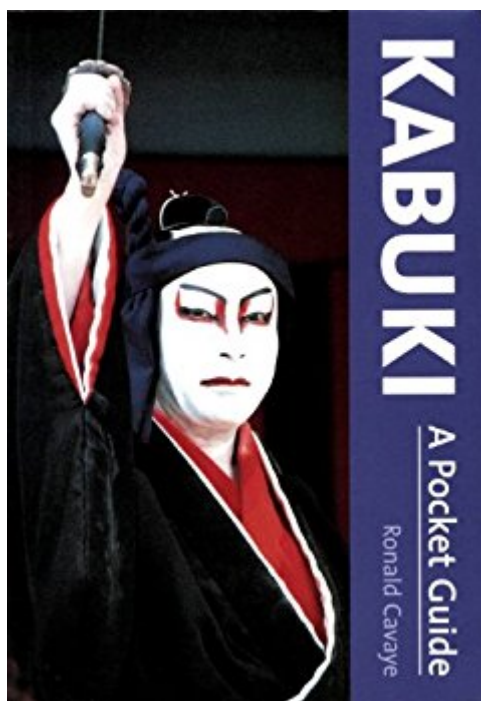


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Kabuki A Pocket Guide



Synopsis

Kabuki A Pocket Guide introduces readers to the foundations of Kabuki—its history and its actors, its acting styles and its performance, its color and music—to the sheer beauty and joy of Kabuki. Kabuki, the popular theatre of Japan, began in about 1603 and is still flourishing today. It was the entertainment of the common people as opposed to Noh, the refined theatre of the aristocracy, and is a close relative of the Bunraku puppet theater. All the actors in Kabuki, even those who play female roles, are men and plays and dances deal with the love of the heroes and villains from Japan's real or legendary past. Concise enough to take to performance, this pocket guide to Kabuki provides a wealth of fascinating information about plays, the actors, and their history. As only an insider can do, the author takes us behind the scene to meet the actors, attend rehearsal, and get a first-hand look at the makeup, costumes, sets and props that go into a Kabuki performance.

Book Information

File Size: 1942 KB

Print Length: 184 pages

Publisher: Tuttle Publishing; Original edition (July 9, 2012)

Publication Date: July 9, 2012

Sold by: Digital Services LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B008EM8ABC

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Not Enabled

Word Wise: Not Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Enhanced Typesetting: Not Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #1,033,547 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #73

in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Literature & Fiction > Drama & Plays > Asian #154 in Books > Literature & Fiction > Dramas & Plays > Regional & Cultural > Asian #155 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Arts & Photography > Graphic Design > Design > Textile & Costume

Customer Reviews

As a student at a college, I chose to do a presentation on Kabuki Theater primarily because I knew nothing about it. The other scholastic references were either myopic (single element reviews) or so

general as to be useless. This book put everything that I read from these other sources into perspective. Just like the movie "A Knight's Tale" showed how jousting was the contemporary life affirming event of the time, Kabuki was the same thing for Japanese theater. The royalty of the 1300s decided that the Noh theater was theirs and so they killed it as entertainment for regular people. So, Kabuki Theater was born as the masses response to being left out of the entertainment. It became so wildly popular that even the upper elements of their society came to see it. Japan as a culture is trying to reach back to its roots and reinvigorate the art. Unfortunately, they didn't learn their lesson from the Edo period and so they have a state theater that re-enacts "traditional" Kabuki in a contemporary theater where every one is on tiered seating. Then you have the other theaters which are trying to keep the spirit of Kabuki alive, by presenting it as it would have been 700 years ago. With the audience sitting on mats all at the same level, seeing the stage can be a little problematic, unless you bring binoculars and manage to sit somewhere that has a clear shot at the stage. Part of the experience is being part of the audience. The other problem that Kabuki is running into is that the other forms of entertainment available removes some of the vitality of a singular feature available to the masses (as it used to be). This book detailed the different elements of the theater in such a way as to make the experience come alive for me. Just the same as going to a Shakespearean festival would have some of its appeal from having survived since the 1600's, Kabuki's lineage from the 1300's makes it an event well worth seeing and experiencing. This book brought that home for me.

You can see it on the title. This book by no means tries to be an extended, in-sight investigation of the complex world of the traditional Japanese theatre called "Kabuki". Instead, this pocket guide is more intended for those who, like me, want to make a first approach into the world of Japanese folk theatre. If that is the case, then this is a perfect introduction. It provides the reader not only with a wide view of the history of Kabuki, but actually shares some of the details regarding the minutia of the performance, like rehearsal, acting houses, the stage, the wardrobe and the makeup. Did you know, for example, that acting in Kabuki is not a job you just take, but a skill passed from father to son? Did you know that the Kabuki actor's "autograph" is actually an imprint of his own face? Did you know that Kabuki was originally an all-women discipline and then it turned into an all-men art through the centuries? I didn't know those things! I learned them all here, and that got me hooked up and made me go and look other things about Kabuki. To round up, if you are already a connoisseur of Kabuki, you may want to skip this book, but if you want to really know the basics and get off to a good start, then look no further.

I picked up this book a week before going to the Kabuki-za and it greatly added to my enjoyment of the performance. It provides an excellent overview of Kabuki as well as many tiny tidbits that make the reader crave for more without coming across as a dry text book. My only complaint is that it was too short. By the time I was finished with the book, not only did I want to see Kabuki, but I wanted to read more about it!

Great explanations of concepts and background of Kabuki. If you are studying Kabuki or going to attend a performance, get this book first.

This book is a great introduction to Kabuki with clear, concise explanation of the art. As a newbie to Kabuki, I find it enjoyable and it helped me understand this exotic, mesmerizing form of theater better. However, there are way TOO MANY typos! For example, lemon (i-e-mon) was spelled "lemon" (lemon as the fruit) and at first I was flabbergasted how lemon could murder people. This happens to a lot of Japanese names and quickly becomes very annoying.

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