

Children's Kabuki Class

Taught by the Yokozen Kabuki Preservation Society, the Children's Kabuki Class, open for elementary and middle school students, began in 1996 for the purpose of raising a new generation to inherit Yokozen Kabuki.

These kids had gained popularity, outshining the adults with their performances, and are the stars of the kabuki performances nowadays.



Matsugami Shrine Stage

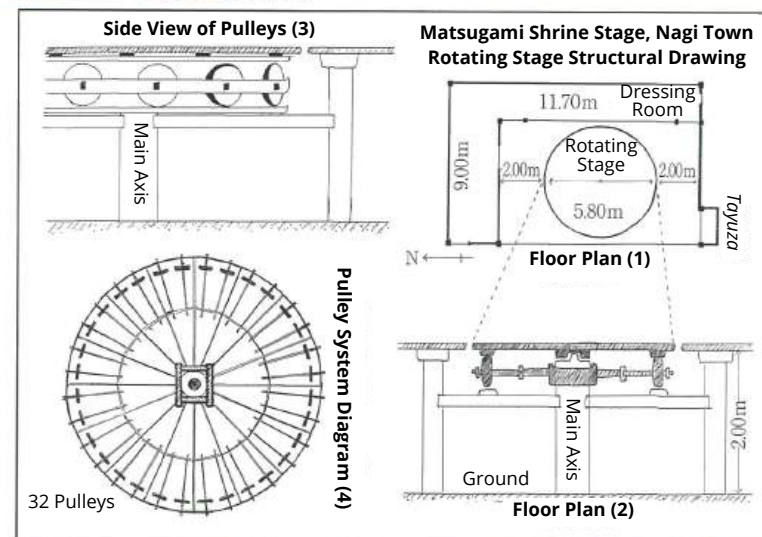
Performing arts flourished in this area since the late Edo Period, with every area in eastern Tsuyama having its own kabuki stage.

Only a few of these stages remain completely intact to this day, one of which being the kabuki stage at Matsugami Shrine in the Nakashima-higashi Area of Nagi Town.

The elaborate rotating stage from when the stage was first built has been preserved, and the stage was designated as an Okayama Prefectural Important Tangible Cultural Property in 1963. It is currently still used every spring for performances held by locals from the Nakashima-higashi Area. Every year, many visitors come to experience the show on shrine grounds, just as they were held in the past.



Performance by the local Nakashima-higashi Matsugami-kai

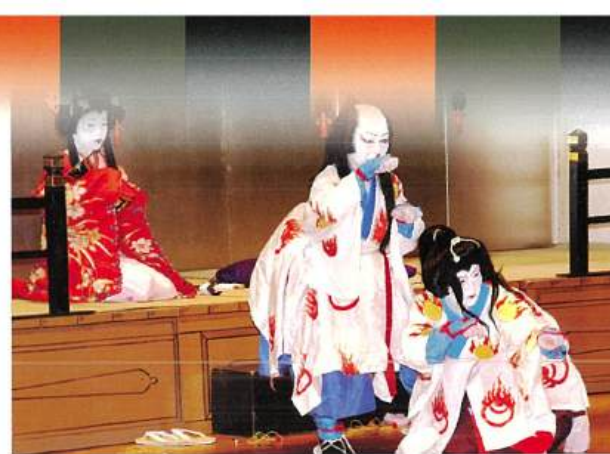


Yokozen Kabuki *Menshibai*

Menshibai - or masked theater - is a performance that is rarely found throughout the country, and the origins of it are unknown.

One performer takes on the *omotezukai* role and performs in time with the *yoruri* music. They expose only their upper body from behind a curtain called a *kekomimaku*; the inside of the curtain is lined with masks for the performer to play many roles, creating a type of theater with a unique visual style.

These simple performances gained popularity and were performed at home, on balconies and as a side show at banquets and parties.



*Genkurou-kitsune to
Hatsune-no-tsuzumi*



Kotobukishiki Sanbasou
by Nagi Town Office
Employees



Yokozen Kabuki Preservation Society

Founded in 1966 by volunteers from Nagi Town, the Yokozen Kabuki Preservation Society holds their regular *"Shiki no Kouen"* (Performances of the Four Seasons) four times a year. They also hold kabuki classes in order to pass on the unique plays and gestures of Yokozen Kabuki - as well as the effects of acting - to the next generation, instructing students about various areas such as makeup, costuming and hairdressing.

In addition to holding visiting performances, members from the Yokozen Kabuki Preservation Society provide instruction and backstage support to other prefectures and to all active kabuki preservation groups in Okayama Prefecture. They are an important organization even outside of Nagi Town, earning many accolades and a great reputation from their activities.

Yokozen Kabuki *Shiki no Kouen*

Spring Performance - Late April
Summer Performance - Mid August
Autumn Grand Performance -
Mid November
Winter Performance - Late February



Winter Performance

(*Koinyoubou Somewake-tazuna Shige-no-iko-wakare-no-dan*)



◆Yokozen Kabuki History

1966

Genichi Takamori designated as Okayama Prefectural Important Intangible Cultural Property as a Yokozen Kabuki Skilled Expert

Yokozen Kabuki Preservation Society founded by volunteers in Nagi

1969

Received Miki Memorial Award

1974

Death of Genichi Takamori (Age 78)

1975

"Yokozen Menshiba" performed at Tokyo National Theater's 24th Traditional Arts Show

1976

Yokozen Kabuki designated as Okayama Prefectural Important Intangible Cultural Property

1989

1st *Higashi Sakushu Nouseon Kabuki* Performance

1996

Kabuki Specialist Employee hired

Children's Kabuki Class started

1999

Start of regular *"Shiki no Kouen"* seasonal performances

2000

Kabuki Specialist Employee hired

Received 1st Okayama Prefecture Cultural Award

Acknowledged by Minister of Culture for Cultural Property Protection Act 50th Anniversary

2001

Mainichi Chihou Jichi Prize Encouragement Award

Nihon Zenkoku Award (Children's Kabuki Class)

2004

Received Sanyo Shimbun Award

2009

Received Sanyo Shimbun Momotaro Award (Children's Kabuki Class)

Yokozen Kabuki

Yokozen Kabuki is a form of kabuki theater that originated in Nagi Town in Katsuta District. Kabuki was widespread throughout Okayama Prefecture in the late Edo Period but disappeared during the period of cultural enlightenment. Despite this, Yokozen Kabuki is carried on to this day thanks to those passionate about kabuki.

Much of this is thanks to Mr. Genichi Takamori (stage name, Baichou Yamashita), who performed in every area of Nagi and actively went out to work in Shodoshima and Hiroshima. He also worked hard to develop and expand kabuki, even purchasing the costumes and equipment needed for kabuki with his own money in order to lend them out.

Takamori gained a reputation through his efforts to preserve and carry on Yokozen Kabuki and was designated as an "Okayama Prefectural Important Intangible Cultural Asset" as a Skilled Expert in 1966. That same year, "Yokozen Kabuki Preservation Society" was found by volunteers; their organization was designated as an "Okayama Prefectural Important Intangible Cultural Property" in 1976.

In order to preserve and continue Yokozen Kabuki into future generations, Nagi Town hired two Kabuki Specialist employees (one in 1996 and one in 2000) who work toward the continuation of kabuki. As part of their work, they hold lecture for elementary students and established the Children's Kabuki Class, gaining attention from throughout the country.

18 Plays of Yokozen Kabuki

- Ehon Taikouki Juudanne Amagasaki-no-ba
- Tamamo-no-mae Asahi-no-tamoto Sandanne Michiharu-yakata-no-ba
- Koibikyaku Yamato-ourai Ni-no-kuchimura-no-dan
- Keisei-awa-no-naruto Junrei-uta-no-dan
- Roubensugi-no-yurai Nigatsudou-no-dan
- Oushuu-adachigahara Sandanne Sodehagisaimon-no-dan
- Meibokusendaihagi Masaoka-chuugi-no-dan
- Yoshitsune-senbonzakura Yoshi-no-yama Michiyuki-no-dan
- Genpei-sakiwake-botan Shigetada-yakata-no-dan
- Kichi-hougen Sanryaku-no-maki Kikubatake-no-dan
- Goshozakura Horikawayauchi Benkei-shoushi-no-dan
- Koinyoubou Somewake-tazuna Shige-no-iko-wakare-no-dan
- Genkurouktsune to Hatsune-no-tsuzumi
- Sugawara-denju-tenarai-kogami Yondanne Terakoya-no-dan
- Kamakura Sandaiki Miuranosuke-haha-wakare-no-dan
- Kana-tehon Chuushingura Godanne Yamasaki-kaidou
- Kana-tehon Chuushingura Rokudanne Kanpei-sepuku
- Kana-tehon Chuushingura Nanadanne Ichiriki-jaya



Many plays are able to be performed even today thanks to the many costumes, equipment and scripts (*nehon*) left behind by predecessors.



Class by Specialist Employees



Late Mr. Genichi Takamori

Jige-shibai in Mimasaka Area

The form of kabuki theater that the general public was most familiar with since the Edo Period spread throughout the country from Kamigata (present-day Kyoto-Osaka-Kobe). Most villages in Okayama Prefecture performed it even at the end of the Edo Period. The type of theater in this area is also said to have originated from locals trying to replicate the performances of theater professionals.

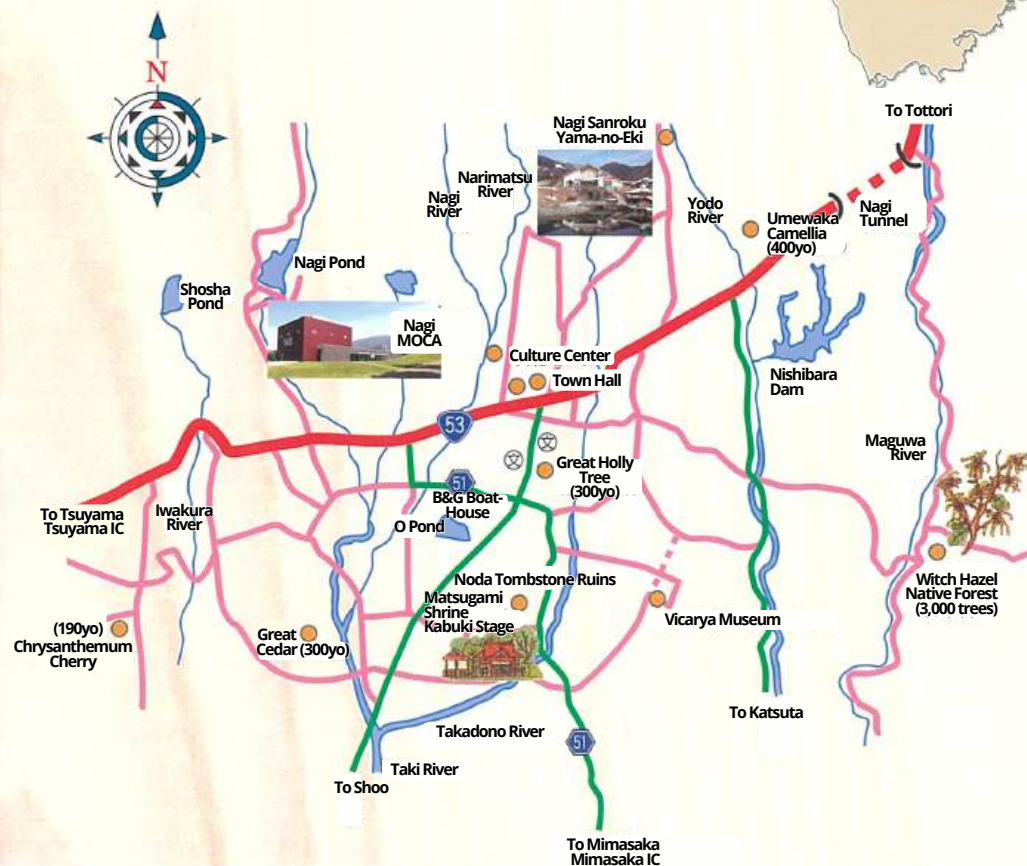
At the time, performances started in the evening during the off-season for farmers and were held at stages on shrine grounds with seating split up into boxed spaces. People of all ages and genders brought boxes of food and alcohol, then ate, drank and had fun late into the night.

"Jige-shibai" shows served as important social gathering places, with some young people even traveling from village to village looking for love at the performances.



Directions

- 1 JR Tsuyama Line (~1hr 40min from Okayama Station)
JR Okayama Station (Tsuyama Line) ->
Tsuyama Station (Bus, Taxi) -> Nagi Town Culture Center
- 2 Chizu Express/Chizu Line (~2hr 40min from Shin-Osaka Station)
JR Shin-Osaka Station (Ltd. Exp. Super Hakuto) ->
Chizu Station (Taxi) -> Nagi Town Culture Center
- 3 Airplane (~1hr 40min from Okayama Airport)
Okayama Airport -> Tsuyama Station (Bus, Taxi) -> Nagi Town Culture Center
- 4 Highway Bus (~2hr 50min from Osaka Station)
From Osaka Station via Shin-Osaka Station (Chugoku Expwy Highway Bus) ->
Mimasaka IC Bus Stop (Taxi) -> Nagi Town Culture Center
Tsuyama IC Bus Stop (Bus, Taxi) -> Nagi Town Culture Center



**Okayama Prefectural Important Intangible
Folk Cultural Property**

Yokozen Kabuki

Nagi Town, Okayama

Yokozen Kabuki Preservation Society

**Nagi Town, Okayama Prefecture
Nagi Town Board of Education**

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