

## Enjoy the World of Bunraku!

The National Theatre has been dedicated to preserving and promoting traditional Japanese performing arts since its opening in 1966. After closing at the end of October 2023, we continue to offer performances at other theaters mainly in Tokyo.

### **Bunraku, one of the most sophisticated puppet theatres in the world**

"Bunraku," with a history spanning over 300 years, is one of Japan's representative traditional performing arts and is also registered as an intangible cultural heritage by UNESCO.

Classical Bunraku works were born in the feudal society of the 18th century. Thus, themes revolve around the struggles of lovers pushed into tragic circumstances, familial love and strong bonds, the loyalty of subjects to their lords, and the sacrifices made for it.

These themes resonate deeply with us even across time, portraying dramas with themes relevant to contemporary society, thus making Bunraku a "puppet theater for adults" where the narrator, Shamisen (a three-stringed Japanese musical instrument) player, and puppeteer all combine to create a stunning performance.

The narrator, or "Tayu," vividly depicts the dialogue, emotions of the characters, and the scenery of the story. The Shamisen player accompanies the narrator with the versatile tones of the traditional instrument, enhancing the storytelling. The puppeteer manipulates a single puppet with three operators, creating lifelike movements resembling real humans and dynamic actions unique to puppets.



The Bunraku performance in May, organized and produced by the National Theatre, offer an excellent opportunity to experience the charm of Bunraku.

We also offer a brochure that includes the synopsis in English and an English audio guide that provides you with the plot and the highlights as the stage progresses (both available for a fee).

#### Program A:

In traditional Japanese performing arts, there is a custom where experienced performers inherit the stage names of historically significant or well-remembered predecessors. Program A marks a significant occasion where the name of "TOYOTAKE Wakatayu," originating from the 18th century, is revived after 57 years. The "Kojo" ritual, performed only during the inheritance of a stage name, is



a ceremonial event where seniors and colleagues express their cheers and expectations for TOYOTAKE Wakatayu, often sharing personal anecdotes.

In this program, the 11th generation Wakatayu, who has inherited the name this time, will perform a work premiered by the first Wakatayu in 1736, along with a work with a tragic tale of young lovers from common folk and lively dances.

#### Program B:

"Hiragana Seisui-ki" is a masterpiece that unfolds various dramas against the backdrop of the 12th century conflict between the Genji and Heike warrior clans vying for supremacy in Japan. With a fast-paced storyline, the musical versatility of narration and Shamisen, and delicate yet refined puppet performances, audiences can savor the essence of Bunraku.



#### Performance Information

Venue : Theatre 1010 <https://www.t1010.jp/>

#### Performance Dates

May 9 (Thu.) - May 27 (Mon.), 2024

#### Performance Times

[9 (Thu.) - 18 (Sat.)] (except May 15)

11:00-15:10 Program A

16:00-20:45 Program B

[19 (Sun.) - 27 (Mon.)]

11:00-15:50 Program B

16:30-20:35 Program A

◇For more information on Bunraku Performance in May

[https://www.ntj.jac.go.jp/schedule/kokuritsu\\_s/2024/6511.html?lan=e](https://www.ntj.jac.go.jp/schedule/kokuritsu_s/2024/6511.html?lan=e)

#### National Theatre Ticket Centre

Tickets are available at the National Ticket Centre.

By Phone in Japanese and English (10:00-18:00)

0570-07-9900 (From overseas: +81-3-3230-3000)

#### Online

[https://ticket.ntj.jac.go.jp/top\\_e.htm](https://ticket.ntj.jac.go.jp/top_e.htm)

#### About The National Theatre

The Theatre was established in 1966 for the purpose of preserving and promoting traditional Japanese performing arts.

Over the years, it has showcased diverse performances in this genre and organized programs to help beginners and international audiences better understand the arts.

However, the Theatre was closed for reconstruction at the end of October 2023. Nonetheless, it continues to present performances at other venues in Tokyo.

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