for the troupe, so if the troupe continues to do its best, it will be able to overcome the problems of tradition and physique.¹⁴⁵

During the mid 1950s there was no question that the majority of critics were enthusiastic about the troupe. As Toita remarked, the Ichikawa Girls’ Kabuki Troupe was not ignored, but embraced.¹⁴⁶ This was very different indeed from the reception offered female actors (*onna yakusha*) some four decades earlier. Not one review mentioned the “disharmony” of the members, perhaps the greatest criticism leveled at early twentieth-century female actors, who performed with male *kabuki* actors at the Imperial Theatre.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁵ Goto Akira, “Shôjo Kabuki no Rikiryô” [Girls’ Kabuki’s Ability], *Minami-za* program, January 1955, 7.

¹⁴⁶ Toita, “Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki,” 72.

¹⁴⁷ Mine Takashi, *Teikoku Gekijô*, 221-222.

Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki was able to transcend such criticism for the simple reason that its members were not performing with male *kabuki* players, but with other girls, who were roughly the same age and size. As an all-female troupe, they did not have to worry about harmonizing with men. Still, issues of physicality did arise. The girls, like their predecessors, were seen as weaker and smaller than their male counterparts. But when Fukushô or Misuji played roles such as Benkei and Watanabe Tsuna (*Ibaraki*) which required a massive display of bravado, critics did not complain; instead they complimented them. Moreover, there were times when critics, such as Tomita (*Ôsaka*), would go as far as to compare the troupe to grand *kabuki*:

In the current [male] *kabuki* world, the first-class members also have physical limitations, so in this regard I don't think that [Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki] is overshadowed by the big-name players. One can compare them to members of grand *kabuki*. If they can learn to develop more of a sense of timing, then they'll be tremendous actors.¹⁴⁸

In Tomita's mind, the troupe rivaled mainstream *kabuki*, and its members had a bright future.

The fact that critics came down strongly on the troupe indicates not only that they accepted it, but also that they took the troupe seriously enough to offer balanced, critical feedback. Some years later, the troupe would face more backlash, as reviewers would write that earlier critics had provided the troupe a handicap by giving it good reviews as a girls' troupe. But in the beginning, the refrain "good for a girl" was almost never heard.

¹⁴⁸ Tomita Yasuhiko, "Tassai na Kyôgen," *Ôsaka Nichi Nichi Shinbun*, 10 July 1955.

Tomita was perhaps the greatest advocate for the troupe. He closed his stellar review of its November 1954 Naka-za performance as follows:

I am not writing sweetly [because it is a girls' troupe]. I am a critic who has been writing criticism for forty years, and I take responsibility for what I write. If anyone has something different to say, let me know.¹⁴⁹

Whether or not he received any mail in response to his verbal challenge, the point is clear: a senior *kabuki* critic was willing to stake his reputation on lauding the troupe. Such a challenge, however, would not have been necessary had the troupe not been the subject of disparaging gossip. Still, save for Akiyama's remarks about what critics were "really saying" about the troupe during intermission, such slander never made it into print. For no matter how one defined the troupe, no one could overlook the fact that it had become a serious contender on the national stage. As veteran grand *kabuki* actor Sawamura Tanosuke VI (b. 1932) recalled, "I didn't think much of them, but I wanted to see what they were doing, since they had become so popular."¹⁵⁰ Despite his misgivings, he saw Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki perform no less than three times.¹⁵¹

Indeed, by the beginning of 1955, critics were calling the rise of the troupe none other than the "*shôjo* boom." The leader of the Nagoya Pen Club Association explained:

Lately, the phrase "Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki boom" has appeared. Saying "boom" is an exaggeration if only people who saw the troupe feel this way. A boom occurs when people have the feeling of wanting to see it; it is when this feeling

¹⁴⁹ Tomita Yasuhiko, "Dôtonbori no Kyôji," *Ôsaka Nichi Nichi Shinbun*, 7 November 1954.

¹⁵⁰ Sawamura Tanosuke VI, interview by author, 18 August 2004, Tokyo, Japan.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

reaches so many people that we begin to understand that a boom has come about. This is the second time the troupe has performed at the Misono-za. Since the last time, not even three months have passed. In that time, the troupe has performed in Tokyo, Osaka, and Kyoto. One can truly say that a “boom” has occurred. Something amazing has happened.¹⁵²

That the girls had become a recognized part of the national performance scene was further witnessed with the publication of *Engekikai*'s 1955 issue of *Today's Kabuki Actors (Gendai no Kabuki Haiyû)*.¹⁵³ The article about the troupe is perhaps the clearest indication that it had been accepted into the closed *kabuki* world. With the exception of the troupe, all the actors featured in the book were male, most of whom were scions of *kabuki* families. Compared to the male actors, however, the troupe was treated differently. Each famous male actor received at least a page or half a page of commentary exclusively devoted to his performance record; the entire Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki Troupe, on the other hand, was given three pages. Head-shots of the nine top-ranked actors and Masujûrô appeared, together with a short article recounting the troupe's path to fame. The main feature was a chart, noting each of the twenty-four members' stage name, private name, date of birth, date of joining the company, height, weight, shoe size, and “things I like,” and “things I don't like.” Now fans could know what kind of gift to bring their favorite actor.

¹⁵² Shimizu Fue, “Shôjo Kabuki Bûmu,” [Girls' Kabuki's Boom], Misono-za program, February 1955, 16-17.

¹⁵³ Noguchi, “Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki, *Engekikai*, 134-136.

Most everyone had listed fruit as a “thing I like”; other favorite things were rice crackers, eggs, and Japanese confectionary. Things in the “don’t like” list included sashimi, fish, and carrots; only Baika and Sanae did not list any dislikes.

There were no charts for likes and dislikes of male *kabuki* actors, whose introductions included a listing of plays and characters they had performed to date. No mention was paid to the girls’ acting. A cynical reader might conclude that the girls were treated in a demeaning manner, more appropriate for child idols than for respectable *kabuki* actors. Still, to dismiss the coverage would be wrong; it is significant that the troupe was the subject of numerous reviews and features in the nation’s top publications. *Engekikai*’s inclusion of Ichikawa Girls’ Kabuki in its exclusive handbook suggests that the troupe, just two years after its Tokyo debut, was viewed as part of the regular performance calendar. Spectators and readers of the preeminent publication could assume that the girls were on their way to becoming a permanent fixture on the national stage.

Chapter 5

Life off the Stage

The press took great pleasure in portraying the girls as one big happy family. Life in the troupe was made out to be an endless slumber party. Pictures in magazines like *Shufu no Tomo* (Housewife's Friend), *Bunka Seigatsu* (Cultural Life), and *Asahi Gurafu* (Asahi Graph) showed the girls tucked neatly into their futons in two straight rows, as if they were perfectly positioned to regale each other with ghost stories into the wee hours of the night.¹ Other pictures showed the young members taking communal baths, rehearsing in the dressing room, or unpacking the props. The press even made the girls look like they were having fun washing clothes. At face value, company membership appeared like a girl's fantasy, where she instantly would acquire a couple dozen sisters with whom to do everything: travel the country, perform, practice, eat, sleep, and bathe. But, in actuality, the troupe, like any other organization, had its share of tremors and quakes underneath the smooth facade the press presented. And, as we shall see, if it did in any way resemble a family, it was a dysfunctional one at best.

Hierarchy Offstage

Just as the plays the troupe performed onstage reflected rigid feudalistic values, so did the offstage division of members reinforce firm lines of demarcation between veteran and novice members. As the *Mainichi Gurafu* reported, "That the girls are part of the old-

¹ "Hamamatsu no Musume Kabuki: Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki Gekidan o Miru" [Hamamatsu's Girls' Kabuki: Watching Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki], *Shufu no Tomo* [Housewife's Friend], January 1953, 42-43; Tsumori Kenji, "Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki Jun'en" [Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki Touring], *Asahi Gurafu* [Asahi Graph], 25 September 1956, 42-43; "Gekikai ni Wadai o Nageta: Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki" [A Topic to Hurl at the Theatre World: Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki], *Bunka Seigatsu* [Cultural Life], May 1953, n.p.

fashioned world of *kabuki* speaks for itself.”² A strict hierarchy was the modus operandi; it was not based so much on age, but on the length of time each girl had been a member of the troupe. The nine members who had received stage names from Ichikawa Sanshō V comprised the top class (*kanbu*), which was actually divided into two subgroups: the top class, consisting of four members, and the junior top class (*jun kanbu*), consisting of five members. Next in line were the middle-ranking (*chū-kanbu*) or regular members, while the newest members were the apprentices (*minarase*).³ They had the lowest standing and were called low-ranked children (*shita no ko*), a pejorative term that corresponded to the third-floor dressing room (*sangai-san* or *ôbeya*) used for adult *kabuki* actors (see appendix II).⁴ The hierarchical arrangement was reinforced in the theatre programs, as members’ names were listed by rank, and the order in which members sat in the dressing room (and ate or bathed) was always the same, based on the number of years one had been a member of the troupe. Depending on the theatre, top members either would receive their own dressing rooms or share with other similarly ranked girls. Though no one ever formally called this arrangement an “apprentice system” (*deshi-seido*), that is in effect what it amounted to, as each of the top members, in time, came to have their own “low-ranked child,” who would perform whatever tasks they needed done.

This arrangement mirrored the divisions in the adult *kabuki* world, as every major, grand *kabuki* actor has his own apprentice or apprentices, often referred to as “room

² “Shōjo Kabuki” [Girls Kabuki], *Mainichi Gurafu* [Mainichi Chart], 14 September 1955, 8.

³ Ōki Yutaka, “Shishunki ni Tasshita: Ichikawa Shōjo Kabuki” [Ichikawa Girls’ Kabuki Reaches Puberty], *Shūkan Tōkyō* [Tokyo Week], 5 July 1958, 83; Ichikawa Ebimaru, interview by author, 16, 28 April 2004, Toyokawa, Japan.

⁴ Ichikawa Ebimaru, interview.

child” (*heyago*), who perform the backstage chores in exchange for receiving lessons and the opportunity to perform. Depending on his relationship with the senior actor, the apprentice is expected to arrive at the dressing room early to ensure that everything is in order and is the last to leave, after cleaning up. Onoe Umeno, who appeared as a guest performer with Ichikawa Girls’ Kabuki in the early 1960s and worked as a child actor for Onoe Baikô VII in the late 1940s and 1950s, recalled that when Baikô went to the toilet, two of his apprentices stood guard, waiting for him with an oblong towel (*tenugui*) in hand.⁵ An apprentice’s rank, generally determined by family standing, influenced what kind of roles he played on stage.⁶ For most apprentices of grand *kabuki*, the prospect of one day performing famous roles is practically nil, as major roles are reserved for big-name players.⁷ Minor actors must content themselves with acting as the actor’s assistants (*kôken*), who help with any onstage costume changes and oversee the props. A *kôken* spends much of the rehearsal time seated *seiza* style with his legs tucked under his knees, and it is from this (uncomfortable) perch that he is expected to learn his master’s role.

Of course one of the major differences between Ichikawa Girls’ Kabuki and grand *kabuki* is that none of the girls hailed from *kabuki* families; everyone was an outsider. As we have seen, however, Sanshō bestowed nine players first-name stage names, which gave them special privileges that put them above other troupe members. At the very top was Misuji, who, as company leader, would have been the member most privy to

⁵ Onoe Umeno, interview by author, 20 August 2004, Tokyo, Japan.

⁶ The apprentice system has undergone change since the 1950s. Low-ranking apprentices, who have not been born into the *kabuki* world, are able to have a shot at performing in a major role at the Kokuritsu Gekijō’s annual production showcasing graduates of its training school.

⁷ Ichikawa Ennosuke III’s apprentices are exceptions to the rule.

administrative and financial decision making.⁸ The first four players—Misuji, Baika, Fukushô, and Masuyo—comprised the first division, and the second five players—Sanpuku, Suzume, Baishô, Himeshô, and Kobotan—comprised the second, or junior top class. Off stage, however, this division largely faded, as all of them were entitled to apprentices. Misuji’s apprentice was first Masami and later Chiyoko, Baika’s was Shinko, Fukushô’s Takako, Masuyo’s Hiromi, Suzume’s Kiyomi, Himeshô’s Sanae, and Kobotan’s Kosuzu.⁹ Middle-ranking members, such as Ebimaru, Mineko, and Teruko, neither received an apprentice nor did they have to serve as one. “We could concentrate on our own selves,” recalled Ebimaru, who had received her stage name from Ichikawa Ebijûrô, not Sanshô.¹⁰ What became awkward was that new, incoming members, who belonged to the apprentice class, were often older than the middle and top-ranked performers. This was similar to the world of men’s grand *kabuki*, where experience and troupe loyalty were privileged over age.

The only one who circumvented this arrangement was Masujûrô and Sumihachi’s daughter, Emiko, who, as the press often noted, became a member of the troupe at birth. Born in 1948 to actor parents, she was four years old when the troupe first performed at Mitsukoshi Gekijô, and, in this sense, she was the only performer in the troupe to be heralded a *kabuki* actor at birth, not unlike grand *kabuki* hereditary actors. As Sanpuku recalled, “She was still awfully young, so she always stayed in the master’s room, and

⁸ When interviewed, Misuji denied that she had any special privileges as the company leader. All other members interviewed, however, spoke about how Misuji played a leadership role in the troupe’s development.

⁹ Sanpuku could not recall the name of her apprentice. Ichikawa Sanpuku, interview by author, 5 April 2004, Toyohashi, Japan.

¹⁰ Ichikawa Ebimaru, interview.

wherever the master [Masujûrô] went, she went. So in that case everyone treated her differently.”¹¹ Indeed, years later Emiko, laughing at the memory of being pampered by all of her “older sisters,” acknowledged that she was the spoiled brat of the troupe.¹²

Members accepted the hierarchical arrangement; it was understood to be perfectly fair and reasonable. New members understood that they needed to prove themselves for the first couple of months by helping with the costumes and props. The apprentices were responsible for arriving before the top-ranked performers to ensure that everything was ready; they washed their “masters’” white slippers and undergarments and gave them massages after practice or performances; they poured the tea and were last in line for meals and the bath.¹³ Most members, when interviewed years later, acknowledged that there was a division between the upper and lower ranks, and some even used the term “apprentice system,” but most downplayed it. “After a couple years, they adopted an apprentice system for us,” Fukushô recalled, “but it wasn’t the same as in the grand *kabuki* world. After all, we were all kids.”¹⁴ Moreover, Baika noted that she does not remember the apprentices using honorifics when speaking to her, which certainly would have been expected of subordinates in the adult world. But for new recruits, the difference was acute. Kiyomi, who joined the troupe in the late 1950s, recalled, “From running around doing errands, to sewing costumes, to helping everyone put on their

¹¹ Ichikawa Sanpuku, interview.

¹² Ichikawa Emiko, interview by author, 2 June 2004, Toyohashi, Japan.

¹³ Ichikawa Toshie, phone interview by author, 27 April 2004; Ichikawa Kiyomi, interview by author, 20 April 2004, Tokyo.

¹⁴ Ichikawa Fukushô, interview by author, 30 April and 3 May 2004, Gero, Japan.

costumes, the time when I was on stage was actually a relief for me.”¹⁵ Still, she never questioned the system. “It was natural for those of us at the bottom to serve the top members,” she said.¹⁶

Apprentices often gave their mentors small gifts, but even this was sometimes problematic. Kobeni, a member of the troupe from 1954-1956, remembered presenting Baishô and Baika with bags that her parents had sent from their store. “I only had two, so I gave them to my favorite mentors,” she recalled. But Misuji, she said, scolded her for exhibiting such favoritism, something that Misuji years later could not recall.¹⁷

In the best cases, apprentices were paired with veteran members who taught them their parts and familiarized them with the rules of the troupe. Hisayo, who was matched with Masuyo, recalled that she could not have found a more helpful mentor. But sometimes the pairings were doomed from the start. Kiyomi and Suzume, for example, were a poor match. Their body types were different; Suzume was tall, Kiyomi, petite, and they were assigned different roles: Suzume played the soft *nimaiime* male roles, while Kiyomi, when she was given the opportunity to perform, played female roles, comic characters, and performed in dance pieces. “It was frustrating,” Kiyomi confided; “she didn’t really teach me.”¹⁸ Suzume was not to blame; the arrangement reflected the system that did not always serve the interests of newcomers. Sometimes, it was equally difficult for mentors. Sanpuku, for example, recalled being paired with a new girl who cried every

¹⁵ Ichikawa Kiyomi, interview.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ichikawa Kobeni, interview by author, 4 May 2004, Yatomi, Japan; Ichikawa Misuji, interview by author, 4 October 2004, Nagoya, Japan.

¹⁸ Ichikawa Kiyomi, interview.

night that she was on the road with the troupe. “She was just miserable, sobbing on the phone to her family every night, till it got to the point that I told her it was fine to quit.”¹⁹

The apprentice system, at its best, served as a buddy system, providing support to members who needed it the most.

Yet the hierarchical ranking seems to have spawned factionalism, or, at the very least, cliques that were formed based on seniority. As was only natural, girls tended to bond more quickly with those who they had entered the troupe at the same time. Misuji, Masuyo, and Baishô, the original threesome, remained close friends; Ebimaru and Mineko and Kiyomi and Hiromi, who joined at the same time, became best friends. When interviewed years later, most members denied the existence of factions within the troupe, but few denied that there were clear boundaries that impeded friendships. As Kiyomi recalled, “It was rare that anyone in the top rank would speak to me. They were all above me. Of all the top-ranked members, Kobotan spoke to me the most.”²⁰ Not surprisingly, the apprentices more intensely felt the gap in treatment between the classes.

The girls’ salary during the years 1952-1959 was paid by the Hamamatsu-za and reflected the hierarchy in place. Unfortunately there are no extant official documents pertaining to salary; all the information compiled here is based on articles from the 1950s and interviews with members that occurred some fifty years after the event in question. According to Watanabe Saburô’s 1953 article in which he quotes the Hamamatsu-za executive director Kaneko Seiji, the four top members were paid fixed salaries, while all

¹⁹ Ichikawa Sanpuku, interview.

²⁰ Ichikawa Kiyomi, interview.

the other members were paid “pocket money.”²¹ It seems fair to assume that after Baishô, Kobotan, Himeshô, Suzume, and Sanpuku earned junior top-tier ranking in 1954, they too received “fixed salaries.” Several years later, in 1958, the *Shûkan Tôkyô* noted that “everyone is paid monthly, but the top-ranked members’ salary is similar to young actors in grand *kabuki*.”²² The writer noted that they made around 50,000 yen per month, out of which they were required to pay for their on-stage cosmetics, also expected of grand *kabuki* actors. Still, it was a generous sum, considering that in 1954, first-year white-collar male college graduates averaged 14,567 yen a month during their first five years of employment.²³ Interviews with performers corroborate this data, with Misuji earning the highest sum, followed by Baika and Fukushô.²⁴ Masuyo should have been paid a figure in that ballpark, though she recalled being paid considerably less.²⁵ The junior top-tier lead performers were probably paid close to 30,000 yen, the figure that Baishô recalled making during a good month. As for the lower-ranked “regular” members, the *Shûkan Tôkyô* estimated that they made between 14,000-15,000 yen per month.²⁶ In actuality, a middle-ranking member, such as Ebimaru, recalled making more like 8,000 yen per month, though she remembered occasions when she earned 10,000 yen. Apprentices were

²¹ Watanabe Saburô, “Shôjo Bakari no Kabuki” [The All-girls’ *Kabuki*], *Shûkan Sankei* [Industrial and Commerce Weekly], 22 February 1953, 56-57.

²² Ôki, “Shishunki ni Tasshita,” *Shûkan Tôkyô*, 5 July 1958, 83.

²³ See “Wages by Educational Background, Age Groups, Industry and Duration of Service (1954),” in *Nihon Tôkei Nengan* [Japan Statistical Yearbook] (Tokyo: Bureau of Statistics, Office of Prime Minister: 1955-1956), 343.

²⁴ Ichikawa Baika, interview by author, 4 March 2004, Toyokawa, Japan.

²⁵ Ichikawa Masuyo, interview.

²⁶ Ôki, “Shishunki ni Tasshita,” *Shûkan Tôkyô*, 5 July 1958, 83.

paid around 2,000-3,000 yen a month, and, therefore, the magazine added, “when they need cash, they send a telegram home: ‘send money.’”²⁷ Similarly, Watanabe suggested that paying most troupe members “pocket cash,” had not been problematic, “since all the members come from mid-to-upper middle-class families.”²⁸ It appears that the girls were only paid for the time they actually performed, which, for the years 1952-1959, averaged ten months of the year. Payment policy, however, was not transparent; the girls said that they never knew how much the others were making. This, no doubt, was the Hamamatsu-za’s intention.

Members said that they do not recall the topic of salary ever being discussed, nor do they remember feeling particularly disgruntled over financial issues. “I didn’t need the money for anything. All our needs were cared for: they gave us clothing, food, lodging, and transportation was always paid for,” Kobeni recalled.²⁹ Baika agreed, noting, “There weren’t many things to spend money on,” and, more practically, they had no time to shop for things.³⁰ In fact, while the press noted that the girls were sending telegrams requesting money, members attest to sending money to their families.³¹ Suzume said that her mother, who had adamantly opposed her participation in the troupe, confided to her that “the money I sent home helped my family during times of financial distress.”³² Still,

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ichikawa Kobeni, interview.

³⁰ Ichikawa Baika interview; Kurokawa Mitsuhiro, “Watashi Seigatsu mo Kibishiku Kisei” [Private Life Also Strictly Regulated], “Maboroshi no Ichikawa Shōjo Kabuki” [Phantom Ichikawa Girls’ Kabuki], *Chūnichi Shinbun*, no. 16, 7 February 1984.

³¹ Ichikawa Baika, interview.

³² Ichikawa Suzume, interview by author, 5 April 2004, Toyohashi, Japan.

others sensed that there was a gulf between what everyone earned. Kobotan of the junior top-class, for example, recalled that the top-ranked Misuji always treated her for movies, since she knew that she was making more money.³³ What seems clear is that during the Hamamatsu-za years (1952-1959), money was not an issue. The girls were content to receive whatever salary they earned, along with the audience's applause, as payment for their efforts. As chapter 7 will discuss, however, salary would become a divisive issue after the troupe became independent from the Hamamatsu-za in August 1959.

“Free Time”

To the public, Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki “performed during the day” and “studied at night”: at least that was how one newspaper summarized its daily schedule.³⁴ Writers questioned how their intensive performing schedule permitted the girls to fulfill their obligatory schooling requirements. Magazines that featured stage pictures of the troupe were certain to include backstage photos of the girls studying diligently in the dressing room “after the performance” (see figures 21 and 22).³⁵ In actuality, the troupe performed during the day and during the night; and for the four top-tier members, there was never time for school or homework. Besides, after finishing a performance, the last thing girls wanted to do was study for school. As Misuji noted, “We always finish performing around nine or ten o'clock in the evening; afterwards, we return to our inn, and the first thing we do is take a bath. Everyone does as she likes—some watch television; others

³³ Ichikawa Kobotan, interview by author, 29 April 2004, Gifu City, Japan.

³⁴ “Seifuku de Jungyô Suru Otome-tachi: Hiru wa Butai, Yoru wa Benkyô o Tsuzukeru” [The Girls who Tour in Uniform: Stage in the Morning, Studies in the Evening], *Sangyô Keizai Shinbun*, 7 February 1953.

³⁵ See, for example, “Gekikai ni Wadai o Nageta,” *Bunka Seigatsu*, May 1953, n.p.

listen to records; I'm asleep by 1 a.m.”³⁶ The late evening hours were the only time the lead performers had to themselves.

Prioritizing the theatre over school was not such a problem, as most of the leads had already completed their compulsory schooling by the time the troupe commenced its heavy touring schedule. Indeed, in 1956, the *Sandē Mainichi* reported that all but three members had finished their school requirements.³⁷ For the girls who still needed to complete their elementary and junior high coursework, the Board of Education, as stipulated in the Hamamatsu-za contract, had hired a fifty-one-year-old female tutor, Matsui Yo, to teach the girls on the road. Matsui stayed with the troupe for six years and taught members for approximately two hours each day.³⁸ In 1953, she told the journalist for the *Sangyō Keizai Shinbun*, “They are behind in subjects like science and math, but for subjects that are connected to the plays, like Japanese and history, they would surprise you by how much they remember.”³⁹ In contrast to the hard-line disciplinary tactics of Masujūrō, Matsui-sensei was seen by the girls as gentle and nurturing. She understood the extraordinary circumstances under which the girls were working. Matsui herself, when interviewed by Kurokawa in 1984, remembered that she tried to be supportive of the members. “When the girls didn’t understand their studies,” she was quoted as saying,

³⁶ Ichikawa Misuji, “Shōjo Kara Onna e no Nayami” [Concerns (about going) from a Girl to a Woman], *Fujin Gahō* [Ladies Illustrated] (September 1958): 234.

³⁷ “Otona ni Natta Shōjo Kabuki” [Girls’ *Kabuki* That Has Become Adult], *Sandē Mainichi* [Sunday Mainichi], 10 June 1956, 45.

³⁸ Kurokawa Mitsuhiro, “Matsui Sensei to no Kōryū Roku-nen” [Six years with Matsui-sensei], “Maboroshi no Ichikawa Shōjo Kabuki” [Phantom Ichikawa Girls’ Kabuki], *Chūnichi Shinbun*, no. 14, 4 February 1984.

³⁹ “Seifuku de Jungyō Suru Otome-tachi,” *Sangyō Keizai Shinbun*, 7 February 1953. She is not identified by name in this article, but interviews confirmed that the teacher in question was Matsui.

“I would tell them, you can go out there and put on such an amazing performance. I couldn’t do that. That alone is proof that you are smart.”⁴⁰ Lessons were squeezed between rehearsals and performances. A frequent sight, Matsui reported, was seeing the girls fall asleep with their textbook in their laps, a position she was inclined to leave them in. Fatigue, however, never exempted the girls from taking the exams that the Board of Education sent every few weeks. As Ichikawa Baika remembered, “We took the tests while consulting a book. Our teacher didn’t mind. We had no time to study,” she said, adding, “The girls playing the ladies-in-waiting or soldiers would just go on stage for a few minutes and then have lots of down time during which they could study, but those of us in the first tier never had any down time. We were always on.”⁴¹ The non-traditional arrangement served its purpose; the girls were able to prioritize their performance careers, and their parents and local bureaucrats were content that they were receiving an education comparable to what was being taught in the schools.

Of course, it goes without saying that the girls were receiving an education in theatre that none of their counterparts at a conventional junior high or high school would ever get. In addition to training with Masujûrô and grand *kabuki* actors, the members were encouraged to take lessons in tea ceremony and flower arrangement and to study instruments central to *kabuki* such as *shamisen*, *tsuzumi*, and *taiko*.⁴² Most of their free time when they were not performing, however, was spent in rehearsal. Ichikawa Baika recalled that on top of their busy production schedule, finding time to rehearse was a

⁴⁰ Kurokawa, “Matsui Sensei,” *Chûnichi Shinbun*, 4 February 1984.

⁴¹ Ichikawa Baika, interview.

⁴² Ichikawa Misuji, *Shôjo Kara Onna e*, *Fujin Gahô*, September 1958, 234.

challenge. “While we were on tour, our rehearsals would take place after the performance ended; during our [sixty-day run] at the Hamamatsu-za, we would wake up at 5 and practice until 8 a.m. Breakfast was until 9. Afterwards, the leads would rehearse. And then we would meet in the dressing room to prepare for our 12:30 p.m. performance.”⁴³

During the formative years of the troupe, rehearsals of new work would commence with a full reading of the play. The entire company would gather and sit *seiza* style on the floor, while Masujûrô would read the entire play out loud. He was the only one during those early years who owned a script; the girls were expected to record their own lines, any necessary prompt cues, and stage directions in their own notebooks.⁴⁴ In this way, each girl created her own individually tailored script. It was at this reading that most of the girls heard the play for the first time. Save for the task of writing down lines, this process resembled the traditional way in which *kabuki* actors received their parts. Hearing the play recited out loud was thought to be easier for the girls to comprehend than reading it by themselves, since many of the younger members had yet to master enough *kanji* to read sufficiently.

After Masujûrô’s reading, the troupe would begin “standing rehearsals” (*tachi-keiko*), in which the movement for an entire act would be taught (see figure 23). “It didn’t matter if we understood or didn’t understand our parts, it would still be a full run-

⁴³ Ichikawa Baika, “Gonan, Yobikomi, Mima Aoitake” [Difficulties, Being Screamed at and Hit with a Green Bamboo Pole], “Matsuba-Botan no Ki” [Journal of Small Peonies], *Mainichi Shinbun*, no. 3, 25 January 1994.

⁴⁴ Meiji-za program, May 1953. See also Ichikawa Masujûrô, “Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki Kôenkai: Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki Are Kore” [Symposium on the Ichikawa Girls’ Kabuki: Pondering Ichikawa Girls’ Kabuki] (lecture, Sakuragaoka Museum, Toyokawa, Japan, 7 May 1995). Transcript courtesy Sakuragaoka Museum, 4.

through,” Baika remembered.⁴⁵ “That’s how we would learn. We had to because we had so many plays to learn. It was never at an easygoing pace,” she said.⁴⁶ Still, members learned the movement and dances with greater ease, since so much of it was recycled from previous plays that they had already mastered. The greater challenge was learning dialogue. Looking back a half-a-century later, Masuyo recalled that learning the part of Princess Taema (*Narukami*) was the most difficult. “I still associate the number 104 with that play,” she said. “I had to learn 104 lines, and I remember learning it as quite an ordeal.”⁴⁷ For Baika, the role of Otoku in *Domo Mata* caused her the most trouble, because she had to speak both for herself and her speech-impaired husband.⁴⁸ There was no preferred method for learning lines. Time, though, was scarce, and private time was even rarer. “It’s not a nice thing to say,” Baika recalled, “but I would sometimes resort to learning my lines in the toilet.”⁴⁹ The worst experience, Sanpuku recalled, was one performance when she was called upon to substitute last minute for a sick member. With no time to learn her lines, she hid them onstage, only for a *kôken* to mistakenly take them away. “I was in a cold sweat, trying to remember what to say,” she recalled. “I’m sure the audience had no idea what I was saying.”⁵⁰ With more experience, members say they

⁴⁵ Ichikawa Baika, interview.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ichikawa Masuyo, interview.

⁴⁸ Ichikawa Baika, “Shoen Geidai-chu ni Chichi no Shi” [My Father’s Death in the Middle of the Opening Program], “Matsuba-Botan no Ki” [Journal of Small Peonies], *Mainichi Shinbun*, no. 5, 8 February 1994.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ichikawa Sanpuku, interview.

grew more confident with the dialogue, but, as discussed in the previous chapter, their strong accents plagued them through the duration of their careers with the troupe.

With limited time for rehearsals, the girls quickly learned the necessity of using performances as a time to hone their skills. Baika wrote:

For our productions lasting one month at big theatres, our schedule would be as follows: on day one, we would arrive at the theatre and make the appropriate introductions, on the second day we would have a dress rehearsal, and on the third day we would open. The last day would be the twenty-third. For the remaining part of the week, we would travel to our next destination and repeat the schedule.

When we were on tour, there would be times when we would perform for just one day. So though one might speak of a “national tour,” all we knew was the station, theatre, and *ryokan* (Japanese-style inn); we never toured the sights. If we had any free time, we tried to get a little bit of sleep.⁵¹

Sleep, though, had to be deferred until after Masujûrô’s infamous critique sessions, which he explained as follows:

I would take notes on every performance, so after we returned to our *ryokan*, I would give criticism, telling each and every one of them what they had done wrong that day. “Here’s how you screwed up,” I would say. That would take about an hour. Think about it, if you have a twenty-five-day production run, that

⁵¹ Ichikawa Baika, “Terebi Fukyû, Heru Danin” [Advent of Television, Dropping Members], “Matsuba-Botan no Ki” [Journal of Small Peonies], *Mainichi Shinbun*, no. 9, 8 March 1994. An examination of the troupe’s programs shows that the troupe did not always run for twenty days, opening on the third and closing on the twenty-third. It seems that Baika was using one production as an example.

gives you twenty-five times to improve. And within a year's time, I guess, I really began to see improvement. So this became our custom.⁵²

On the whole, the girls appear to have welcomed these sessions. The writer Kyoya Kôsei reported visiting the troupe's headquarters at the Hamamatsu-za in February 1953 and attending one of the critique sessions that had focused on Act VI of *Kanadehon Chûshingura* in which Kanpei commits suicide after being wrongly accused of murdering his lover's father. Masujûrô gave the performers playing Okaru and Kanpei a list of mistakes they had made before he noticed that one of the girls who had played a hunter was sobbing. "Masujûrô thought the girl might have developed a stomach ache, but, when he asked, she shook her head, replying, 'Master, you gave Kanpei and Okaru seven or eight points on which they needed to work, but you only gave me two,'" Kyoya wrote, adding, "one can only smile at this situation."⁵³ When questioned by Kyoya, Masujûrô said he attempted to treat the leads and the walk-on characters equally in order to mitigate any friction, or crying fits.

The Green Bamboo Pole Master

Kyoya's tender impression of Masujûrô fails to resonate with how most troupe members viewed him. In their eyes, he was all-powerful, intimidating, and downright frightening. As Baika recalled, "He was very strict. He was the son of a farmer. Very strict."⁵⁴ Even Sumihachi, his wife during this period in his life, told *Engekikai*, "I cannot

⁵² Ichikawa Masujûrô, "Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki Kôenkai," 4.

⁵³ Kyoya Kôsei, "Shôjo Kabuki to wa" [What is Girls' Kabuki?], Meiji-za program, May 1953, 26.

⁵⁴ Ichikawa Baika, interview.

tell you how many times I've cried under the whip of my husband."⁵⁵ Likewise, his daughter, Emiko, admitted that she was scared of him and was particularly afraid of making mistakes. "If I knew I had made mistakes, I would avoid him and not return to his room until I was certain that he had forgotten about it."⁵⁶ Indeed, the image of a concerned master asking a girl about her queasy stomach does not jibe with their descriptions. While all members and many outsiders agree that Masujûrô wanted nothing less than to make the girls into excellent performers, his means were draconian at times. His use of green bamboo poles is a case in point. Ichikawa Baika recounted:

When rehearsals first began, our master would prepare three bamboo sticks. . . . On top of our busy schedules, we found time to rehearse, and when we did, the bamboo pole would come flying. Masujûrô would fling the bamboo pole at us. We were scared of that whipping sound, but if we cried in front of that teacher, he would scold us twice as much. And this would go on day after day. But I never thought of quitting.⁵⁷

Just about every member interviewed admitted that she was intimidated, if not frightened, by Masujûrô, who quickly earned the nickname, the "green-bamboo master." Masujûrô avoided any discussion of this disciplinary tactic in his autobiography, but acknowledged later that he used bamboo poles at practice and on tours, in order to keep the girls in line (not that there were reports of anyone misbehaving). Years later, at the Sakuragaoka Museum symposium, he defended his actions:

⁵⁵ Ôe Ryôtarô, "Hamamatsu no Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki" [Hamamatsu's Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki], *Engekikai* (December 1952): 77.

⁵⁶ Ichikawa Emiko, interview.

⁵⁷ Ichikawa Baika, "Gonan, Yobikomi, Mima Aoitake," *Mainichi Shinbun*, 25 January 1994.

It's often written that I've been called the green-bamboo master, and that I hit the girls hard with a green bamboo pole, but that is not the case. If I hit them with a bamboo pole, they'd die, so that's just not true. As everyone knows, if you scream at someone in a loud voice, you surprise them. So, in order to surprise the children, I would hold a bamboo pole and scream in an angry voice, "What are you doing," and I would hit the ground with the pole. Things that they might have learned by doing them ten times, they learned in two.⁵⁸

Masujûrô, no doubt, had great expectations for his protégées. It did not matter to him whether or not the troupe was performing in big theatres or small ones, the girls had a responsibility to themselves and to their audiences to perform well. "Art is not something that you sweetly teach. . . . As far as art is concerned, you have to continue to scold. Everyone, after all, continued to follow me, because several days later, a real performance would take place."⁵⁹ Even Baika, who wrote most vociferously against Masujûrô's use of the bamboo poles, acknowledged, "If it hadn't been for [those poles] I'm not sure we would have gone so far. Due to the master always stamping with that pole and correcting us, we received such great applause from the audiences, and that is something a child will always remember."⁶⁰ Surely compared to the corporal punishment

⁵⁸ Ichikawa Masujûrô, "Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki Kôenkai," lecture, 3.

⁵⁹ Kurokawa Mitsuhiro, "Suparuta-shiki no Môgeiko" [Intense, Sparta-like Training], "Maboroshi no Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki" [Phantom Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki], *Chûnichi Shinbun*, no. 15, 6 February 1984.

⁶⁰ Ichikawa Baika, quoted at Ichikawa Masujûrô, "Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki Kôenkai," 8.

used to discipline actors in Peking Opera (*jingju*), Masujûrô's tactics were mild, but, to the girls, his techniques were harsh.⁶¹

Indeed, for some girls, the stress of performing and being critiqued was unbearable. Many dropped through Masujûrô's infamous sieve, never to return to the troupe after being scolded one too many times. Others stayed and suffered quietly. Ichikawa Sanpuku, for one, recalled that she once became so distraught that she considered suicide. With her petite frame and large face, she was often cast in grandmotherly roles but, unfortunately, it was rare that she could perform such parts without the audience laughing when she appeared in a grey wig and old-lady kimono. Hoping to remedy the problem, she asked Masujûrô for some constructive feedback. His response, indelibly stitched in Sanpuku's memory to this day, was, "They laugh because you're a bad actor. If you did it correctly, they wouldn't laugh."⁶² She does not recall if it was this particular criticism that gave her the idea to commit suicide, but she remembers that such thoughts were prompted by an awful night of performing and some harsh words from Masujûrô. She does not recall the precise date, but remembered that it was at the Bunraku-za in Osaka that she decided to try to kill herself. "I was in a slump," she said. "I went backstage after the performance and started to look at all the ropes to hang myself. But I got scared and ran back to the dressing room where everyone was sleeping."⁶³ She says she never told anyone in the troupe about her suicidal thoughts, but buried her

⁶¹ See Colin Mackerras, *Peking Opera* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 6.

⁶² Ichikawa Sanpuku, quoted in Ichikawa Masujûrô, "Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki Kôenkai," 9; Ichikawa Sanpuku, interview.

⁶³ Kurokawa, "Suparuta-shiki no Môgeiko," *Chûnichî Shinbun*, 6 February 1984; Ichikawa Sanpuku, interview.

worries by throwing herself into practice. Though none of the other members said they had experiences that mirrored Sanpuku's, most of the girls, especially those in the top class, agreed that psychological stress was an inevitable part of membership in the Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki Troupe.

Partly due to their hectic schedule, partly due to their training, troupe members were expected to approach every task with the utmost professionalism. They wore a uniform when they were on tour and made a point of visiting with the local press to talk about their productions (see figure 24). Disciplinary problems were few, though not unheard of. Masujûrô, for example, recalled taking the young troupe to its first grand *kabuki* production at Misono-za in Nagoya and being amazed at everyone's excellent behavior. "It was not I who had raised the troupe," he mused. "Art had raised it."⁶⁴ By the time the troupe came under the auspices of the Hamamatsu-za, the girls were rehearsing or performing almost every day, with very little vacation. According to Masujûrô's *Kabuki Jinsei*, the girls were given one day off every eleven days;⁶⁵ however, in a 1955 *Engekikai* article he is quoted saying that the girls were given four or five days of "unplanned vacation" between productions.⁶⁶ Whether this was truly the case is unclear. *Asahi Gurafu*, reporting on the troupe's 1956 Hokkaidô tour, noted that despite the rigorous schedule, "the girls do not look particularly tired nor do they get sick."⁶⁷ Most girls interviewed further commented along the lines of, "Sometimes I get a little sleepy,

⁶⁴ Ichikawa Masujûrô, *Kabuki Jinsei* [A Kabuki Life] (Toyohashi: Hôbundô, 1983), 140.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 148.

⁶⁶ Akiyama Yasusaburô, "Hanatakashi Shôjo Kabuki" [The High-Nosed Girls' Kabuki], *Engekikai* (October 1955): 76.

⁶⁷ "Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki Jun'en," *Asahi Gurafu*, 25 September 1956, 42.

but it's exciting to see new sights. And when I've had a week's vacation, I really want to tour again."⁶⁸ Similarly, Ichikawa Suzume looked back fondly on the intense schedule: "We didn't have any vacations. We'd occasionally return home to see our families, but it was more fun to be together with everyone. I'd go home and would quickly long to go back to the Hamamatsu-za or somewhere else."⁶⁹ But there were also times when the rigid schedule forced the girls into making difficult decisions. During the particularly active period, 1954-1960, members were given time to return home only once or twice a year, making it impossible to attend special family events. For Baika, making the decision not to return home to see her ill father was wrenching. She recalled that the troupe had just opened a new production at the Naka-za in Osaka, and that she was playing not one, but several leading roles:

At the time, taking a night train [home to Toyokawa] would have taken six hours . . . but even if I returned to see my father on his death bed, I did not have the confidence that I would be able to return for the next day's performance. During intermission, I called my mother. She reported that father had been diagnosed with angina, and that he was sleeping. "Your father understands that you have work," she told me. "It's up to you whether or not to return." Which should I prioritize, my parent or my art? I was on the brink of making an important decision. I felt that it would be the end of my career if I went home;

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ichikawa Suzume, quoted in Ichikawa Masujûrô, "Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki Kôenkai," 8.

besides all the spectators had come thinking they would see me. It was the first time I had played *Domo Mata*. And there was no substitute.⁷⁰

The death of a parent is an event that many performers confront over the course of their careers, but it was perhaps even more painful for the Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki Troupe members to face such tragedies since they were so young. "Of all the difficulties I've encountered as a performer, this was the most difficult," she wrote.⁷¹ Ironically, the arduous decision with which Baika was presented resembles the conflict between public obligation (*giri*) and personal feeling (*ninjô*) that dominated the troupe's repertory, in which a character is torn between the need to fulfill his or her obligation to a superior and his or her desire to act on personal emotions. Though the peer pressure to perform would have been intense, the very plays the troupe performed would have also contributed to teaching members that commitment to the troupe needed to be prioritized over personal matters.

As troupe members aged, rules regulating their private lives became stricter. Justifying his authoritarian policies, Masujûrô emphasized that his girls were growing into young women.

One of the most difficult things was traveling with the girls as they transitioned from adolescence to womanhood. They were a troupe of some twenty-five or twenty-six girls. When they were in elementary school, it was like going on a school trip, but when they grew up and began turning seventeen and eighteen,

⁷⁰ Ichikawa Baika, "Shoen Geidai-chu," *Mainichi Shinbun*, 8 February 1994.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

they started to become these attractive women, and suddenly we'd be taking the train somewhere and suddenly young men would start teasing them.⁷²

In an attempt to take control of the situation, Masujûrô instituted a stricter curfew and forbade the girls to go on solo dates and to speak men backstage, including the crew, musicians, and office staff. The leading members were permitted to go out as a foursome or as a group of nine.⁷³ In Masujûrô's defense, members have noted that he felt "responsible" for their safety, since parents had trusted him with their daughters.⁷⁴ The policy, however, created an awkward environment in which Masujûrô was the only man with whom they had regular contact—a situation that would lead to a host of problems down the road.

Most members accepted the rules, but a handful rebelled by sneaking out late at night, after Masujûrô had made his rounds of the rooms to ensure that everyone was safely in bed and asleep. Baishô, who admittedly loved to outsmart the master, said she was always successful at fooling Masujûrô by putting small props in her futon to make it look like she was sound asleep.⁷⁵ Baika, however, said she was not as lucky. On the one time that she says she sneaked out, she got caught. The troupe had been boarding in Kyoto at the Minami-za's third-floor dressing rooms, which were only accessible by an elevator that stopped running at 10 p.m. Baika says she and the unnamed other members

⁷² Ichikawa Masujûrô, "Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki Kôenkai," 4.

⁷³ Ichikawa Baika, "Maiko-san to Ikitô" [Hitting it off with Geisha Apprentices], "Matsuba-Botan no Ki" [Journal of Small Peonies], *Mainichi Shinbun*, no. 7, 22 February 1993.

⁷⁴ Ichikawa Masuyo, interview.

⁷⁵ Kurokawa Mitsuhiro, "Watashi Seigatsu mo Kibishiku Kisei," *Chûnichi Shinbun*, 7 February 1984; Ichikawa Baishô, interview by author, 28 April 2004, Toyokawa, Japan.

had been socializing, not with men, but had gone for an innocent game of bowling with some *maiko* (geisha apprentice) friends, having used a ladder to climb out of the dressing room window:

I had a strange feeling about it. We spent about two hours together, and our plan was to use the same ladder to get back inside the dressing room and sneak back into our futons. But just when we were climbing up the ladder, the master spotted us. “Hold it,” he shouted.⁷⁶ We were given a terrible scolding. We explained that we had been with *maiko*—wouldn’t he take that into consideration? Well, this only took place once.⁷⁷

In actuality, from Masujûrô’s perspective, socializing with geisha was almost as bad as socializing with other men; actors and *maiko* (or geisha, for that matter) were two entirely different breeds with different means and goals. On a different occasion, when Masujûrô learned that one of the members had poured a cup of sake for the film star Tsukikata Ryûnosuke in Kyoto, he reportedly “changed colors,” he was so upset (see figure 25). As recounted by Kurokawa, Masujûrô lined up all the girls when they returned to the Minami-za and screamed, “I recall teaching you how to act, not how to pour sake. Step forward if you poured sake!” No one stepped forward, so Misuji, as the troupe leader, came forward and took the blow, a slap across her face.⁷⁸ According to Kurokawa, it was the only time such a public scolding occurred.

⁷⁶ Baika says that Masujûrô used the Japanese term “*goyo*” for “hold it,” an expression that is often used by police upon catching bandits in *kabuki* plays.

⁷⁷ Ichikawa, “Maiko-san to Ikitô,” *Mainichi Shinbun*, 22 February 1993.

⁷⁸ Kurokawa Mitsuhiro, “Yoi Shidôsha ni Megumareru” [Blessed with Good Teachers], “Maboroshi no Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki” [Phantom Ichikawa Girls’ Kabuki], *Chûnichi Shinbun*, no. 17, 8 February 1984; Ichikawa Baika, interview.

Here a contrast can be drawn between Masujûrô and the founder of Takarazuka, Kobayashi Ichizô. As Jennifer Robertson notes, Kobayashi “envisioned his Takarazuka as an appropriate site for the resocialization of (bourgeois) girls and women whose unconventional aspirations had led them to the Revue stage in the first place.”⁷⁹ He was not interested merely in having his Takarasiennes perform in front of an audience, he wanted to prepare them for a future life off the stage as conventional mothers and wives. In playing the part of the *otokoyaku* (male roles), the actress could learn “to understand and appreciate males and the masculine psyche,” which would therefore make them “better able to perform as Good Wives, Wise Mothers, knowing exactly what their husbands expected of them.”⁸⁰ Masujûrô’s public behavior, however, indicated that he was not keen on teaching the girls how to service their future husbands. Though he had told the Hamamatsu-za management early on that he wanted to lead the troupe until members married, he did everything in his power to delay this eventuality, at least on the surface. “The troupe was never seen as a finishing school for marriage,” Baika explained, noting that although she played exclusively female roles, she never was pressured to learn domestic skills like cooking or sewing. (During our interview, she joked that she is still a lousy cook, but that Fukushô, who excelled at male roles, is a phenomenal chef). She remembered that Masujûrô, after the sake incident, repeatedly drilled them to not think of themselves as geisha and encouraged them to throw away any sense of being a woman. “He didn’t want us to think about being a woman. We should be performers. Masujûrô

⁷⁹ Jennifer Robertson, *Takarazuka: Sexual Politics and Popular Culture in Modern Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 67.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

absolutely hated it when thoughts would turn to marriage and other womanly things,” she added.⁸¹ Teaching members to be a good wife and wise mother was not on Masujûrô’s agenda.

To the press, Masujûrô appeared to be considerably less concerned about the prospect of members becoming girlfriends, wives, and mothers. The *Mainichi Gurafu* devoted most of its 1955 article on the troupe to the following exchange:

One girl comes running into Masujûrô’s dressing room all made up. “Master, I received this letter.”

[Masujûrô:] “It’s a letter from a man. Do you know this person?”

[Troupe Member]: “No, not at all.”

[Masujûrô:] “Well, go ahead and read it.”

So the girl breaks the seal, and just like Benkei (from *Kanjinchô*), she earnestly opens the letter. [The letter reads]:

“ . . . I love XX-san [name of troupe member]. You are like a dream that I cannot forget. Please, won’t you become my friend?”

The girl’s face does not change colors as she reads, and the master says he’s heard enough.

[Masujûrô:] “Enough. Enough. Isn’t it fine for you to become friends with him? If you become friends with him, he’ll become a patron of the troupe.”

The girl exits relieved.

To this Masujûrô says, “Every now and again, we get this type of fan letter. And all the kids bring the letters to me. It’s not that I tell them what to do about it

⁸¹ Ichikawa Baika, interview.

But to tell you the truth, I don't have any worries about them. If you want to call them innocent, call them innocent. If you want to say that it's old-fashioned, call it old fashioned. The girls here are not particularly current. All of the girls are really diligent."⁸²

Once again, Masujûrô's public image does not resonate with the one described by the girls some fifty years after the incident in question. Though it has been the members' longtime "secret," which they had intended never to reveal to outsiders, several women, when questioned, spoke of Masujûrô initiating and having sexual relations with troupe members.⁸³ As Ichikawa Baishô remarked, "It is the shame of our troupe. Everyone [in the troupe] knows about it, but there is a tacit rule not to not to discuss it."⁸⁴ Journalist Kurokawa Mitsuhiro said he became aware of such allegations against Masujûrô when he was writing his series on the troupe in 1984, but decided not to print anything because of

⁸² "Shôjo Kabuki," *Mainichi Gurafu*, 14 September 1955, 8.

⁸³ Shortly after I embarked on this thesis, an off-the-record source revealed that Masujûrô had engaged in sexual relations with troupe members while they were still members of the troupe. I was told that "many members were angry with what Masujûrô had written in *Kabuki Jinsei*, and that it "didn't tell the full story as to why the troupe disbanded." When I began to interview members, however, I hesitated to confront them with such allegations. One member, without any prompting, went out of her way to tell me "how she had never had sexual relations with any man until after she left the troupe." Uncomfortable to present her with contrary "rumors," I refrained from asking about Masujûrô's alleged behavior. Several interviews later, it became clear to me that members were trying to cover something up, to the extent that some were refusing even to meet with me for an interview. Finally, I confronted Ichikawa Baishô, who confirmed the off-the-record rumors. I proceeded to question Ichikawa Kobotan, Ichikawa Kobeni, Ichikawa Emiko, Onoe Umeno, and Kurokawa Mitsuhiro, all of whom confirmed that they had been privy to information about Masujûrô's sexual relations. Because all these individuals had spoken openly, on the record, with the tape recorder playing in full view, I felt that I did not need to re-interview members, who, I presume, would have been offended and, possibly hurt, by such allegations. In the interest of preserving the trust of the troupe, I have refrained from naming individuals who allegedly had sexual relations with Masujûrô.

⁸⁴ Ichikawa Baishô, interview.

the delicate nature of the situation.⁸⁵ It is not surprising that Masujûrô, who died in 1998, never discussed such sexual relations, though he did make a point of stating that he “always liked girls,” when asked why he did not start an all-boys’ *kabuki* troupe.⁸⁶ Furthermore, Kurokawa revealed that Masujûrô told him that “he loved gambling and women,” and during the successful years of the troupe, he was “blessed with money and women.”⁸⁷

Various reasons were given for the girls’ compliance with his sexual requests—competition for the best parts, the troupe’s intimate atmosphere, their undivided loyalty to their master. As Kurokawa remarked, “Masujûrô was the king.”⁸⁸ Indeed, it is difficult to gauge if there was resistance to Masujûrô’s sexual advances, or if it was just seen as “a normal part” of life in an all-girls’ troupe, troubling as that is to imagine in an age when such actions instantly would be labeled sexual harassment. From interviews with troupe members, it does not appear that anyone saw it in such stark terms; no one used words like rape, harassment, or even exploitation. Kobotan, who said she did not engage in sexual relations with Masujûrô, says that she told her mother, who was “angry” because she believed the girls getting the best parts were those who engaged in sex with the master.⁸⁹ Kobotan, however, said that she believed that sex with the leader was an

⁸⁵ Kurokawa Mitsuhiro, interview by author, 15 July 2004, Nagoya, Japan. He said that although he “researched the story one hundred percent, only thirty percent of it could be included in his columns.”

⁸⁶ Ichikawa Masujûrô, “Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki Kôenkai.” This remark can be heard on the tape of Masujûrô’s lecture, but it was not transcribed on the hardcopy (see page 7).

⁸⁷ Kurokawa, interview.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ichikawa Kobotan, interview.

inevitable part of troupe life. To further complicate the situation, such flesh-relations were not always viewed as unrequited. Masujûrô's daughter, Emiko, said she was still in elementary school when it became clear to her that her father was having sex with troupe members, whom she believed were willing and eager partners. "Some were called [by Masujûrô] and some were not," she said implying that those who were not picked as consorts were envious.⁹⁰ As the daughter of the troupe leader, she says, "I absolutely hated it. I hated what was going on."⁹¹ Confronting her father was out of the question. "He absolutely would not allow it."⁹²

While some members overlooked Masujûrô's philandering, others were more visibly annoyed. Kobeni recalls him flirting with one member off-stage, but was more irked by the two occasions he barged in on the naked girls while they were bathing. "He would open the door and scream at us, 'What do you think you're doing!'"⁹³ None of the girls, however, felt comfortable tipping the balance of power and asking him what he thought he was doing.

In time, Masujûrô's relations with members took its toll on the troupe. Sumihachi left, and lower-ranked members began to drop out. Just how many quit because of the sex is unknown. For Kobeni, it was not a difficult choice. "When I told my parents about this, they insisted that I leave, saying that they had put their trust in this troupe, and that type

⁹⁰ Ichikawa Emiko, interview.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ichikawa Kobeni, interview.

of behavior was unacceptable,” she recalled.⁹⁴ Kobeni quit after the March 1956 production at Naka-za in Osaka, which makes it clear that Masujûrô had begun having sex with members by then. The situation remained unchanged by the early sixties, when Onoe Umeno made two guest appearances with the troupe. She remembered: “I was told by some members who had just come back from a rural tour what had happened. You know how on tour, everyone stays in the same room in the inn, and some of the girls were talking about how in the very same room, Masujûrô and [. . .] were doing it. . . . I had absolutely no interest in being part of that kind of troupe.”⁹⁵ The troupe was never dysfunctional in the sense that Masujûrô’s behavior impaired its collective ability to perform, but it was dysfunctional in the sense that his actions exacerbated tensions among all members, regardless of their class rank.

Indeed, many sensed that all was not well with the troupe’s power dynamic, but ultimately did not report it to anyone at time. Many simply said that their first priority and love was the stage, and to tattle on Masujûrô would jeopardize their career.

If the press had any inkling of such illicit affairs, it kept mum. Writing in 1956 on how the troupe had changed since his first encounter seeing them at the Hamamatsu-za in 1952, a rather nostalgic Toshikura Yoshikazu, the editor of *Engekikai*, reported:

Four years ago, I ate at the same table as Misuji, Fukushô, Baika, and Masuyo. When asked what they would like, they all ordered curry rice. They wore the type of all-white shirts worn by junior high students. I will never forget how cute they were, filling their cups with water and eating curry rice. Later when I met them in

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Onoe Umeno, interview. Out of respect for the individual performers, I have decided to withhold their names.

the hallway of the Kabuki-za—it was only my third time—I felt that their sense of frankness hadn't changed a bit. There's no way that the girls who have improved so much are still the same, but I feel that it was like yesterday that I saw the girls eating their curry rice. This girlishness is, in actuality, the key behind the charm of Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki.⁹⁶

The sweet *shôjo* of yesteryear were still entertaining their admirers of today. The girls might have grown taller and become more adept, but they were still little girls, Toshikura assured his readers. In fact, the girls were such skilled performers that their acting extended to real life, where they fooled the press, their fans, and, often, their families about their life off the stage. They might have still looked cute, sweet, naïve, and virginal, but they were much wiser in their years, whether or not they had been Masujûrô's sexual partners.

Looking back, members would agree that Masujûrô's philandering was one of the reasons for the troupe's demise several years later. Had he not played favorites and broken the trust of so many of the girls, it is possible that Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki would have stayed afloat. But a host of other non-related issues, including the members' respective ages, also contributed to the troupe's downfall. As we will see in the following chapter, the girls were not only victims of Masujûrô's warped sense of power and control, but of the historical circumstances, in which they were caught in the changeover of the new Naritaya house leadership.

⁹⁶ Toshikura Yoshikazu, "Yonnen Mae to" [Four Years Ago and], Tôyoko Hall Program, May 1956.

Chapter 6

Caught in a Power Struggle

On the afternoon of 1 February 1956, the troupe received a telegram that Ichikawa Sanshō V had died. It was the opening day at the Minami-za, Kyoto's most prestigious theatre, and that morning the girls had received a bouquet of flowers from *maiko* (geisha apprentice) fans.¹ Having played at the Naka-za, the Meiji-za, the Misono-za, toured the eastern prefectures, and completed a run at its home base Hamamatsu-za within the past six months, the troupe had been anticipating yet another successful production to add to its myriad accomplishments. With Sanshō's death, however, it suddenly found itself mourning the loss of its dearest patron and pondering its now unclear future.

Sanshō's death was the first major blow the troupe had experienced since its formation some nine years earlier. Certainly there had been personal losses: Baika's father and Ichikawa Ebijūrō had died in recent years, but Sanshō's death would have a debilitating effect on the collective troupe. Members were grief-stricken.² In his autobiography, Masujūrō recounted his personal connection to the Naritaya headmaster, "Since I had had such a deep relationship with Sanshō, his death for us meant that uncertain days were ahead."³ Such feelings are certainly understandable, given the

¹ Uchiyama Tsuneo, "Hamamatsu to Jūdai-me Danjūrō: Ichikawa Shōjo Kabuki Sodate no Oya" [Hamamatsu and Danjūro X: The Parent who Raised Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki], *Tôtômi* [The Far Lake] 25 (March 2002): 18.

² Ibid.

³ Ichikawa Masujūrō, *Kabuki Jinsei* [A Kabuki Life] (Toyohashi: Hōbundō, 1983), 160.

numerous meetings and letters exchanged between the two men from 1953 right up until Sanshō's death.

With that said, Sanshō's death was not unexpected. A letter dated 2 December 1955 from Sanshō to Masujūrō was followed by a postscript from Sanshō's relative, Yoneko, who warned that her uncle's health was poor, and that if Masujūrō was planning to visit, he needed to do so "quickly."⁴ Still, even from his deathbed, Sanshō took time to exchange New Year's greeting cards and to compose a haiku in memory of a member of Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki who had recently died.⁵ Taking no chances, however, the troupe visited him in mid-January, so it seems that they were bracing themselves for the worst.⁶

Now, three weeks later, after the final piece of the day, troupe members gathered onstage around Masujūrō for the public announcement of Sanshō's death.⁷ "All of us were sobbing on stage," Ichikawa Emiko remembered.⁸ After the announcement, the actors and the audience took a moment for silent prayer, and that evening, Masujūrō

⁴ Ichikawa Sanshō V to Ichikawa Masujūrō, 2 December 1955, no. 24, Ichikawa Shōjo Kabuki collection. Sakuragaoka Museum, Toyokawa, Japan. Yoneko further warned Masujūrō not to tell anyone about Sanshō's illness. It is unclear if Sanshō knew how severe his condition was at this point.

⁵ Ichikawa Sanshō V to Ichikawa Masujūrō, 6 January 1956, no. 25, Ichikawa Shōjo Kabuki collection. Sakuragaoka Museum, Toyokawa, Japan. According to Sanshō's letters, the member's name was Hiromi. He wrote: *Bonbai no Ochitaru Tsubomi Beni Koyuki* (盆梅のおちたるつぼみべに濃ゆき), which can be translated: A Fallen Bud, From a Tray of Plum Blossoms, Exuding Deep Red.

⁶ "Yasashii Otoosan Deshita: Ichikawa Sodatte Kita 'Sanshō-dono'" [He was a Sweet Father: "Mr. Sanshō" who Raised Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki], *Kyōto Shinbun* (evening), 3 February 1956.

⁷ Another troupe member interviewed seemed to recall that Misuji made the formal announcement, but Emiko said that she was certain that her father, Masujūrō, delivered the news to the audience. "I absolutely remember him doing it," she recalled. Ichikawa Emiko, interview by author, 2 June 2004, Toyohashi, Japan.

⁸ Ibid.

departed for Odawara, where Sanshō's body was cremated. Later in the week, he attended the funeral in Tokyo, while the girls stayed in Kyoto to finish their production run.⁹ Even with the Naritaya headmaster's death, the show would go on.

Sanshō was buried in the Aoyama Cemetery, adjacent to Danjūrō IX's grave. Though Sanshō's grave marker was dwarfed by Danjūrō IX's tomb, his funeral was still a "grand affair," befitting the headmaster of the esteemed Naritaya house. It was overseen by Shōchiku President Ôtani Takejirō and attended by more than one thousand people.¹⁰ Among those present were Nakamura Fukusuke V (1910-1969), Nakamura Utaemon VI (1917-2001), Ichikawa Ennosuke II (later Ichikawa Enō, 1888-1963), Ennosuke's brothers Chūsha VIII (1896-1971) and Kodayū (1902-1976), and members of the Omodakaya, Otowaya, and Naritaya houses. "Everyone's eyes were red from staying up all night and crying," Masujūrō was said to have recalled.¹¹ The ceremony was performed according to Shintō rites, not the conventional Buddhist ones, which, in a mark of continuity, had been used for Danjūrō IX's funeral.

Ôtani Takejirō, president of Shōchiku—the major entertainment company and largest producer of *kabuki*—delivered the main eulogy. His remarks focused on what he believed were Sanshō's two major contributions. The first was his work in restoring and reviving several of the Ichikawa family's *kabuki jūhachiban* (the eighteen favorite plays). The second was his leadership of the Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki Troupe.¹² He had been

⁹ Uchiyama, "Hamamatsu to Jūdaime Danjūrō," 18.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 17.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 17-18.

¹² *Ibid.*

responsible for making the troupe a visible, professional presence that could play at almost any major house. In an unprecedented move, Sanshō, at the urging of his successor, Ichikawa Ebizo IX (1910-1965), was posthumously named Ichikawa Danjūrō X.

It had been an open secret that Sanshō would be succeeded by Ebizō IX, the eldest son of Matsumoto Kōshirō VII, who had been an apprentice of Ichikawa Danjūrō IX. Indeed, largely due to the Matsumoto family's connections with Danjūrō IX, Sanshō, who, as noted earlier, had no children of his own, adopted Kōshirō's eldest son in 1940. That same year, Sanshō permitted him to take the name Ebizō, the sure sign that he was next-in-line for the Danjūrō name.¹³ Though Ebizō had never excelled as a child actor, he flourished in the postwar theatre world, playing starring roles like Genji in the new *kabuki* adaptation of *Genji Monogatari*, a part that earned him endearing cries of “Ebi-sama” (Sir Ebi) by his female fans. It was rumored that Ebizō would marry Sanshō's niece, Ichikawa Kōbai (later, Suisen III), the only living descendent of Danjūrō IX (his grandniece) in order to produce a biological heir to the Danjūrō line, but this failed to transpire.¹⁴ Suisen III remained single until her death in 1978, contributing to yet another break in the bloodline of the Naritaya house.

Before he died, Sanshō had instructed Ebizō to continue to teach and support Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki.¹⁵ Even Ichikawa Baika recalls Sanshō saying, “Haruo” (he

¹³ See Samuel L. Leiter, “Ichikawa Danjūrō XI: A Life in *Kabuki*,” in *Frozen Moments: Writings on Kabuki, 1966-2001* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell East Asia Series, 2002), 32-43. Ebizō IX previously held the names Matsumoto Kintarō and Ichikawa Komazō IX.

¹⁴ Seki Yōko, *Ebizō soshite Danjūrō* [Ebizō and then Danjūrō] (Tokyo: Bungei Shunjū, 2004), 114, 148.

¹⁵ Uchiyama, “Hamamatsu to Jūdaime Danjūrō,” 18.

called Ebizô by his private name), “you have got to look after this troupe.”¹⁶ The girls had trained with Ebizô on several occasions while Sanshô was still living, but, as far as Masujûrô was concerned, the troupe’s future was now at risk. Masujûrô’s concern was not entirely unfounded, as, shortly after the funeral, he received the following letter from Yoneko:

Thanks for coming so soon after the death of my uncle. The ten-day memorial service has ended, so I am getting back to myself. I did not know where to write to you, so I sent the letter to the Hamamatsu-za.

Uncle Sanshô hoped that Ichikawa Girls’ Kabuki would continue to prosper. If you are going to continue [to lead] Ichikawa Girls’ Kabuki, I think it is best that you, Masujûrô, either go by yourself or, if possible, take the four lead performers, but do pay a call on Ebizô. I think you should ask the new headmaster [Ebizô] for his teaching. Ebizô will not tell you to come, so I am playing the role of the intermediary and suggesting that you do this. Last week, this was a topic of conversation, so I am relaying this to you. If you do not pay your respects to him, he will not be pleased. So I am worried.

Haruo intends to take over all the work that Sanshô was doing for the troupe. I will assist in any way, and I will put in a good word for you. Please write to me about your intentions. I’m waiting for your reply.

If you like, I will go with you to Haruo’s. Just let me know the date and time.

¹⁶ Ichikawa Baika, interview by author, 4 March 2004, Toyokawa, Japan.

Are the children and everyone well?¹⁷

Though Yoneko was sincere, if not kindly reassuring, regarding the role that Ebizô had promised to play as the troupe's new Naritaya sponsor, it is conceivable that Masujûrô would feel uneasy at hearing something akin to the king does not call upon his servants, his servants must call upon him. Clearly, Masujûrô needed to be the one to reach out to Ebizô, which, for whatever reasons, he had not yet done. Reading between the lines, Masujûrô sensed danger.

But, as if he had read his mind, Ebizô sent Masujûrô a handwritten letter, dated 23 February, five days after Yoneko's letter. In the politest language, he thanked Masujûrô for everything he had done to support "his father" [Sanshô] and promised to guide the troupe in the same manner as Sanshô.¹⁸ It is unknown how Masujûrô responded to this letter, but just a few days later, Ebizô wrote another letter to Masujûrô requesting that he send a complete list of the troupe members' names and ages. "Even though my father probably had one, a copy will be necessary for me as well, so please send it immediately," he wrote.¹⁹ Despite the loss of Sanshô, it appeared that Masujûrô's fears were premature; the troupe would still be supported by the Ichikawa acting family.

At first, all proceeded seamlessly. The troupe continued to perform in the grand venues to which it had become accustomed and maintained an exhausting touring

¹⁷ Yoneko to Ichikawa Masujûrô, 17 February 1956, no. 29, Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki collection. Sakuragaoka Museum, Toyokawa, Japan.

¹⁸ Ichikawa Ebizô to Ichikawa Masujûrô, 23 February 1956, no. 26, Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki collection. Sakuragaoka Museum, Toyokawa, Japan.

¹⁹ Ichikawa Ebizô to Ichikawa Masujûrô, 1 March 1956, no. 10, Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki collection. Sakuragaoka Museum, Toyokawa, Japan. Note that this letter does not contain the year, but from the context it appears that it must have been written shortly after the one dated 23 February 1956.

schedule that took it to far flung parts of the country. The troupe performed in March at the Naka-za in Osaka (where critic Tomita Yasuhiko noted that there had been “an explosion of young women spectators like the fans of Takarazuka and Ôsaka Shôchiku Kageki”²⁰); in May at Tôyoko Hall in Tokyo; in July through Tôhoku and Hokkaidô; in August at Shinbun Hall in Kobe and the Misono-za in Nagoya; in September at the Minami-za; in October through Kyûshû; in November back at Tôyoko Hall (where the *Asahi* reported that the house was either 70 percent full or sold out²¹); and in December again at the Misono-za.²² Each production was several weeks long; concerning the Tôhoku/Hokkaidô tour, the *Asahi Guraifu* reported: “The troupe will visit twenty-two cities over twenty-nine days, performing twice a day, in the morning and evening, for a total of fifty-four times.”²³ All told, the troupe played at a whopping seventy venues in 1956, its busiest year yet.

For its first Tokyo production after the death of Sanshô, Ebizô penned a special program greeting in which he announced that he had had assumed the duty of leading the troupe.²⁴ To be sure, his greeting did not include a special haiku as Sanshô’s invariably

²⁰ Tomita Yasuhiko, “Netsuen to Kyôwa no Kesshô: Hikaru Misuji, Masuyo no ‘Tsubosaka’” [Enthusiasm and Harmony’s Crystallization: Shining Misuji, Masuyo’s ‘Tsubosaka’], *Ôsaka Nichi Nichi Shinbun*, 5 March 1956.

²¹ Akiyama Yasusabûro, “Serifu ni Kaikan ga Tobashii” [Pleasures of the Dialogue are Scarce], *Asahi Shinbun* (evening), 12 November 1956.

²² This list has been compiled from programs, as well as from “Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki Nenpu” [Ichikawa Girls’ Kabuki Biographical Sketch] and “Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki Kôgyô Kiroku” [Ichikawa Girls’ Kabuki Production Record] (unpub. documents, Toyokawa: Sakuragaoka Museum, 4 February 1995).

²³ Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki Jun’en” [Ichikawa Girls’ Kabuki Tour], *Asahi Guraifu* [Asahi Graph], 25 September 1956, 42-43.

²⁴ Ichikawa Ebizô, “Goaisatsu” [Greetings], Tôyoko Hall program, May 1956.

had, but that did not indicate that Ebizô was any less committed to the troupe. Rather, he saw his main mission to continue to teach the troupe; when the girls performed new work, they could count on Ebizô for instruction, though, like Sanshô, he too occasionally requested the assistance of other actors.²⁵ Troupe members also learned first hand that Ebizô could joke around as much as anybody else backstage, but, on stage, he was serious and focused (see figure 26). “He was absolutely punctual, never late,” Ichikawa Baishô recalled.²⁶ “He was always seated five minutes before rehearsals began,” she said.²⁷ Kobotan further recalled that Ebizô was a strict teacher. “If we zoned out for a second, he would get angry.”²⁸ Several members also remember Ebizô to be quite severe concerning their theatregoing; while Sanshô had allowed and even encouraged the girls to attend Shôchiku productions free of charge, Ebizô reversed this policy. He reasoned that since the girls were paid a salary, they should use their own money to pay for seats, just like everyone else. “When he learned that we were getting into the theatre for free, he revoked our privileges, telling us that if we didn’t pay, we wouldn’t be attentive,” Baika recalled.²⁹ Apparently it did not dampen the girls’ appetites to see grand *kabuki*, though it did mean that they often walked up four flights of stairs to sit in the cheapest seats.

²⁵ Akiyama Yasusabûro, “Serifu no Mazusa ga Ki ni Naru: Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki” [Concerns about the Poor Dialogue: Ichikawa Girls’ Kabuki], *Asahi Shinbun* (evening), 15 May 1956. Akiyama notes that Ebizô requested that Ichikawa Fukunosuke III (1904-1990), a former apprentice of Sanshô, assist the troupe.

²⁶ Ichikawa Baishô, interview by author, 28 April 2004, Toyokawa, Japan.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ Ichikawa Kobotan, interview by author, 29 April 2004, Gifu City, Japan.

²⁹ Ichikawa Baika interview.

Most memorably, Ebizô spent two days at the Minami-za in Kyoto, coaching the troupe late into the evening in several new pieces for its September 1956 production.³⁰ For the first time the troupe performed three acts from Tsuruya Nanboku IV's *Tôkaidô Yotsuya Kaidan*, and Ebizô made a special effort to instruct Misuji as Iemon, Fukushô as Naosuke, and Baishô as Takuetsu. An article in the October 1956 issue of *Makuai* included several photographs of him speaking to troupe members. One shows him wearing a dark kimono, seated in the auditorium with the Minami-za president and a fan of the troupe, beaming at Fukushô. Another depicts him speaking to Baika, Baishô, and Misuji on the set of *Yotsuya Kaidan*; the third shows him dressed in a dapper white suit, standing in front of the stage and directing Misuji and Baishô.³¹ His commitment to the troupe earned it praise, as the *Kyôto Shinbun* attributed the performers' "lack of mistakes" to the new Naritaya headmaster.³²

Ebizô monitored the girls' programming, recommending certain members for parts for which Masujûrô had overlooked them. He saw tremendous potential, for example, in Kobotan, advising that she play Yuranosuke in the "Gion no Ichirikiya" scene of *Chûshingura* for the November production at Tôyoko Hall.³³ Furthermore, *Engekikai* commented that although Misuji, Fukushô, Baika, and Masuyo had been the

³⁰ Ibid. According to *Makuai*, he stayed through the opening day, and then returned to Tokyo.

³¹ "Sôke Ichikawa Ebizô-jô to Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki" [Headmaster Ebizô and Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki], *Makuai* (October 1956): n.p.

³² W., "Netsui ni wa Kôkan" [Favorable Impressions Regarding the Enthusiasm], *Kyôto Shinbun* (evening), 11 September 1956.

³³ Ichikawa Kobotan, interview. Miyake, however, would criticize this casting. Miyake Shûtarô, "Mazu Ichio no Seiseki: Tôyoko Hôru no Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki" [A Fine Grade: Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki at Tôyoko Hall], *Mainichi Shinbun* (evening), 13 November 1956.

troupe's top stars, actors from the second tier like Kobotan and Baishô were starting to "push them out,"³⁴ a prediction that would come to naught. In any case, critic Miyake Shûtarô revealed that Ebizô had told him "how enthusiastic he was about teaching the girls";³⁵ he further commended the troupe's stellar improvement of *Kanjinchô*, which he credited to Ebizô's guidance.³⁶

But there was a downside to Ebizô's superstar teaching: he had difficulty making time for the troupe. This could only be expected. Unlike Sanshô, Ebizô was in the prime of his performing career, and there was mounting pressure on him to assume the Danjûrô name. Indeed, one cannot overstate the importance of the preparation required for taking this name that had been held in abeyance for sixty years. His obligations were numerous. He was busy with his own rigorous production schedule, as well as with training his teenage son, the future Danjûrô XII, Shinnosuke (b. 1946).

Reconsidering the Repertory

Meanwhile, Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki found itself under fire for trying too hard to broaden its repertory. For its early years it had focused on performing the "*denden-mono*," *kabuki* plays adapted from *bunraku*, a choice its leaders had deliberately made, since these are the pieces that have set choreography that has been passed down together

³⁴ Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki Tôyoko Hôru" [Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki at Tôyoko Hall], *Engekikai* (December 1956): 43.

³⁵ Miyake, "Mazu Ichio no Seiseki," *Mainichi Shinbun*, 13 November 1956.

³⁶ Ibid. See also Akiyama Yasusaburô, "Serifu ni Kaikan ga Tobashii," *Asahi Shinbun*, 12 November 1956.

with the dialogue and music.³⁷ The girls had concentrated on learning *kabuki* movement; only later did they incorporate dialogue and investigate the psychological aspects of the pieces. As we have seen, over the years, in response to criticism, the troupe had added to its repertory *shin kabuki* plays that lacked preordained patterns (*kata*) as well as dances, thanks, in part, to its training with the renowned *nihon buyô* instructor, Fujima Fujiko. Indeed, the first half of its September 1956 Minami-za production was dominated by dances, several of which were newly choreographed solo pieces that were performed by Baika, Misuji, and Masuyo, respectively.³⁸ Yet now members faced backlash that they had overstretched themselves. The *Makuai* critic warned that the troupe was “in danger of being a jack of all trades and master of none.”³⁹ He explained that the troupe had become popular performing pieces like *Chûshingura*, “Terakoya,” “Moritsuna,” “Sakaya,” *Tsubosaka*, and *Gappô*, all *denden-mono*. Since this was undoubtedly the troupe’s strength, why did it need to venture into uncharted land where there were not ready *kata* at its disposal? “In *kabuki*,” he advised, “the same pieces appear over and over again. Instead of reaching broad and shallow, study the narrow and deep adaptations of puppet plays. This is the road on which Girls’ Kabuki will excel.”⁴⁰

To some extent, the troupe followed such suggestions. The obscure dance pieces were cut, and over the next year, its program emphasized the *denden-mono* on which it

³⁷ As noted earlier, a synonym for *denden-mono* is *maruhon-mono*, a term that is more commonly employed today. In writings about the troupe, however, the term *denden-mono* was frequently used.

³⁸ Minami-za program, September 1956.

³⁹ Katsurada Shigeharu, “Kiyô Binbo e no Kiken” [Danger of Being a Jack of All Trades and Master of None], *Makuai* (October 1956): 82.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 83.

had made its reputation, and, for a while at least, it performed fewer *shin kabuki* plays. Programs continued to feature crowd pleasers *Kanjinchō*, *Imoseyama*, *Shinrei Yaguchi no Watashi*, *Tsuchigumo*, *Kagamiyama*, and “Ninoguchi Mura.” The decision to return to these seemingly “easier-to-learn” staples may have been motivated in part by the addition of several new performers, which brought the troupe’s roster to twenty-nine members for the August 1957 Hamamatsu-za production.

The troupe’s production schedule in 1957 topped that of 1956, as it toured almost nonstop for twelve months: Kyūshū in January; Kyoto (Minami-za) in February; a regional tour through northern Honshū, Tōhoku, and Hokkaidō during March, April, and May; Kyoto (Minami-za) in June, Osaka (Naka-za) and Nagoya (Misono-za) in July (in between venues, the troupe had a one-day break); Hamamatsu (Hamamatsu-za) in August; a regional tour of the Kansai region, Kyūshū, and northeastern Honshū in September and October; Tokyo (Tōyoko Hall) in November; and Nagoya (Misono-za) in December. During the June and July productions, the troupe took the opportunity to make a celebratory announcement (*kōjō*) from the stage in honor of its eight-year anniversary, and Shōchiku President Ôtani Takejirō personally congratulated the troupe on its achievements in November in Tokyo.⁴¹ For that production, Andō Tsuruo of the *Yomiuri Shinbun* called attention to the dazzling line-up of pieces (*Bō Shibari*, *Kokaji*, *Musume Dōjōji*, “Numazu,” and *Benten Kozō*), noting that “this is something that could

⁴¹ “Gekirei no Ôtani Takejirō Kaichō” [Encouragement from President Ôtani Takejirō], Misono-za Program, December 1957.

not be done by the ranks of junior male *kabuki* actors (*wakate kabuki*),” yet another golden endorsement.⁴²

The December 1957 Misono-za full-length production of *Kanadehon Chûshingura* capped off the stellar year. The production was a phenomenal vehicle to show off the troupe’s leading stars in a number of different roles throughout the day, as was the custom in grand *kabuki*. There were no surprises on the cast list. Fukushô had returned to playing Ôboshi Yuranosuke in acts IV, VII, and IX (she also played the villainous Kô no Moronao in acts I and III, and Ono Sadakurô in act V); Misuji rotated between Wakanosuke (acts I, II, and III), Kanpei (*michiyuki*, acts V and VI), and Honzô (act IX); Baika played Enya Hangan (acts I, III, and IV), Okaru’s mother (act VI), and Tonase (acts VIII and IX); while Masuyo took the roles of Kaoyo (acts I and IV) and Okaru (*michiyuki* and act VI). Second-division *kanbu* members played important roles as well: Sanpuku played the comical Bannai, Himeshô played Konami, Baishô played Honzô (acts II and III), and Suzume played Rikiya. Kobotan played Ono Kudayû (in acts IV and VII), which was surely a comedown after playing Yuranosuke the previous year.

If there was one thorn in the company’s side, it might have been the open letter to Misuji written by one of her fans, Kusakabe Chitomeko, that was published in *Engekikai* in December 1957.⁴³ While the letter began as a compliment, it quickly launched into the real reason for writing: to gently alert Misuji that she was still “an amateur.” She wrote:

⁴² Andô Tsuruo, “Sawayakana ‘Kokaji’ no Misuji” [A Fresh ‘Kokaji’ s’ Misuji], *Yomiuri Shinbun* (evening), 8 November 1957.

⁴³ Kusakabe Chitomeko [草壁知止子], “Seitake no Nobita Shôjo Kabuki” [The Girls’ Kabuki that has Grown Taller], *Engekikai* (December 1957): 58-60.

To tell it to you straight: art only comes through rigorous discipline. This is what becoming a professional means. However, the unfortunate aspect of this is that while you are trying so hard to attain this artistic perfection, you will also make mistakes. And I must say that this is the mark of an amateur. It is the same situation with Fukushô. A professional always creates tension.⁴⁴

Trying to take the sting out of her comments, Kusakabe suggested that such a scolding inevitably comes too late, and therefore she was taking the liberty of warning Misuji while it was still early enough to effect positive change.

Such an opinion, however, does not appear to have represented the general feeling of Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki fans. In fact, *Engekikai*, the same periodical that printed Kusakabe's letter, published several fan letters, all inquisitive, if not downright flattering, in its December 1957 issue.⁴⁵ Considering *Engekikai*'s reputation as the leading theatre magazine, there is no compelling reason to doubt the letters' authenticity. Questions included how the troupe had made the transition from a dance (*nihon buyô*) club to a *kabuki* troupe; where the troupe performed when it was not in Tokyo; what members thought of current fashion; and how they coped with being so far away from their respective families. Responses were penned (or at least signed) by Baika, Fukushô, Misuji, and Masuyo, whose candid photos accompanied their responses. One fan also asked Misuji what it was like to participate at the Performing Arts Festival (Geijutsu Matsuri), a one-day program held in October 1957 at the renowned Kabuki-za. Misuji responded that she could see the faces of spectators clearly from the stage and hoped "to

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ "Dokusha Wadai: Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki ni Kiku" [Readers' Topics: Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki], *Engekikai* (December 1957): 98-100.

perform on a stage like that in the future.”⁴⁶ From this exchange, readers also learned that the troupe had opened an office in Tokyo near Ueno Park to assist with coordinating its schedule, and that, on occasion, even members of Ichikawa Girls’ Kabuki wore Western-style clothes: Masuyo always dressed in feminine attire or kimono, while her older sister, Misuji, “wears slacks,” and “when she wears kimono it is in the male style.”⁴⁷ Members also remembered to put in a word about Ebizô. “We learn the plays from Master Ebizô. He puts so much effort into teaching us,” Masuyo stated, adding that he had recently spent time training and observing the troupe in Kyoto.⁴⁸ Thus, by the end of 1957, the troupe appeared to have weathered the transition to the new headmaster rather well and to have maintained a steady fan pool.

What none of the members admitted to knowing was that the troupe’s foundation was on the verge of crumbling. Little did they realize as they toured the country and played in grand venues that the Hamamatsu-za management was beginning to question the direction of the troupe.⁴⁹ There was no apparent change in the troupe’s record; sales continued to be strong, and reviews, on the whole, were positive.⁵⁰ But by the beginning

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Kurokawa Mitsuhiro, “Mi o Sutete Na o Toru” [Throwing away the Fruit, Taking a Name], “Maboroshi no Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki” [Phantom Ichikawa Girls’ Kabuki], *Chûnichi Shinbun*, no. 19, 20 February 1984.

⁵⁰ Kurokawa Mitsuhiro, “Gei ka Kekkon ka Nayamu Zain” [Troupe Members Worry: Art or Marriage], “Maboroshi no Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki” [Phantom Ichikawa Girls’ Kabuki], *Chûnichi Shinbun*, no. 18, 13 February 1984.

of 1958, the management had told Masujûrô that the troupe needed to expand its repertory to include works that were not necessarily considered *kabuki*.⁵¹

The question of repertory and genre had surfaced earlier in 1957 when several troupe members were invited to appear in the Shin Tôhô Eiga feature film *Kyôen Yukinojô Henge* (Rival Performances: The Transformation of Yukinojô), starring the actress-idol Misora Hibari, who, at twenty, was roughly the same age as the leading performers of Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki.⁵² A classic revenge melodrama based on a novel serialized in the *Asahi Shinbun* in 1931, the film revolves around the story of a fictitious Edo-period *onnagata*, Nakamura Yukinojô. Invoking the *kabuki* convention of *yatsushi* (concealed identity), Yukinojô is actually a woman disguised as a male *onnagata* actor. Twelve years earlier, as a young girl, she—then named Yuki—had witnessed her mother's murder and the demise of her father's business and his subsequent death. Thus, she vowed to take revenge on the individuals responsible. She is adopted by a *kabuki* actor, Nakamura Kikunojô, who, while teaching her how to become a star *onnagata*, helps her to master the art of sword fighting so that she can defend herself against her enemies offstage. This film was a re-make of *Yukinojô Henge*, released in 1935-1936, which starred the twenty-seven-year-old Hasegawa Kazuo (1908-1984), who played both Yukinojô and Yamitarô, Yukinojô's sidekick and self-appointed bodyguard.⁵³ Misora

⁵¹ Kurokawa, "Mi o Sutete Na o Toru," *Chûnichi Shinbun*, 20 February 1984.

⁵² See Kurokawa Mitsuhiro, "Yoi Shidôsha ni Megumareru" [Blessed with Good Teachers], "Maboroshi no Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki" [Phantom Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki], *Chûnichi Shinbun*, no.17, 8 February 1984. The film was directed by Watanabe Kunio.

⁵³ For a discussion of the history of *Yukinojô* films, see Donald Richie, *A Hundred Years of Japanese Film* (Tokyo: Kodansha, 2001), 156-157. Director Ichikawa Kon re-made the film in 1963 with Daei productions, which once again starred Hasegawa Kazuo. Richie's account of the history of this film does not mention the version starring Misora Hibari.

Hibari's version went one step further; she played both characters, plus that of Yukinojô's mother, Oen.⁵⁴

The three-hour film is a lavish historical drama, and for the scenes set in the recreated Edo-period Nakamura-za, one of the three licensed grand theatres (*sanza*), several of the minor *kabuki* actors were actually played by members of Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki troupe. Misuji had the largest of these cameo roles, as she played Kanpei opposite Hibari's Okaru in the *michiyuki* dance sequence of *Kanadehon Chûshingura* (see figure 27). Fukushô, Suzume, Baishô, Himeshô, and Sanpuku also appeared onstage as *kabuki* characters in other brief excerpts, including one from the famous extortion scene of *Benten Kozô*. As the film was a vehicle to showcase Hibari's versatility, she played the leading role of Benten Kozô. With the exception of Himeshô, all the Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki members who appeared in the film played male characters, which helps to explain why the troupe's leading *onnagata*, Baika and Masuyo, were not featured. Filming the scenes with Girls' Kabuki took four days, from 3 to 6 October.⁵⁵

The film, which is one of the best extant performance documents of the troupe, plays with gender norms. It is set during a time, of course, when only men would have been eligible to perform at the grand Nakamura-za. To complicate the situation, Misora, a woman, plays the role of a woman (Yukinojô), who plays a male *kabuki* actor, who

⁵⁴ *Yukinojô Henge* was representative of the kind of film on which Hibari would make her reputation. As Alan M. Tansman has written, Hibari "was an infinitely protean performer and wore so many masks. In her 158 films, she played a cast of characters that cut across history, gender, and mood." "Mournful Tears and *Sake*: The Postwar Myth of Misora Hibari," in *Contemporary Japan and Popular Culture*, ed. John Whittier Treat, 103-133 (Honolulu: Hawaii, 1996).

⁵⁵ "Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki Kôgyô Kiroku," (unpub. documents, Toyokawa: Sakuragaoka Museum, 4 February 1995).

performs as an *onnagata*. Reference is made to her constant gender-bending, as hordes of women become attracted to “him,” thinking that she is a man who has an uncanny ability to pass on and offstage as a woman. Yukinojô’s acting is so convincing, in fact, that her enemy’s daughter falls hopelessly in love with her and dies convinced that she is a man. Likewise, the role of Benten Kozô requires Misora to shift between masculine and feminine genders, while for the roles of Yamitarô and Oen, she plays a straight male and female, respectively.

Notwithstanding the glamour of appearing with the pop star on celluloid, members of Ichikawa Girls’ Kabuki shrugged off the moment. In response to a fan letter, Baika stated that her fellow members never had any desire to perform in films, and that the troupe planned to continue to perform plays for the stage. Indeed, she emphasized that Hibari’s agents had invited Ichikawa Girls’ Kabuki to appear in the film, partly, she disclosed, thanks to the long-standing relationship between Hibari’s producers and the Hamamatsu-za.⁵⁶ Baika stated: “As stage performers, we inhabit a totally different world from Misora Hibari who until now has worked in film . . . and among my acquaintances, it seems that no one is a fan of Hibari.” And, as if to separate herself one step further from any dealings with the movie industry and Misora Hibari, she noted that she herself, not surprisingly since she did not appear, “was frankly indifferent to the film.”⁵⁷

But for the Hamamatsu-za management, the troupe’s cameo appearance in *Kyôen Yukinojô Henge* was precisely the type of direction (and publicity) that it was seeking. When the well-known producer and playwright Kikuta Kazuo (1908-1973) inquired

⁵⁶ See “Dokusha Wadai: Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki ni Kiku,” *Engekikai*, 98-100. For more on the relationship between Ono Haruyoshi and Hibari’s producer, see chapter 2.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

about the troupe performing a staged version of Takeuchi Tsunauchi's (1922-1987) hit cartoon (*manga*) *Akadô Suzunosuke* (The Red-Barreled Suzunosuke), the Hamamatsu-za management was delighted. Kikuta and Kaneko Seiji of the Hamamatsu-za, in fact, went ahead and made arrangements for the troupe to perform at the Koma Gekijô in Shinjuku, Tokyo. Moreover, the Hamamatsu-za drew up a plan to hold a joint performance—possibly performances—between Shôchiku Kageki Dan (Shôchiku Opera Troupe; also known as SKD) and Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki.⁵⁸ All that stood in the way was Master Ebizô, whose approval was necessary for the projects to go forward.

Growing Pains

Meanwhile, the troupe was under pressure to change its name. As discussed in previous chapters, the term *shôjo* most commonly refers to adolescent girls; in Japan, when a girl or boy becomes twenty, she or he officially becomes an adult (*seijin*), which is commemorated with a special “coming of age day” annually held on 15 January.⁵⁹ While the term “*shôjo*” could be stretched to include youthful looking women, it had become apparent that the stars of the troupe could no longer deny that they were growing up, and that the troupe's spectators, in turn, were finding it more difficult to accept these young women as adolescent girls. Fukushô, the eldest member, had turned twenty-one in February 1957, and Misuji, Baika, and Kobotan would do so later in the year. Masujûrô had relented on the question of members over twenty wearing makeup, and, as mentioned

⁵⁸ Kurokawa Mitsuhiro, “Mi o Sutete Na o Toru,” *Chûnichî Shinbun*, no. 19, 20 February 1984.

⁵⁹ This national holiday has its origins in the *genpuku* “coming of age ceremony” that was practiced from the seventh century through the Edo period. See David W. Plath, “Gempuku,” in *Kodansha Encyclopedia of Japan* (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1983), 3: 17.

earlier, Fukushô and Himeshô had undergone plastic surgery in order to enhance their noses.⁶⁰ The leading girls were no longer girls.

Ever since the star members turned twenty, the media had begun to inquire directly about their respective plans for courtship and marriage. Or, rather, as *Shûkan Tôkyô* pointed out, ever since “the girls’ chests had started to swell,” the topic had been considered of interest.⁶¹ Members, however, appeared even more annoyed with these questions than with the pressure to change their troupe’s name. Generally, they brushed off such remarks with a joke. Baika responded, “We have no time for falling in love (laugh)” while Misuji added, “I truly haven’t given marriage any thought.”⁶² Fukushô was even more direct: “When I see those people pushing baby carriages, I’m kind of disgusted,” leading the writer to surmise that for them “marriage was only a daydream.”⁶³ Still, many of the third-tier members were leaving the troupe, purportedly to marry and to start families, so the media continued to press the leads for their plans as well.

While many of the top newspapers that reviewed Ichikawa Girls’ Kabuki stayed clear of the members’ private lives, they could not resist telling the troupe that its name had become dated. The company had, in the words of a *Makuai* critic, “reached a turning point.”⁶⁴ In the critics’ eyes, any name with the word “girl” was no longer suitable for the maturing troupe. It had become a masquerade. Akiyama of the *Asahi* was the most

⁶⁰ Kurokawa, “Gei ka Kekkôn ka Nayamu Zain,” *Chûnichi Shinbun*, 13 February 1984.

⁶¹ Ôki Yutaka, “Shishunki ni Tasshita: Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki” [Ichikawa Girls’ Kabuki Reaches Puberty], *Shûkan Tôkyô* [Tokyo Week], 5 July 1958, 80-81.

⁶² Misono-za program, July 1957.

⁶³ Ôki, “Shishunki ni Tasshita: Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki,” *Shûkan Tôkyô*, 5 July 1958, 80-81.

⁶⁴ Katsurada Shigeharu, “Tenkanki ni Tatsu Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki” [Ichikawa Girls’ Kabuki Reaches a Turning Point], *Makuai* (October 1956): 82-83.

vociferous critic, proposing, as early as 1956, that the troupe change its name to “*onna kabuki*” (women’s *kabuki*).⁶⁵ A critic of *Kyôto Shinbun* agreed, noting “Members of Ichikawa Girls’ Kabuki have gotten so much bigger, one cannot really call them *shôjo* anymore.”⁶⁶ And, the same year, the *Sandê Mainichi* declared that the *shôjo* of Ichikawa Girls’ Kabuki “had become adults.”⁶⁷ To be sure, some reviewers, like Toshikura Yoshikazu of *Engekikai*, had voiced his frustration with critics who were constantly calling attention to the girls’ female sex and name choice. “Can we please try to overlook the *shôjo* and the *onna* part of its name, and just let [the troupe] develop?” he had pleaded in 1955.⁶⁸ But, as discussed in chapter 4, most critics never could forget that the members of this *kabuki* troupe happened to be women.

Long before 1956, Masujûrô had been forced to confront the inevitability of the girls growing up, but he took a wait-and-see approach as far as deciding whether to promote new members to the top tier or to continue with the original members. When asked by Akiyama Yasusaburô (*Asahi*) in 1955 about his plan for the troupe, Masujûrô told him that Sanshō believed that it should stick to being a “girls’ *kabuki* company,” in that the current stars should be replaced and given the responsibility of teaching the new members. However, he was quick to add, “The current group of stars loves to perform, so

⁶⁵ Akiyama, “Serifu no Mazusa ga Ki ni Naru,” *Asahi Shinbun*, 15 May 1956.

⁶⁶ W., “Netsui ni wa Kôkan,” *Kyôto Shinbun*, 11 September 1956.

⁶⁷ “Otona ni Natta Shôjo Kabuki” [Girls’ *Kabuki* That Has Become Adult], *Sandê Mainichi* [Sunday Mainichi], 10 June 1956, 45.

⁶⁸ Toshikura Yoshikazu, “Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki” [Ichikawa Girls’ Kabuki], Tôyoko Hall program, March 1955, 3.

it looks like we will become a women's theatre (*onna shibai*) troupe after all."⁶⁹ In 1956, when asked more directly by *Makuai*'s critic about how the troupe felt about a name change, Masujûrô responded:

That will be up to the troupe members—that is essential. It depends on how long they will remain in the troupe, but sooner or later, we will have to change the name. But in [mainstream] *kabuki*, there are forty-year olds who are still considered young, and the oldest one in our troupe is only twenty. But calling a thirty-year-old a *shôjo* is really strange. Even when one turns twenty-four or twenty-five, she might feel rather embarrassed [about the name], so this would be a problem down the line some four or five years from now. The troupe members also do not see this problem as particularly urgent.⁷⁰

While Masujûrô never offered his own personal view in print during this time, it can be inferred that he preferred to retain the current members than hire new ones. Under his direct watch, Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki had achieved national recognition, and it would have been only natural for him to want to reap the rewards of its success.

Only many years later, in 1995, would Masujûrô frankly address why he had not taken this course:

We already had a firm foundation of nine top actors, and it was unusual for [the good] parts to circulate to the others. Just because one is given a role doesn't mean that they can do it well. So there were many who didn't like this policy and quit. [Painter] Itô Shinsui [1898-1972] was a great fan of Girls' Kabuki, and he

⁶⁹ Akiyama Yasusaburô, "Hanatakashi Shôjo Kabuki: Hachigatsu no Meiji-za" [The High-Nosed Girls' Kabuki: August at Meiji-za], *Engekikai* (October 1955): 76.

⁷⁰ Katsurada, "Tenkanki ni Tatsu Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki," *Makuai* (October 1956): 82-83.

once warned me, “Masujûrô, what are your long-term plans for Ichikawa Girls’ Kabuki? If you want to keep the troupe going in the future, you need to rotate the top performers to the rank of teachers and train new girls to take the lead roles. If you don’t do that, Girls’ Kabuki will disappear; [rotate the players] in the same way that Takarazuka does.” At the time, even though I agreed, I didn’t have a response. The reason is that it had taken so many years for the top players to reach that point. Audiences came to see us perform because of those players. It was not so easy to replace these people. Maybe easy in other genres, but not *kabuki*. Now that I think back, perhaps Itô was wiser. If we had done that at the time, perhaps we would have lasted longer. But, after all, it would not be easy all of a sudden to tell a child who had worked so hard, “You are being transferred to the rank of teacher,” that she was no longer needed. Maybe you can tell that to a grandmother at sixty, but you don’t tell that to a twenty year old. They were at the height of their popularity. But maybe as a result, that is why there are no remains of the troupe.⁷¹

At face value, these remarks sound like Masujûrô had the top-ranked members’ interests at heart. But it is impossible to evaluate his inaction vis-à-vis reorganizing the troupe without taking into consideration his use of these very same individuals for his alleged sexual gratification. While we will never know to what extent such sexual relations influenced his decision to maintain the status quo, he was clearly attached to the leading members and did not wish to see them go.

⁷¹ Ichikawa Masujûrô, “Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki Kôenkai: Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki Are Kore” [Symposium on the Ichikawa Girls’ Kabuki: Pondering Ichikawa Girls’ Kabuki] (lecture, Sakuragaoka Museum, Toyokawa, Japan, 7 May 1995), 6. Transcript courtesy Sakuragaoka Museum.

For their part, the lead performers defended their desire to remain members and to keep the term *shôjo* in the troupe's name. Fukushô told the *Makuai* critic: "If you look at our ages, I suppose we're not *shôjo* anymore, but though I've been in the troupe for some ten years, we only really became active after the Mitsukoshi Gekijô production, so in that way we really still are *shôjo*."⁷² Baika chimed in: "The oldest one in our troupe is twenty, but the average age in our troupe is seventeen or eighteen, so we can still keep the name until [the average] becomes twenty," she said in an effort to preserve the status quo.⁷³ Fukushô also pointed out that if the troupe changed its name to *onna kabuki*, the expectations would be much higher. Audiences would "come to expect true adult *kabuki* and that would be frightening," she said, internalizing critics' earlier laments that despite the troupe's efforts to be genuine, they were still considered to be different from professional, male *kabuki*.⁷⁴

When pressed about the idea of replacing the older members with new recruits, in the same way as Takarazuka or SKD, the troupe vacillated. *Makuai*'s critic could only conclude that the troupe "had begun to do this" by recruiting younger members and holding study productions a number of times a year at the Hamamatsu-za, but as we have seen, the idea of younger performers actually playing leading roles in major productions was never implemented.

By 1957, the troupe's inaction over changing its name had begun to infuriate Akiyama. He wrote stingingly, "The troupe is comprised of twenty-five *shôjo*; there are

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

members who are twenty-two, and recently one girl who is eleven joined the troupe.⁷⁵ We tease them that this move is to lower the average age of the troupe. This is the troupe's problem."⁷⁶ For him, the troupe needed to take immediate action: either to change its name to "Onna (women's) Kabuki" or to hire younger members to replace the leading members. The same year *Kyôto Shinbun* complained that the "charm and freshness of the *shôjo* had diminished."⁷⁷ Even Professor Kawatake Shigetoshi agreed that the "*shôjo*" modifier was no longer appropriate and endorsed "Onna Kabuki" as a new name.⁷⁸

By then, however, Masujûrô appeared to be contemplating a change, although he might have been humoring the media. Pressed on the matter in July 1957, he responded, "How about taking away the '*shôjo*' and just making it, 'Ichikawa Kabuki'? That's what I'm thinking."⁷⁹ For him, the prospect of actually changing the troupe's name appeared to be too much of a psychological burden; the members had been called "*shôjo*" for the past ten years of their lives and were not ready to discard it for a new name. To use a cliché, Masujûrô wanted to have his cake and eat it too, even though the reality was that the troupe's name no longer accurately represented its membership.

⁷⁵ Akiyama appears to be employing the traditional Japanese counting convention whereby a baby's age is counted one at birth. Thus, even though Fukushô, Misuji, Baika, and Kobotan, were born in 1936, their age would be rendered twenty-two in 1957.

⁷⁶ Akiyama Yasusaburô, "Sei Ippai no Butai: Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki" [An Energetic Production: Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki], *Asahi Shinbun* (evening), 9 November 1957.

⁷⁷ W., "Migotae aru 'Kagamiyama': Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki" [Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki's Worthwhile "Mirror Mountain"], *Kyôto Shinbun* (evening), 17 February 1957.

⁷⁸ Kawatake Shigetoshi, "Hisashiburi no Shôjo Kabuki" [Girls' Kabuki after a Hiatus], Tôyoko Hall program, November 1957, 22.

⁷⁹ "Hatachi ni Natta Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki" [Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki Turns Twenty], Misono-za program, July 1957, 23.

Ultimately, however, the decision was not up to the performers. One year later, the *Shûkan Tôkyô* announced that the troupe's early summer production at the seaside resort of Atami might be "the last chance" to see it perform as the Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki Troupe. The likely new name would be the Ichikawa Women's Kabuki Troupe, the very name that had been proposed by Akiyama Yasusaburô (*Asahi*) some years earlier.⁸⁰ By this point, according to Baika, even the Hamamatsu-za had begun advocating a name change.⁸¹ Still, the management declined to take full responsibility for the change, as Executive Director Kaneko Seiji noted that the new name was as much for the theatregoers in Tokyo's Asakusa district, where the troupe's next production would be held:

As Girls' Kabuki, the troupe performed at the Mitsukoshi Gekijô, Meiji-za, Tôyoko Hall, and other theatres numerous times. We've grown to have loyal fans in Tokyo as well. But Asakusa fans are something else. With the name "Girls' Kabuki," some audience members might think that it's a children's theatre troupe and laugh—there's the fear that they won't respect the troupe, and so we're doing away with [the term] "*shôjo*" and replacing it with something else. I hope that it will be '*onna*' (women).⁸²

By holding Asakusa audiences responsible for the troupe's new name, Kaneko effectively absolved the Hamamatsu-za from taking responsibility for the change, even though this is precisely what the management had wanted.

⁸⁰ Ôki Yutaka, "Shishunki ni Tasshita," *Shûkan Tôkyô*, 5 July 1958, 80-81. The actual new name choice was attributed to a Shôchiku executive.

⁸¹ Ichikawa Baika, follow-up phone interview, 9 March 2004.

⁸² *Ibid.*

But even in the weeks leading up to this Tokyo production at the Tokiwa-za, members voiced their reluctance to change the troupe name. *Shûkan Tôkyô* noted that Baika and Fukushô “won’t say anything, but everyone seems to feel that taking away the ‘*shôjo*’ and renaming the troupe ‘Onna Kabuki’ doesn’t quite do it.”⁸³ It quoted Misuji as saying, “Much has been said about our name, it seems. We’re all still very young, and we had always intended to be *shôjo*, and we’ll continue working hard and performing plays.”⁸⁴ Clearly, the troupe was attached to its name and did not want to embrace a new name prematurely that had not yet been selected officially.

At this point, it remained unclear as to where Ebizô stood. He must have known that the troupe was on the verge of a name change, and he must have been consulted. All members remember, however, is that he tried to talk Masujûrô out of the troupe performing at the Tokiwa-za, a theatre located in the heart of the downtown (*shitamachi*) district in Asakusa, which he perhaps saw as too déclassé for a troupe boasting the venerable Ichikawa name. “We were practicing at the Fujiya Inn on the Dôgenzaka slope in Shibuya where we often stayed. Ebizô came to watch the rehearsal, and I remember him saying, ‘You don’t need to perform at the Tokiwa-za,’” recalled Misuji.⁸⁵ Indeed, the Tokiwa-za was the very theatre that years before had been seeking young girls for an entr’acte strip show.

In the months leading up to this production, the troupe had progressively less contact with Ebizô. Writing in the Tôyoko Hall program in April 1958, Baika commented

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ichikawa Misuji, interview by author, 4 October 2004, Nagoya, Japan.

on his absences, stating “It is truly a pity that the headmaster has not been able to see the troupe perform frequently.”⁸⁶ Yet she still shared the information that he had told her personally that he had been worried about the troupe spending three months on the road and was relieved to see that everyone was well. “Just hearing his voice,” she wrote, “made the cold diminish instantly.”⁸⁷ Members still looked upon Ebizô as their headmaster; for the troupe’s April production at Tôyoko Hall, he penned a note of greeting in the program, reiterating that he was committed to training the troupe that his “deceased father,” Sanshô, had raised.⁸⁸ Still, it was becoming evident that his actual meetings with the troupe were infrequent.

This became painfully clear later in June 1958, when, after the troupe begrudgingly publicized that it would indeed perform as the “Ichikawa Women’s (Onna) Kabuki Company,” Ebizô abruptly announced that he opposed the name change. As Baika recalled, “The Hamamatsu-za thought that there was value in changing the name, but Ebizô did not want to change our name.”⁸⁹ Indeed, on 28 June, a mere three days before the troupe opened at the Tokiwa-za, the Naritaya headmaster unilaterally decided that the new name was inappropriate and ordered anything bearing the new name recalled and destroyed.⁹⁰ As Misuji later stated, “We had three days to re-do everything that stated

⁸⁶ “Goaisatsu Moshiagemasu” [May We Offer our Greetings], Tôyoko Hall program, April 1958, 30.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ “Goaisatsu,” Tôyoko Hall program, April 1958, 5.

⁸⁹ Ichikawa Baika, follow-up phone interview, 9 March 2004.

⁹⁰ Akiyama Yasusaburô, “Yobimono ‘Sannin Sanbasô’: Tokiwa-za no Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki” [The Draw is ‘Three Person Sanbasô’: Ichikawa Girls’ Kabuki at the Tokiwa-za], *Asahi Shinbun* (evening), 4 July 1958. See also Enomoto Shigetami, “Magari Kado ni Kakatta: Shôjo Kabuki” [Girls’ Kabuki Turns a Corner], *Engekikai* (December 1959): 110-113.

‘Onna Kabuki’—the banners, the lanterns, the programs, etc. It was as if all hell had broken loose; it caused quite a storm.”⁹¹ Surely, if the channels of communication had been open, such a mishap would never have occurred.

The new programs did not leave any trace of the “Onna Kabuki” name, but the *Asahi* did not let the incident rest. As a long-time proponent of the troupe changing its name, critic Akiyama Yasusaburô was not going to stay quiet about what he believed was a mistake. He is the one who made the naming debacle public three days after the opening, disclosing that Ebizô had ordered the reversion to the old name “at the last minute.”⁹² “Everyone in the troupe had gotten taller,” he wrote, “they looked like ‘regular women.’ There is nothing strange about calling the performers ‘women.’”⁹³ After years of urging the troupe to change its name, only to see it dispose of his advice at the eleventh hour, Akiyama was fed up.

Ebizô, unfortunately, left no public record as to why he felt so strongly about keeping the name Ichikawa Girls’ Kabuki at this point in time—as we shall see, he would change his mind two years later. Perhaps he simply still saw the performers as *shôjo*, not in age but in skill, or perhaps he still was hoping that the older members would make way for new, younger ones. Or, perhaps he made the decision on behalf of the troupe members, who had made it clear that they were not in favor of any name but Ichikawa Girls’ Kabuki. It is also highly likely that he was sensitive to the connotations of the term

⁹¹ Ichikawa Misuji, “Shôjo Kara Onna e no Nayami” [Concerns (about going) from a Girl to a Woman], *Fujin Gahô* [Ladies Illustrated] (September 1958): 232.

⁹² Akiyama, “Yobimono ‘Sannin Sanbasô,’” *Asahi Shinbun*, 4 July 1958.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

onna kabuki, which conceivably would conjure up images of the actress-prostitutes of the early seventeenth century. But whatever the case, his decision was final: the troupe would remain Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki.

The troupe took the headmaster's decision in stride. What part it had in destroying programs and flyers is unclear, but members spent the day before the official opening taking part in the Edo-period custom of arriving at the theatre by boat (*funa norikomi*), sailing from the Tsukiji River to the Sumidagawa River, to the Azuma Bridge in Asakusa.⁹⁴ Decked out in their persimmon and black, stiff, sleeveless vests (*kamishimo*) imprinted with the Naritaya *mimasu* crest, and male-style wigs, the troupe members waved to onlookers.⁹⁵

Some spectators might have mused that members took the boat ride to cheer themselves up, but from everything the performers had stated in print, it seems that they were in accord with the headmaster's decision. In September 1958, three months later, Misuji would note that not only was Ebizô opposed to the name, but "all of us members had strong desires, so our name reverted to what it had been."⁹⁶ She further stated: "While it's true that I have passed the legal age, it's not as if I'm really so old. I truly hope that we can continue to bring to the stage our good manners and our girlish purity that we have always possessed. By thrusting the name 'Onna Kabuki' on us, I don't believe that we have lost the beauty that we have cultivated up until now."⁹⁷ Yet, she also

⁹⁴ Ichikawa Misuji, "Shôjo Kara Onna e no Nayami," *Fujin Gahô*, 232.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*; Akiyama, "Yobimono 'Sannin Sanbasô,'" *Asahi Shinbun*, 4 July 1958.

⁹⁶ Ichikawa Misuji, "Shôjo Kara Onna e no Nayami," *Fujin Gahô*, 232.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 233.

implied that the troupe, as it was then comprised, could not perform under the name “*shôjo*” forever; the question would be revisited.

A Taxing Dilemma

Despite Ebizô’s opposition to the troupe performing at the Tokiwa-za, some critics believed the theatre had been the perfect venue for the troupe. *Engekikai* wrote, “It’s been a mystery to me why [the troupe] has not performed in Asakusa up until now, because there is no other troupe that fits Asakusa so well.”⁹⁸ But save for the troupe’s lighthearted dance *Sanbasô*, the reviews of the actual pieces were far from glowing. Once again, critics dealt the harshest blow to the program’s *shin kabuki* piece.⁹⁹ Surprisingly little was said about the troupe’s tribute to the Naritaya master, *Danjûrô Musume*. Adapted and re-written by Kunieda Kanji (1892-1956) in 1950 for the Nishikawa school of dancers, the piece is set in Asakusa—the very Tokyo neighborhood where the troupe was performing—and revolves around “Danjûrô’s Girls” (*Danjûrô Musume*), who have become smitten with the great *kabuki* actor.¹⁰⁰ They imitate him playing the amorous hero Sukeroku as well as his nineteenth-century counterpart, the street leader hero Banzui Chôbei—quintessential Naritaya house roles—and call out, “Japan’s Number One Naritaya” (*Nihon Ichi no Naritaya*).¹⁰¹ Though the troupe had planned to perform this

⁹⁸ “*Wakashu Kuzushi*” [The Downtrodden Chap], *Engekikai* (August 1958): 56-58.

⁹⁹ The *shin kabuki* piece was *Wakashu Kuzushi*. See “*Wakashu Kuzushi*,” *Engekikai*, 58; Akiyama, “Yobimono ‘Sannin Sanbasô,’” *Asahi Shinbun*, 4 July 1958. *Wakashu Kuzushi* was by the novelist and playwright Hôjô Makoto (1918-1976).

¹⁰⁰ The piece was excised and adapted from a “transformational” (*henge*) piece first performed by Danjûrô VII in 1813 under the title of *Mata Kokoni Sugata Hakkei*. Among the other famous dances featured in this piece is “Ômi no Okane.” See “Danjûrô Musume,” in Nihonbuyôsha, ed., *Nihon Buyô Zenshû* (Tokyo: Buyô-sha, 1982), 3: 695-700. As the chronology notes, it was the second time the troupe performed this piece.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

piece at the Tokiwa-za long before the naming confusion, it served as additional proof that members wanted to retain their status, quite literally, as “Danjûrô’s girls.”

Indeed, in agreeing to retain its name, the troupe hoped that its relationship with Ebizô would be strengthened and that the messy business of changing its name would be forgotten. Such optimism, however, would soon be exchanged for a more pessimistic stance. Years later, Masujûrô, in a face-saving gesture, would tell Kurokawa, “I learned that Ichikawa Ebizô was angry that the [troupe’s] name had changed from Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki to Ichikawa Onna Kabuki. Ultimately, we returned to the name Shôjo Kabuki, but from that point on, relations worsened with the Ichikawa leader.”¹⁰² In fact, it was not only the troupe’s name that concerned Ebizô. He soon let it be known that he opposed the Hamamatsu-za’s idea of broadening the troupe’s repertory. Naritaya family art (*ie no gei*) pieces like *Kanjinchô* were not to be performed on the same stage as juvenile cartoons, like the popular *Akadô Suzunosuke*. He felt so strongly that the troupe needed to reject the Hamamatsu-za’s new plan that he threatened to excommunicate the troupe from the Naritaya house. “If you do that, you will have to return the name Ichikawa,” Masujûrô recalled Ebizô warning him.¹⁰³ Once again, we only have Masujûrô’s biased account of what transpired. But whether or not the story unfolded in this precise manner, the troupe’s relationship with the headmaster had become strained to the point of stalemate.

The seemingly superficial issue of the troupe’s name, in fact, had exacerbated what, in the two and half years since Sanshô’s death, had become a difficult situation.

¹⁰² Kurokawa, “Mi o Sutete Na o Toru,” *Chûnichî Shinbun*, 20 February 1984.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

Tensions flared between the Naritaya house and the Hamamatsu-za. The incident made it excruciatingly clear to Ono Haruyoshi, president of the Hamamatsu-za, that he was the troupe's mere financier, who was required *de facto* to cede all artistic control to Ebizô, who had his own ideas about the troupe's future. Writing some twenty years after the naming incident, Ono stated, "I do not intend to blame others for what happened, but, as the owner, I did not understand the need to protect the traditional *kabuki* framework. Moreover, I don't understand the value of the [*iemoto*] system. It was very difficult, but I keenly came to realize that I was far outside the world of *kabuki*." ¹⁰⁴ In his mind, Ebizô had won.

At the end of the Tokiwa-za run, the troupe played at the Hamamatsu-za from 28-31 July, an unusually short run. It appears that at this point the Hamamatsu-za management had decided that it would not negotiate with Ebizô and gave Masujûrô a choice that basically came down to "us or him?" In order for the troupe to remain under the auspices of the Hamamatsu-za, the troupe would need to break off its relationship with the Ichikawa line. ¹⁰⁵

This was a daunting dilemma for Masujûrô, who acknowledged what he had denied for so long: the troupe was stuck between two greater forces. On the one hand, there was the Hamamatsu-za. Ono Haruyoshi, Ono Kakutarô, and Kaneko Seiji had been loyal and trusting financial backers of the troupe. It was thanks to this management team that he and the troupe members were paid regularly and had toured all over the country.

¹⁰⁴ Ono Haruyoshi, *Ono Haruyoshi Jidenshō Mizube Danwa* [Autobiographical Discussions by Ono Haruyoshi] (Kyoto: Shirakawa Shoin, 1978), 160-161.

¹⁰⁵ Tsuchiya Chikashi, "Shôjo Kabuki no Jûnen" [Girls' Kabuki's Ten Years], *Engekikai* (December 1959): 173.

But now the Hamamatsu-za team worried increasingly about the troupe's profitability, especially with the advent of home television—to be discussed in the next chapter—as well as what they perceived to be increased competition from other female troupes, SKD and Takarazuka. Ebizô, on the other hand, while not giving the troupe financial capital, lent the troupe something intangible that all the money could not buy: the Ichikawa name.

Looking back on this double-ultimatum some twenty-five years later, Masujûrô would write that he tried to convince both sides to compromise. Representing himself as the victim, Masujûrô stressed that he took it upon himself to meet with Ôtani Takejirô in secret at Shôchiku's headquarters to explain the troupe's position, while continuing to plead with Kaneko of the Hamamatsu-za to rethink the theatre's plan.¹⁰⁶ "I became absolutely panicked, negotiating among the head of the Ichikawa family, Danjûrô XI [Ebizô IX], the Hamamatsu-za, which had raised the troupe, and Ôtani Takejirô of Shôchiku," he wrote.¹⁰⁷ Yet, no one would relinquish his position, so Masujûrô was forced to take sides. After six years, the troupe would break from the Hamamatsu-za and become an independent company. In turn, it could keep the Ichikawa name and hope that relations with Ebizô would be patched up in time.

Ono Haruyoshi decided not to replace Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki at the Hamamatsu-za with another performing troupe. Apparently, he had had enough of show business. Predicting that live entertainment was no longer financially lucrative, he ordered eight

¹⁰⁶ Ichikawa Masujûrô, *Kabuki Jinsei*, 162.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

hundred *pachinko* game machines and turned the Hamamatsu-za into a hall for Japan's favorite new pastime.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁸ Tsuchiya, "Shôjo Kabuki no Jûnen," *Engekikai*, 173. *Pachinko* is a pinball game for which winners can receive cash prizes. Invented after World War II, the game is often claimed to be the most popular leisure activity in Japan.

Chapter 7

The Final Years

In many ways, the troupe's new-found independence placed it squarely back where it had been before being discovered by the Hamamatsu-za. No longer did it have the luxury to concentrate exclusively on rehearsing and touring; now all members were required to help with the behind-the-scenes work that the Hamamatsu-za had done so adeptly for six years. This chapter documents how the troupe responded to its new circumstances, as it took the steps to become an incorporated company, eventually taking a new name, the Ichikawa Actress Company (Ichikawa Joyû-za). While the troupe continued to garner publicity in major periodicals and newspapers, it struggled to stay financially stable. Concomitant with its monetary problems, the attrition of second-tier members and a strained relationship with the Naritaya house would lead to its demise as a professional company.

Surprisingly perhaps, only a handful of girls quit the troupe after its break from the Hamamatsu-za. Most members chose to stay and perform in a three-month tour through Tôhoku and Hokkaidô from August-October 1958 and to perform at the Misono-za (Nagoya) in December. If members recognized the precariousness of their situation, they did a good job of not showing it to the press; on paper, they greeted the first months of independence with excitement and optimism.¹

From their perspective, there was reason for such a sunny outlook. Even without the Hamamatsu-za in charge, the troupe was still considered part of the Naritaya house.

¹ According to Ichikawa Baishô, the troupe came under Shôchiku, the entertainment production company, at this time, but I found no written evidence of this. Ichikawa Baishô, interview by author, 28 April 2004, Toyokawa, Japan.

Moreover, commentators had been upbeat about the troupe's prospects as an adult women's company. Kawatake Shigetoshi had praised the troupe's acting and encouraged it to think about the real possibilities of performing *kabuki* as adults. Indeed, he reasoned that since Beijing Opera had come to use actresses in place of the male female-role specialists (*dan*), the same eventuality could occur in *kabuki* as well.²

Meanwhile, Misuji, in a September 1958 essay, stressed that members were committed to performing for the long haul:

In the Meiji Period, there was Ichikawa Kumehachi and in the Taishô Period, there was Nakamura Kasen,³ who were star female *kabuki* actors, but their careers ended neither here nor there. Those individuals were unlike *kabuki* actors in that they had no lineage, and, as women, they faced constraints of their age, I believe. What type of thing is this? We, as mere "Girls' Kabuki," are thinking seriously that we do not want to follow such a course.⁴

While comparing troupe members to the famous female actors (*onna yakusha*) of the past, Misuji also attempted to create some distance from them. Noting that Kumehachi and Kasen's *kabuki* performance careers had petered out, Misuji expressed her hope that her troupe would not be subjected to the same fate. She and the other members wanted to continue to perform as adults. Yet, she also acknowledged that the troupe needed to

² Kawatake Shigetoshi, "Hisashiburi no Shôjo Kabuki" [Girls' Kabuki after a Hiatus], Tôyoko Hall program, November 1957, 22.

³ I believe the essay contains a typographical error for Nakamura Kasen's name. As printed, the name could be read "Yosen," but from the context, I believe that Misuji is referring to the Taishô-period actress, Ichikawa Kasen.

⁴ Ichikawa Misuji, "Shôjo Kara Onna e no Nayami" [Concerns (about going) from a Girl to a Woman], *Fujin Gahô* [Ladies Illustrated] (September 1958): 234.

overcome the challenges of independence while finding a new “style,” which would entail more than merely performing new pieces.⁵

In many ways, Misuji’s article was noteworthy for what it did not mention. Namely, she never once stated explicitly that the troupe had severed ties from the Hamamatsu-za. With hindsight, one can grasp that her statement “in the future, we will not be able to rely on other’s people’s assistance” could refer to the fact that the troupe had become independent from a financial sponsor and would now have to forge a new means of survival.

Taking the first step to control its management destiny, members decided to form the Ichikawa Girls’ Troupe, Inc. (Kabushikigaisha Shôjo Kabuki Gekidan). Just as the structure of the troupe’s hierarchy had mirrored a traditional all-male *kabuki* theatre, the management structure reflected that of a Japanese corporation. Each member was assigned a managerial role: Misuji became the president (*shachô*), Baika executive director (*senmu*), and Masuyo and Fukushô were appointed executives (*jômu*); all the other first-division members—Baishô, Sanpuku, Suzume, Himeshô, and Kobotan—were appointed department heads (*buchô*); the managing director (*daihyô torishimari yaku*) was Masujûrô.⁶ Apparently the audience had been supportive of the move, as one spectator called out, “President” (*shachô*) when Misuji appeared on stage.⁷ Writing in

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Enomoto Shigetami, “Magari Kado ni Kakatta: Shôjo Kabuki” [Girls’ Kabuki Turns a Corner], *Engekikai* (December 1959): 110; see also “Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki” [Ichikawa Girls’ Kabuki], *Engekikai* (January 1961): 54. The 1961 article briefly documents the creation of Ichikawa Girls’ Troupe, Inc., but what is confusing is that it makes no reference to the fact that, by 1961, the troupe had changed its name to the Ichikawa Actress Company.

⁷ Enomoto, “Magari Kado ni Kakatta,” *Engekikai*, 110.

Engekikai, Enomoto Shigetami joked that he “didn’t know whether or not the troupe has a union, but this kind of cooperation between labor and management is in fashion.”⁸

Making reference to the labor riots that had beset large Japanese companies since the end of the war, he wrote, “Since all the leading actors are playing management roles, there probably will never be a strike.”⁹ Still, Enomoto acknowledged that the troupe was fighting for its life; how it would survive as an independent entity was not clear.

On one level, the performers were trying to survive as women in a male chauvinist culture. Masujûrô was billed as the troupe’s managing director, but all the other management positions were filled by women. *Engekikai* quoted Misuji as stating that “in most Japanese companies, all women can do is grumble about how they don’t like to serve tea; here is a chance to really try to combat male tyranny.”¹⁰ Women, the article stated, were cordially invited to join the troupe, not as performers but as office administrators (for which serving tea was presumably not a requirement). Thus, for the first time, the members became explicit liberal feminist pioneers. With its commitment to finding ways of overcoming gender inequality in the workplace, the troupe became the first all-female corporation, an arrangement that many considered to be utterly unique and unprecedented in Japan in the late 1950s.¹¹

The year 1959 began the same way as the previous two years: with a regional tour, this time through central Honshû, Japan’s main island. The troupe was invited back to

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

Tôyoko Hall in Tokyo in March, and, similar to the previous year, it went on tour in the spring. During August, it divided its time between Nagoya (Misono-za) and Kyoto (Minami-za), demonstrating that even as an independent company it could play at top theatres. Yet, it is clear that the troupe was spending more time performing in the countryside, which was probably a result of it not performing in Osaka for the second year in a row. Moreover, its annual December run at the Misono-za had been reduced to six days (at its peak, in 1956, it had been fifteen). For December 1959, the troupe shuttled between Nagoya and Tokyo, where it played at the Shinjuku Dai Ichi Gekijô. Built in 1904, the “Shinjuku Number One Theatre” was a new venue for the troupe and would be a temporary substitute for Tôyoko Hall.¹² With respect to the troupe’s relations with the Naritaya house, the heretofore customary note of greeting from the headmaster for the troupe’s Tokyo productions was missing from the Tôyoko Hall and Shinjuku Dai Ichi Gekijô programs in 1959, a sign that relations between Ebizô and the troupe were not healthy.¹³

As for the critics, Akiyama of the *Asahi* and Andô of the *Yomiuri* continued to complain about the members’ voices and dialects, but Miyake Shûtarô of the *Mainichi* praised the troupe’s acting, gushing that the “entire [March 1959] program exudes

¹² The Shinjuku Dai Ichi Gekijô would close in July 1960. Waseda Daigaku Engeki Hakubutsukan, ed., *Engeki Hyakka Daijiten* [Theatre Encyclopedia] (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1963), 3: 265. According to Fukushô, she lost personal items, such as a door curtain (*noren*) that had been given to her by a fan, which she had been storing at the theatre, unaware that it was going to be closed. Ichikawa Fukushô, interview by author, 30 April and 3 May 2004, Gero, Japan.

¹³ Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki program, Tôyoko Hall, March 1959; Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki program, Shinjuku Dai Ichi Gekijô, December 1959.

enthusiasm.”¹⁴ He called the troupe’s *Sonezaki Shinjû* a “masterpiece.”¹⁵ Regarding Misuji’s performance, he commented, “The scene [the troupe] performed is not particularly charming, but Misuji made it work. . . . She wouldn’t lose even to Ganjirô [Nakamura Ganjirô II (1902-1983)],” who had, in fact, directed the piece.¹⁶ Fukushô’s Benkei also earned stellar praise from the *Kyôto Shinbun*’s critic, who noted, “We could not expect such a Benkei from other actors of the same age in [grand] *kabuki*.”¹⁷ Even Akiyama, while noting how all the women had grown, seemed relieved to report that “the troupe has not changed. . . . They are baby-faced, innocent, and have not lost their cuteness.”¹⁸ After years of grumbling about how inappropriate the name “*shôjo*” was for the troupe, Akiyama seemed to suggest that the girls were still the same.

Critics agreed that the troupe’s new dance pieces were strong, but were largely divided over the troupe’s other work. Miyake, in particular, was complimentary of *Fukeru Yosa Tsuki no Yokogushi*, by the early twentieth-century playwright Oka Onitarô (1872-1943). A *shin kabuki* sequel to “Genyadana,” the play depicts the scarred Yosaburô’s whereabouts after his first reunion with his lover, Otomi. Remarking that the

¹⁴ Miyake Shûtarô, “Chikamatsu Mono no Shusaku” [Excelling with Chikamatsu Pieces], *Mainichi Shinbun* (evening), 16 March 1959; Akiyama Yasusaburô, “Seijitsu na Butai” [A Sincere Stage: Ichikawa Girls’ Kabuki], *Asahi Shinbun* (evening), 19 March 1959; Andô Tsuruo, “Buyô ni Shinpo: Tassha na Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki” [Improvement in Dance: The Amazing Ichikawa Girls’ Kabuki], *Yomiuri Shinbun* (evening edition), 11 March 1959.

¹⁵ Miyake, “Chikamatsu Mono no Shusaku,” *Mainichi Shinbun*, 16 March 1959.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ “Shinkyô Miseta Fukushô to Masuyo: Minami-za Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki” [Fukushô and Masuyo Show Great Progress: Ichikawa Girls’ Kabuki at the Minami-za], *Kyôto Shinbun*, 22 August 1959.

¹⁸ Akiyama Yasusaburô, “Seijitsu na Butai,” *Asahi Shinbun*, 19 March 1959; Akiyama, “Ushinawanu Kawai-rashisa: Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki” [Not Lacking in Cuteness: Ichikawa Girls’ Kabuki], *Asahi Shinbun*, 19 December 1959.

work had not been staged since 1922, Miyake lauded the troupe for its successful production.¹⁹ As it had done before with new pieces like *Toyokawa Rishoki* and *Wakashu Kuzushi*, the troupe also attempted to branch out by adding “showier” pieces that shared the bill with old staples.²⁰ Some pieces, like *Kyô Ningyô*, were jazzed up, as several members, instead of the customary solo dancer, performed the roles of the beautiful dolls.²¹ Another new piece, *Oitotori Monochô: Yume no Taimen*, a popular *shingeki* play, featured the performers sporting an array of elaborate hair styles. Miyake and Andô suggested they could understand why the troupe was beginning to perform flashier pieces in the fashion of Takarazuka and SKD, but Akiyama voiced opposition.²² “This new play is quite vulgar. This is not a proper play for young girls who will continue to grow,” he scolded.²³ Other spectators, such as Fujima Rankei, the daughter of the troupe’s dance teacher and choreographer Fujima Fujiko, recalled that it was not so much the vulgarity that was problematic, but the fact that it was a play from outside the traditional *kabuki* repertory.²⁴ Such dipping from the new theatre upset the purists.

¹⁹ Miyake, “Chikamatsu Mono no Shusaku,” *Mainichi Shinbun*, 16 March 1959.

²⁰ Tsuchiya Chikashi, “Shôjo Kabuki no Jûnen” [Girls’ Kabuki’s Ten Years], *Engekikai* (December 1959): 172. Tsuchiya noted, however, that the pieces *Toyokawa Rishoki* and *Wakashu Kuzushi* had failed to become popular hits.

²¹ Dai Ichi Shinjuku Gekijô program, December 1959, 12.

²² Miyake Shûtarô, “Shôjo Kara Onna e” [From Girl to Woman], *Mainichi Shinbun*, 16 December 1959; Andô Tsuruo, “Masuyo ga Migoto Seichô” [Masuyo’s Splendid Growth], *Yomiuri Shinbun*, 18 December 1959; Akiyama, “Ushinawanu Kawai-rashisa,” *Asahi Shinbun*, 19 December 1959.

²³ Akiyama, “Ushinawanu Kawai-rashisa,” *Asahi Shinbun*, 19 December 1959.

²⁴ Fujima Rankei, interview by author, 25 July 2004, Tokyo.

The new, flashier pieces reflected Masujûrô's desperation for a solution to revive the appeal of the troupe. While the grand Shôchiku and independent theatres continued to welcome the troupe after its break from the Hamamatsu-za, there was a growing sense that its solid fan base had begun to wane. The result was that theatres were scaling back the runs, which could have only been frustrating for the troupe. Writing in the *Yomiuri*, Andô Tsuruo surmised that attendance at the troupe's March 1959 production had been low because of competing *kabuki* troupes, while Enomoto of *Engekikai* suggested that its problems stemmed from "a *shingeki*-complex."²⁵ Young people, he mused, were no longer interested in anything smacking of tradition. "They see [*kabuki*] as an amusement for the aged. Young people are rejecting traditional culture that has been passed down."²⁶ What was even more troubling for the troupe, Enomoto added, was that in some parts of the countryside, *kabuki* still had the reputation of being a low form of entertainment that was not necessarily suitable for children. *Nô*, on the other hand, was seen as a high art, and therefore, acceptable. *Shingeki*, as well, had risen in popularity on the small theatre circuit, as Masujûrô was quoted as saying that a regional cultural association had canceled an upcoming production of Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki in order to accommodate a *shingeki* troupe.²⁷ Itinerant *kabuki* troupes had evidently hit a new low.

In hindsight, the burgeoning popularity of color television would be offered as yet another reason for the troupe's troubles in the early 1960s. As Ichikawa Baika explained:

²⁵ Andô Tsuruo, "Buyô ni Shinpo," *Yomiuri Shinbun* (evening edition), 11 March 1959; Enomoto Shigetami, "Magari Kado ni Kakatta: Shôjo Kabuki" [Girls' Kabuki Turns a Corner], *Engekikai* (December 1959): 111.

²⁶ Enomoto, "Magari Kado ni Kakatta," *Engekikai*, 111.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

We performed for some wonderful ten years, but with the advent of television and the change in times, arts everywhere were under attack. These were tough times. Just spending time at home became something that was enjoyable. Indeed the stage—live performance—was declining in popularity. From this point onward, no matter where we performed, the turnout was poor.²⁸

Many commentators would note that theatre, like film, would suffer from this period onward.²⁹ Almost overnight, listings of television programs appeared in the very places where newspapers once reviewed theatre events. Audiences once eager to attend shows could now enjoy the very same plays on television, since many live performances, including those of Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki, were televised during this period.³⁰ Yet, according to Sandra Buckley, only thirty percent of households owned black-and-white television sets in the 1960s; it was not until the 1964 Tokyo Olympics that Japanese began to own color televisions en masse.³¹ Moreover, the productions of Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki had been broadcast since the mid-1950s, which very well might have contributed to its national popularity. Thus it seems a bit farfetched to claim that television whisked

²⁸ Ichikawa Baika, "Terebi Fukyû, Heru Danin" [Advent of Television, Dropping Members], "Matsuba-Botan no Ki" [Journal of Small Peonies], *Mainichi Shinbun*, no. 9, 8 March 1994.

²⁹ Donald Richie, *A Hundred Years of Japanese Film* (Tokyo: Kodansha, 2001), 177-178. See also Mori Yoshio, "Katabami-za wa Dô Shiteiru ka" [What will the Katabami Troupe Do?], in "Gendai Butai Haiyû" [Contemporary Stage Actors], special issue, *Engekikai*, (September 1964), 198.

³⁰ Matsushita Kahoru, interview by author, 7 June 2004, Tokyo. Matsushita was a longtime employee of Fuji Terebi (Television), whose first job was working as the commentator for an Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki broadcast. Unfortunately, no tapes survive from these broadcasts. Matsushita is currently a *kabuki* and *bunraku* earphone guide commentator. See also <http://www.asahikaisetsu.co.jp/kaisetsusya/matsushita.htm>. Accessed 17 December 2003.

³¹ Sandra Buckley, "Television," *Encyclopedia of Contemporary Japanese Culture* (London: Routledge, 2002), 514.

away the troupe's core audience. While television may have had an adverse affect on the troupe, there were other major issues that also accounted for why it had reached such a low. What was clear, even in the early 1960s, was that the troupe would have to do something different in order to attract audiences that were quickly finding plenty of other contemporary amusements.

Declining audiences translated into low, if not nonexistent, paychecks for the members. As discussed in chapter 5, many members had taken their paychecks for granted during the troupe's years under the Hamamatsu-za. With their meals and daily living expenses paid for, the girls could send money home to their families; on tour, they were not in need of extra cash. Yet, now, as young women, the loss of a regular paycheck became a source of concern. As Fukushô recalled, "That was around 1959 or 1960; it was always, 'This is it for this month; try to be patient.'"³² Still, all the leading members persevered; only a couple of members who had appeared in a handful of productions quit.

After years of playing in grand theatres, this would only have been depressing for the longtime members. As Baika recalled, she and her colleagues bought a pot and *miso* so that they could cook in the dressing room on tour, a state of affairs that was not so different from the early years of touring, before being discovered by the Hamamatsu-za.³³

Our golden age had lasted for ten years and some months, but now every day the situation was like falling from a steep hill. With declining audiences, we lacked places to stay, food, and even money for transportation. We slept in the dressing

³² Kurokawa Mitsuhiro, "37 Nen, Tsuni Maku o Hiku" [Closing the Curtain at Last in 1962], "Maboroshi no Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki" [Phantom Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki], *Chûnichi Shinbun*, no. 20, 21 February 1984.

³³ *Ibid.*

rooms and prepared meals on our own. This is how troupes get started, but it was one thing to deal with these hardships as a child, it's different though as an adult.³⁴

Still, the troupe continued to perform throughout the country, hoping that its luck would change.

Despite the financial hardship, the troupe continued to attract new recruits. Five new members were listed in the troupe's December 1959 Misono-za program, and one new name was added to the roster for the troupe's Tokyo production in Shinjuku later that month. Perhaps because the perks were no longer as enticing, hiring standards had been lowered significantly. In the past, potential members were required to audition before Masujûrô and the Hamamatsu-za managers, but now a simple introduction and greeting could land a girl a job, especially if she could demonstrate that she would receive financial backing from her parents. Ichikawa Kiyomi, who joined the troupe after its March 1959 Tôyoko Hall production, recalled that she was hired immediately:³⁵

I went backstage with a friend who was a fan of Baishô and Fukushô. My friend told them that I wanted to join the troupe. I was then led to Masujûrô. He looked at me and said, "Okay, who needs an apprentice?" Suzume didn't have one, so I was paired with her. There was already an [a girl named] Emiko [Kiyomi's private name] in the troupe, so Masujûrô gave me the stage name Kiyomi, since

³⁴ Ichikawa Baika, "Terebi Fukyû," *Mainichi Shinbun*, 8 March 1994.

³⁵ Ichikawa Hisayo, interview by author, 2 April 2004, Tokyo; Ichikawa Kiyomi, interview by author, 20 April 2004, Tokyo.

that was supposedly Suzume's previous stage name. So from that point onwards, I was called Ichikawa Kiyomi.³⁶

Her account suggests no investigation of her talents or training. It should be noted, though, that she had extensive music and dance experience before joining the troupe, but, as discussed in chapter 5, the new recruits were seldom permitted to perform. They worked their way through the ranks, first helping with backstage chores and playing extras, before ever being given a significant role.³⁷

Despite its dwindling audience, the troupe was included in *Engekikai*'s December 1959 issue of *Gendai no Kabuki Yakusha* (Contemporary Kabuki Actors), a directory of professional *kabuki* actors, all of whom, with the exception of Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki, were male. While this listing was another coup for the troupe, the article suggested that its future was not entirely secure and admonished readers to offer support.³⁸

As 1959 drew to a close, what critics were not willing to overlook was the troupe's name. Just because they continued to praise the troupe's productions did not mean they were willing to overlook the inappropriate "girl" modifier. Akiyama had never let the name issue rest, but he was joined now by Enomoto and Miyake, who lobbied for the troupe to change its name to "Ichikawa Onna (Women's) Kabuki," the name that had been proscribed by Ebizô in 1958.³⁹ Finally, after years of mulling over a fitting new

³⁶ Ichikawa Kiyomi, interview.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Tsuchiya, "Shôjo Kabuki no Jûnen," 172-173; Enomoto, "Magari Kado ni Kakatta," *Engekikai*, 113.

³⁹ Enomoto, "Magari Kado ni Kakatta," *Engekikai*, 112; Miyake Shûtarô, "Shôjo Kara Onna e" [From Girl to Woman], *Mainichi Shinbun*, 16 December 1959; Akiyama, "Seijitsu na Butai," *Asahi Shinbun*, 19 March 1959.

name, the troupe succumbed to outside pressure. In March 1960, from the stage of the Shinjuku Dai Ichi Gekijô in Tokyo, the troupe announced that its new name would be the Ichikawa Joyû-za (Ichikawa Actress Company).⁴⁰

Celebrating the Ichikawa Actress Company

The origin of the troupe's new name is a bit of a mystery. It is generally attributed to Shôchiku president Ôtani Takejirô.⁴¹ But, to complicate the situation, the Hamamatsu-za president Ono Haruyoshi wrote in his autobiography that Ôtani, in fact, had proposed the name Ichikawa Musume Kabuki.⁴² Similar to the word “*shôjo*,” *musume* can mean either “girl” or “daughter,” the latter, conceivably, a name that one never outgrows; no matter how old a girl becomes, she is always someone's daughter. The proposed name aside, what is confusing about Ono's account is that, according to other sources, neither he nor the other Hamamatsu-za managers participated in the negotiations at this stage in the troupe's career; they had been out of the picture since August 1958. Yet, in his

⁴⁰ Ichikawa Joyû-za, Shinjuku Dai Ichi Gekijô program, March 1960. Ichikawa Masujûrô and Kurokawa Mitsuhiro both state that troupe performed at the Shinjuku Dai Ichi Gekijô in May 1960, during which it took the new name Ichikawa Joyû-za. I, however, found no written evidence supporting this claim. I located a program from the Shinjuku Dai Ichi Gekijô from March 1960, which states that it was during this production that the troupe took the name Ichikawa Joyû-za. Ichikawa Masujûrô, *Kabuki Jinsei*, 181; Kurokawa Mitsuhiro, “37 Nen, Tsuni Maku o Hiku” [Closing the Curtain at Last in 1962], “Maboroshi no Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki” [Phantom Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki], *Chûnichi Shinbun*, no. 20, 21 February 1984.

⁴¹ Both critics Toshikura Yoshikazu and Tomita Yasuhiko attributed the troupe's new name to Ôtani Takejirô, and Ichikawa Masuyo was quoted in the *Chûbu Nihon Shinbun* as saying that the troupe's new name was decided by Ôtani. See Toshikura Yoshikazu, “Ichinin Mae no da kara” [Because They Have Become Adults], Shinjuku Dai Ichi Gekijô Program, March 1960; Tomita Yasuhiko, “Shinkyô Ichijirushii Masuyo” [Remarkable Progress made by Masuyo], *Ôsaka Nichi Nichi Shinbun*, 20 August 1960; “Konshû no Shûyaku: Ichikawa Masuyo” [This Week's Star: Ichikawa Masuyo], *Chûbu Nihon Shinbun* (evening), 6 June 1960.

⁴² Ono Haruyoshi, *Ono Haruyoshi Jidenshō Mizube Danwa* [Autobiographical Discussions by Ono Haruyoshi] (Kyoto: Shirakawa Shoin, 1978), 160-161.

autobiography, Ono states that the Hamamatsu-za was involved in the negotiations over the name Ichikawa Joyû-za. Indeed, he wrote that he sent Kaneko Seiji to Tokyo to meet with Ôtani, but:

Before the discussions with Shôchiku had taken place, Ichikawa Danjûrô XI [Ebizô IX] had sent Masujûrô a sealed letter requesting that the troupe change its name to Ichikawa Joyû-za. So should we go with “Musume Kabuki” or with “Joyû-za”? All public indicators suggested that “Musume Kabuki” sounded fresher, but Danjûrô XI had the strong opinion of not allowing anything other than “Joyû-za.”⁴³

Ono Haruyoshi neglected to provide a date when this incident occurred, but he implies that he was still involved in discussions regarding the troupe in 1960, which is highly unlikely, considering that the press documented a clear break between the Hamamatsu-za and the troupe in August 1958. Still, since no one who actually participated in the negotiations is alive to clarify Ono’s account, precisely what occurred during the talks with Shôchiku remains unclear.

Meanwhile, Ebizô—who would not officially take the name Danjûrô XI until 1962—remained in the background. It was Ôtani Takejirô who took on the responsibility of writing the program’s requisite “letter of greeting” for the troupe’s first of four “Celebratory Productions”—in Tokyo, Nagoya, Kyoto, and Osaka—to publicize its new name.⁴⁴ In his brief note, he duly recounted the troupe’s patronage by Ichikawa Sanshô, noting that “today they have developed into splendid adult actresses,” and that

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ “Goaisatsu” [Greetings], Ichikawa Joyû-za Program, Shinjuku Dai Ichi Gekijô, March 1960, 1.

“Headmaster Ichikawa Ebizô has given his consent for the troupe to change its name to the Ichikawa Actress Company.”⁴⁵ Notably, though there was no comment from Ebizô himself. As if to detract from the awkwardness of the situation, the program re-printed a photograph of the Minister of Education, a professed “fan of Misuji and the other stars,” presenting the troupe with a wooden plaque engraved with its new name.⁴⁶

Also featured in the program was a commemorative photograph of the newly minted Ichikawa actresses all dolled up, posing on the flowing staircase of Ginza’s chic Matsuzakaya Department store (figure 28).⁴⁷ With the exception of Misuji, who sported slacks, a button-down plaid shirt, and a sweater, all the members wore skirts or dresses, stockings, and pumps (Himeshô and Baishô completed their outfits with stylish hats). Decked out in the latest fashions (all Western-style), they looked happy enough to be the recipients of a new name. Missing from the photograph is Sanpuku, who had left the troupe after the first Shinjuku Dai Ichi Gekijô production. “I had wanted to quit earlier,” she explained, “but I was asked to perform in the [first] Shinjuku [1959] production. It really came down to finances and thinking about my future. It was one thing when we were paid by the Hamamatsu-za, but it was different when were on our own.”⁴⁸ Such concerns of salary and future prospects were not far from the thoughts of the remaining

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ “Matsuda-buchô Daijin Mizu kara Furugô” [Minister Matsuda Presents it Himself], Ichikawa Joyû-za Program, Shinjuku Dai Ichi Gekijo, 3 March 1960. The plaque is stored in the Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki archives, Sakuragaoka Museum, Toyokawa, Japan.

⁴⁷ Ichikawa Joyû-za Program, Shinjuku Dai Ichi Gekijo, March 1960.

⁴⁸ Ichikawa Sanpuku, interview by author, 5 April 2004, Toyohashi, Japan.

eight leading members, but these worries would have been difficult to detect from the elegant photograph.

Critics who had been pressing for a name change for years lauded the troupe for taking a name that suited the members' ages. *Engekikai* noted that Takarazuka and SKD aside, the troupe was one of the very few examples of an all-female troupe in Japan's history.⁴⁹ Yet, others took the opportunity to warn members that changing too quickly would lead to the troupe's demise. Maeda Mitsuho, for example, entreated the troupe to maintain its girliness (*shôjo-rashisa*):

Like the actors of grand *kabuki* who often change their name, Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki did as well. And with the name change, while it's unnecessary to say that I hope Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki—I mean, the Ichikawa Actresses Company—will be a great success, I hope that its art will not change from that of a “girl” to that of an “actress.” There is something truly special about a girl's charm—there is no end to that innocence, purity, naiveté, obedience, enthusiasm, and beauty. And even though it has become the Actress Company, I hope that it will not lose that charm. Of course, as each *shôjo* develops into a woman, there is nothing that can be done about the fact that she will lose her girliness. It's only a matter of course that womanly charm will replace that girliness. And that will be a success in its own right. However, there is the expression “never forget the first heart” (*hatsu kokoro wasureru bekarazu*), which the great founder of *nô*, Zeami, put forth. I believe that girliness exemplifies the “first heart.” Come to think of it, Girls' Kabuki was virtually synonymous with this “first heart.” No matter how

⁴⁹ Tobe Ginsaku, “Kono Kotoba Gozonji? Joyû-za” [Do You Know This Word? Actress Company], *Engekikai* (April 1960): 85.

veteran, no matter how expert one is, if one forgets this first heart, it will be the end.⁵⁰

Thus he cautioned the girls never to forget the memory of their first performances and the time before they had become a nationally renowned company.

Other critics once again admonished the troupe not to overextend itself. “Let me be perfectly clear,” Toshikura Yoshikazu of *Engekikai* warned, “performing a [*shingeki*] piece like *Oitotori Monochô*, of course, is a direction that you must take in order to attract spectators, but your duty is really to *kabuki*.”⁵¹ Similarly, Maeda warned, “When you move outside a stylized theatre form to realism and perform something like *shinpa*, the limitations of only having women [performers] is a great handicap. If you continue to perform classics, there is no problem. . . . It really comes down to choosing pieces that display the charms of an all-female troupe.”⁵² In other words, precisely because of *kabuki*’s stylized conventions in which gender is always a performance, the company could perform both male and female roles, while in *shingeki*, where realism was valued, such gender-bending was implausible.

The troupe appeared to follow these recommendations closely; for all four celebratory name-taking productions, there was a conscientious blend of *kabuki* classics and newer, jazzier pieces. In Tokyo, the troupe once again performed the controversial *Oitotori Monochô*, but did so alongside traditional favorites like *Kotobuki Soga no Taimen*, *Shinjû Ten no Amijima*, and *Meiboku Sendai Hagi*. In both Nagoya and Osaka,

⁵⁰ Maeda Mitsuho, “Shôjo Kabuki kara Joyû-za e” [From Girls’ Kabuki to Actress Company], Ichikawa Joyû-za, Misono-za program, June 1960, 8.

⁵¹ Toshikura Yoshikazu, “Ichinin Mae,” March 1960.

⁵² Maeda Mitsuho, “Shôjo Kabuki kara Joyû-za e,” June 1960, 8.

the troupe performed excerpts from *Yoshitsune Senbon Zakura*, and for all three productions, it performed Fujima Fujiko's colorful version of *Fuji Musume*, with seven dancers, instead of the customary one, as well as Okamoto Kidô's romantic Chinese fairytale *Sake no Hajimari*.⁵³ And, in Kyoto, the troupe performed *Kanjinchô*.⁵⁴ That piece, along with so many of the other pieces the troupe had been performing since the early 1950s, had been honed to perfection.

Critics responded enthusiastically, though Akiyama continued to harp on the performers' voices, and the *Chûo Nihon Shinbun* critic raised concerns that the troupe was overstretching itself with new pieces such as *Sake no Hajimari* and the *shingeki* piece *Taruya Osen*, a modern adaptation of Ihara Saikaku's (1642-1693) short story.⁵⁵ He stated: "The real winners are the *denden-mono* (*gidayû*) and the dance numbers. . . . If the girls do not harness their artistry, there is the fear that they will slip into doing something in a *shingeki* manner. . . . I want them to improve but if they go this route they will lose both their initial investment and any profit."⁵⁶ His review's headline encapsulated his

⁵³ See Ichikawa Joyû-za, Misono-za program, June 1960; Ichikawa Joyû-za, Mainichi Hall program, August 1960; Ichikawa Baika, interview.

⁵⁴ "Matakano Seki no Imyô" [Nicknamed 'The Barrier Gate' Again], *Kyôto Shinbun* (evening), 15 August 1960.

⁵⁵ Akiyama Yasusaburô, "Tasai de Kigarui: Ichikawa Joyu-za: Chikara no Haitta 'Kawashô' 'Sendai Hagi' [Various and Lighthearted: Ichikawa Joyû-za, A Show of Strength in "Kawashô" and "Sendai Hagi"]", *Asahi Shinbun*, 21 March 1960.

⁵⁶ Ueno Chiaki, "Nagoya Hiroen Kôen: Mada Atarashii Mono ni Yowai" [Nagoya's Performance Celebration: New Pieces are Still Weak], *Chûbu Nihon Shinbun*, 7 June 1960.

thoughts: the “New Pieces are Still Weak.”⁵⁷ Similarly, Tomita Yasuhiko of the *Ôsaka Shinbun* complimented the troupe’s dance pieces and lavished praise on Masuyo.⁵⁸

Despite the overall positive reviews, the troupe’s performance schedule came to an abrupt standstill after the initial celebration productions. When asked about its future plans, members denied that anything had really changed. “It will be the same that it has been up until now,” Masuyo told a reporter. “We always give it our all, and, since President Ôtani gave us the name ‘Joyu-za’ it wouldn’t be right to soil it.”⁵⁹ Still, some members recalled that around the time the troupe changed its name, Masujûrô formed “The Second Girls’ Kabuki” (Dai Ni Shôjo Kabuki), which featured younger members like Ebimaru, Mineko, and his daughter, Emiko, who appeared under the stage name Suzuhachi. Though successful at first, this troupe never came close to attracting the attention of the first Ichikawa Girls’ Kabuki troupe.⁶⁰

In lieu of live performances, the Ichikawa Actress Company made the prescient decision to record several of its productions on film, a project that became known as “the kabuki play series” (*kabuki geki shirizu*). Whose idea it was to make the films is not clear, nor is it known if the films were intended to be broadcast on television or in a theatre. It is unlikely they were made for commercial distribution, as the films were never shown

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Tomita, “Shinkyô Ichijirushii Masuyo,” *Ôsaka Nichi Nichi Shinbun*, 20 August 1960.

⁵⁹ “Konshû no Shûyaku: Ichikawa Masuyo,” *Chûbu Nihon Shinbun*, 6 June 1960.

⁶⁰ Ichikawa Ebimaru, interview by author, 28 April 2004, Toyokawa, Japan; Ichikawa Emiko, interview by author, 2 June 2004, Toyohashi, Japan. Ichikawa Suzume, interview by author, 5 April 2004, Toyohashi, Japan.

publicly.⁶¹ Judging from the notes on the play scripts stored in the Sakuragaoka Museum, it appears that the troupe had planned to film seven or eight plays, but, in the end, only four were filmed: *Awa no Naruto*, *Kagamiyama Kokyô no Nishikie*, *Tsubosaka Reigenki*, and *Koi Bikyaku Yamato Ôrai: Umegawa Chûbei*.⁶² The choices, all adaptations of puppet plays, reflected the troupe's tendency to perform plays in the presentational style of *bunraku*, accompanied by a *gidayû* chanter. All four plays were longtime favorites of the troupe.

These plays had been in the troupe's repertory almost as long as its existence. This time, however, they were heavily adapted for the screen; while each performance opened and closed with the conventional pulling of the tri-colored, striped *kabuki* curtain, there was no *hanamichi* and no live audience. Close-up shots of the performers and quick cuts to new scenes further indicate that the performers were directed as if they were in a movie, not in a play. Incidentally, Masujûrô is listed as the co-director, together with Kôno Akiwa, who ostensibly had more film experience.⁶³

In some cases, the structure of the plays was wholly revised to make them tighter for the screen. The film version of *Koi Bikyaku*, for example, is different from the troupe's stage version, which was always performed on separate bills as two different

⁶¹ VHS copies of the four films are housed at the Misono-za Library in Nagoya and in the Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki archive at the Sakuragaoka Museum in Toyokawa.

⁶² Copies of the scripts are preserved in the Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki archive, Sakuragaoka Museum, Tokyokawa, Japan. *Koi Bikyaku Yamato Ôrai: Umegawa Chûbei* is generally performed in *kabuki* under the title *Koi no Tayori Yamato Ôrai*, as mentioned earlier. For the film series, the title *Koi Bikyaku Yamato Ôrai: Umegawa Chûbei* was used. For a translation of the *ningyô jôruri* play by Chikamatsu Monzaemon on which the *kabuki* plays are based, see Donald Keene, trans., "The Courier for Hell," in *Major Plays of Chikamatsu*, rev. ed. (New York: Columbia, 1990), 161-194.

⁶³ His name can also be read Kawano Akiwa 河野秋和. I was unable to find any biographical information about him.

acts: “Fuingiri” and “Ninoguchi Mura.” In the film, both acts are fused together, with the “Fuingiri” scene recast as a flashback; the film begins with a shot of Magoemon being informed that his son, Chûbei, has absconded with funds in order to buy out the contract of his lover, the courtesan Umegawa. Only after this newly added introduction does the film then cut to the “Fuingiri” scene, in which Chûbei “breaks the seal” on the packaged coins and redeems Umegawa. This dramatic sequence is then followed by another shot of Magoemon hearing the bad news, and only then do the actors perform an abbreviated version of “Ninoguchi Mura,” in which the lovers flee to Chûbei’s hometown and meet his father one last time before succumbing to their captors. On the other hand, the piece *Tsubosaka* remained faithful to the troupe’s stage version, complete with the “small theatre” addition of the character Gankurô (discussed in chapter 4). In this regard, the majority of the film’s *kata* (forms) are the same as those used for the stage productions, but the dialogue is heavily cut and the pace is swifter, making the plays more appropriate for the screen. Each piece is approximately twenty-seven minutes.

In general, the same performers who had played the parts for the stage landed the parts for the films. As always, lead roles went to the top foursome, Misuji, Masuyo, Baika, and Fukushô, but Suzume, Baishô, and Himeshô also earned several plum parts. Sanpuku was the only longtime member who did not appear in any of the films, due to her resignation earlier in the year.

The Challenges of the 1960s

Despite the grand, celebratory productions in 1960, the troupe barely performed in 1961. Save for a six-day run at the Mainichi Hall in Osaka, the troupe limited its productions to a smattering of one-day affairs in or around Toyokawa, the hometown of

Masujûrô and the original members. The retirement of several key members—Sanpuku, Ebimaru, Himeshô, and Kobotan—had taken a toll, and booking a venue had become increasingly difficult given the troupe’s depleted financial reserve. A general state of inertia seems to have characterized the troupe during this year, but if it had avoided performing altogether, it might never have been resuscitated.

Yet, from the scale of the 1962 Tôyoko Hall production—its first major run in thirteen months— it would have been difficult for spectators to know that the troupe was falling apart. Seven new members had joined and had taken great pride in actually being able to perform. Among them was Onoe Umeno, who enjoyed the pedigree of having been a child actor in Onoe Baikô VII’s productions.⁶⁴ Under the direction of Enjôji Kiyô’omi and with the sponsorship of the Shôchiku entertainment company, the troupe went to great lengths to create a theatrical atmosphere that evoked an earlier age when *kabuki* had flourished as the unrivaled popular theatre. The small lobby featured a tall tower (*yagura*), which would have stood outside one of the three licensed theatres (*sanza*) during the Edo period. The tower housed a drum that was beaten to announce the opening and closing of the day’s performance, a ritual that was re-enacted during the troupe’s production. On the wall were picture billboards by the esteemed Torii school of *kabuki* painters that featured the names of performers and drawings of characters in the plays.⁶⁵ Spectators, furthermore, received a colorful program booklet that contained imitations of Edo-period woodblock prints (*ukiyoe*) of the plays on the program with the text drawn in

⁶⁴ Ichikawa Umeno, interview by author, 20 August 2004, Tokyo.

⁶⁵ Andô Tsuruo, “Ichikawa Joyû-za no Kokaku” [Ichikawa Actresses Company Old Style], *Yomiuri Shinbun* (evening), 19 February 1962.

the old-fashioned calligraphy style unique to *kabuki*.⁶⁶ The auditorium featured two *hanamichi* that were decorated with lanterns bearing the actors' names, giving the production a festive feel.⁶⁷ With a whopping nine pieces on the program, including a special greeting, the troupe offered plays that showed off its strengths in *kabuki* movement and dance. Not surprisingly, three of the plays were adaptations from *bunraku*: “Amagasaki,” “Numazu,” and *Gappô*; and four were dances: *Fuji Musume*, *Kagamijishi*, *Bô Shibari*, and *Ebisu Môte Koi no Tsuribori*. *Taruya Osen* was the only *shin kabuki sewamono* (play of domestic life) on the program.

Aside from Akiyama's stinging remarks about the “unpolished” *Taruya Osen*, the reviewers' reaction was positive.⁶⁸ In a surprise move for a Tokyo critic, Miyake Shûtarô of the *Mainichi* actually praised the troupe for resurrecting the “old business” of using a candle for parts of “Numazu,” and he especially commended Fukushô's Heisaku and Misuji's Jûbei.⁶⁹ Most effusive in his praise was Andô of the *Yomiuri*, who stated, “Of all the troupes playing here in February, this was the most enjoyable.”⁷⁰ Perhaps because of

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Akiyama Yasusaburô, “Miseru Gidayû Mono: Sannen Buri no Ichikawa Joyû-za” [*Gidayû* Pieces For Show: Ichikawa Actress Company after Three Years], *Asahi Shinbun*, 21 February 1962.

⁶⁹ Miyake Shûtarô, “Hisabiza no Ichikawa Joyû-za: Bunan na ‘Numazu’” [Ichikawa Actress Company After A Long Time: A Safe “Numazu”], *Mainichi Shinbun* (evening), 20 February 1962.

⁷⁰ Andô Tsuruo, “Ichikawa Joyû-za no Kokaku,” *Yomiuri Shinbun*, 19 February 1962.

the warmhearted remarks, the troupe was invited back to the Tôyoko Hall for a short run in June.⁷¹

They performed in Tokyo again a short three months later, in September 1962, this time at the Yomiuri Hall. Missing from this production was Masuyo, who had quit after the Tôyoko Hall production—a big disappointment to members and fans.⁷² Easing the troupe’s concerns was the return of Kobotan. Her picture was displayed in the program with the caption, “Ichikawa Kobotan returns to the stage after three years.”⁷³ The *Asahi* further explained that she had been working as a waitress at a restaurant near the Diet, noting, “She is performing only in the evening production, and in the lobby, there are many bouquets to her from politicians, including a note from her patron.”⁷⁴

The program contained no hints that this would be the troupe’s last major production. As in recent productions, there was a mix of reliable staples—*Ibaraki*, *Narukami*, “Moritsuna,” *Ise Ondô*, and “Ninoguchi Mura”—as well as new and more challenging work, such as a rarely performed act from *Genpei Nunobiki no Taki*, which

⁷¹ See Akiyama Yasusaburô, “Kakki no Aru Kyakuseki: Ichikawa Joyû-za Kôen” [A Lively Auditorium: Ichikawa Actress Company], *Asahi Shinbun*, 20 June 1962. The only evidence that I could find of this production was Akiyama’s article; literature on the troupe, including Masajûrô’s *Kabuki Jinsei*, makes no mention of it.

⁷² See, in particular, “Konshû no Shûyaku: Ichikawa Masuyo,” *Chûbu Nihon Shinbun*, 6 June 1960; Tomita, “Shinkyô Ichijirushii Masuyo,” *Ôsaka Nichi Nichi Shinbun*, 20 August 1960. See also Ichikawa Joyû-za, Yomiuri Hall, September 1962. The program roster is not entirely reliable, as it seems that the troupe “padded” the program to include some members, like Ichikawa Hisayo, who had resigned previously. Ichikawa Hisayo, interview by author, 2 April 2004, Tokyo.

⁷³ See Ichikawa Joyû-za, Yomiuri Hall, September 1962.

⁷⁴ Akiyama Yasusaburô, “Kaeru Fukushô no Godan: Ichikawa Joyû-za” [The Acclaimed Fukushô’s Five Roles: Ichikawa Actresses Company], *Asahi Shinbun*, 27 September 1962.

no company in the *kabuki* world had performed in twenty years.⁷⁵ The precursor to “Sanemori Monogatari,” it had last been performed by Kataoka Nizaemon XII (1882-1946) in 1943, and, for that reason, Andô commented in the *Yomiuri*, “This is an extremely difficult scene for actors so that is one reason why actors stopped doing it. So, I applaud the troupe’s courage [to revive this act.]”⁷⁶ Enjôji’s specially commissioned *Tsuzumi ga Taki*, a legend about a waterfall, was the other piece new to the troupe. It did not go over as well as *Genpei Nunobiki*; Andô, for one, charged, “I expected it to be more fantasy-like. The finale, more so than being a review, was like a third-rate geisha recital.”⁷⁷

Additional feedback came from Miyake, who criticized Umeno’s and Kobotan’s “poor performances” in *Ise Ondô*, and Andô complained that the troupe was still making mistakes in comprehension.⁷⁸ “They are spending time on superfluous parts, and it still reeks of rural touring.”⁷⁹ Even after all the productions given in the big cities, the troupe could not overcome its provincial roots.

⁷⁵ Akiyama Yasusaburô, “Honkakuteki na Dashimono” [Genuine Pieces on the Program], *Asahi Shinbun*, 9 September 1962. Katherine Saltzman-Li translates *Genpei Nunobiki no Taki* as *The Genji and Heike at the Nunobiki Waterfall*. See her translation, “The Sanemori Story,” in *Kabuki Plays On Stage: Brilliance and Bravado, 1697-1766*, eds. James R. Brandon and Samuel L. Leiter, 260-286 (Honolulu: University of Hawaii, 2002).

⁷⁶ Andô Tsuruo, “‘Genpei Nunobiki no Taki’ Jôen no Yûki” [Courage in Performing “The Genji and Heike at the Nunobiki Waterfall”], *Yomiuri Shinbun*, 27 September 1962.

⁷⁷ Andô, “‘Genpei Nunobiki no Taki,’” *Yomiuri Shinbun*, 27 September 1962.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*; Miyake, “Mezurashii ‘Yoshikata Yakata’” [A Rare “Yoshikata’s Abode”], *Mainichi Shinbun*, 28 September 1962.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

Still, not one critic insinuated that Yomiuri Hall might be the troupe's last major Tokyo production.⁸⁰ There were growing hints, however, that the troupe was having difficulty. A scheduled tour to Hawaii, which had been announced in the program and the *Yomiuri Shinbun*, was subsequently canceled, and the list of performers to quit continued to grow.⁸¹

The exodus of performers had started in the spring of 1960 when Himeshō, Kobotan, and Ebimaru had quit. At that time, Masuyo had also declared her intention to resign, but was persuaded to appear in the Tōyoko Hall production. Himeshō and Ebimaru had left for good, but, as we have seen, Kobotan returned for the Yomiuri Hall production. In later years, the members would discuss their particular reasons for resigning. For starters, they attributed it to the troupe's failure to continue to attract audiences. Misuji recalled, "During the show, I looked out and saw that two-thirds of the seats were empty. I realized that so many things had gone wrong."⁸² This might have stemmed from the popularity of color television, discussed earlier, but also from the ill-fitting new name, the Ichikawa Joyū-za. With the word "*kabuki*" now omitted from the name, some members believed that it was unclear that the Ichikawa Actress Company was, in fact, a *kabuki* troupe. Furthermore, "*joyū*" also conjured up the image of a

⁸⁰ Onoe Umeno said that this was also true of members at the time of the production. Onoe Umeno, interview by author, 20 August 2004, Tokyo.

⁸¹ See Ichikawa Joyū-za, Yomiuri Hall, September 1962. According to Andō, the troupe had been invited to Hawaii for one week to participate in the "Japan Show," a revue of performing arts. Misuji, Baika, Fukushō, and Suzume had been planning to perform *Danjō Dōjōji*, a twist on *Musume Dōjōji*, and *Renjishi*. Ichikawa Baika said that the tour had been cancelled, but could not elaborate on the reasons. Ichikawa Baika, interview. See Andō Tsuruo, "'Genpei Nunobiki no Taki' Nado ni Wadai" [The Topic is 'Genji and Heike at the Nunobiki Waterfall'], *Yomiuri Shinbun* (evening), 21 September 1962.

⁸² Kurokawa, "37 Nen," *Chūnichī Shinbun*, 21 February 1984.

contemporary theatre troupe, since the word had come to be associated with the modern plays of *shingeki*, while the term “*onna yakusha*” (female actor) was associated with women performing in *kabuki* plays.⁸³ As Matsushita Kaoru noted, “It’s not that [Ichikawa Actress Company] has a negative nuance . . . but it no longer sounds like a classical performing company.”⁸⁴ Thus members added what they felt was an inappropriate name to their list of grievances with what had gone wrong with the troupe.

With declining audiences, members could no longer overlook their precarious financial state. “It was such a difficult situation, but we had no guarantor,” said Ebimaru, who left the troupe after the 1960 Shinjuku production to pursue an arranged marriage.⁸⁵ Similarly, Himeshō said she resigned because she was “thinking about the future,” and “as a woman,” she thought it best to leave; likewise, Masuyo told Kurokawa, “I came to understand a lot of things about adult society, and I didn’t like it. I told them honestly that I was leaving and it was a huge relief.”⁸⁶ As discussed in chapter 5, while several members believed that Masujūrō’s extramarital philandering had a negative impact on the troupe, no one viewed his behavior as the sole factor for the troupe’s demise. As Baishō noted, “It was one factor, but the main reason was money.”⁸⁷ Kurokawa, too, spoke of Masujūrō gambling away the troupe’s profits, and Baishō further noted that Masujūrō

⁸³ See Ayako Kano, *Acting Like a Woman in Modern Japan: Theatre, Gender, and Nationalism* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 32.

⁸⁴ Matsushita Kaoru, interview. Ichikawa Suzume and Ichikawa Baishō voiced similar feelings (interviews).

⁸⁵ Ichikawa Ebimaru, interview.

⁸⁶ Ichikawa Himeshō, phone interview by author, 27 April 2004; Kurokawa, “37 Nen,” *Chūnichī Shinbun*, 21 February 1984.

⁸⁷ Ichikawa Baishō, interview.

had approached her “wealthy” boyfriend about giving the troupe a loan to keep it afloat.⁸⁸ “There was absolutely no guarantee that he [Masujûrô] would re-pay the troupe,” she stated.⁸⁹ Placed in such an awkward position, Baishô also decided to quit.

Meanwhile, what had come of Ebizô and the troupe’s relationship with him? As expected, he was promoted to the name Ichikawa Danjûrô XI. A series of special productions held in his honor commenced in April 1962, just a month before the Ichikawa Actress Company’s production at Tôyoko Hall. Tellingly, the troupe made no reference to this historical event in its program. Moreover, there is neither any record of the new Danjûrô attending the all-female production nor is there a written statement by him in the program.

As the Ichikawa Actress Company, the troupe continued to use the crest that had been designed by Sanshô, which featured the character for woman written inside the Naritaya *mimasu* crest, but such symbolism had become devoid of meaning. Indeed, it appears that despite Ebizô’s tacit acceptance of the troupe’s new name, relations never healed between him and Masujûrô. Since the 1958 Tokiwa-za naming fiasco, contact between them had come to a grinding halt. Referring to Ebizô’s attempt to convince the troupe not to perform at the Tokiwa-za in Asakusa, Ichikawa Misuji recalled, “I have no recollection of ever meeting Danjûrô [XI] again after that time in Shibuya.”⁹⁰

Sadly for the troupe, Ebizô’s and Masujûrô’s personalities clashed. Explaining that the former was “super polite” and a “perfectionist,” Fujima Rankei, the daughter of

⁸⁸ Ibid; Ichikawa Kurokawa, interview.

⁸⁹ Ichikawa Baishô, interview.

⁹⁰ Ichikawa Misuji, interview.

Fujima Fujiko, noted, “This was the absolute opposite of Masujûrô. Their personalities were totally opposite.”⁹¹ So many of Ebizô’s positive traits—his methodic, punctual, and exacting approach—were viewed as problematic by Masujûrô. He saw the Naritaya headmaster as a stick-in-the-mud perfectionist, who could never compromise; everything needed to be black-and-white. In his autobiography, Masujûrô revealed that he regretted his decision to follow Ebizô: “The more I think about it, the more I don’t understand why I became so worn down in the battle with the head of the Ichikawa family [Danjuro XI], who was useless at answering any questions.”⁹² He further wrote that he wished that he had not been so enamored by the grand *kabuki* theatre, which fueled his desire to be part of the Naritaya house, instead of thinking about the interests of the troupe, and perhaps, even forming something akin to Suzuki Tadashi’s theatre festival in rural Toyama Prefecture.⁹³ “Why is it that I never thought of building a *kabuki* town, for everyone to come and see?” he asked.⁹⁴

Masujûrô was not the only person to have difficulty working with Ebizô. Beneath his elegant, demure stage persona, Ebizô had an allegedly terrible temper, exacerbated by illness, which would take his life just a few years later in 1965.⁹⁵ He and playwright Osaragi Jirô (1897-1973) had a messy falling out, which was publicized in the 1960s, and

⁹¹ Fujima Rankei, interview.

⁹² Ichikawa Masujûrô, *Kabuki Jinsei*, 162.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 163. Suzuki Tadashi (b. 1939) is one of Japan’s leading contemporary theatre directors. He began his famous Toga Village festival during the summer 1976.

⁹⁴ Ichikawa Masujûrô, *Kabuki Jinsei*, 163.

⁹⁵ Seki Yôko, *Ebizô soshite Danjûrô* [Ebizô and then Danjûrô] (Tokyo: Bungei Shunjû, 2004), 14-15.

he acquired a reputation for sparring with Shôchiku over such practices as requiring actors to appear in both afternoon and evening productions.⁹⁶ Unfortunately for the female troupe, Ebizô IX/Danjûrô XI appears to have taken a dislike to Masujûrô, and so, instead of using his power to boost the troupe, as Sanshō had done, he abandoned it mid-course, just as it was trying to forge a new identity.⁹⁷ Before the troupe had time to make proper amends, the Naritaya leader became seriously ill and passed away.

Bidding Farewell

Despite performers dropping out, despite the loss of its major financial sponsor, and despite no longer playing at first-rate theatres, the remaining members refused to face the reality that the troupe's days were numbered. Their tenacity is clear in an article that *Engekikai* ran in 1964, after the troupe had been absent for two years in a row from the Tokyo stage:

The phrase "Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki" has virtually disappeared in today's mass communications. The troupe was active for about ten years, becoming an incorporated company (*kabukishiki gaisha*), but recently a rumor has started to circulate that the troupe has broken up. Thinking about the age of the lead actor, Ichikawa Misuji, who was born in 1936, that is not necessarily a false report.

Many people are apt to believe it, since Ichikawa Baika and Ichikawa Suzume

⁹⁶ Samuel L. Leiter, "Ichikawa Danjûrô XI: A Life in *Kabuki*," in *Frozen Moments: Writings on Kabuki, 1966-2001* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell East Asia Series, 2002), 40; Hayashi Kyôhei, interview by author, 2 August 2004, Tokyo.

⁹⁷ Of all the troupe members, Ichikawa Emiko, Masujûrô's daughter, spoke most openly about the strained relationship between Ebizô and the troupe. "He did not like Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki," she stated. Interview.

have opened a drinking establishment near the Toyohashi Station. So we decided to ask what was happening by calling long distance.

“Broken up? Absolutely not,” Suzume answered. “We opened Kabuki Tea House (Kabuki Chaya), but of course we perform whenever we have productions. Many [venues] are old age homes and are memorial-type affairs, but I think we’ve been quite busy playing in Kyûshû, Nagoya, and Tokyo. Misuji is living in an apartment in Nagoya and is active in a dance circle; Fukushô helps out at her family’s candy shop, and everyone else is scattered about, but whenever we have a production, people come together for it. Many members are younger and are still commuting to school, and cannot take a holiday, so frequently we’ll perform with only fifteen members. Altogether we have around twenty members,” she responded.

The members who were once *shôjo* have become mature women today. They are not performing at regular theatres, and it is unknown how much their skills have improved, but it is clear they are doing well. The popular Ichikawa Girls’ Kabuki has been a bit sad recently, but it appears that the troupe has not thrown away its dream to perform. The troupe’s office is in Toyohashi City, the same address as Baika and Suzume’s Kabuki Tea House. We will continue to bring you news about the troupe as always in order to pacify worried fans.⁹⁸

Needless to say, it was the final time *Engekikai* would carry a story exclusively about the troupe.

⁹⁸ “Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki Sono Go” [After Ichikawa Girls’ Kabuki], in “Gendai Butai Haiyû” [Contemporary Stage Actors], special issue *Engekikai* (September 1964): 223.

But the lack of coverage in the major publications can be misleading. Even after the larger *kabuki* world had buried it, the troupe refused to die. For years after the so-called “last” production, the troupe, in a drastically reduced version of its former self, soldiered on, performing at civic centers and small, rural theatres.

An undated documentary about the troupe, probably from 1964, reveals that Misuji, Baika, Fukushô, and Suzume—who had replaced Masuyo as the troupe’s fourth lead—continued to perform after other members had quit.⁹⁹ Though Baika admitted that many of the scenes of the documentary had been “staged” by the film crew, it offers valuable evidence about the state of the troupe in its declining years.¹⁰⁰

The documentary primarily focuses on Baika, who begins by recalling the days when the troupe practiced tirelessly in Toyokawa, which laid the groundwork for it to perform at the Meiji-za, Minami-za, and Misono-za. The narrator then reveals that the troupe has been reduced to four members—Baika, Misuji, Fukushô, and Suzume—who get together for performances on occasion. Indeed, the first couple of sequences clarify that even these leading ladies have developed other interests and hobbies. The film shows Baika and Suzume serving *sake* to male customers at their Kabuki Teahouse while Masujûrô, looking weathered and aged, regales a couple of men with stories of the troupe

⁹⁹ A VHS recording of the documentary was given to me by Ichikawa Baika, who thought it had been broadcast on Nippon Hôshô Kyôkai (NHK). Ichikawa Suzume believed that it was broadcast on Nagoya Television. Unfortunately, the documentary is undated, and all production information is omitted. I assume that the documentary was filmed in 1964, because it is stated several times that Baika, who was born in 1936, is twenty-eight years old. If Baika’s age, however, was calculated using the traditional Japanese counting convention whereby a baby’s age is counted one at birth, the date could have been 1963.

¹⁰⁰ Ichikawa Baika, interview.

playing at the grand playhouses. In the next shot, we see Misuji and Fukushô trying their luck at *pachinko*. The halcyon days of touring the country have passed.

One of the many poignant scenes shows Baika and Suzume watching Misuji and Fukushô enact the fight scene finale of *Ibaraki*, which, the narrator states, they have played some four hundred times. Now, they perform it once again at a “Health Center” in Mie prefecture, a far cry from the grand theatres of Tokyo, Kyoto, and Osaka. Baika watches her colleagues intently, looking deeply saddened to see such talented actors wasting away in such lowly surroundings. The camera follows her as she walks away from the venue, stating, “I don’t think your [Misuji’s and Fukushô’s] art has declined in the least, but something is missing.” She proceeds to write a letter to former members, beseeching them to appear in a special production, which, at the very least, will reinvigorate the foursome. She is then shown paying a house call to a former member, who opens the door, with her baby in hand—the image starkly reminding the viewer why so many members had left the troupe.

Baika’s strategy apparently works, as some twelve former members journey to Nagoya for a three-day production. The documentary captures Baika sewing a costume and looking at her co-performers, while she states, “It’s not as though everyone has forgotten how to perform. People married . . . and because of finances our troupe broke up. . . . But everyone loves the stage.” There is a shot of groups rehearsing and then of Misuji reciting a formal announcement onstage. Though she introduces herself as Ichikawa Misuji, she says nothing about being connected to the Naritaya house, nor does she wear the *mimasu* crest, which had been part of the troupe’s costume for such occasions for so many years. There is a brief shot of the troupe performing *Meiboku*

Sendai Hagi, and then the camera revisits the dressing room, where Baika studies herself in the mirror and slowly wipes away her makeup. Another chapter has ended.

The next sequence takes place at the train station where the foursome wave goodbye to the departing members, who are returning home after the last performance. The camera zooms up on one member who boards the train, accompanied by her husband and their babies. The train doors shut, and the passengers—the former members, their husbands and their small children—furiously wave goodbye to Baika, Misuji, Fukushô, and Suzume. As the foursome slowly walk from the station, Baika states: “Can I live as an actress? Can I live as a woman? Until today, my twenty-eighth year, while continuing to worry, I have come this far.”

The foursome retreat to an *okonomiyaki* restaurant where they take up the issue that constantly haunts them: to quit or to persevere. The mood has changed from the upbeat, cheerful atmosphere of the previous scene. Misuji speaks first, proposing that they throw in the towel, noting that they cannot continue given their present financial situation. “We must think of another road,” she advises. Fukushô chimes in that she has been worried and is considering marriage. Verging on tears, Baika then reveals that she has been waiting for Misuji and Fukushô to say they wanted to quit. “If everyone says they are going to quit, there is nothing that can be done,” she says. Looking utterly glum, they confer silently.

The mood then becomes festive; upbeat music plays while the foursome boards a train to Shizuoka prefecture, where they are scheduled to perform for a girls’ club. On the train, they laugh, smile, and act like they are having a wonderful time with their best friends. In Shizuoka, they perform “Ninoguchi Mura,” an old favorite, and the camera

focuses on a male spectator who sheds a tear at the short-lived reunion of the characters Magoemon and Chûbei. After the performance, the foursome is treated to a feast, and, once again, they look like they are enjoying every moment.

But the next scene returns yet again to a solemn mood. Over braised eel and beer, Misuji, Baika, Fukushô, and Suzume plead with Masujûrô to keep the troupe afloat. This time, Baika breaks down, sobbing that theatre has always been what she wanted to do. “We put so much work into it as children, practicing, as you,” she says addressing Masujûrô, “hit the bamboo pole.” In a marked change from the earlier scene, the actresses insist that they want to continue to perform.

The subsequent scene shows the foursome training a younger generation in the parts they once performed. Suzume and Fukushô show a girl how to dance with a fan; Misuji demonstrates how to play the evil Yashio in *Sendai Hagi*; Baika illustrates the proper way to do a *mie*. “Do it again; do it again; again; again, again.” she instructs. As she recites the lines of Masaoka, the camera fades out.

In this way, the documentary shows that the troupe had reinvented itself as a senior company that is passing *kabuki* onto the next generation. Indeed, despite Kurokawa’s, Baika’s, and Masujûrô’s respective accounts that the troupe’s final production took place at the Yomiuri Hall in 1962, the troupe went on to perform numerous times throughout the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s, and even into the 1990s.¹⁰¹ These productions were never reviewed, and there was no concerted effort to maintain a

¹⁰¹ See Ichikawa Baika, “Terebi Fukyû,” *Mainichi Shinbun*, 8 March 1994; Ichikawa Masujûrô, *Kabuki Jinsei*, 181; Kurokawa, “37 Nen,” *Chûnichi Shinbun*, 21 February 1984. In his chronology of Ichikawa Girls’ Kabuki/Ichikawa Joyû-za, Masujûrô lists Yomiuri Hall as the troupe’s final production venue, but elsewhere in his book, he notes that he “does not have any recollection of the troupe’s lamp extinguishing.” Ichikawa Masujûrô, *Kabuki Jinsei*, 164.

collection of the programs; however, it is unknown just how much performing the troupe did after the 1962 Yomiuri Hall production. It is clear that the troupe did not end suddenly, but petered out very slowly, after a long struggle. Despite finally labeling itself a “grand *kabuki* troupe,” as it did for its 1962 production at the Kitazawa Kaikan (Nagano Prefecture), the troupe, however, would be hard pressed to ever again perform in the posh, grand *kabuki* venues that it had once enjoyed. In the end, the troupe had become an unequivocally “small” theatre troupe, performing on a rural circuit similar to that which Masujûrô had frequented as a young actor in the 1930s and 40s.

As we have seen, there are numerous reasons for why the troupe came to an end: the women’s age, societal pressures to marry and bear children, waning finances, problems with the new Naritaya headmaster, competition engendered by Masujûrô’s philandering habit, and the growing popularity of television. What should not be denied is that during the 1950s and early 1960s, the troupe mastered *kabuki*’s fundamentals and delighted thousands of spectators throughout the country. Critics compared the troupe to “young men’s *kabuki*” (*wakate kabuki*), and one can only assume that had it been given the opportunity to continue to develop as a collective group under the leadership of the Naritaya house, the Ichikawa Actress Company very well might have been compared to adult male *kabuki* as well.

Because of the troupe’s relatively short-lived existence, it is easy to dismiss it as not amounting to anything, as some professional male *kabuki* performers have done today.¹⁰² Yet, as documented in this thesis, many others who saw the troupe perform in

¹⁰² Nakamura Jakuemon IV (b. 1920) and Sawamura Tanosuke VI (b. 1932) were negative about the troupe. Tanosuke said he saw the troupe perform some three times because of the publicity it received, but thought it was overrated. Jakuemon said that he never saw the troupe perform because he was “against women performing *kabuki*.” Nakamura Shikan VII (b. 1928),

the 1950s, including esteemed critics who also reported on men's grand *kabuki*, believed that the troupe was a valid addition to the *kabuki* theatre world, and even predicted, if not hoped, that it would continue to develop as adults. James R. Brandon, who is well known for his *kabuki* productions at the University of Hawaii, saw the troupe perform in 1960 and characterized the troupe as "doing grand *kabuki*."¹⁰³ Matsushita Kahoru, who served as a television commentator of a production around the same time, stated that the troupe was excellent.¹⁰⁴

You know, I was talking to an announcer friend this morning, and we were reminiscing about Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki. You know when you see children's *kabuki* today or rural theatre, we laugh and joke about it, but Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki was totally different. It was orthodox *kabuki*. More than *shôjo*, they really had a sophisticated air about them. It wasn't an amateur troupe; they really practiced hard, and it was splendid theatre. There was no place in which I might have said, "What was that?" . . . They were brilliant and did terrific theatre.¹⁰⁵

moreover, said that he knew about the troupe and even met some of the performers, but never had the opportunity to see it perform, since he was so busy. His wife, Masako, who was working in the dressing room during our interview, however, chimed in that she saw the troupe perform numerous times, and seeing that I had brought photographs of the troupe, proceeded to identify each one of the major performers by name. Nakamura Jakuemon IV, phone interview by author, 31 July 2004; Nakamura Shikan VII, interview by author, 18 October 2004, Tokyo; Sawamura Tanosuke VI, interview by author, 18 August 2004, Tokyo.

¹⁰³ James R. Brandon, conversation with author, 17 November 2003, Tokyo.

¹⁰⁴ Matsushita, interview.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

As their first teacher, Furukawa Yoshiishi, told Kurokawa, “Their rise was quick, and their fall was quick. I learned from them that it had absolutely nothing to do with their artistic skill waning, but with their decline in popularity.”¹⁰⁶

But members would be largely forgotten for their brief career as adult performers. It is not surprising that the statue memorializing the troupe in Toyokawa is of a young girl, not a woman (figure 29). If members had a choice, they would prefer to recall the early years of their respective careers under Sanshō instead of the years struggling as adult actresses with receding emotional and financial support. Still, as the documentary from the 1960s had foreshadowed, the troupe would be remembered as adult teachers. Indeed, some twenty-eight years after the Yomiuri Hall production, the troupe would pass on the reins to the next generation of Ichikawa *kabuki* actresses. This was not strategic, but wholly accidental. As Ichikawa Baika tells the story, in the early 1980s she was approached at a party by three young women who inquired if she would teach them *kabuki*.¹⁰⁷ In this way, the troupe’s successor, the next generation of “Danjūrō’s Girls,” was born.

¹⁰⁶ Kurokawa, “37 Nen,” *Chūnichī Shinbun*, 21 February 1984.

¹⁰⁷ Ichikawa Baika, “Musume Kabuki Hata-age [Unfurling Girls’ Kabuki], “Matsuba-Botan no Ki” [Journal of Small Peonies], *Mainichi Shinbun*, no. 12, 29 March 1994.

Conclusion

Kabuki as Invented Tradition

Today in Japan, there is no longer a debate about women's place on the *kabuki* stage. *Kabuki* has become a traditional theatre (*dentô geinô*) that prides itself on performing classics of the past in the manner they were performed during its heyday in the Tokugawa period. To be sure, there have been changes—the house seating, lighting, and stage technology are considerably different, and, on a more dramaturgically experimental level, some actors have reinvigorated old forms with new tools.¹ Despite the common perception that *kabuki* is timeless, it is not entirely frozen in the distant past. New traditions, as Eric Hobsbawn and Terrance Ranger would argue, are being invented.²

Yet, such innovating has stopped short at the prospect of replacing female bodies for the male ones that inhabit the stage. There is, of course, the notable exception of permitting the young daughters of *kabuki* actors—who are generally under the age of eighteen (*shôjo*, in their own right)—to make cameo appearances in plays, an invented tradition inaugurated by Danjûrô IX. While his daughters may have aspired to become actresses, daughters of more recent generations of actors are cognizant from a young age that their future does not entail acting on the *kabuki* stage. This point was best made in an interview with the five grandchildren of Nakamura Shikan VII, published in a 2004

¹ Nakamura Kanzaburô XVIII (b. 1955) and his troupe, the Heisei Nakamura-za, for example, have achieved fame for their tent-*kabuki* and “Cocoon Kabuki” as well as for collaborations with well-known contemporary Japanese playwrights, Noda Hideki and Watanabe Eriko. Ichikawa Ennosuke is known for his “Super Kabuki,” which uses new scripts and technology.

² Eric Hobsbawn, “Inventing Traditions,” in *The Invention of Tradition*, eds. Eric Hobsbawn and Terrance Ranger, 1-14 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

Kabuki-za program. In response to the question, “What is your future dream?” the four grandsons stated that they aspired to become *kabuki* actors; tellingly, only eight-year-old Kana responded differently: she wanted to become a book seller.³ While she arguably has a myriad of professions from which to choose in liberal democratic Japan, it is clear that the aspirations of her brothers are off-limits. As far as gender roles are concerned, the world of *kabuki* acting remains entrenched in an all-male feudal hierarchy.⁴ Female representation in professional *kabuki* is limited to the brief window of opportunity when women are *shôjo*. The social conditioning, not to mention training, begins at a young age, and girls such as Kana are taught that their calling lies outside the world of the *kabuki* stage. Indeed, no male actor has attempted to integrate women into his *kabuki* productions.⁵ In recent years, the gender wars on which the media has focused attention concern women mounting the sacred sumo arena (*doma*) and whether or not Princess Aiko will be eligible to become the empress in the event that a male heir is not produced. But on the issue of women in *kabuki*, the debate has subsided, and the *onna yakusha* have become virtually extinct.

The only notable exception to this is the Nagoya Musume Kabuki Company, the indirect heir to the Ichikawa Girls’ Kabuki Troupe. Established in 1983, the all-female

³ Kabuki-za Program, September 2004, 40-41. The program was in honor of the stage debut of Nakamura Shikan’s fifth grandson, Nakamura Yoshio. In all fairness, though, it should be pointed out that two of the boys stated that by day they each wanted to become a *kabuki* actor, but “by night a baseball player.”

⁴ I am speaking here of acting in the *kabuki* world. In recent years, women have begun to perform jobs, once limited to men, in the off-stage arena, from fitting costumes to designing the scenery.

⁵ Ennosuke has been known to perform with Fujima Murasaki, his wife and the well-known dance choreographer and teacher. She has danced opposite him, for example, in the *michiyuki* scene of *Sonezaki Shinjû* and appeared in his troupe’s production of *Setaigo*, a stylized musical dance piece about the succession of China’s empress.

troupe is still active today, defying its own self-anointed label of *musume* (translated as “girl” or “daughter”). Unlike its predecessor, however, it always has been independent of a third-party sponsor. The troupe was aided in its early period briefly by Ichikawa Sumihachi and then, for some ten years, by Ichikawa Baika, who diligently taught the troupe the fundamentals of *kabuki* performance that she had learned as a young girl. Along the way, the troupe has been guided by several professional *kabuki* actors, including Sawamura Tōjūrō II (b. 1943), Bandō Yajūrō (b. 1956), and, most prominently, Ichikawa Danjūrō XII.⁶ In the invented tradition of his ancestors, Danjūrō has given several members the prestigious “Ichikawa” acting name, thus lending Nagoya Musume Kabuki intangible social capital from which its predecessor also benefited.⁷

Nagoya Musume Kabuki generally sponsors its own annual or semi-annual productions, which run for two or three days. In addition, it has been commissioned to perform at different theatres throughout Japan. In the years since the troupe’s star members received the Ichikawa name, the troupe has expanded its repertory to include more than forty plays, engaged in outreach projects with the Nagoya community, established a fan club, and formed a junior troupe that trains junior high and high school students. In 2002, the troupe performed in the Netherlands and Belgium at the invitation of the Wereld Muziek Theater Festival (figure 30).⁸ In 2003, it earned status as a non-

⁶ Kurokawa Mitsuhiro, “Shisetsu: Nagoya Musume Kabuki no Jūnen” [Personal Essay: Nagoya Musume Kabuki’s Ten Years], *Engeki* [Theatre] 37 (1992): 46-54.

⁷ Members who have received the Ichikawa name are Ichikawa Ohka, Ichikawa Misuya, Ichikawa Mitsuji, and Ichikawa Sakurako.

⁸ Nagoya Musume Kabuki performed eight times from 9-20 April, appearing in such national theatres as Het Muziektheater in Amsterdam, the Stadsschouwburg in Utrecht, and the Schouwberg in Rotterdam. The festival is heavily subsidized by the Dutch government and aims to produce non-Western music, dance, and theatre in an attempt to offer diverse programming as well

profit organization so that it can receive tax-deductible contributions. The troupe was also prominently featured in the four-hundred-year anniversary celebrations in honor of Izumono Okuni sponsored by Taisha City in Shimane Prefecture.

While the troupe approaches *kabuki* with utmost professionalism, its collective management and production style mark it as an amateur troupe.⁹ With the exception of its co-founder, Ichikawa Ohka, who earns a living from teaching *nihon buyō* and has transformed her grandmother's *tokiwazu* music school into the practice studio for the troupe, all the members hold other jobs and are often forced to prioritize their paid work over performing. Partly because of its inability to make a full-time commitment, the troupe has never been commercially successful, nor is it particularly well known outside of its home city, Nagoya. Unlike its predecessor, Musume Kabuki has never been a professional contender.

By way of conclusion, then, perhaps it is appropriate to revisit the question as to why women have never succeeded at becoming professional *kabuki* actresses. As discussed in the introduction, women, post-Okuni, had their first opportunity to ascend the professional *kabuki* stage during the Meiji period when theatergoers and management became receptive to the idea of *kabuki* actresses replacing the *onnagata*. As we have explored more closely in the present study, the other great opportunity for women to

as to qualify for the generous government theatre subsidies, which are given only if a theatre produces a certain number of non-European productions per year.

⁹ Kurokawa, "Shisetsu," 50-51. In 1992, Kurokawa stated: "First there's the question as to whether the troupe is 'professional' or 'amateur.' Being that they are allowed to use the Ichikawa name lends proof to their professionalism, but at the same time, the troupe's foundation is weak. In a word, they don't have any management knowledge. The troupe has been able to flourish thanks to the efforts of so many people. In the future, will this continue to be the case?" The same observations are arguably valid today.

perform on the *kabuki* stage came after World War II, when the feudalistic ideology fostered by the imperial system came heavily under attack. Recall Ichikawa Masujûrô's statement that Japan's defeat enabled the development of Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki.¹⁰ While this is probably true, it is worth considering that a macro revolution in *kabuki* could have occurred had SCAP's Occupation policy been different. Instead of insisting that *kabuki* continue to be a living theatre form that responded to current events and social issues, the Occupation forces encouraged it to become a classical theatre form divorced from modern realities. It was to be a "genuine classic art which transcends its feudal subject matter,"¹¹ a theatre that had no bearing on the way Japanese lived their lives in the postwar period.¹² In becoming a classical theatre form, *kabuki* purged itself of any desire to become modern, and, by extension, absolved itself of the need to train actresses to play female roles.¹³

In actuality, this was not the only direction that *kabuki* could have taken on the path to modernity. This can best be understood by looking briefly at the history of *jingju* or what is generally known as "Peking/Beijing Opera." Like *kabuki*, *jingju* flourished in

¹⁰ Ichikawa Masujûrô, "Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki Kôenkai: Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki Are Kore" [Symposium on the Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki: Pondering Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki] (lecture, Sakuragaoka Museum, Toyokawa, Japan, 7 May 1995). Transcript courtesy Sakuragaoka Museum, 3.

¹¹ As quoted in Marlene J. Mayo, "To Be or Not to Be: *Kabuki* and Cultural Politics in Occupied Japan," in *War, Occupation and Creativity: Japan and East Asia, 1920-1960*, eds. Marlene Mayo and J. Thomas Rimer (Honolulu: University of Hawaii, 2001), 291.

¹² See James R. Brandon. "Kabuki and the War of Greater East Asia, 1931-1945," *Mime Journal: Theatre East and West Revisited* 22 (2002-2003): 19-39; Mayo, "To Be or Not to Be," 291-292; Okamoto Shiro, *The Man Who Saved Kabuki: Faubion Bowers and Theatre Censorship in Occupied Japan*, trans. and adapt. Samuel L. Leiter (Honolulu: University of Hawaii, 2001).

¹³ See Kamiyama Akira, "Kumehachi no Zanzô: Onna Yakusha to Joyû no Aidai" [Images of Kumehachi: Between Female Actor and Actress], *Geinô* [Performing Arts] 34 no. 9 (September 1992): 22-23. He makes this argument in the context of the Meiji period.

the eighteenth, nineteenth, and early twentieth centuries, is highly stylized, and was performed traditionally by all-male casts. Indeed, actresses were prohibited from the stage by Confucian-influenced imperial bans, most notably in 1772, after which male actors further developed the art of playing female roles.¹⁴ Like women performing *kabuki* in the public theatres during the Meiji period, women began performing publicly in *jingju* after the downfall of the Qing dynasty in 1911 and the establishment of the Republic of China.¹⁵

Yet, here the parallels come to an end. For, unlike *kabuki*, professional actresses continued (and continue) to perform in *jingju* together with actors in mixed companies. With the support of the great actor Mei Lanfang (1894-1961), who is credited with training several women to learn the special techniques of the *dan* (male player of female roles in Chinese theatre), women became accepted gradually, to the extent that they are now seen as an inseparable component. Today the tradition of the male *dan* has practically disappeared.¹⁶ This can be traced to the communist government's use of *jingju* as a political tool to revolutionize thinking about social roles for men and women. Min Tian has noted, "It is beyond question that the politics and ideology of the new Chinese

¹⁴ Women had a long history of performing on the Chinese stage before this ban. In fact, during the Yuan dynasty (1277-1367), women dominated the public stage. See Chou Hui-ling, "Striking Their Own Poses: The History of Cross-Dressing on the Chinese Stage," *TDR* 41 no. 2 (Summer 1997): 130-152; Siu Leung Li, *Cross-Dressing in Chinese Opera* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2003), esp. 29-64; Min Tian, "Male *Dan*: the Paradox of Sex, Acting, and Perception of Female Impersonation in Traditional Chinese Theatre," *Asian Theatre Journal* 17 no. 1 (Spring 2000): 78-81.

¹⁵ See Tian, "Male *Dan*," 90-93.

¹⁶ Of further interest, Siu Leung Li states, "In contemporary China, we can see a bifurcated development in cross-dressing: the gradual demise of the male *dan* across all forms of regional opera, and the continual flourishing of the female *sheng* [player of male roles], particularly in Yueju opera." Siu Leung Li, *Cross-dressing in Chinese Opera*, 191-213.

regime have hastened the male *dan*'s extinction."¹⁷ While such politicking was most extreme during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) under the leadership of Jing Qing (Mao Zedong's wife and one of the notorious "gang of four"), who sought to crush all feudal remnants of *jingju* and popularize the *yangbanxi* (revolutionary model plays), it has continued to this day.¹⁸ The government-subsidized Beijing Municipal Traditional Drama School (Beijingshi Xiqu Xuexiao), for example, accepts, supports, and trains both women and men, and commentators, such as Tian, are optimistic that "in due course, traditional Chinese theatre will have its own Siddonses and Duses."¹⁹

In Japan, on the other hand, *kabuki* is generally considered to be a mirror of the feudal past that must be preserved. Unlike in the People's Republic of China where *jingju* is largely subsidized, *kabuki* is a commercial theatre, monopolized by Shôchiku. Still, almost all the actors who play minor roles in Shôchiku productions are graduates of the government-subsidized three-year (in the past, it was a two-year commitment) National Training School (*yôseijô*).²⁰ The school, it must be pointed out, has a decidedly sex-specific policy, accepting only men between the ages of fifteen and twenty-five. Of course, the men who graduate from the school are largely barred from playing the leading

¹⁷ Tian, "Male *Dan*," 92. See also Siu Leung Li, *Cross-Dressing in Chinese Opera*, 192-213; Colin Mackerras, *Peking Opera* (Hong Kong: University of Oxford Press, 1997), 61.

¹⁸ See Jiang Qing, "Revolutionizing Beijing Opera," in *Chinese Theories of Theater and Performance from Confucius to the Present*, ed. and trans. Faye Chunfang Fei (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), 166-169. See also Premier Zhou Enlai's remarks, quoted in Siu Leung Li, *Cross-Dressing in Chinese Opera*, 192.

¹⁹ Tian, "Male *Dan*," 93. See also Mackerras, *Peking Opera*, 64-66; Siu Leung Li, *Cross-Dressing in Chinese Opera*, 198-199. The Communist Party's policy, formulated in the 1950s and 1960s, has been to permit the remaining male *dan* to perform, but not to allow the training of new male *dan*. Instead, women are trained to perform female roles.

²⁰ Nakamura Matazô, interview by author, 12 September 2004, Tokyo.

roles—the Benkeis, Sukerokus, and Benten Kozô— that are all but reserved for the scions of great acting families; the graduates can best hope to be hired as apprentices by grand *kabuki* actors to play bit parts and to perform stunts. Yet, it seems fair to argue that without access to the basic training that men are eligible to receive, women will never truly succeed as professional players on the *kabuki* stage.

Needless to say, the intention of this study has not been to argue that *kabuki* should have endured something as traumatic as the Cultural Revolution and gone the way of *jingju*, nor is it my desire to advocate that women should replace men on the *kabuki* stage as a means of showcasing a “gender free” ideology. The female *kabuki* players and troupes discussed in this dissertation were not formed out of political conviction, and, as we have seen, merely substituting female bodies for male ones does not “break” the feudalistic system. Yet, the comparison to *jingju* is instructive, because it shows us possibilities that have been utterly concealed by the institutional structure of *kabuki* today. Indeed, my goal in writing this dissertation has been to explore an alternative to the conventional historiography of traditional Japanese theatre and to document the historical precedent for female *kabuki* actors.

The present study has offered a different narrative of *kabuki* that is largely forgotten today because of the need to preserve *kabuki*'s image as an unchanging, timeless theatre form. The preceding chapters have explored the history of the all-female company Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki Troupe, which had great potential to become a new invented tradition in its own right. While the troupe's own internal problems stunted its development as a professional adult company, it is also evident that it lacked the macro-social structure to succeed. The leading members, at least, quit not because they did not

want to make a career in the *kabuki* theatre world, but because the socio-economic support structure had receded. Financial backing from the Hamamatsu-za had ceased, and support from the Naritaya house had diminished. Without the sponsorship of these institutions, the troupe had no chance of succeeding, let alone retaining members for whom the prospect of marriage and raising children in lieu of a stage career proved to be a more appealing, if not practical, choice.

If history is any forecaster of the future, it will not be through the conventional route that women will become *kabuki* actors. It will be through the quirky nature of human relations by which a male player, perhaps one who has no biological children of his own (such as Ichikawa Danjûrô X) or has only daughters (such as Danjûrô IX), will advocate to train young girls for adult stage careers.²¹ For as we have seen through this study of “Danjûrô’s Girls,” it only takes one powerful individual to change a tradition and invent a new one. Thus, the question is not if women can perform *kabuki*, but if social forces will enable them to do so.

²¹ This is the dominant reason behind the professional careers of Izumi Junko and her sister Izumi Shoko. A study of other performing arts in Japan, such as *nô*, that have come to accept women is beyond the scope of this study. See Loren Edelson, “*Kyôgen*’s Pro Actresses: Izumi Women Find Place Onstage,” *Japan Times*, 7 November 1997.

Appendix I

Chronology of Danjûrô's Girls

This chronology is mainly concerned with the development of the Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki Troupe/Ichikawa Actress Company and its major productions. Relevant dates concerning women affiliated with the Naritaya house during other periods are also provided. Dates concerning the early productions of Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki are fuzzy, since there are no extant written records concerning the troupe's touring productions from 1949-1953 and there are limited extant records for productions after 1962. Where possible, repertory selections are provided; please note that there was a break between the morning (generally, from 11 a.m.) and evening programs (generally, from 4 p.m.); often the lineup was rotated midway through production so that the morning program would be performed during the evening program and vice versa.

The chronology is based on the troupe's programs and newspaper articles, handwritten documents from the troupe's archive at the Sakuragaoka Museum, as well as interviews that I conducted with troupe members. Biographical information is generally taken from Nomura Jusaburô's *Kabuki Jinmei Jiten* (Biographical Dictionary of Kabuki). Because precise documentation generally can be found in the text, I have not duplicated the information here.

1838

Birth of Horikoshi Hideo (later, Ichikawa Danjûrô IX).

1846

Birth year generally given for Yokota Kei (later, Ichikawa Kumehachi).

1881

Birth of Horikoshi Jitsuko (later, Ichikawa Suisen II), 21 August.

1882

Birth of Kamiyagi Fukusaburô (later, Ichikawa Sanshō V).

1883

Birth of Horikoshi Fukiko (later, Ichikawa Kyokubai II).

1888

Iwai Kumehachi (private name: Yokota Kei) admitted to the Naritaya house and takes the new stage name Ichikawa Kumehachi.

1891

Danjûrô IX excommunicates Kumehachi from the Naritaya house for performing *Kanjinchō* without permission. She was officially reinstated in 1895, but may have been reinstated unofficially earlier.

1901

Marriage of Horikoshi Jitsuko, the eldest daughter of Danjûrô IX, and Kamiyagi Fukusaburô, who takes the surname Horikoshi.

1902

Formation of Shôchiku Kabushiki Gaisha (Shôchiku Entertainment Company) by the twin brothers Ôtani Takejirô (1877-1969) and Shirai Matsujirô (1877-1951).

1903

Death of Ichikawa Danjûrô IX, 13 September.

1908

Opening of the Teikoku Joyû Yôsei-jo (Imperial Actress Academy).

1910

Birth of Matsumoto Haruo (later, Ichikawa Danjûrô XI), 6 January.

1911

Opening of the Teikoku Gekijô (Imperial Theatre).

1913

Kobayashi Ichizô establishes the Takarazuka Shôkantai (Takarazuka Choir), the forerunner of Takarazuka Kageki (Takarazuka Revue).



Birth of Nakada Daiji (later, Ichikawa Masujûrô), 18 July.



Birth of Horikoshi Kikue (later, Ichikawa Suisen III), 16 December.



Death of Ichikawa Kumehachi, 24 July.

1919

Kamiyagi Fukusaburô, husband of Suisen II and the son-in-law of Danjûrô IX, stars in *Ya no Ne* and takes the stage name Ichikawa Sanshô V.

1923

Great Kantô Earthquake, 1 September.

1944

Death of Ichikawa Suisen II, 22 October 1944.

1945

After two atomic bombs are dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan agrees to unconditional surrender on 15 August. Under the leadership of SCAP (Supreme Commander of Allied Powers), military troops occupy Japan at the end of August. Regulations to censor all forms of entertainment, including *kabuki*, are promulgated.

1946

Birth of Horikoshi Natsuo (Ichikawa Danjûrô XII), 6 August.

1947

The new constitution is promulgated on 3 May, giving women and men equal rights.



Death of Ichikawa Kyokubai, 16 May.



In November, a full-length version of *Kanadehon Chûshingura* is performed in Tokyo at the Tôkyô Gekijô. Censorship of *kabuki* effectively ends.

1948

In Toyokawa City, Aichi Prefecture, several girls, who had studied *nihon buyô* (Japanese classical dance), begin to study *kabuki* plays under the direction of Furukawa Yoshiishi (stage name: Takemoto Nishiki-dayû), a *gidayû* narrator.

1949

The girls begin to train under Ichikawa Dankichi, a small circuit *kabuki* actor, and his wife, Ichikawa Sumihachi. They hold their first public recital at the Shôwa-za Theatre in the Ushikubo district of Toyokawa on 18 April. Tickets cost 50-yen per person and the lineup consisted of: *Hidakagawa*, “Nozaki Mura,” “Ninokuchi Mura,” and “Ôkura-kyô.”



Subsequently, the club takes the name the Toyokawa Shôjo Kabuki Gekidan (Toyokawa Girls’ Kabuki Troupe) and performs at several local venues.

1950

Summer

The troupe changes its name to the Tokyo Shôjo Kabuki-za (Tokyo Girls’ Kabuki Company). Tours to Ine Town in Kyoto Prefecture, and to the Ise Peninsula.

October

The troupe performs at the Hamamatsu-za, Shizuoka Prefecture, for the first time on 21 October 1950, under the name of the “Katsukawa Ikuyo Ichi-za: Onna Kodomo Shibai” (Katsukawa Ikuyo Company: Women and Children’s Theatre). Lineup: “Gion Ichirikiya,” from *Kanadehon Chûshingura*, “Nozaki Mura,” and the “Taki” scene from *Hakone Reigenki*.

1951**June**

Three-day production at the Hamamatsu-za. President of Hamamatsu-za, Ono Haruyoshi, agrees to buy the female troupe and make it the theatre's resident company. A formal contract would be signed by Ono Haruyoshi and Ichikawa Dankichi at a later date.



Subsequently, the troupe receives permission from Ichikawa Sanshō V for members to use the name "Ichikawa" as a stage name. The troupe takes the new name the "Ichikawa Hiroe Ichi-za" (Ichikawa Hiroe Troupe) at a performance at the Shōwa-za theatre in Ushikubo, Toyokawa City.

**December**

The troupe performs *Kanadehon Chūshingura* at the Hamamatsu-za. After Dankichi requests for troupe members to receive individual stage names from the Naritaya house, headmaster Ichikawa Sanshō V journeys to Hamamatsu City to watch a performance and decides to bring the troupe under the patronage of the Naritaya house.

1952**22 July to 20 September**

The troupe performs a sixty-day run at the Hamamatsu-za, during which the troupe formally takes the name "Ichikawa Shōjo Kabuki Gekidan" (Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki Troupe). The repertory changes every five days and the girls perform without vacation (see Appendix III for a complete listing of plays). Ichikawa Sanshō announces that the troupe has become an official part of the Naritaya house and, on 27 July during a private naming ceremony, he bestows individual stage names on four performers (Misuji, Baika, Fukushō, and Masuyo) and Dankichi, who takes the name Masujūrō.

October

First review of the troupe printed in *Engekikai* by editor Toshikura Yoshikazu.



Troupe performs for seven days at the newly built Shin Kabuki-za in the Ōsu district of Nagoya.

December

Troupe performs for the second time at the Shin Kabuki-za in Ōsu, Nagoya.

1953**January**

Regional production through Chūbu region (Niigata, Toyama, Ishikawa, Fukui, Yamagata, Nagano, Gifu, and Shizuoka prefectures). Lineup: *Meiboku Sendai Hagi*,

“Kuzunoha,” “Moritsuna,” “Ninoguchi Mura”; evening: “Terakoya,” “Shigenoi Kowakare,” “Suzugamori,” “Kuramae.”

February

Tokyo debut production at the Mitsukoshi Gekijô at the flagship Mitsukoshi Department Store in Nihonbashi, 3-15 February. Lineup: “Kuruma Biki,” “Goten” from *Meiboku Sendai Hagi, Gappô*; evening: *Ichijô Ôkura Monogatari*, “Moritsuna,” and “Ninoguchi Mura.”

March

“Homecoming” production at the Hamamatsu-za (Hamamatsu), 18-27 March. Lineup: *Kagamiyama Kokyô no Nishikie, Rôben Sugi no Yurai, Tsuru Onna*; evening: “Shigenoi Kowakare,” *Izayoi Seishin, Hidakagawa*.

April

Tour to the countryside (dates unclear); production in Toyohashi, 1-3 April.

May

Production at Meiji-za (Tokyo), 1-7 May. Lineup: *Kagamiyama Kokyô no Nishikie, Sono Kouta Yume no Yoshiwara, Tsuru Onna*; evening: “Terakoya,” *Hidakagawa*, “Shigure no Kotatsu,” *Izayoi Seishin*.

June

Production at the Bunraku-za (Osaka), June 12-19. Lineup: *Meiboku Sendai Hagi, Ichijô Ôkura Monogatari, Gappô, Oshichi*; evening: *Keya Mura*, “Moritsuna,” “Ninoguchi Mura,” *Hidakagawa*.



Production at the Yachiyo Gekijô (Kobe), 20-25 June. Lineup: *Sendai Hagi, Ichijô Ôkura Monogatari, Gappô, Oshichi*; evening: *Keya Mura*, “Moritsuna,” “Ninoguchi Mura,” *Hidakagawa*.



Production at the Yasaka Kaikan (Kyoto), 26-30 June. Lineup: *Sendai Hagi, Ichijô Ôkura Monogatari, Gappô, Oshichi*; evening: *Keya Mura*, “Moritsuna,” “Ninoguchi Mura,” *Hidakagawa*.

July

Production at the Hamamatsu-za (Hamamatsu), 3-21 July. Lineup includes: “Danmari,” *Akegarasu, Tamasan, Asagao Nikki*; evening: *Ise Ondô Koi no Netaba, Kasane*, “Sanemori Monogatari,” “Kuramae.”

August

Production at the Bunraku-za (Osaka), 1-16 August. Lineup: “Shigenoi no Kowakare,” *Kasane*, “Terakoya,” *Asagao Nikki*; evening: “Sanemori Monogatari,” *Tsuru Onna*, “Sakaya,” *Ise Ondô Koi no Netaba*.



Production at the Yasaka Kaikan (Kyoto), 20-25 August. Lineup includes: “Terakoya,” “Shigenoi no Kowakare,” *Asagao Nikki*; evening: “Moritsuna,” *Ise Ondô Koi no Netaba*, “Sakaya”, *Tsuri Onna*.

September-October

Tour to Shizuoka prefecture and Tôhoku region. Lineup: *Kagamiyama Kokyô no Nishikie*, “Kamiji,” “Kuramae”; evening: “Danmari,” “Shigenoi no Kowarake,” “Terakoya,” *Ise Ondô Koi no Netaba*.

November

Production at the Yasaka Kaikan (Kyoto), 5-11 November. Lineup: *Tamasan*, “Hikimado,” *Izayoi Seishin*, “Kuramae”; evening: *Shinshû Kawa Nakajima*, “Horikawa,” *Akegarasu*, *Shinrei Yaguchi no Watashi*.



Production at the Bunraku-za (Osaka), 12-24 November. Lineup: *Tamasan*, “Hikimado,” *Izayoi Seishin*, “Kuramae” evening: *Shinshû Kawa Nakajima*, “Horikawa,” *Akegarasu*, *Shinrei Yaguchi no Watashi*.

1954

January

Production at the Yachiyo Gekijdan (Kobe), 9-18 January. Lineup: “Danmari,” “Terakoya,” “Kamiji,” *Honchô Nijûshikô*; evening: *Sannin Sanbasô*, *Ise Ondô Koi no Netaba*, *Adasan*, “Nozaki Mura.”

February

Tour of Chûbu region (Niigata, Toyama, Ishikawa, Fukui, Yamagata, Nagano, Gifu, and Shizuoka prefectures). Lineup: “Nozaki Mura,” *Sannin Sanbasô*, “Kamiji,” *Honchô Nijûshikô*; evening: “Danmari,” “Fuingiri,” *Adasan*, *Yanagi*.



Production at the Hirao Kominkan (Toyokaya City), 11 February.



Ichikawa Ebijûrô dies, 16 February.

April

Production at the Bunraku-za (Osaka), 9-25 April. Lineup includes: *Awa no Naruto*, *Sannin Sanbasô*, full-length *Kanadehon Chûshingura*.

May

Production at the Toyohashi Kôkaidô (Toyohashi), 17-18 May.

June

Production at the Minami-za (Kyoto) 18-28 June. Lineup: “Goten,” from *Jitsuroku Sendai Hagi*, “Suzugamori,” *Ibaraki*, “Sakaya”; evening: “Soga Nakamura,” *Awa no Naruto*, *Kanjinchô*, “Hamamatsu-ya.”

July-August

Production at the Meiji-za (Tokyo), 31 July-15 August. Ichikawa Sanshō V bestows individual stage names upon five additional members: Sanpuku, Suzume, Baishō, Himeshō, and Kobotan. Lineup: *Narukami*, “Sakaya,” *Ibaraki*, “Hamamatsu-ya”; evening: *Shinrei Yaguchi no Watashi*, *Jitsuroku Sendai Hagi*, *Kanjinchô*, *Ise Ondo Koi no Netaba*.

September

Production at the Minami-za (Kyoto), 17-27 September. Lineup: *Kagamiyama Kokyō no Nishikie*, *Sono Kouta Yume no Yoshiwara*, *Ise Ondo Koi no Netaba*; evening: *Sannin Sanbasō*, *Kajiwara Heizō no Ishikiri*, *Kasane*, *Shinrei Yaguchi no Watashi*.

November

Production at the Naka-za (Osaka), 1-23 November. Lineup: *Kotobuki Sannin Sanbasō*, “Shigenoi no Wakare,” *Ibaraki*, *Shinrei Yaguchi no Watashi*; evening: “Moritsuna,” “Kuramae,” *Kanjinchô*, “Ninoguchi Mura.”

December

Production at the Misono-za (Nagoya), 3-12 December. Lineup: *Kotobuki Sannin Sanbasō*, *Kagamiyama Kokyō no Nishikie*, *Ibaraki*; evening: “Moritsuna,” “Ninoguchi Mura,” *Kanjinchô*, *Hidakagawa*.

1955**January**

Production at the Minami-za (Kyoto), 18-28 January. Lineup: *Narukami*, “Moritsuna,” *Toribeyama Shinjū*, *Noriaibune*; evening: “Kuruma Biki,” “Sushiya,” “Nozaki Mura,” *Sannin Katawa*.

January-February

Production at the Naka-za (Osaka), 30 January-13 February. Lineup: “Kuruma Biki,” “Sushiya,” “Sakaya,” *Sannin Katawa*; evening: *Narukami*, *Shinjū Ten no Amijima*, *Toribeyama Shinjū*, *Noriaibune*.



Production at the Misono-za (Nagoya), 16-25 February. Lineup: *Narukami*, *Kajiwara Heizō no Ishikiri*, “Sakaya,” *Sannin Katawa*; evening: “Nozaki Mura,” “Terakoya,” *Toribeyama*, *Noriaibune*. Special “classroom kabuki” production of *Sannin Katawa* for students, free of charge, 20 February at 8:30 a.m.

March

Production at Tōyoko Hall (Tokyo), 6-25 March. Lineup: “Moritsuna,” *Kotobuki Ayatsuri Sanbasō*, *Gappō*, *Noriaibune*; evening: *Kajiwara Heizō no Ishikiri*, *Ibaraki*, *Meiboku Sendai Hagi*, *Tsuri Onna*.

May

Production at the Minami-za (Kyoto), 1-25 May. Lineup: *Meiboku Sendai Hagi*, *Renjishi*, *Gappō*, “Fuingiri”; evening: *Toki wa Ima Kikyō no Hata-age*, *Ninin Dōjōji*, “Amagasaki,” *Genyadana*.



Production at the Yachiyo Gekijdan (Kobe), 26-30 May. Lineup: *Kagamiyama Kokyō no Nishikie*, “Sakaya,” *Kotobuki Ayatsuri Sanbasō*, *Toribeyama*; evening: *Genyadana*, *Awa no Naruto*, *Kanjinchō*, *Banchō Sarayashiki*.

June

Production at the Hamamatsu-za (Hamamatsu), 15-27 June. Lineup includes: *Banchō Sarayashiki*, “Amagasaki,” *Tsubosaka Reigenki*, “Owarai Geki,” *Kasane*; evening: *Imoseyama Onna Teikin*, *Genyadana*, *Domo Mata*.

July

Production at the Naka-za (Osaka), 2-24 July. Lineup: *Kajiwara Heizō no Ishikiri*, *Musume Dōjōji*, *Domo Mata*, *Genyadana*; evening: *Imoseyama Onna Teikin*, *Awa no Naruto*, *Tsuchigumo*, *Benten Kozō*.

August

Production at the Meiji-za (Tokyo), 6-29 August. Lineup: *Kanjinchō*, *Sannin Katawa*, *Awa no Naruto*, “Sushiya”; evening: “Amagasaki,” *Sannin Sanbasō*, *Shuzenji Monogatari*, *Migawari Zazen*.



Tour to Shizuoka prefecture (dates unclear).

September

Tour to Tōhoku (Miyagi and Fukushima prefectures) and Ibaragi prefecture (dates unclear).

October

Performance in Hirao (Toyokawa), 10 October, and in Toyohashi, 12-13 October.

November

Production at the Yachiyo Gekijdan (Kobe), 1-6. Lineup: excerpts (probably “Sushiya”), *Yoshitsune Senbon Zakura*, “Terakoya,” *Musume Dōjōji*, *Domo Mata*; evening: “Ninoguchi Mura,” *Rōben Sugi no Yurai*, *Ibaraki*, “Nozaki Mura.”

December-January

Production at the Misono-za (Nagoya), 8-18 December. Lineup: *Imoseyama Onna Teikin*, *Awa no Naruto*, *Tsuchigumo*, *Genyadana*; evening: *Meiboku Sendai Hagi*, *Renjishi*, *Domo Mata*, “Michiyuki Hatsune no Tabi.”



Production at the Hamamatsu-za (Hamamatsu), 20 December-2 January. Lineup includes: “Terakoya,” *Ichijō Ōkura Monogatari*, *Shinrei Yaguchi no Watashi*; evening: “Nozaki Mura,” “Moritsuna,” excerpts, *Kanadehon Chūshingura*, *Kyō Ningyō*.

1956

January

Performance in Toyohashi, 5 January.



Production at the Hamamatsu-za (Hamamatsu), 14-24 January. Lineup includes: solo dance pieces, *Migawari Zazen*; evening: “Benkei Jōshi,” *Noriabune*.

February

Production at the Minami-za (Kyoto), 1-19 February. Lineup: *Kotobuki Sanbasō*, *Tsubosaka Reigenki*, *Kokaji*, “Nozaki Mura”; evening: “Sakaya,” “Michiyuki Hatsune no Tabi,” “Terakoya,” *Date Musume Koi no Higanoko*.



Ichikawa Sanshō V dies, 1 February.

March

Production at the Naka-za (Osaka), 1-25 March. Lineup: *Kagamiyama Kokyō no Nishikie*, *Kokaji*, “Ninoguchi Mura”; evening: “Kuruma Biki,” *Tsubosaka Reigenki*, “Gion no Ichirikiya,” *Date Musume Koi no Higanoko*.

May

Production at Tōyoko Hall (Tokyo), 4-23 May. Lineup: *Kagamiyama Kokyō no Nishikie*, *Tsuchigumo*, *Asagao Nikki*; evening: “Terakoya,” *Ninin Dōjōji*, *Rōben Sugi no Yurai*, “Ninoguchi Mura.”

June-July

Tour to Tōhoku and Hokkaidō. Lineup includes: *Kajiwara Heizō no Ishikiri*, “Fuingiri,” *Ibaraki*, *Sannin Sanbasō*, *Toribeyama*, *Bō Shibari*, *Shinrei Yaguchi no Watashi*, “Sakaya,” *Kanjinchō*, *Hidakagawa*.

August

Production at Kobe Shinbun Hall (Kobe), 12-17 August. Lineup: “Shigenoi Kowakare,” “Horikawa,” *Tsuri Onna*, “Gion no Ichirikiya”; evening: *Shuzenji Monogatari*, *Gappō*, *Migawari Zazen*, *Ise Ondo Koi no Netaba*.



Production at the Misono-za (Nagoya), 18-27 August. Lineup: “Shigenoi Kowakare,” “Horikawa,” *Tsuri Onna*, “Gion no Ichirikiya”; evening: *Shuzenji Monogatari*, *Gappô*, *Migawari Zazen*, *Ise Ondo Koi no Netaba*.

September

Production at the Minami-za (Kyoto), 1-23 September. Lineup: solo dance pieces performed by Baika, Misuji, and Masuyo, *Ikudama Shinjû*, *Imoseyama Onna Teikin*, *Migawari Zazen*, *Tôkaidô Yotsuya Kaidan*.

October

Tour to Kyûshû, 13-19 October. Lineup: *Kajiwara Heizô no Ishikiri*, *Awa no Naruto*, *Tsuchigumo*, *Genyadana*; evening: “Shigenoi Kowakare,” “Moritsuna,” *Bô Shibari*, “Ninoguchi Mura.”



Production in Toyohashi, 30-31 October.

November

Production at Tôyoko Hall (Tokyo), 6-26 November. Lineup includes: *Imoseyama Onna Teikin*, *Renjishi*, *Sannin Katawa*; evening: “Gion no Ichirikiya,” *Kanjinchô*, *Ikudama Shinjû*, *Date Musume Koi no Higanoko*.

December

Production at Misono-za (Nagoya), 8-23 December. Lineup includes: “Fuingiri,” *Musume Dôjôji*; evening: *Kanjinchô*, *Shinjû Ten no Amijima*, *Date Musume Koi no Higanoko*.

1957

January

Tour to Kyûshû, 1-10 January. Lineup: “Kuruma Biki,” “Terakoya,” *Migawari Zazen*, “Nozaki Mura”; evening: *Meiboku Sendai Hagi*, *Sannin Katawa*, “Gion no Ichirikiya,” *Date Musume Koi no Higanoko*.

February

Production at the Minami-za (Kyoto), 1-25 February. Lineup: *Shinrei Yaguchi no Watashi*, *Tsuchigumo*, *Kagamiyama Kokyô no Nishikie*, *Kanjinchô*, “Ninokuchi Mura.”

March-May

Three-month tour to Sanin, Hokuriku, Tôhoku, and Hokkaidô. Lineup includes: *Tsuri Onna*, “Kamiji,” excerpts from *Yoshitsune Senbon Zakura*, “Amagasaki,” “Sakaya,” *Noriabune*.

Production in Toyohashi, 22-23 April.

June

Production at the Minami-za (Kyoto), 2-26 June. Lineup: *Genpei Nunobiki no Taki*, “Suzugamori,” “Shigure no Kotatsu,” *Kawaranu Iroyatose no Kotobuki*, *Bô Shibari*; evening: *Hakone Reigenki*, *Ibaraki*, *Izayoi Seishin*, *Hidakakawa*.

July

Production at the Naka-za (Osaka), 1-18 July. Lineup includes: *Shinrei Yaguchi no Watashi*, “Hikimado,” *Kawaranu Iroyatose no Kotobuki*, *Tachi Nusubito*, *Ise Ondo Koi no Netaba*; evening: *Uguisuzuka*, *Ayatsuri Sanbasô*, “Moritsuna,” *Asagao Nikki*.



Production at the Misono-za (Nagoya), 20-29 July. Lineup: *Kumagai Jinya*, *Sono Kouta Yume no Yoshiwara*, “Numazu,” *Tachi Nusubito*; evening: *Honchô Nijûshikô*, “Hikimado,” *Izayoi Seishin*, *Danjûrô Musume*.

August

Production at the Hamamatsu-za (Hamamatsu), 11-20 August. Lineup includes: *Uguisuzuka*, *Honchô Nijûshikô*, *kôjô*, “Soga Nakamura,” *Ise Ondô*, “Sushiya,” *Narukami*, *Bô Shibari*, *Benten Kozô*.

September-October

Tour of the Kansai region, Kyûshû, and Hokuriku. Lineup includes: *Kajiwara Heizô no Ishikiri*, “Ninoguchi Mura,” *Bô Shibari*, *Benten Kozô*; evening: excerpts, *Yoshitsune Senbon Zakura*, *Gappô*, *Kanjinchô*, *Hidakagawa*.



Performances in Hirao (Toyokawa) and neighboring towns, 22-24 September.



Ichikawa Misuji participates in the Performing Arts Festival (Geijutsu Matsuri) at the Kabuki-za, 1 or 2 October.



Several members are involved with the filming of *Kyôen Yukinojô Henge*, starring Misora Hibari, 3-6 October.

November

Production at the Tôyoko Hall (Tokyo), 5-25 November. Lineup: *Narukami*, “Numazu,” *Bô Shibari*, *Benten Kozô*; evening: *Hakone Reigenki*, *Kokaji*, “Shigure no Kotatsu.” *Musume Dôjôji*.

December

Misono-za (Nagoya), 7-19 December. Lineup: “Full-length” production of *Kanadehon Chûshingura* that includes acts I-IX plus the entr’acte *michiyuki* between acts IV and V (acts X and XI are omitted).

1958

January-March

Tour to Chûgoku (Okayama, Hiroshima, Yamaguchi, Shimane, Tottori prefectures), Kyûshû, and Mikawa (eastern Aichi prefecture) regions (dates are unclear).



Performance in Toyohashi, 24 February.

April

Production at Tôyoko Hall (Tokyo), 4-24 April. Lineup: *Toyokawa Risshoki*, *Ibaraki*, “Nozaki Mura,” *Ichijô Ôkura Monogatari*; evening: *Awa no Naruto*, *Kagamijishi*, *Koi Musume Mukashi Hachijô*.

May-June

Tour to Hokuriku, Nagano, Shizuoka, Kantô regions. Lineup includes: *Kajiwara Heizô no Ishikiri*, “Shigenoi,” *Kanjinchô*; evening: *Ichijô Ôkura Monogatari*, *Awa no Naruto*, *Kokaji*, “Nozaki Mura.”



Performance at the Hamamatsu-za, 16 May. Lineup: *Kajiwara Heizô no Ishikiri*, “Shigenoi,” *Kanjinchô*, “Kuramae.”

July

Production at the Tokiwazu-za (Tokyo), 1-25 August. Lineup: *Awa no Naruto*, *Wakashu Kuzushi*, *Yaoya Oshichi*, *Kotobuki Sanbasô*, *Danjûrô Musume*, *Ise Ondo Koi no Netaba*.



The troupe intends to announce its new name, the Ichikawa Onna Kabuki Company, but on 28 June, Naritaya headmaster Ichikawa Ebizô XI announces that the troupe must retain the name the Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki.



Production at the Hamamatsu-za (Hamamatsu), 28-31 July.



The troupe subsequently breaks off relations with its resident theatre, the Hamamatsu-za, and becomes an incorporated company, Kabukishiki Gaisha Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki.

August

Production at the Misono-za (Nagoya), 21-27 August. Lineup includes: *Meiboku Sendai Hagi*, *Benten Kozô*, *Shinrei Yaguchi no Watashi*, *Kagamijishi*, *Koi Musume Mukashi Hachijô*.

September-November

Tour to Hokkaidô, Tôhoku, Kantô, Kyûshû. Lineup includes: *Kagamiyama*, *Domo Matahei*, *Honchô Nijûshikô*, “Suzugamori,” “Yoshino Yama.”

December

Production at the Misono-za (Nagoya), 7-16 December. Lineup includes: *Edo Kagamiyama Kokyô no Nishikie*, *Kokaji*, *Yaoya Oshichi*; evening: “Kikubatake,” *Bô Shibari*.

1959**January-February**

Tour through Chûbu (Niigata, Toyama, Ishikawa, Fukui, Yamagata, Nagano, Gifu, Shizuoka prefectures) district. Lineup includes: *Meiboku Sendai Hagi*, “Ninoguchi Mura,” *Kanjinchô*, “Nozaki Mura”; evening: “Kuruma Biki,” *Bô Shibari*, *Shinrei Yaguchi no Watashi*.

March

Production at Tôyoko Hall (Tokyo), 4-24 March. Lineup includes: “Kuruma Biki,” *Tsuegumo*, *Sonezaki Shinjû*; evening: *Fukeru Yosa Tsuki no Yokogushi*, *Bô Shibari*, “Kawashô.”

April-July

Tour to Chûgoku, Kyûshû, Hokuriku, and Kantô (Tokyo-to and Kanagawa, Saitama, Gunma, Ibaragi, Tochigi, Chiba prefectures) regions. Lineup includes: “Kuruma Biki,” *Tsuegumo*, *Sonezaki Shinjû*, *Shinjû Ten no Amijima*.

August

Production at the Misono-za (Nagoya), 1-8 August. Lineup includes: *Kasane*, *Sonezaki Shinjû*; evening: *Genpei Nunobiki no Taki*, *Asagao Nikki*, *Rokkasen*.

Production at Minami-za (Kyoto), 16-24 August. Lineup includes: *Ninin Dôjôji*, *Sonezaki Shinjû*, *kôjô*, *Sannin Katawa*; evening: *Shuzenji Monogatari*, *Kanjinchô*, *Asagao Nikki*, *kôjô*.

September-November

Tour to Chûbu (Niigata, Toyama, Ishikawa, Fukui, Yamagata, Nagano, Gifu, Shizuoka prefectures), Kyûshû, Kantô (Tokyo-to and Kanagawa, Saitama, Gunma, Ibaragi, Tochigi, Chiba prefectures) regions.

December

Production at the Misono-za (Nagoya), 3-9 December. Lineup: “Sodehagi Saimon,” *Kotobuki Sannin Sanbasô*, “Kawashô,” *Momijigari*; evening: “Moritsuna,” *Kyô Ningyô*, *Oitotori Monochô: Yume no Taimen*, *Tachi Nusubito*.



Production at the Shinjuku Dai-chi Gekijô (Tokyo), 13-27 December. Lineup includes: “Kuruma Biki,” *Kanjinchô*, *Oitotori Monochô: Yume no Taimen*, “Yoshino Yama”; evening: *Imoseyama Onna Teikin*, *Kyô Ningyô*, “Shigure no Kotatsu,” *Sannin Dôjôji*.

1960

January

Production at the Osaka Mainichi Hall (Osaka), 8-14 January. Lineup includes: “Kuruma Biki,” *Ibaraki*, “Shigure no Kotatsu,” *Sannin Dôjôji*; evening: *Kagamiyama Kokyô no Nishikie*, *Kanjinchô*, “Nozaki Mura.”

February

Tour to Mikawa.

March

Production at the Shinjuku Dai-ichi Gekijô (Tokyo), 4-28 March. The troupe announces its new name, Ichikawa Joyû-za (Ichikawa Actress Company). Lineup includes: *Kotobuki Soga no Taimen*, *Sake no Hajimari*, “Kawasho,” *Fuji Musume*; evening: *Meiboku Sendai Hagi*, *Hige Yagura*, *Oitotori Monochô: Yume no Taimen*, “Michiyuki Tabiji no Hanamuko.”

April

Production at the Kasumi-za (Toyokawa).

May

Production at the Shinjuku Dai-ichi Gekijô (Tokyo) (Dates unclear).¹

June

Production at the Misono-za (Nagoya), 4-13 June. Lineup: *Kotobuki Soga no Taimen*, “Ki no Mi” and “Sushiya” from *Yoshitsune Senbon Zakura*, *Sake no Hajimari*, *Fuji Musume*; evening: “Amagasaki,” *Taruya Osen*, *Hige Yagura*, *Rôben Sugi no Yurai*.

August

Production at the Minami-za (Kyoto). Lineup includes *Kanjinchô* (dates unclear).



¹ See chapter 7, note 40.

Production at the Mainichi Hall (Osaka), 17-22 August. Lineup: “Ki no Mi” and “Sushiya” from *Yoshitsune Senbon Zakura, Sake no Hajimari, Banchô Sarayashiki, Fuji Musume*; evening: “Amagasaki,” *Hige Yagura*, “Shigenoi Kowakare,” *Toribeyama Shinjû*.

September-December

The activities of the troupe are unclear during this period. It is likely that “the *kabuki* play series” (*kabuki geki shirizu*) was filmed at this time. The troupe may have also performed in the countryside.

1961

January

Production at Mainichi Hall (Osaka), 6-11 January.

February

Performance at the Chigiri Shôgakkô (elementary school) (Toyokawa), 26 February; performance at the Kasumi-za (Toyokawa), 28 February.

March

Performance at Kasumi-za (Toyokawa), 26 March.

May

Performance at the Ota-ku Minkaikan (Tokyo), 9-10 May. Lineup includes: *Renjishi*, *Rôben Sugi no Yurai*, *Kanjinchô*, and “Ninoguchi Mura.”

June

Performance at the Hirao Kôminkan (Toyokawa), 26 June; Kasumi-za (Toyokawa), 27 June; Rôshin Kôminkan, (Toyohashi) 30 June.

July

Performance at the Toyohashi Kôminkan (Toyohashi), 3 July.

November

Performance at the Toyohashi Kôkaidô (Toyohashi), 18 November, Kasumi-za (Toyokawa), 30 November.

1962

February

Production at Tôyoko Hall (Tokyo), 14-25 February. Lineup: “Amagasaki,” *Bô Shibari*, “Numazu,” *Fuji Musume*; evening: *Gappô*, *Kôjô*, *Kagamijishi*, *Taruya Osen*, *Ebisu Môte Koi no Tsuribori*.

March

Regional tour, dates unclear.



Production in Toyohashi, 17-18 March; production at the Kasumi-za (Toyokawa), 20 March.

April

Ichikawa Ebizô XI takes the name Ichikawa Danjûrô XI at the Kabuki-za.

June

Production at Tôyoko Hall (Tokyo), opening date unclear; run ends on 23 June. Lineup includes: *Botan Kagekiyo*, *Kasane*, “Sakaya,” *Migawari Zazen*.

September

Production at Yomiuri Hall (Tokyo), 21-30 September. Lineup: *Genpei Nunobiki no Taki*, *Ibaraki*, “Ninokuchi Mura,” *Tsuzumi ga Taki*; evening: “Moritsuna,” *Narukami*, *Ise Ondo Koi no Netaba*.



Performance records indicate that the Ichikawa Actress Company continued to make regional tours several times a year through the 1980s. A limited listing includes the following:

October

Production at the Kitazawa Kaikan (Suwa, Nagano Prefecture) 17-21 October. Lineup: “Ninoguchi Mura,” *Ibaraki*; evening: *Benten Kozô*, “Numazu,” *Kanjinchô*, *Hidakagawa*.

November

Performance at the Mitsukoshi Gekijô (Tokyo), 13 November.

1964

Performance at the Chûshô Center (Nagoya), 29 May.



Performance at the Itabashi Kuminkaikan Kôminkaidô (Tokyo), 15 June.



Performance at the Beppu Kokusai Kankyô Kaikan (Kyûshû), 3 September.

1965

Ichikawa Danjûrô XI dies, 10 November.

1968

Performance at the Niigata Ongaku Center (Takasaki), 22 July.

1969

Performance at the Fukui-shi Bunka Kaikan, 11-12 September

1970

Performance at the Niigata Ongaku Center (Takasaki), 23 July.



Performance at the Shibuya Kôkaidô (Tokyo), 25 July.



Performance at the Toyohashi-shi Kokaidô (Toyohashi), 28 July.

1974

Death of Ichikawa Suisen III, 27 September.

1977

Birth of Horikoshi Takatoshi (later, Ichikawa Ebizô XI), 6 December.

1979

Performance at the Shinjuku Asahi Seimei Hall (Tokyo), 1 May.

1983

Under the tutelage of Ichikawa Sumihachi and later Ichikawa Baika, several young women form a class to learn *kabuki* in June in Nagoya.

1984

Ichikawa Actress Company performs at the Kasugai-shi Shimin Center (Aichi Prefecture), 10 November.



Formation of Nagoya Musume Kabuki, under the leadership of Katô Emiko.

1985

Ichikawa Ebizô XII, son of Ichikawa Danjûrô XI, assumes the name Ichikawa Danjûrô XII at a celebratory production at the Kabuki-za in April.



Nagoya Musume Kabuki makes its debut at the Chûshô Kigyô Center (Nagoya), April. Lineup includes “Amagasaki,” *Benten Kozô*. In September, the troupe performs “Nozaki Mura” at the Nagoya Shimin Kaikan (Nagoya).

1986

Nagoya Musume Kabuki performs *Shinrei Yaguchi no Watashi* and “Yoshino Yama” at the Chûshô Kigyô Center (Nagoya) in April. In August, the troupe plays at Kinan Bunka

Kaikan, Tanabe City (Wakayama Prefecture), performing *Shinrei Yaguchi no Watashi*. Additional direction provided by Sawamura Tôjûrô II.

1987

Nagoya Musume Kabuki performs “Kuramae” and *Ôshû Adachigahara*, Act III at the Chûshô Kigyô Center (Nagoya) in April. In October, it performs *Kagamiyama Kokyô no Nishikie* at the Meiji-mura Kôen (Aichi Prefecture).

1988

Nagoya Musume Kabuki performs “Kumagai Jinya,” “Ninoguchi Mura,” and *Benten Kozô* at the Chûshô Kigyô Center (Nagoya) in April. In October, it performs “Ninoguchi Mura” at the Meiji-mura Kôen (Aichi Prefecture).

1989

Nagoya Musume Kabuki performs “Yoshino Yama” at the Nagoya-shi Geijutsu Sôzô Center in March. In May, the troupe performs excerpts from *Kanadehon Chûshingura*, Acts III, V, VI, VII, at the Aichi Bunka Kaidô (Nagoya). In October, the troupe performs *Benten Kozô* at Meiji-mura Kôen (Aichi Prefecture).



In October, Nagoya Musume Kabuki performs on the same program with members of Ichikawa Shôjo Kabuki. The lineup includes *Meiboku Sendai Hagi* and “Nozaki Mura.” Nagoya Shimin Kaikan (Nagoya).

1990

New members of Nagoya Musume Kabuki perform “Amagasaki” at the Aichi Fujin Kaikan (Nagoya). In July, the troupe performs “Moritsuna Jinya” and *Shinrei Yaguchi no Watashi*, and in August, the troupe performs the same program in Mie Prefecture. In October, the troupe presents “Yoshino Yama” at Meiji-mura Kôen (Aichi Prefecture).

1991

Joint production starring members of Nagoya Musume Kabuki and Ichikawa Girls’ Kabuki, the Nagoya Shimin Kaidô (Nagoya), 19-20 January. Production directed by Ichikawa Danjûrô XII and Ichikawa Masujûrô. Lineup: *Narukami*, excerpt from *Sugawara Denju Tenarai Kagami*.



In April, Nagoya Musume Kabuki performs “Yoshino Yama” at the Tôza (Gifu Prefecture); in October, it performs *Shinrei Yaguchi no Watashi* at Meiji-mura Kôen (Aichi Prefecture), and, in November, it presents “Terakoya,” “Ninoguchi Mura,” and *Genyadana* at the Matsuzakaya Hall (Nagoya).

1992

April

Ichikawa Danjûrô XII bestows three performers of Nagoya Musume Kabuki with the Ichikawa name. Katô Emiko becomes Ichikawa Ohka, Itô Akemi takes the name Ichikawa Misuya, and Mori Toshie becomes Ichikawa Mitsushi. A celebratory production, which includes *Narukami* directed by Danjûrô, is given by the troupe at the Mitsukoshi Gekijô (Tokyo). The troupe begins to train under Fujima Rankei. In July, the troupe performs *Go Taiheiki Shiroishi Banashi* and *Ichijô Ôkura Monogatari*, among others at the Nagoya-shi Geijutsu Sôzô Center (Nagoya). The troupe performs throughout the fall, with the December production culminating in a special “New Directions” production of *Umegawa Chûbei*, with selections from “Fuingiri” and “Ninoguchi Mura,” directed by Ichikawa Ennosuke III, at the opening of the Aichi-ken Geijutsu Gekijô (Nagoya), 24-27 December.



Ichikawa Baika resigns as the troupe’s teacher.

1993

Ten-year anniversary of Nagoya Musume Kabuki. Under the direction of Ichikawa Danjûrô XII, the troupe performs *Kagamiyama* in June. The troupe also performs *Musume Dôjôji* (choreographed by Fujima Fujiko and taught by Fujima Rankei) at the Nagoya Shimin Kaikan Hall (Nagoya). In October, the troupe performs *Kanadehon Chûshingura*, Act III.

1994

In April, the troupe performs *Narukami*; in May, it performs *Kyô Ningyô* at the Meiji-mura Kôen (Aichi Prefecture); in December, it performs “Kusunoha” at Misono-za (Nagoya).

1995

In April, Nagoya Musume Kabuki performs *Ichinotani Futaba Gunki* at the Nagoya-shi Geijutsu Sôzô Center and subsequently performs it at the Kokuritsu Gekijô (National Theatre, Tokyo), 11 November.



The troupe launches a *kabuki* club, “I Love Kabuki,” for junior and senior high school students.



In August, the troupe participates in the Nagoya Castle Festival, performing the festive *Kotobuki-shiki Sanbasô*.

1996

Nagoya Musume Kabuki performs at the Nagoya Shimin Kaikan in June.

1997

Nagoya Musume Kabuki performs *Narukami*, 12-13 February, and “Nozaki Mura,” 3-4 May, and excerpts from *Ehon Taikôki* and the dance “Hikkukuri,” 30-31 August. It performs *Narukami*, 22-23 September. All productions are held at the Artpia Hall (Nagoya). In October, it launches a community-wide event, “Si Si Si Kabuki.”

1998

Ichikawa Masujûrô dies, January.



In May, Nagoya Musume Kabuki holds the first production of the “Ko-Musume-Kai” (The Little Sister Association) to attract younger members to the company.



Under the direction of Ichikawa Danjûrô XII, the troupe performs a full-length version of *Yoshitsune Senbon Zakura* at the Nagoya Shimin Kaikan (Nagoya), 5-6 September.

1999

In July, the “Ko-Musume-Kai” holds its second production. In November, the troupe performs *Tsubosaka Reigenki* and *Kanadehon Chûshingura*, Act VIII, at the Artpia Hall (Nagoya), 13-14 November. Subsequently, the troupe tours to the Noto Hantô Engekidô (Ishikawa Prefecture), 16 November.

2000

The troupe performs “Amagasaki” and *Kyô Ningyô* at the Kita Bunka Hall. In December, it performs *Narukami* and *Seki no To* at the Nagoya Nôgakudô.

2002

Nagoya Musume Kabuki tours to the Netherlands and Belgium in April at the invitation of the World Music Theatre Festival in April. The troupe performs a similar program at the Misono-za (Nagoya), 26 September.

2003

Under the direction of Bandô Yajirô, the troupe performs *Koi no Tayori Yamato Ôrai* at the Chikusa-za (Nagoya), 31 July-3 August.



In commemoration of the four-hundredth anniversary of *kabuki*, the troupe is invited to perform *Musume Dôjôji* at the Dan Dan Hall in Shimane Prefecture, alleged birthplace of Okuni, 21 September. On 23 September, it performs *Tomo Yakko* and *Musume Dôjôji* at the Artpia Hall (Nagoya).

2004

In July, the troupe performs *Tsubosaka Reigenki* and *Seki no To* at the Chiku-za (Nagoya), and in August the troupe, at the invitation of Sunpotto Hall (Takamatsu City), performs *Koi no Tayori Yamato Ôrai* and *Seki no To*.



Danjûrô XII gives the Ichikawa name to an additional performer, Yagi Mineko, who takes the name Ichikawa Sakurako (September 2004).

Appendix III

Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki Sixty-day Long Run at Hamamatsu-za¹
22 July-20 September 1952

Each play title is followed by its *kabuki* sub-genre. Please note the following abbreviations: *nj*=*ningyô jôruri* (puppet repertory); *sho*=*shosagoto* (dance-drama); *ka*=*kabuki* (plays originally written for *kabuki*); *shin ka*=*shin kabuki* (new *kabuki* play).

Production 1 (July 22-26)

- 1) "Kuruma Biki," *Sugawara Denju Tenarai Kagami (nj)*
- 2) *Meiboku Sendai Hagi (nj)*
- 3) "Hikimado," *Futatsu Chô Chô Kuruwa Nikki (nj)*
- 4) *Asagao Nikki (nj)*

Production 2 (July 27-31)

- 1) "Shigenoi Kowakare," *Koi Nyôbô Somewake Tazuna (nj)*
- 2) "Moritsuna," *Genji Ômi Genji Senjin Yakata (nj)*
- 3) Ichikawa Sanshō V's *kôjô* stage address
- 4) "Ninoguchi Mura," *Koi no Tayori Yamato Ôrai (nj)*

Production 3 (August 1-5)

- 1) *Zôhō Chûshingura (nj)*
- 2) "Nozaki Mura," *Shinpan Utazaimon (nj)*
- 3) *Ôshû Adachigahara*, Act III (*nj*)
- 4) *Meiboku Kasane Monogatari (sho)*

Production 4 (August 6-10)

- 1) *Shinshû Kawa Nakajima Kassen (nj)*
- 2) *Awa no Naruto (nj)*
- 3) "Sanemori Monogatari," *Genpei Nunobiki no Taki (nj)*
- 4) "Inasegawa," *Shiranami Gonin Otoko (ka)*

Production 5 (August 11-16)

- 1) "Ôkura-kyô," *Ichijô Ôkura Monogatari (nj)*
- 2) "Fuingiri," *Koi no Tayori Yamato Ôrai (nj)*
- 3) "Taki," *Hakone Reigenki (ka)*
- 4) *Yaoya Oshichi (nj)*

¹ Titles as noted on the Saitô scroll. Saitô, "Hamamatsu Jôen Kabuki."

Production 6 (August 17-21)

- 1) “Kumagai Jinya,” *Ichinotani Futaba Gunki* (nj)
- 2) “Kowakare,” *Sakura Giminden* (ka)
- 3) “Michiyuki Hatsune no Tabi,” *Yoshitsune Senbon Zakura* (nj)
- 4) “Suzugamori,” *Ukiyozuka Hiyoku no Inazuma* (ka)

Production 7 (August 22-26)

- 1) “Amagasaki,” *Ehon Taikoki* (nj)
- 2) *Sesshû Gappô Ga Tsuji* (nj)
- 3) *Tsuchiya Chikara* (shin ka)
- 4) “Kuramae,” *Shinpan Ukina no Yomiuri* (nj)

Production 8 (August 27-31)

- 1) *Ise Ondô Koi no Netaba* (ka)
- 2) “Kuzunoha,” *Ashiya Dôman Ôuchi Kagami* (nj)
- 3) “Terakoya,” *Sugawara Denju Tenarai Kagami* (nj)
- 4) *Kyô Ningyô* (sho)

Production 9 (September 1-5)

- 1) *Mito Kômonki* (genre unclear)
- 2) “Benkei Jôshi,” *Goshô Zakura Horikawa Youchi* (nj)
- 3) *Hidakagawa* (ningyô buri) (nj)
- 4) “Kamiji,” *Shinjû Ten no Amijima* (nj)

Production 10 (September 6-10)

- 1) *Kamakura Sandaiki* (nj)
- 2) *Gotaiheiki Shiroishi Banashi* (nj)
- 3) *Tsubosaka Reigenki* (nj)

Production 11 (September 11-15)

- 1) *Uguisuzuka* (nj)
- 2) *Hiragana Seisuiki* (nj)
- 3) *Rôben Sugi no Yurai* (nj)
- 4) *Shinrei Yaguchi Watashi* (nj)

Production 12 (September 16-20)

- 1) “Soga Nakamura,” *Chôchidori Soga Monogatari* (nj)
- 2) “Keya Mura,” *Hikosan Gongen Chikai no Sukedachi* (nj)
- 3) “Sakaya,” *Hade Sugata Onna Maiginu* (nj)

4) “Yanagi,” *Sanjûsangendô Munagi no Yurai* (nj)

Appendix IV

Translations of Japanese Play Titles

Many *kabuki* plays have been translated into English, so I have used those English titles in the list below. When no previous translation was available, I attempted to craft my own. The challenge of reading Japanese play titles was made somewhat easier, thanks to the *Engeki Gedai Yōran* (Handbook of Play Titles) published by Nihon Hōsō Kyōkai, an authoritative work that includes many of the obscure titles that have been dropped from the repertory in recent years. Likewise, Samuel L. Leiter's *New Kabuki Encyclopedia: A Revised Adaptation of Kabuki Jiten* is an invaluable guide. In addition to information on theatrical conventions, playwrights, and actors, it contains plot synopses of the major plays.

Specific translations of many of the plays can be found in the footnotes of the text. The titles are listed by the names they were called by the troupe. On occasion, the troupe's programs note the same play by a different title. Titles are cross-listed titles so that the reader will be able to easily recognize the various names of any particular play performed by the troupe.

Each play title is followed by its *kabuki* sub-genre. Please note the following abbreviations: *nj*=*ningyō jōruri* (puppet repertory); *sho*=*shosagoto* (dance-drama); *ka*=*kabuki* (plays originally written for *kabuki*); *shin ka*=*shin kabuki* (new *kabuki* play); *matsu*=*matsubame* (derived from or inspired by *nō* and *kyōgen* theatre); *shin*=*shingeki* (new theatre).

Adasan also called *Ōshū Adachigahara* (place name), *nj*

Akegarasu (Dawn Ravens), *ka*

“Amagasaki” (place name), from *Ehon Taikōki* (The Picture Book of the Taikō), *nj*

Asagao Nikki (The Diary of Lady Asagao), *nj*

Awa no Naruto (Naruto on the Straits of Awa), *nj*

Ayatsuri Sanbasō (The Puppet Sanbasō), also called *Kotobuki Ayatsuri Sanbasō*, *ka*

Banchō Sarayashiki (The Mansion of Broken Dishes at Banchō), *shin ka*

“Benkei Jōshi” (Envoy Benkei), also known as “Horikawa” (place name), from *Gosho Zakura Horikawa Youchi* (Night Attack at the Imperial Horikawa Mansion), *nj*

Benten Kozō (character name), also refers to *Shiranami Gonin Otoko* and *Gonin Otoko*, *ka*

Bô Shibari (Tied to a Pole), *sho/matsu*

Botan Kagekiyo (The Peony Warrior Kagekiyo), *ka*

Danjô Dôjôji (Male-Female Dôjôji), *sho/matsu*

“Danmari,” (Pantomime), *sho*. Generally, this term refers to the theatrical convention whereby actors perform stylized pantomime as they hunt for a missing object. On several occasions, as noted in the chronology, the troupe used “Danmari” as a title for one of its pieces.

Date Musume Koi no Higanoko (The Stylish Daughter and a Bundle of Love), also known as *Yaoya Oshichi*, *nj*

Domo Mata (Matahei the Stutterer), from *Keisei Hangonkô* (The Courtesan of the Hangon Incense), *nj*

Ebisu Môde Koi no Tsuribori (Fishing for Love at the Ebisu Shrine), also called *Tsuri Onna*, *matsu/sho*

Edo Kagamiyama Kokyô no Nishikie (The Edo Mirror Mountain: A Woman’s Treasury of Loyalty), *nj*

Ehon Taikôki (The Picture Book of the Taikô), *nj*

“Fuingiri” (Breaking the Seal), from *Koi no Tayori Yamato Ôrai* (A Message of Love from Yamato), *nj*

Fuji Musume (The Wisteria Maiden), *sho*

Fukeru Yosa Tsuki no Yokogushi (Yosa and The Moon’s Boxwood Comb Late at Night), *ka*

Funa Benkei (Benkei aboard Ship), *matsu/sho*

Gappô, refers to *Sesshû Gappô ga Tsuji* (Gappô at the Crossroads), *nj*

Genji Monogatari (The Tale of Genji), *ka*

Genpei Nunobiki no Taki (The Genji and Heike at the Nunobiki Waterfall), *nj*

Genyadana (place name), also called *Kirare Yosaburô* (Scarface Yosaburô), *ka*

“Gion no Ichirikiya” (Gion’s Ichiriki Teahouse), from *Kanadehon Chûshingura* (The Treasury of Loyal Retainers), *nj*

Go Taiheiki Shiroishi Banashi (The Tale of Shiroishi and the Taihei Chronicles), *nj*

“Goten” (Before the Palace), from *Meiboku Sendai Hagi* (The Precious Incense and Autumn Flowers of Sendai), *nj*

Hakone Reigenki (The Miracle at Hakone), *ka*

“Hamamatsu-ya” (The Hamamatsu Shop), from *Shiranami Gonin Otoko* (The Five Bandits), *ka*

Hidakagawa (The Hidaka River), *nj*

Hige Yagura (The Beard Tower), *matsu/sho*

“Hikimado” (The Skylight), from *Futatsu Chôchô Kuruwa Nikki* (Chôgorô and Chôkichi: A Diary of Two Butterflies in the Pleasure Quarters), *nj*

Hiragana Seisuiki (The Chronicle of the Rise and Fall of the Heike), *nj*

Honchô Nijûshikô (Japan’s Twenty-Four Paragons of Filial Piety), *nj*

“Horikawa” (place name), also known as “Benkei Jôshi” (Envoy Benkei), from *Gosho Zakura Horikawa Youchi* (Night Attack at the Imperial Horikawa Mansion), *nj*

Ibaraki (The Demon Ibaraki), *matsu/sho*

Ichijô Ôkura Monogatari (The Tale of Lord Ichijô Ôkura), also called *Kiichi Hôgen* (character’s name), *nj*

Ichinotani Futaba Gunki (Chronicle of the Battle at Ichinotani), *nj*

Ikudama Shinjû (Love Suicides at Ikudama), *nj*

Imoseyama Onna Teikin (Mt. Imo and Mt. Se: An Exemplary Tale of Womanly Virtue), *nj*

“Inasegawa” (The Inase River), from *Shiranami Gonin Otoko* (The Five Bandits), *ka*

Ise Ondo Koi no Netaba (The Ise Dances and Love’s Dull Blade), *ka*

Izayoi Seishin (The Love of Izayoi and Seishin), *ka*

Jitsuroku Sendai Hagi (A True Record of the Autumn Flowers of Sendai), *nj*

Kagamijishi (Mirror Lion), *sho*

Kagamiyama Kokyô no Nishikie (Mirror Mountain: A Woman’s Treasury of Loyalty), *nj*

Kajiwara Heizô no Ishikiri (The Stone-Cutting Feat of Kajiwara), *nj*

Kamakura Sandaiki (The Chronicle of the Third Generation of Kamakura), *nj*

“Kamiji,” (Paper Seller Jihei), from *Shinjû Ten no Amijima* (The Love Suicide at Amijima), *nj*

Kanadehon Chûshingura (The Treasury of Loyal Retainers), *nj*

Kanjinchô (The Subscription List), *ka*

Kawaranu Iroyatose no Kotobuki (Felicitations on the Eight-year Anniversary [a special greetings]) This was not a play, but a special greeting made by the performers.

“Kawashô” (The Kawashô Teahouse), from *Shinjû Ten no Amijima* (The Love Suicide at Amijima), *nj*

“Keya Mura” (Keya Village), from *Hikosan Gongen Chikai no Sukedachi* (Divine Oaths at Mount Hiko), *nj*

Kiichi Hôgen (character’s name), also called *Ichijô Ôkura Monogatari* (The Tale of Lord Ichijô Ôkura), *nj*

“Kikubatake” (The Chrysanthemum Garden), from *Kiichi Hôgen*, also called *Ichijô Ôkura Monogatari* (The Tale of Lord Ichijô Ôkura), *nj*

“Ki no Mi” (The Pasania Tree), from *Yoshitsune Senbon Zakura* (Yoshitsune and the Thousand Cherry Trees), *nj*

Kirare Yosaburô (Scarface Yosaburô), *ka*

Kôjô (Formal greetings) This is not a play, but an announcement made by the actors either during or between plays.

Koi Bikyaku Yamato Ôrai: Umegawa Chûbei (The Love Messenger from Yamato: The Courtesan Umegawa and Her Lover, Chûbei)

Koi Musume Mukashi Hachijô (The Lovestruck Daughter and the Old Silk Kimono), *nj*

Kokaji (Munehika: The Little Swordsmith), *sho*

Kokusenya Kassen (The Battles of Coxinga), *nj*

Kotobuki Ayatsuri Sanbasô (The Felicitous Puppet Sanbasô), also called *Ayatsuri Sanbasô*, *ka*

Kotobuki Sanbasô (The Felicitous Person Sanbasô), *nj*

Kotobuki Sannin Sanbasô (The Felicitous Three-Person Sanbasô), *nj*

Kotobuki Soga no Taimen (The Felicitous Soga Encounter), *ka*

“Kowakare” (Separation from the Child), from *Sakura Giminden* (The Tale of the Martyr of Sakura), *ka*

“Kuruma Biki” (Pulling the Carriage Apart), from *Yoshitsune Senbon Zakura* (Yoshitsune and the Thousand Cherry Trees), *nj*

“Kuramae” (In Front of the Storehouse), from *Shinpan Ukina no Yomiuri* (The Broadsheet’s Latest Scandal), *nj*

Koi no Tayori Yamato Ôrai (A Message of Love from Yamato), *nj*

Kumagai Jinya (Kumagai’s Camp), from *Ichinotani Futaba Gunki* (Chronicle of the Battle of Ichinotani), *nj*

“Kuzunoha” (Lady Kuzunoha), from *Ashiya Dôman Ôuchi Kagami* (A Courtly Mirror of Ashiya Dôman), *nj*

Kyô Ningyô (The Dancing Doll of the Capital), *sho*

Meiboku Kasane Monogatari (The Tale of Courtesan Kasane), *sho*

Meiboku Sendai Hagi (The Precious Incense and Autumn Flowers of Sendai), *nj*

“Michiyuki Hatsune no Tabi” (Journey Dance of the New Year’s Drum Cry), also called “Yoshino Yama”) from *Yoshitsune Senbon Zakura* (Yoshitsune and the Thousand Cherry Trees), *sho*

“Michiyuki Tabiji no Hanamuko” (Journey of the Bridegroom), from *Kanadehon Chûshingura* (The Treasury of Loyal Retainers), *sho*

Migawari Zazen (The Zen Substitute), *matsu/sho*

Mito Kômonki (Diary of the Mito Clan), genre unclear

Momijigari (Viewing the Autumn Foliage), *sho*

“Moritsuna Jinya” (Moritsuna’s Camp), from *Ômi Genji Senjin Yakata* (The Genji Vanguard in Ômi Province), *nj*

Musume Dôjôji (A Maiden at Dôjôji), *sho*

Narukami (Saint Narukami), *ka*

Ninin Dôjôji (Two Maidens at Dôjôji), *sho*

“Ninokuchi Mura” (Ninokuchi Village), from *Koi no Tayori Yamato Ôrai* (A Message of Love from Yamato), *nj*

Noriabune (The Ferry), *sho*

“Nozaki Mura” (Nozaki Village), from *Shinpan Utazaimon* (The Balladeer’s New Tale) *nj*

“Numazu” (place name), from *Igagoe Dôchû Sugoroku* (Through Iga Pass with the Tôkaidô Board Game), *nj*

Oitotori Monochô: Yume no Taimen (Paragon of Amusements: The Dream Meeting), *shin*

“Ôkura-kyô” (Lord Ôkura), from *Ichijô Ôkura Monogatari* (The Tale of Lord Ichijô Ôkura), *nj*

Ôshû Adachigahara (place name), also called *Adasan*, *nj*

“Owarai Geki” (Laugh Theatre) A special comic bonus the troupe seems to have performed on occasion.

Rôben Sugi no Yurai (The Legend of Priest Rôben and the Cedar Tree), *nj*

Rokkasen (The Six Poet Immortals), *sho*

Sagi Musume (The Heron Maiden), *sho*

“Sakaya” (The Sake Shop), from *Hade Sugata Onna Maiginu* (The Lustrous Dancing Girl), *nj*

Sake no Hajimari (Commencement of the Drinking Fest), *shin ka*

“Sanemori Monogatari” (The Sanemori Story), from *Genpei Nunobiki no Taki*, *nj*

Sannin Dôjôji (The Three Maidens at Dôjôji), *sho*

Sannin Katawa (The Three Handicapped Servants), *sho*

Sannin Sanbasô (Three-Person Sanbasô), also called *Kotobuki Sannin Sanbasô* (The Felicitous Three-Person Sanbasô), *nj*

Seki no To (The Barrier Gate), *ka*

Sesshû Gappô ga Tsuji (Gappô at the Crossroads), *nj*

“Shigenoi Kowakare,” (Separation from Nurse Shigenoi), from *Koi Nyôbô Somewake Tazuna* (Multiple Colors of the Pack-Horse Driver and the Beloved Wife), *nj*

“Shigure no Kotatsu” (“Brazier”), from *Shinjû Ten no Amijima* (The Love Suicide at Amijima), *nj*

Shinjû Ten no Amijima (The Love Suicide at Amijima), *nj*

Shinpan Utazaimon (The Balladeer’s New Tale), *nj*

Shinrei Yaguchi no Watashi (Miracle at Yaguchi Ferry), *nj*

Shinshû Kawa Nakajima Kassen (Battle at the River Nakajima), *nj*

Shiranami Gonin Otoko (The Five Bandits), *ka*

Shuzenji Monogatari (The Tale of Shuzenji), *shin ka*

“Sodehagi Saimon” (Sodehagi’s Prayer), from *Ôshû Adachigahara* (place name), *nj*

“Soga Nakamura” (personal name), from *Chôchidori Soga Monogatari* (The Butterfly and Plover Tale of the Soga Brothers), *nj*

Sonezaki Shinjû (The Love Suicides at Sonezaki), *nj*

Sono Kouta Yume no Yoshiwara (A Little Song While Dreaming of Yoshiwara), *ka*

Sugawara Denju Tenarai Kagami (Sugawara and the Secrets of Calligraphy), *nj*

“Sushiya” (Sushi Shop), from *Yoshitsune Senbon Zakura* (Yoshitsune and the Thousand Cherry Trees), *nj*

“Suzugamori” (place name), from *Ukiyozuka Hiyoku no Inazuma* (The Floating World’s Pattern and Matching Lightning Bolts), *ka*

Tachi Nusubito (The Sword Thief), *matsu/sho*

“Taki” (Waterfall), from *Hakone Reigenki* (The Miracle at Hakone), *ka*

Tamasan (character name), *nj*

Taruya Osen (Osen the Cooper's Wife), *shin*

“Terakoya” (The Village School), from *Yoshitsune Senbon Zakura* (Yoshitsune and the Thousand Cherry Trees), *nj*

Tôkaidô Yotsuya Kaidan (The Ghost Stories at Yotsuya on the Tôkaidô Highway), *ka*

Toki wa Ima Kikyô no Hata-age (The Rebellion of the Brother of the Bellflower), *ka*

Tomo Yakko (The Dancing Footman), *sho*

Toribeyama Shinjû (The Love Suicides at Toribeyama), *shin ka*

Toyokawa Risshoki (Chronicle of a Toyokawa Buddha), *ka*

Tsubosaka Reigenki (The Miracle at Tsubosaka Temple), *nj*

Tsuchigumo (The Earth Spider), *matsu/sho*

Tsuchiya Chikara (character name), *shin ka*

Tsuri Onna (Fishing for a Wife), *matsu/sho*

Tsuzumi ga Taki (The Drum at the Waterfall), *shin ka*

Uguisuzuka (The Hill of the Bush Warbler), *nj*

Wakashu Kuzushi (The Downtrodden Chap), *shin ka*

Yanagi (The Willow), from *Sanjûsangendô Munagi no Yurai* (The Legend of the Willow at Sanjûsangendô Temple), *nj*

Ya no Ne (The Arrow Sharpener), *ka*

Yaoya Oshichi (character name), also known as *Date Musume Koi no Higanoko* (The Stylish Daughter and a Bundle of Love), *nj*

Yasuna (character's name), *sho*

“Yoshino Yama” (Mount Yoshino), from *Yoshitsune Senbon Zakura* (Yoshitsune and the Thousand Cherry Trees), *nj*

Yoshitsune Senbon Zakura (Yoshitsune and the Thousand Cherry Trees), *nj*

Yotsuya Kaidan (Ghost Stories at Yotsuya), *ka*

“Yuka no Shita” (Under the Floor), from *Meiboku Sendai Hagi* (The Precious Incense and Autumn Flowers of Sendai) *nj*

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