INTRODUCTION

From folding screens and scrolls of the early seventeenth century, a lively picture emerges of what kabuki performances in Kyoto were like during the time of Okuni (ca. 1603–1620)\(^1\) and in the immediate years following. On one screen we see a physically alluring prostitute, possibly Okuni herself, posed center stage, languorously leaning on the hilt of a long sword, bare arms erotically exposed, a fan dangling indolently from the fingertips, and, through hair falling rakishly over temples and forehead, gazing at her audience seated a few paces away.\(^2\) A troupe comic (dokeyaku) and what is probably a stage manager (kōjoyaku) observe her from either side of the stage, while musicians behind her follow her actions intently. Standing alone, she is the focus of all attention. And well she might be, for in seventeenth-century Japan, she presented an exotic, as well as an erotic, spectacle. She is costumed as a young man, and wears a brilliant, multicolored kimono of a dandy, startlingly set off by a Christian cross hanging from her waist.

Musicians are seen playing a new type of musical ensemble consisting of traditional no drums and flute with the shamisen added.\(^3\) Only in kabuki is this strange music heard. On several screens, sen-suous women recline on tiger skins as they play the shamisen;\(^4\) prob-
ably they are as much prostitutes as the performers. A screen of the Kanei period (1624–1644) shows drum players and most of the audience boisterously laughing and shouting at dancers on stage.\footnote{2} Except for a few sober-sided Portuguese merchants in an audience (easily identified by their white collars and tall, brimmed hats),\footnote{4} the throngs who flock to see the titillating new performances called kabuki obviously are there to have a good time. Scenes of eating, drinking, joking with friends, talking to the actors, bowing, and flirting are everywhere evident.\footnote{7}

The assignation of a prostitute (keiseikai) by a young man-about-town is pictured as a favorite theme of short plays performed by both women’s and boys’ troops.\footnote{8} Okuni was famous for her portrayal of the indolent young man. As pointed out in the first chapter, prostitution, already common, became institutionalized during the period of boys’, or wakashū, kabuki; in 1640 the Shimabara licensed quarter for prostitution was established, by government edict, in Kyoto.\footnote{9} Plays of prostitute assignation were glamourously contemporary and apparently audiences found it immensely interesting to see, in women’s kabuki, a prostitute dressed as a young man playing a love scene with another female prostitute, or, in boys’ kabuki, a young man, dressed as a prostitute, play a love scene with another young man.

Other scenes show stages filled with elegantly dressed and coiffured young boys and women dancing in pairs, threes, and fours;\footnote{10} a group of eighteen prostitutes perform a circle dance in languorous, seductive motions center stage;\footnote{11} dancers with open fans form attractive processions as they move from the entry passage (hachigakari, borrowed from no theater) to the stage proper.\footnote{12} Their dance steps were taken from popular street dances (collectively called furyū), and the songs that accompany them are mostly kouta, short songs currently in vogue in Kyoto. Performed en masse by kabuki’s youthful, alluring performers, how much more colorful, lively, and appealing they must have been than the stately solo dances and monotonous chanting of no, the establishment theater!

These scenes and scrolls show that exuberant spectacle, addiction to new fashions, and concentration on the talents of the actor—at times amounting to something very near idolatry—were the touchstones of early kabuki performance. These characteristics have remained basic to kabuki through its later development into a mature, and indeed today a classic, theater art. They have never been abandoned, though often they have been criticized, and they have never become so overlaid by later artistic aims as to become indistinct. Visual and aural spectacle provide the structure around which a performance is organized; this is not a literary frame, as in dialogue plays in the West. While a number of kabuki dramas are superior plays in the literary sense, their written scripts should be viewed only as performance guides. From Okuni’s first performance of kabuki in 1603, for a full three centuries, everything contemporary in Japanese culture found its way onto the kabuki stage. It was not a static theatrical art, but an ever-changing one, constantly adapting itself as living theater to changing tastes and times. At the center of both spectacle and change, stood the actor. It was perhaps inevitable that the actor should have been the focus of the crude spectacles of early kabuki. But even when kabuki dramaturgy developed to where multiact plays were being written (after 1664),\footnote{13} and the playwright rose to a stature sufficient for his name to be listed in the playbill (in 1680),\footnote{14} the actor’s importance remained immense.

KATA, OR FORM, IN ACTING

From their pivotal position in kabuki, virtuoso actors created a rich vocabulary of acting techniques that gradually crystallized over the years into codified traditions of performance. The traditional ways of performing are called kata, literally form, pattern, or model. The actor’s vocal and movement techniques are the central elements of most kata, but production elements such as costuming, makeup, and scenic effects are thought of as extensions of the kabuki actor’s technique, and they too are usually discussed as part of the kata of acting.\footnote{15} Some kata are ephemeral and pass as quickly as they are created. But other kata of “patterned acting” have been polished and perfected over generations, and these form the foundation of kabuki performing art. When the best actors perform traditional kata, we are strongly reminded of ukiyo-e woodblock prints, in the economy of means, strong visual design, and vividness of execution. Both kabuki and ukiyo-e are bravura arts, and it is not by coincidence that they are manifestations of the same popular culture of Tokugawa Japan.

In the limited space available here, it is possible to discuss only the most important kata of kabuki acting. Some are not yet fully understood and require further study. I will mention something of their historical development, the way they are used, and where possible, their aesthetic purpose. Most descriptions will be of kata as they are
performed today. Illustrations will be drawn from well-known plays, especially from the ten or so plays which are available in English translation (see the Bibliography).

Kata exist in such numbers and variety it is no easy matter to organize them into a rational and understandable system. Generally however, Japanese writers discuss them on two levels: broad, overall styles of performance as one level, and specific performance techniques as a second. In addition to this, it seems useful to discuss how different actors have created individual kata that are personal variations of specific performance techniques. We have then, three levels to consider. Let me begin with the broadest level and end with the most specific and individualized.

KATA AS PERFORMANCE STYLE

There are five general performance styles in kabuki: danmari, aragoto, wagoto, maruhon, and shosagoto. They can be described as historical styles, by and large; that is, they arose in succession in different historical periods. So they reflect different stages of kabuki's historical and social development. Many specific performance kata (on the second level) originated in general performance styles. It might be expected that general styles of performance would be related to the two most important kabuki dramatic types, jidaimono or historical plays and seuramono or domestic plays, but as a rule this is not the case. For the most part, kabuki performance style does not correlate in any simple way with dramatic type. Here I will discuss style quite apart from play type.  

1. Danmari

Danmari may be the oldest historical style. Records are insufficient to determine its age with certainty, but its simple nature suggests great age. Danmari is an unassuming five- to ten-minute pantomime (danmari means "wordless") in which members of the kabuki troupe successively enter the stage and display themselves, their costumes, and their special acting idiosyncrasies (Plate 10). The scene is set in the outdoors and always at night (another word for danmari is kuryami, "darkness"). After the full cast is on stage, some danmari conclude immediately on a mass tableau, expressing violent opposition among the characters. In more developed danmari scenes, characters engage in a slow-motion pantomime struggle for possession of some object, after the initial entrance. This too culminates in a group tab-
leau. Seeing danmari is like peeking through "glass windows of an aquarium," says the kabuki critic Toita Yasuji. The term danmari seems first to have been used in 1780, but already sixty years before this, nighttime pantomime scenes were established as a standard form. Neither of these dates is early. Still it seems probable that the simple parodying of individual actors in danmari is a relic of the earliest kabuki when performances were little more than occasions for advertising the physical attractiveness of prostitute-performers.

A danmari pantomime may be an independent piece or a scene in a longer play. Until this century, kabuki troupe commonly toured the provinces and a danmari piece was the usual way the acting company was introduced to the audience at each new location along the way. Young actors made their acting debuts and promotions to new acting names (signifying higher rank) were announced in danmari. The renowned actor Ichikawa Danjūrō VII (1791–1859), after being banished from the Edo stage for nine years, chose to make his first kabuki reappearance in the danmari The Cave Mouth (Iwato) (1850). Through the Tokugawa period, a danmari customarily was included in the November program of the major licensed kabuki theaters and the numerous small, unlicensed kabuki playhouses as well. It became traditional to perform an introductory kōo mise danmari within an historical play, and through it introduce to the audience the new acting company for the coming theater season. Danmari is performed in domestic plays as well (Plate 10). Because audiences would tire of seeing the same danmari piece year after year, new theatrical twists were invented to entertain the audience. Dozens of kinds were created. Today danmari is not often performed, perhaps because of the more sophisticated tastes of contemporary playgoers. Our chief interest in danmari is that it shows us kabuki acting in its plainest and probably oldest style.

2. Aragoto

A second major style of performance is aragoto, literally "rough style." It is a bravura style that projects power and masculine vigor. Every aspect of aragoto is exaggerated—elocution, movement, costuming, makeup—in order to produce a stunning theatrical effect. Aragoto is an Edo (Tokyo) acting style which reflects the martial and raw spirit of seventeenth-century Edo in its boisterousness, vitality, and lack of refinement. The creation of aragoto acting is credited to Ichikawa Danjūrō I (1660–1704), the leading Edo actor of the Genroku period. He founded the Ichikawa family acting-tradition which has continued through eleven generations (Ichikawa Danjūrō XI died in 1965). In his first stage appearance in 1673, Danjūrō played the role of Kintoki, modeled after the superhuman hero Kimipira, already familiar to Edo audiences for over a decade through enormously popular puppet performances (called kimpira puppet plays, after the hero's name). He carried over into his performance the bombastic style of moving and speaking of the puppet plays and the exaggerated costumes and actions. The play's title was Children of the Guardians of Buddha (Shiten-nō Osanadachi). The four guardians of Buddha are traditionally shown in Japanese sculpture as ferocious deities, with bulging musculature, glaring eyes, bare teeth, and defiant mien. Both kimpira puppet plays and the centuries-old Buddhist concept of fearsome guardian deities seem to have contributed to Danjūrō's acting approach. Danjūrō II (1688–1758) refined his father's aragoto style and later generations of actors have continued the process. Even so aragoto remains a rough, dynamic style.

A striking form of makeup is used for many aragoto roles. It is called kumadori, or "following the shadow," and consists of broad lines of red, blue, black or grey (Plates 11, 13, 18, 19, 21, 33). Because the lines of makeup follow the natural musculature of the face kumadori does not mask expression (as do the abstract patterns of ching painted-face makeup in Chinese opera), but instead projects it with great clarity and force. Danjūrō I is described as wearing "black-and-red" makeup in his kabuki debut, but it is not clear whether this was kumadori as we now know it. An illustration of Danjūrō II, dated 1715, shows the actor definitely wearing kumadori makeup.

The play Wait a Moment (Shibaraku) (1692) illustrates typical elements of aragoto style (Plates 11 and 33). The hero's costume is three times the volume of a normal costume and the sleeves of the outer garment are so large they have to be fitted with stays to hold them in their proper place. His sword is an impossible eight feet in length (some aragoto heroes wear three swords instead of the usual two). Kumadori makeup of bright red lines highlight his face (his opponents will even wear kumadori makeup on their arms, chests, and legs, to emphasize the musculature of their entire bodies). When the hero moves, he struts like an emperor; when he stops, stage assistants arrange his massive costume. The audience is entertained when the actor who is playing the hero works his own name into his first
speech; this is a long-standing tradition. At the climax of the play, he decapitates eight of the enemy with a single sweep of his sword, a humorous bit of spectacle apparently inspired by the kimpura chanter Izumi Dayu II who enjoyed ripping the heads from puppets and smashing them in the heat of battle.

To act aragoto style well it is said the actor must imagine the virility and self-confidence of a sixteen-year-old. The actor who performs with the required degree of physical force the demanding aragoto role of Matsuo Maru in The House of Sugawara (Sugawara Denju Tenarai Kagami) (1746) is warned that he may suffer stomach cramps during the run. Skill in elocution is prized in aragoto. The voice of the hero should be pitched high and it should reverberate strongly. The vocal technique is so difficult critics say Danjūrō IX (1838–1903) possessed the last genuine aragoto voice. For example, Benkei in The Subscription List (Kanjincho) (1840), is an aragoto role, but actors today do not speak his lines on a higher pitch than those of Togashi, his opponent. All the physical resources of the actor must be channeled toward powerful expression of heroic action in aragoto. It is said of Danjūrō IX that he could be heard blocks away from the theater when he delivered major speeches from Wait a Moment. Whether true or not, the story is an indication of the importance placed on the voice in aragoto. The hero’s highest emotional peaks are expressed in abstract sound, not in sentences. An example of this is the final line, “yarrtoko tottcha, untoko na!” in Wait a Moment. Like “yo ho, heave ho,” the phrase doesn’t mean anything literally. But it allows the actor to demonstrate through sound, as well as visually, his heroic presence as the curtain closes. We will recall that the great Modjeska once brought tears to the eyes of an American audience by reciting the alphabet in Polish.

Most plays in aragoto style were created by actors of the Ichikawa family and are part of the “Collection of Eighteen Plays” (Jubateiban), compiled by Danjūrō VII (1791–1859). The titles of some indicate as well as any description the rough nature of aragoto: The Thunder God (Narukami), Throwing the Elephant (Zōbiki), Pushing and Pulling (Oshi Modoshi), and The Whisker Tweezers (Kenuki).

3. Wagoto

Wagoto, or “soft-style” performance, is as different from aragoto as can be imagined. The style was created by Kyoto-Osaka actors, and it reflects especially the gentle refinement of imperial Kyoto. The wa-
Wagoto is delicate to the point of effeminacy. He is spineless, pen- 

niless, irresponsible, yet immensely attractive as a lover. The great 

Kyoto actor Sakata Tōjūrō (1647–1709) is credited with creating wagoto acting in his portrayal of the beautiful young man who visits a 

prostitute. He became famous in 1678 in the role of the disinvited 

merchant, Izaemon, who loved the prostitute Yūgiri (Plate 12). He 

played Izaemon in four productions that year, and, in all, he 

acted Izaemon eighteen times during his career. The first of the 

dozen or so kabuki plays written for Tōjūrō by Chikamatsu Monzaemon (1653–1724), Japan’s greatest playwright, was about Izaemon 

and Yūgiri.34

Wagoto acting is relatively realistic. It is suited to dialogue drama. 

And it is rooted in the youthful beauty of the leading actor. It is also, 

surprisingly, a comic style. During Tōjūrō’s time the saying was 

current that, “the lover acts with the heart of comic.”35 The term 

bandō, or “half-comic,” was also used to describe wagoto acting.36 

The humor of such acting arises from the contrast between the actor’s 

physical attractiveness and the momentary pitiful condition of the 

character he is portraying. We laugh at the hero’s foolishness and 

helplessness because, it seems to me, he need not seriously pursue 

the woman he is meeting; his beauty is such that she advances to 

him in spite of his lack of money and status and his pouting bad 

manners. Something of wagoto humor is apparent in the name of 

one wagoto hero, translated literally, Mr. Three-two-five-seven (San-

nigorôshichi).37 The wagoto leading man in kabuki served as model 

for the townsman lover of the many love-suicide plays Chikamatsu 

later wrote for the puppet theater.

Tōjūrō and Danjūrō I were active during the same span of years in 

the Genroku period, and they knew each other’s style of performing. Wagoto acting was adopted by actors in Edo, like Nakamura 

Shichisaburô, while, under the influence of flamboyant aragoto, wa-

goto acting became more stylized.38 The conversational quality of its 

speaking style seems not to have been much affected by aragoto, but 

the overall manner of portraying the wagoto hero became more femi-

nine. This feminine quality can be seen today in the way the wagoto 

actor stands, feet close together and toes pointing in, like a Japanese 

woman, rather than in broad masculine stance with feet at a ninety-

degree angle.39

In contrast to aragoto’s scenes of violent fighting, indolent and 

elegant love scenes (muregoto) came to be the specialty of wagoto act-

PLATE 12. Wagoto style. Nakamura Ganzôrô playing Izaemon, the original role of 

the gentle, comic lover in Love Letter from the Licensed Quarter (Kurwâ Banô). 

(Phote courtesy of Shochû)
ing. Especially between 1800 and 1840 wagoto love scenes were notorious for their lewdness. One contemporary writer remarks, "it appears that down until the end of the Tokugawa period, they exceeded all bounds in licentiousness and perversion." Today’s critics hold that the true wagoto fusion of the comic and the erotic is largely lost. Much of the outer form of wagoto acting style does remain, however, as in the elegant mannerisms of movement and in the special wagoto vocal style—"not thin and high, but soft and sounding like the second string of the shamisen." The foremost actor of wagoto today is Nakamura Ganjiro II. In his seventies, his charming portrayal of Izaemon visiting Yugiri, in Love Letter from the Licensed Quarter (Kuruma Bunsho) (1808) is unmatched as an example of wagoto acting (Plate 12).

4. Marubon
Dasnari, aragoto, and wagoto are all "pure" kabuki acting styles. They were created within kabuki by kabuki performers (although they may have been influenced to a small degree by other theater forms). Marubon, or "puppet style," however, originated outside of kabuki. The style developed during the middle decades of the eighteenth century when a large number of new, immensely successful joruri, or puppet, plays were adapted for performance by kabuki actors. Before this, kabuki actors had always thought of themselves as active collaborators in creating a play text. They were not inhibited from changing lines of dialogue that the troupe's resident playwrights had written for them. In joruri, however, the text was held sacred. The performance began with the fully composed text. It was set to music, and the puppets were manipulated to illustrate and act out the meaning of the text. The essence of the art of the puppet theater lies in the complete meshing of the movements of the puppets with the rhythm of the chanted text and the shamisen accompaniment. During the performance a chanter could not improvise new words to the text—for that would throw off the predetermined puppet movements—not could puppeteers ad lib new actions—for that would throw off the chanter. Consequently when kabuki actors began to perform these joruri texts, they found they not only had to conform to already settled patterns of physical actions taken over from the puppets, but they also had to time their acting to match the music and the chanting of a newly imported team of joruri chanter and shamisen play (in kabuki called chobo) that soon became a part of each kabuki troupe.

As a result, a new kabuki acting style arose. In time, the marubon style of performance came to be used not only in adaptations of puppet plays, but in newly written kabuki plays as well. Kawatake Mokuami (1816–1893) was especially fond of writing into his kabuki plays "joruri scenes" that used chobo music and were acted in marubon style (Plate 13). The term marubon refers to the "full script" of a puppet play that was used as the basis for a kabuki adaptation, hence in kabuki a "marubon play," or performance in "marubon style."

PLATE 13. Marubon style. Princess Hotorogisu bends backward in a puppet-style movement (ashihoburi) as she is cruelly tortured in Gorosô of the Palace. (Photo courtesy of National Theater of Japan)
A key feature of *maru-bon* performance style is its emphasis upon narrative comment. The *chobo* chanter does more than speak the dialogue of the puppet characters. He also provides extensive exposition of past events, descriptions of time and place to set the scene, delineation of character traits, and even omniscient commentary on the probable consequence of a character's actions. All of these functions were absent in *dan-mar*, *ara-goto*, and *wuga* style performance because there was no narrator. The narration in *maru-bon* style, therefore, added a completely new dimension to kabuki. It made this style of performance more dense, more reflective, slower in tempo. For example, when the usual kabuki act begins, the curtain is run open, a few bars of offstage (geza) music sets the scene, actors enter, and the action begins. However, when the curtain is run open to begin the typical *maru-bon* act, a lengthy passage of *chobo* narration describes the situation and scene in weighty, drawn-out phrases, replete with musical elaboration. Several minutes must pass before the actors may appear and the action of the play begins. The tempo of the actor's movements is greatly slowed, because descriptive passages require more time than an actor's movement. Performance in one of the "pure" kabuki styles invariably concludes with a visual high point, a group tableau as the curtain is run closed, while in *maru-bon* style performance very often a final phrase of commentary by the narrator is the last thing that occurs before the curtain closes.

*Furi* is a generic term in kabuki meaning "pantomimic movement." In *maru-bon* acting, *furi* movement is extremely important. It is based on gestures of the puppets, and emphasizes everyday gestures of eating, drinking tea, opening doors, combing hair, dressing and the like. These movements are accompanied by narration which describes either the action directly or the emotion underlying it. *Furi* is performed by male characters and by actors playing female roles, the *onnaga*. The puppetlike quality of movements may be purposely emphasized by the *onnaga* in a technique called *ningyō-mi*, literally "body-of-the-puppet." For example, a movement easily recognized as *ningyō-mi* is when a woman turns her back on the audience, droops her body slightly, and looks over one shoulder. This is *ushiro-buri*, or "back movement." It is a difficult and beautiful movement for a puppet to make. It is easy for an actor, but still audiences are charmed by the human actor moving like a puppet (Plate 13). In *ningyō-buri*, "puppet movement," the actor is manipulated on stage by an acting assistant just as if the actor were a puppet.\(^{43}\)

*Ningyō-mi* is basic, and it is constantly seen in plays done in *maru-bon* style; *ningyō-buri*, however, is used only in certain dance plays and then primarily as a device to demonstrate an actor's mastery of technique. When the actor strictly matches the rhythm of his movements (or delivery of dialogue) to the musical rhythm of the *chobo*, this is called *nori* (or *nora*), meaning "riding" the music.\(^{44}\)

In adapting puppet plays to kabuki, actors "kabukized" them in a number of ways. In some cases they created whole new scenes and acts: the act titled *Pulling the Carriage Apart* (Kurumabiki) was worked out by kabuki actors for the famous *joruri*-derived play, *The House of Sugawara*.\(^{45}\) Later the act was added to puppet performances of the play, and now it is standard both in kabuki and in *joruri*. In the same play, a typically humorous kabuki battle-scene was created to close the first act. The usual geza shamisen and the drums and flute of the kabuki, which are light in tone, alternate with the heavy-sounding puppet shamisen so that the musical texture of *maru-bon* kabuki is considerably brighter and more lively than the corresponding puppet performance. In *joruri*, every line is taken by the chanter, but in *maru-bon* performance, the actors themselves speak many, and sometimes all, of the dialogue lines. One of the very beautiful effects in *maru-bon* performance is when a brief line is spoken, in alternate syllables, by actor and chanter. In *The Three Eras of Kamakura* (Kamakura Sandai) (1718), the six syllables of the phrase *sono ureshisa, this happiness,"* are spoken alternately by the chanter and the actor playing Takazuna.\(^{46}\) In sobbing or laughing scenes, the chanter may join the actor in sobbing or laughing. One voice complements the other; it is as if the actor and his alter ego were combining forces.

5. *Shosa-goto*

*Shosa-goto* is the usual term for kabuki "dance style" (*keigo-to*, or "elegant style," is also used in Kyoto-Osaka). It is in kabuki plays performed in dance style that the formal musical-dance structure given in the chapter on music (pp. 133-175) comes into play. *Shosa-goto* is the most complex of the performance styles, because it encompasses three distinct types of dance—*odori*, *mae*, and *furi*—and because of its long and complicated history. *Odori* is the main dance strain. Kabuki takes its name, in fact, from the *kabuki odori*, which Okuni created out of the great variety of dance forms which existed as popular, street, and folk dances toward the end of the sixteenth
century. They were commonly referred to as furyū odori, literally, "dances of fashion." They were the "in" dances of the time. The importance of the kabuki odori section of Okuni kabuki is discussed in William Malm's chapter on music. Here it will be sufficient to note that the basic characteristics of odori are its liveliness and that it may involve leaping in the air. Within the shosagoto dance form, individual dances which express each dancer's character (shinuki) and group dances (tōodori) are important sections. Namba, in which the arm and leg on the same side of the body move in unison, is a characteristic odori dance step. The crablike walk which namba causes can be traced in scroll and screen illustrations from early folk dances, through furyū odori, women's kabuki dances, and adult (yuru) kabuki (1653-1688), down to the kabuki dance of today. (The namba movement of puppets came later.)

Mai is dance derived from no and, to a lesser extent, from other related dance forms: Buddhist ennen no mai, or "longevity dance"; rustic ta mai, or "field dance"; popular shirabyōshi mai performed by troupes of professional girls; and others. Some of the dances called mai can be traced to indigenous folk or religious dance and others were directly inspired by Chinese and Korean dances first brought to Japan as much as a thousand years before kabuki. By the time of kabuki, mai indicated a wide variety of folk, religious, and classic dance in which deliberate movement and turning or pivoting, rather than lively leaping as in odori, were central to dance technique (Gunji suggests mai is related to the verb mawaru, "turn"). The mai arrest posture places the weight equally on both feet (Plate 14), which contrasts with the typical kabuki posture, in which one foot is thrust strongly forward of the other and the weight is unequally distributed front and rear (Plate 15, left).

Furi identifies those aspects of kabuki dance which are specifically pantomimic. In dance-plays a fan, small towel, hat, cane, drum or other small musical instrument is used as a property during the pantomime sequences. The actor performs a number of dance variations of the movements associated with the property (Plates 30, 31, 32). Compared to furi in puppet-derived plays, which tends to be a literal step-by-step pantomime of realistic actions, furi in dance-plays is more abstract, less realistic. Maruhon furi is narrative or story-telling in aim; shosagoto furi tends to be lyric and aesthetic in aim.

Several terms identify differing relationships between dance mime and its accompanying lyrics. In ate buri (ate means "to suit" or "be

PLATE 14. Shosagoto style. Matsumoto Koshiro as Benkei in The Subscription List (Kanjimebi) dances in no-derived style, feet evenly spaced, fan overhead, and fingers grasping the kimono sleeve. (Photo courtesy of Shochiku)
FORM IN KABUKI ACTING

appropriate”), the actor pantomimes concrete objects or actions one after the other as they are mentioned in the lyrics. For example, it is ateburi when in The Subscription List Benkei raises the open fan to represent a mountain as the chorus sings, “midst mountain places”; when he cradles his head to “awake and asleep . . . with armor and sleeve-pillow as sole companions”; when he sculls a boat to “adrift at sea.” Ateburi has an extreme form, in which each syllable is accompanied by miming an object of the same sound. The mime has no meaning. It is a game. For example, in The Barrier Gate (Sekino) (1784), when “Ki ya bō . . .” written with characters meaning “living,” “wild,” and “evening,” is sung, the actor ignores these meanings and instead mimics “tree” (ki also means tree in Japanese), “arrow” (ya also means arrow), and “pole” (bō also means pole.)

This type of ateburi is nicknamed kiyabō. It may well be the only dance technique in the world based on a pun. Fuseiburi, “elegant furi,” complements a verbal image with a visual image which is related to it, without however, duplicating that image (as in ateburi). The sung phrase “Fuji and Asama,” in Six Master Poets (Rokkasen) (1832), evokes in our mind’s eye massive, powerful volcanoes; meanwhile the actor mimics a delicate thread of smoke rising from an incense stick. Fuseiburi demands a subtlety of expression that is not required in ateburi.

As early as adult kabuki, such onnagata actors as Ukon Genzainemon were staking out dance-style performance as the exclusive province of the performer of female roles and establishing reputations in kabuki by their dancing. Among several types of dance-plays, one in particular provided exceptional opportunity for the onnagata actor to display his personal attractiveness and his technical dancing skill, and as a consequence became unusually popular. This was the hengemono, or “change piece.” In hengemono a leading onnagata actor changes costume during performance, the number of times determined by the theme of the play (the three beauties, the four seasons, the five colors, the six mountains, on up to the twelve months). Reportedly the onnagata actor Mizuki Tatsunosuke danced the first multiple-change play in Kyoto, in 1697. It was a seven-change performance. Maid of the Dojō Temple is a seven-change piece, too (Plates 15, 29–32). These and other plotless shosagoto (called simply buyō, or “dance”) were brilliant spectacles, but as they were dominated by the singer–performer dramatic development within them was very limited.
The development of true dance-dramas, or buyōgeki, had to wait almost another century. In the 1780s Nakamura Nakazô I, an excellent dancer, created a number of male roles in dance-plays. Typically he played the role of the onnagata’s antagonist. New kinds of kabuki dance music (especially tokiwazu and kiwomoto) were being developed at the same approximate time, other “dancers” of male roles joined Nakazô, and the result was a major flourishing of new shosagoto pieces, many of which were highly dramatic. The situation came full circle in 1840. In that year the famous shosagoto play *The Subscription List* was first performed. The leading role, Benkei, was a male role (created by Danjûrô VII) and in the total cast of eleven there was no female role at all. It is interesting to note, in passing, that while kabuki originated in dance and dance is considered of great importance to the art, most of the great early actors we have mentioned, including Ichikawa Danjûrô I and II, and Sakata Tôjûrô, were not known as dancers.

*The Subscription List* was closely modelled on the nô play *Ataka*. Nô-style elocution, mai dance movements (including the special sliding step of nô, suraishi), nô-style costumes, and nô dramatic structure are all apparent in it (Plates 14, 20, 27). The first performance was not successful; the audience found it uncomfortably highbrow. But since then it has become second in popularity only to *The Treasury of Loyal Retainers* (Chûshingura) (1748) in the kabuki repertory. Following the lead of *The Subscription List*, more than a score of nô-derived dance dramas were created during the Meiji period, especially for the actors Danjûrô IX (1838–1903) and Onoe Kikugorô V (1844–1904) and VI (1885–1945), including: Benkei in the Boat (Funa Benkei), The Thorn Tree (Ibaraki) (Plate 21), *The Monstrous Spider* (Tsubigumo), and *The Angel’s robe* (Hagoromo). Comic pieces from the nô-kyôgen repertory were made into dance plays as well, including the delightful *The Zen Substitute* (Migawaritzansen), *Tied to a Pole* (Bôshibari), and others. Collectively, the plays that deliberately exhibit their nô or nô-kyôgen origins are called matsuubame, “pine and board” pieces, for their settings copy the wooden planking painted with a pine tree which forms the back wall of the nô stage. It is characteristic of a matsuubame dance-play that it exists in just one version (with perhaps minor variations), for it is based on a fixed model in nô, while other shosagoto pieces may exist in several versions.

Three important dance plays that derived from nô are not part of the matsuubame group and require some explanation. In early kabuki, before the shogunate government had become official patrons of nô, performers drew freely on nô (and nô-kyôgen) for kabuki dramatic material. But by the Kano period (1624–1644) this practice largely had ceased. (Two centuries were to pass before *The Subscription List*, intentionally patterned after nô, was performed in kabuki.) But, two nô plays were absorbed into the kabuki repertory: *Dôjô Temple* (Dôjôji), first danced as shosagoto sometime between 1673 and 1680, and *The Stone Bridge* (Shakkôyo), a lion dance initially performed as kabuki in 1704. They have been staged in kabuki endlessly through the years: the former in some twenty versions and the latter in at least thirty-five versions. Two and a half centuries of performance in kabuki has obliterated all but the most vestigial resemblance to nô style in these spectacular show-pieces for the onnagata actor. With good reason they can be thought of as virtually pure kabuki in style, quite unlike the later nô derived matsuubame plays.

*Okina*, a congratulatory piece in nô, has been staged in kabuki from early times. The religious nature of the play in nô is evident in the fact that the central dance is one celebrating long life. It is performed by the character Okina, the old man. The dances of Sensai and Sanbasô, the other characters, are relatively unimportant. In kabuki the play is called Sanbasô, and it is performed when a new theater is dedicated and during the first three days of the New Year’s program. In its function, then, Sanbasô retains the celebratory nature of the nô Okina. But the content of the dance has changed over the years, moving from serious ritual thanksgiving toward entertainment. In the Genroku period, the role of Okina was danced by the old master of the kabuki troupe, the most respected performer; Sensai by the nimaime, the juvenile lead; and Sanbasô by the tachiyaku, the leading man. Today, the troupe’s leading man dances Okina, which is now a small role; the chief comic plays Sensai; and whoever is the troupe’s most accomplished dancer performs Sanbasô, now the major dancing role. Because Sanbasô is performed often, many versions have been created to lend interest to each new staging of it. A half dozen versions are performed currently.

The five general acting-styles may be alternated scene-by-scene or act-by-act within a play, or acts within the same scene may play in different styles. For example, overall *The Barrier Gate* is a dance-drama performed in shosagoto style. But it also includes an aragoto section, a lovers’ quarrel (kuruwa banashi) stemming from wagoto...
technique, and a section of ningyōburi. The only style missing is danmari. Most of The House of Sugawara is played in maruhon style, but one act is played in aragoto style (Pulling the Carriage Apart, as noted before), and there is an important michi yu, or travel dance, in shosagoto style. Benkei, in The Subscription List, is played in moderately strong aragoto-style, while Yoshitsune, in the same play, is played “close to a wagoto role.” Examples could be added almost without end.

There is nothing inartistic in juxtaposing the five styles in performance. Aragoto and wagoto roles naturally complement each other. A clear artistic principle underlies the alternation of styles from act-to-act and from scene-to-scene. Acting technique, atmosphere, tempo, musical timbres, movement patterns, color—in fact every artistic aspect of performance—is varied through a long day’s program in order to continually reengage the audience’s interest. The principle is neither frivolous nor the creature of kabuki eclecticism, as has been suggested. In his writings on no, Zeami admonished the no actor to diligently seek variety and novelty in his performance, giving as his reason the practical fact that audiences easily become bored in the absence of variety. Further investigation may well show that this is a basic principle in Japanese theater art.

KATA AS SPECIFIC PERFORMANCE TECHNIQUES

The second level of kata is concerned with specific performance techniques. In writing about acting, Japanese authorities list and discuss as many as several hundred specific performance techniques or kata. Here I will mention some of those which occur most frequently. For convenience, kata on the second level can be divided into acting techniques (both voice and movement), techniques of costume, makeup, and wigs used by the actor, and staging techniques which support the actor.

1. Mie

Perhaps the most important, certainly the most striking, of the standard movement kata in kabuki is mie. To perform mie, an actor “winds up” with arms and legs, moves his head in a circular motion, then with a snap of the head, freezes into a dynamic pose. Like a visual exclamation point mie momentarily halts the action of the play and intensifies its emotion. Mie is held for several seconds (the better the actor, the longer it can be held), then is gradually relaxed, and the play continues. This basic pattern of movement will be varied considerably to suit different types of scenes. For example, head movements may be vertical or circular or feet may be spread or together. The actor may speak while executing a mie; however, it is a general principle of kabuki acting to move and to speak sequentially rather than simultaneously. Thus it is more usual for the actor to speak before and after a mie rather than during its movement. The strongest mie are accompanied by the sound of wooden clappers (see Sound Effects Kata); softer mie are performed in silence, without dialogue, music, or sound effects.

As an illustration of how mie are used in a play, let us take The Subscription List. It runs about seventy minutes playing time and contains eight mie. The first mie precedes Benkei’s reading of the subscription list; the second follows it; the third terminates Togashi’s interrogation of Benkei (mondo); the fourth occurs at the end of the pushing sequence during the dance confrontation between Togashi with his soldiers and Benkei and his companions (Plate 27); the fifth is immediately after Benkei strikes his master Yoshitsune; the sixth, a “stone-throwing” (ishinage) mie, is the high point of Benkei’s dance of reminiscing (monogatari); the seventh, by Benkei on the banamichi and Togashi on the main stage, emphasizes their relationship in parting; and the eighth is performed by Benkei a few moments later, alone on the banamichi (the ramp through the audience) before he begins his final, powerful exit. The mie mark the eight, emotional high-points of the play, and we can no more imagine The Subscription List without these visual climaxes than we can a Western opera without its climactic high notes.

Mie almost certainly originated in aragoto acting. The mie posture of arms akimbo, fists clenched, and feet widely planted apart can be seen in prints as early as 1688–1699. In the most powerful types of mie, the actor crosses one eye over the other (nirami) to make his expression fierce (Plate 17). The prints of Torii Kiyomitsu (1735–1785) depicting Danjirō II in aragoto-style plays like Arrowhead (Ya no Ne) appear to be the first illustrations showing nirami, but it may well have been in use before this. There are many kinds of mie. The most common is Genroku mie, named after the Genroku period (1688–ca. 1723) in which it was created. One arm is raised behind the body with fist clenched, and the opposite leg is thrust forward. An example is Saba Goro’s pose at the conclusion of The Maid of Dojo Temple (Masume Dōjōji, Plate 15). In soku, or “sheaf,” mie the
actor stands straight, heels together, head up. It indicates a self-contained, proud attitude and shows to good advantage an actor with an attractive physique. In fudo mie, the actor clasps a Buddhist rosary in the upturned fist of his left hand and holds a sword upright in his right hand at chest level, reproducing the well-known statue pose of the fierce god Fudo. Benkei performs a fudo mie after he has read the subscription list to Togashi, substituting the rolled-up scroll for a sword. A stone-throwing (ishinage) mie captures the moment after the action of throwing (Plate 22). Yoko, or ‘profile,’ mie; yurei, or ‘ghost’ mie; and hadirimakki, or ‘wrapped-around-a-post,’ mie take their names from their distinctive poses (Plate 18).

Mie mentioned thus far are for the single actor. Others are performed by two, three, or more actors. Tenchi, or ‘heaven-earthman,’ mie, describes a group mie for three people and takes its name from the fact that the main actor center is visually the highest, and the actors to the right and left of him are progressively lower (Plate 16). A two-actor mie, in which one is high and the other low, is called tenchi, or ‘heaven-earth’ mie. The actor in the ‘heaven’ position often mounts a small platform to increase the grandeur of the pose (Plate 15). Hippari, or ‘pulling,’ mie, illustrates conflicting emotions of a number of characters on stage at the same time. An act or scene often concludes with hippari mie. It is an impressive sight to see eight to ten principal actors and thirty or more supporting actors simultaneously perform mie appropriate to their own characters, and then pose in brilliant tableau as the curtain is run closed before them. The most vigorous mie are used in aragoto roles and include nirimai, eye-crossing (Plate 17). The actor of a wagoto role or an omagata performs mie of quite a different order: there are no large arm or leg movements, the movement of the head is less pronounced, and the eyes are not crossed (Plate 32).

2. Roppo
A second movement kata is the swaggering walk known as roppo, the literal meaning of which is ‘six directions’ movement. It originated in pre-Genroku kabuki, and is said to be based on the strutting walk (tanzen roppo) affected by young men parading themselves through the licensed quarters and before the bathhouses where unofficial prostitutes worked. Roppo exhibits to good advantage an actor’s handsome appearance and masculine carriage. The first entrance of the hero in Sukeroku: Flower of Edo (Sukeroku Yukari no Edo Zaku-
PLATE 17. Mie showing crossed eyes (mirama). The late Ichikawa Ennosuke as Honzō, Act IX, The Treasury of Loyal Retainers (Chushingura). (Photo courtesy of Shochiku)

PLATE 18. Around-the-pillar (bashiramaki) mie. Ichimura Uzaemon as Soga Gorō in the aragoto style play Arrowhead (Yamone) wears bold kumadori makeup and exaggerated costume. The actor’s stage assistant is seen behind, closed out of the scene. (Photo courtesy of National Theater of Japan)

ra) (1713) contains a famous swaggering tanzen roppō section. A number of vigorous roppō have been created which conclude a play with the hero’s exit down the hanamichi (Plate 19). Tobi roppō, or “flying” roppō, is the best known of these. The actor moves down the hanamichi in great leaps and bounds, his arms and legs literally flying in six directions. Benkei’s exit (Plate 20), which concludes The Subscription List and Narukami’s exit which concludes The Thunder God, are examples of tobi roppō. The onnagata actor playing the role of the one-armed demon in The Thorn Tree, exits down the hanamichi in katate, or “one-armed” roppō (Plate 21). And Tadanobu, the fox in The Thousand Cherry Trees of Yoshitsune (Yoshitsune Sembon Zakura) (1747), performs kitsune, or “fox’s” roppō.
3. Tachimawari

Stylized combat is a third type of movement Kata. Called tachimawari, literally "standing-and-turning-about," these combats are the most active scenes in kabuki and are highly spectacular. Tachimawari consists of linked sequences of movements not found elsewhere in performance. Sections within tachimawari culminate in mie. The movements are performed to geza music (especially the drums), and they are reinforced by rhythmic patterns, beaten out by wooden clappers (see Sound Effects Kata). There are two general types of tachimawari movements. One type consists of slow-motion, extremely
stylized slashing or stabbing actions of a character who is attempting to murder an opponent. Each attack culminates in a mie. The movements form a grotesquely beautiful dance of death. This kind of tachimawari has not attracted much attention from Japanese scholars and remains to be analyzed in detail. The second type of tachimawari pits a single hero against a group of opponents and is easily identified in performance. The hero’s opponents may be a group of constables, monks, or gallants, dressed alike who move in unison as in a dance chorus (called yoten, Plates 15, 22, 23). They may number as many as twenty or thirty and they attack the hero, sometimes en masse, sometimes in groups of eight or six or four, and sometimes singly in quick succession carrying identical weapons (swords, poles, buckets, or, in shosagoto, flowering branches) (Plate 22). The purpose of the attack is to capture the hero, not to kill him. The hero demonstrates his prowess by easily defeating them without actual weapon or body contact. Movement kata in these group battles is generically termed tate. Sequences culminate in beautiful formal poses (Plate 23). The essence of tate movement is effortlessness: a deft movement, a sharp lunge, a quick evasion, a stylized flick of the hand to send an opponent flying (some two hundred such movements are listed). The movements are emotionless but beautiful. In other fight scenes the hero, or heroine, fights one or two opponents of equal rank using, as a rule, swords or poles. Such a scene is choreographed using the same tate movements as a group battle (Plate 16). Acrobatic flips (tobogae) are a striking part of tate. A somersault symbolizes the death of the attacker (Plate 24). He may jump from a platform or into a river or lake (an open trap). The nature of some of these acrobatic techniques is apparent in their names: “bodycutting” (kirimi), “monkey flip” (sarugaeri), “slow flip” (dandangaeri), “somersault of a corpse” (shiningaeri), and “linked flips” (tsuzukegaeri).

4. Entrance and Exit Kata

The movement of an actor entering into sight on stage and his often protracted departure from view are classified as acting kata and have names—de, “entrance,” and hikkomi, “exit” (synonymous with the dance terms deba and iriba, confer, p. 143). It is the aim of the actor in each case to make the most vivid impression possible upon the audience. Most important movements on and off stage are executed down the banamichi, which can be thought of as an extension of the stage itself, through the audience, to the rear of the auditorium. It is
an invariable convention that a major actor pauses momentarily at
the strongest point on the banamichi, when entering and exiting.
This position is seven-tenths of the way toward the stage and is called
the shichisan, or “seven-three” position. Acting which takes place
there is called shichisan acting. Good acting at the seven-three posi-
tion on entering is essential, because this is the audience’s first ex-
posure to an actor and the role he is playing. The kata of Sukeroku’s fif-
ten-minute-long entrance at the banamichi and seven-three acting
are widely admired. He swaggers, one arm cocked jauntily inside his
elegant kimono, a stylish parasol over his shoulder, a silk headband
of deep purple tied off at one temple, wooden clogs raucously an-
nouncing his presence. Sukeroku stops at seven-three, pivots so the
audience in all parts of the auditorium can view his stylish appear-
ance, and demonstrates through stylized dance and poses “his braver-
ness and valor, his pride, cleverness, and energy, his championing of
the rights of the people.” Yoshitsune’s gentle, subdued posturing
as the nagauta chorus sings “beautiful the hills, shrouded in the
mists of spring” in The Subscription List is another example of
seven-three acting, during an entrance quite different in mood.

An actor at seven-three may talk with another actor who is on
stage. Or in a dance-play, he may execute a fairly long section of
dance on the banamichi (the entrance is then called deka). A good
example is Lord Ukyo’s drunken return home in The Zen Substitute.
To accompaniment of flute and drums, the chorus seated on stage
sings, “How wonderful to loosen her silken gown. How glorious,
down to the inner sash. He ambles home tipsily, hair awry, mussed
and tumbled, hanging disheveled like weeping willow strands.”
Lord Ukyo appears at the end of the banamichi and dances comically
to the seven-three position. He stops and poses, his attitude changing
to melancholy as the chorus continues, “Her fragrance clings still to
his sleeve, her image yet to his heart.” He mimes smelling the sleeve
of his kimono and looks back into the distance as if to see her. He
then speaks a single line, a thick-tongued, “She came with me a
long, long way, but when I looked back where her visage once stood
there lingered only a sliver of a moon.” The fan slips from his fingers
and he poses. Suddenly the onstage musicians switch to a lively
melody and Lord Ukyo’s mood changes. He flips open his dancing
fan, twirls around on one leg, laughing gaily, and happily dances at
seven-three. The instrumental music ends and the chorus sings, “We
see in the scattered remnants of a cloud a reminder of this morning’s

PLATE 22. Group tachimawari. A young hero easily fends off a group of attacking
men (yoten), posing with one foot on the back of an opponent and arms in a stone-
throwing (tishinage) mie position. (Photo courtesy of Shochiku)
PLATE 23. Tachimawari pose. The late Ichikawa Danjūrō XI as Benten in Benten the Thief (Benten Kōzo) is attacked on the temple roof by constables carrying short ladders. (Photo courtesy of Shochiku)

PLATE 24. Acrobatic flips (tombo). At the seven-three position on the hanamichi, Benkei, in an aragoto version of The Subscription List (Gohiki Kanjinsbo), flips an attacker high in the air with a kick. (Photo courtesy of National Theater of Japan)
parting. Lord Ukyo’s expression turns sad and his lively dancing slows. He lurches drunkenly to a stop. The chorus sings, “Splayfooted and staggering ... he weaves his way virtuously home.” Instrumental music continues as Lord Ukyo turns, slaps his thigh with the closed fan, and minces onto the main stage, ending his entrance, or deka. The whole scene takes four or five minutes to perform. Benkei’s last mie in The Subscription List is performed at seven-three, and his rappo movement down the banamichi to conclude the play is an important exit kata (Plate 20). Acting at seven-three during an exit is often for the purpose of expressing a change of character. We see Kumagai’s new agonized mood (Plate 25) at the end of Chronicle of the Battle of Ishinotani. Lovers may reveal a comic side of their nature and make a humorous exit (Plate 26), or, conversely, a seemingly good person, alone at seven-three, will suddenly show his evil intentions through pantomime.

5. Other Movement Kata

Japanese writers discuss many more movement kata. Of these I would like to mention two, both basic to kabuki acting and seen in every performance. The overriding concern in kabuki for theatrical effectiveness is shown clearly by the way leading actors perform crucial scenes while directly facing the audience. The technique is called shōmen engi, or “full-front acting.” A good example of shōmen engi is when the thief Benten, disguised as a woman in the cloth-buying scene of Benen the Thief (Benten Kozo) (1862), is being challenged by the shop manager and the impressive stranger, Nippon Daemon. If the scene were staged in a Western, realistic manner, Benten would almost certainly face his challengers and, at least part of the time, he would be physically close to his two questioners and in the same plane with them. That is, we would use physical actor relationships to project psychological character relationships. But in kabuki, Benten sits downstage center, facing front. His back is to the shop manager while Daemon sits on a slightly raised platform to his rear. Benten is given the strongest stage position and is spatially separated from the others. His is the title role and the audience is expected to focus its attention almost exclusively upon him. During the scene, Benten is abused and eventually unmasked, but he never turns upstage to face the others. Benten’s actions and especially his facial expressions are too important for the audience to miss; so he plays the entire scene facing front.

PLATE 25. Exit (hikkom). Kumagai (Masumoro Koshirō) making his final departure from his family and his exalted position as a general in Chronicle of the Battle of Ishinotani (Ishinotani Futaba Gunki). He stands at seven-three on the banamichi. The curtain has been drawn to cover the main stage. A shamisen musician watches carefully, to time his playing to the actor’s movements. (Photo courtesy of National Theater of Japan)
line, then turn front (shômen engi) to deliver the next, alternating the two techniques, until they are close together center. In the same play, the danced confrontation of Benkei and the retainers versus Togashi and the soldiers is pure tsukeyori (Plate 27). The two groups press in against each other, surging first one way and then the other, ending with both groups glaring face-to-face at center stage.

6. Vocal Kata

Vocal kata have been less extensively studied and described by Japanese theater scholars than movement kata, perhaps because they present greater challenges to analysis. The major vocal kata are generally identified as watarizerifu, warizerifu, tsurane, yobi, yakuharai, and suzer fizuru (some are also writing techniques). In watarizerifu, "passed-along dialogue," a single line of dialogue is divided among several actors, with the final phrase delivered in unison. Thus, different characters express consecutive segments of a single thought, each aware of the other person sharing a portion of the thought and this awareness culminates in the unison final phrase. This is a conventional theatrical technique which is unknown in psychologically oriented Western drama. Passed-along dialogue is used many times in the average kabuki play. Often members of a group who have little individuality speak in watarizerifu, as in this example from The Scarlet Princess of Edo (Sakura Hime Azuma Buiibo) (1817), by Tsuruya Namboku:

FIRST MAID: Other than his excellency Seigen, there's not a priest at Kiyomizu Temple . . .
SECOND MAID: True, not one who looks like he could read a prayer . . .
THIRD MAID: Though they know the latest music from kabuki and songs of love, you can be sure . . .
FOURTH MAID: They all, everyone of them . . .
ALL MAIDS (in unison): Stink of worldly evil. Ha, ha, ha!

Major characters may also speak passed-along dialogue, as when the villain Akugorô makes his initial appearance in the same play:

PLATE 26. Comic exit (hikkomai) dance. A comic hero and his lover begin their travel dance exit in time to music at the seven-three position on the banamichi. (Photo courtesy of Shochiku)
FORM IN KABUKI ACTING

PRINCE MATSUWAKA: Iruma Akugorō...
RETAINER SHICHIRŌ: Appears on his horse...
SAMURAI GENGŌ: In fiery spirit...
PRINCE MATSUWAKA: Bearing...
ALL (in unison): What command?

Warizuru, "divided dialogue," is similar except that lines alternate between only two characters and, while in the former the characters are conscious of sharing one thought with companions, in warizuru the characters are unaware that their spoken thoughts are meshing with those of another person. Divided dialogue is a superb technique for expressing irony. An example of divided dialogue is the scene in which Seigen, the priest who loves Princess Sakura, and the princess, who is searching for her lost child, pass each other in the dark in The Scarlet Princess of Edo. Seigen, bitter at Sakura’s rejection of him, nonetheless cares for her child, in the hope that somehow it will bring them together. They enter on two banamichi, one on the left and one on the right side of the audience, physically separated by sixty or seventy feet. Though they look across the audience toward each other, in the darkness and pouring rain they do not see each other.

SEIGEN: When I think of how my soul sinks in misery; deeper each day for her love, then I long to meet her; that she may see the anguish caring for the child; causes me unknown to her, for if I could now...

SAKURA: What person where extends to him the hand of succor; raising my child to manhood, my babe just one glimpse...

SEIGEN: In one meeting to reproach with mounting bitterness...

SAKURA: Of my beloved infant, my darling child...

SEIGEN: The parent of this child, Princess Sakura...
SAKURA: To meet again...
SEIGEN: To see you...
SAKURA: Oh, Merciful Buddha...
SEIGEN: Let the Princess...
SAKURA: Let the child...
SEIGEN: Please let us...
BOTH (drawn out, in unison): Meet... one... more... time... 

Tsurane is an extended declamation, closely associated with a name-announcing (manori) speech delivered by a major character, sometimes at seven-three during an entrance, sometimes on the main stage in the midst of a scene. In early kabuki, actors improvised speeches of tsurane in order to demonstrate their skill in elocution, much as a concert soloist improvised a cadenza in nineteenth-century Europe. Now tsurane in classic plays are set and traditional. Several major characters may announce themselves in succession, as when the five thieves in Benten the Thief line up on stage and introduce themselves and their pedigrees in outrageous speeches of tsurane (Plate 28). Tsurane is delivered in a musical, grandiloquent manner. Yobi, or "calling," is a brief kata designed to focus attention on an entering actor. The minor character speaking yobi drops to one knee, looks down the banamichi to where the major character will appear, and intones, "Here he comes!"

From the early days of kabuki, speeches which incorporated poetic forms of language and which were delivered in rhythmic fashion were called keiyozenfu, "patterned dialogue." The most obvious feature of a keiyozenfu passage is that it was written in alternate phrases of seven and five syllables, the classic Japanese poetic meter. Passed-along dialogue, divided dialogue, and tsurane may or may not be composed in lines of seven and five syllables (the previous examples of passed-along dialogue are not, but the example of divided dialogue is, in seven-five.) The playwright Tsuruya Namboku (1755-1824) is credited with first writing long speeches and even extended scenes in seven-five dialogue. A particularly beautiful style of speaking seven-five dialogue to geya musical accompaniment was developed in the plays of Kawatake Mokuami (1816-1893), and this style
came to be called *yakubari*. It is spoken in twelve regular beats with a pause at the end of each phrase; for emphasis the actor may also pause after the initial seven syllables and then prolong each syllable of the following five. *Yakubari* is among the last important *kata* to be developed in kabuki.

Ad-libbed dialogue is known as *sutezerifu*, literally "thrown-away dialogue." Famous actors of the Genroku period were their own playwrights (Danjūrō I, for example, wrote a score of plays for himself under the name Mimasu Yahyōgo). The tradition of actors composing their own lines carried over, at least in such important speeches as *tsurane*, into the nineteenth century. Today ad-libbed dialogue, actually improvised by the actor himself, is rare except in the deliberately comic performances seen once or twice a year, in which stars are stagehands and the stagehands play major roles. A number of plays have important sections of *sutezerifu*; these are not considered part of the play text and do not appear in published scripts. For each production someone writes new *sutezerifu* containing contemporary references. Whether the actor contributes lines or not, he delivers *sutezerifu* as if it were an ad lib spontaneously thrown out for the amusement of his audience. Perhaps the scene which best captures the spirit of old-time *sutezerifu* is in the play *Sukeroku: Flower of Edo*, where the hero accosts several passersby and forces them to crawl between his legs. The whole scene is *sutezerifu*. No two productions of it are the same. Actors who play the two, three, or four passersby vie to create new types of makeup, costume, and business, as well as new songs to sing and lines to speak. The scene is one of the funniest in the kabuki repertory and in large part this is due to its genuine spirit of spontaneity.

7. Sound Effects *Kata*

*Geza* music and its contribution to kabuki performances is discussed in detail in William Malm’s chapter on music. But a few remarks can be made regarding the way in which acting and music are coordinated. Music accompanies every scene of the traditional kabuki play. For dialogue plays (and these constitute the majority of plays in the repertory), *offstage* *geza* music is that accompaniment. In dance plays, or dance scenes within a long dialogue play, most music is provided by an onstage musical ensemble (*debayashi*), sometimes augmented by the *offstage* *geza*. It is of great interest to note that when *geza* music is playing—and this is most of the time—the actor does not match the rhythm of his acting to the rhythm of the music. He does not step in time to *narimono* drum patterns that are heard when he enters or exits on the *banamichi* nor does he time his spoken phrases to fit the shamisen melodies that play in the background during a dialogue scene. *Geza* is atmospheric music. It sets a mood and the actor goes his own way within that general ambience. Put another way, we can say that the emotional connotations of the music are carefully matched to the emotional context of a scene, but that during the playing of a scene an actor does not follow the music. The kabuki actor’s performing is not governed or controlled, as the Western tap or ballet dancer’s performing is, by structure, tempo, and phrasing of the music. This holds true for *tate* fighting scenes as well. Though *tate* is occasionally referred to as “danced” fighting, the term is misleading, for *tate* movements are performed without regard to the rhythm of the accompanying *geza* music. We must turn to the dance-plays and dance scenes to find actors timing their movement phrases to match sung and instrumental musical phrases. (Even here, we can note that exact synchronization is shunned as inartistic; talented actors allow the conclusion of a dance phrase to lag behind the music as a deliberate ambiguity and to create tension between dance and music.) Brief comic dances within dialogue plays gain humor from the fact that the actor suddenly changes style and moves mechanically in time to lively music. And in plays performed in puppet style, those passages originally spoken in rhythm to shamisen music are performed in the same way in kabuki. The subject is complex and not fully understood, but it would seem that the basic relationship between acting and music in kabuki is contrapuntal and that only in dance or puppet style do acting and music approach fusion into a single pattern.

Wooden clappers, *hyōshigi* (also shortened to *ki*), are used throughout a kabuki performance for a variety of purposes. The stage manager strikes together a pair of hardwood *ki*, about ten inches long and two inches square, out of sight backstage to signal the opening of the curtain, the entrance of musicians, scenery shifts, and the close of the curtain at the end of an act. This use of *ki* is not directly connected with acting and will not be discussed here. Another shorter pair of hardwood sticks, about eight inches long, are beaten on a wooden board (laid on the stage floor beside the proscenium arch, stage left) to emphasize and to punctuate the actor’s movements. These sound patterns are called *tsuke uchi*, “accompanied beating,” or just *tsuke*. 
The tsuke-player (an assistant playwright in Kyoto-Osaka, a scenery-man in Tokyo) watches the actors intently so that he can time his beats precisely to match their movements. Much as the Western concert singer uses an accompanist who knows the singer’s style and requirements, each important kabuki actor before World War II had his own tsuke-man. Today as a rule one person will beat the tsuke through the whole play.

Strong mie are accompanied by tsuke beats, usually four (weaker mie, or kimari, may be performed without tsuke accompaniment). The first beat, considered separate from the others, is struck if the actor plants one foot forward in preparation for the mie. The remaining three beats, a pattern termed battari, accompany the mie itself; the first beat as the head is brought up and the second and third beats (the second is a “grace note” to the third) as the head locks into position and the mie position is held. The loudness or prominence of the “grace note” in battari is varied to suit the preference of the actor. Most actors like it to be almost inaudible. Nakamura Kanzaburō likes to hear it sound clearly and distinctly. The grace note also can be dropped. The resulting pattern, of two beats, is called batan. Some actors prefer batan to battari to accompany their mie. Regular-paced beats, hata hata, accompany running entrances or exits down the hanamichi. Hanamichi. Hata hata may accelerate until the tempo is several times that of the actor’s running, thereby magnifying the impression of the runner’s speed. Volume and tempo will vary to suit male or female characters.

Several tsuke patterns support tate fighting scenes. When the main actor moves through a line of attackers, single, well-spaced beats of the tsuke mark his progress (sometimes called hirote, “one hand”) and if the segment concludes in a mie, the usual battari (or batan) pattern is beaten out loudly. Some sections of tate are made up of linked sequences of lunges, parties, thrusts, and evasions. Here we hear a succession of alternating batan and battari patterns: pause, battari, pause, batan, pause, battari, pause, and so on until the section concludes. It seems that the less interesting sound of batan is used for the attackers’ movements and the stronger battari sound for the countering movement of the chief actor. A single tsuke beat may emphasize the dropping of an object, the reaction of a major character in an exceptionally tense moment, or similar action which requires audience attention. 90

Without doubt the most spectacular tsuke pattern is uchiage, a continuous beating which increases in volume and tempo until it thunders through the theater, softens, crescendoes again, and concludes in a sharp battari. Uchiage accompanies only the most important and strongest group-mie in a play, usually that closing an act. It may continue for up to thirty seconds, allowing the cast ample time to move into the tableau preceding the mie. The curtain closes immediately after uchiage and the mie have been completed.

8. Costume and Makeup Kata

Actors use costume, makeup, and wigs, to help them portray character. In kabuki, there are hundreds of traditional kimono and other costume styles. One book minutely describes eighty-four wig types. There are numerous kinds of makeup (The Encyclopedia of Theater describes twenty-seven types of kumadori and adds that there are so many types it is impossible to list them all). 91 Traditional kata of dressing major kabuki characters makes them readily identifiable. Also, types of characters—white-robed monks, a “red princess,” a tattooed thief, elaborately costumed courtesans walking on high black clogs, a black-hatted court noble—are identifiable by the distinctive garb of their class.

But elements of dress do more than help portray character in kabuki. Costumes, wigs, and makeup become part of the actor’s performance technique used for theatrical and dramatic effect. Henge, “transformation,” describes a costume and wig technique (sometimes including makeup) whereby an actor totally alters the visual representation of his character. In a very large number of no plays, the leading character, disguised in the first part of the play, reveals his true identity in the second half. This is accomplished by changing mask, or wig, or costume (or all three) offstage (hence, the division of most no plays into two parts, with an interlude between them giving the actor time to make the change). The inspiration for kabuki transformation scenes undoubtedly comes from no, but in kabuki the transformation is theatricalized by carrying it out onstage before the eyes of the audience. In kabuki the revelation of one’s true nature is called jitsu wa, “in reality.” The difference in no and kabuki techniques of transformation can be seen in the respective versions of The Maple Viewing (Momiji Gari). In the no play, at the conclusion of part one the court lady retires into a set piece representing a mountain that is placed at the rear of the no stage. The actor changes appearance while out of sight, and reemerges after the interlude as a
demon wearing a hideous mask, bulky male kimono, and a bright red, flowing wig. In the kabuki version, however, the actor peels back the top half of the outer kimono with the help of a stage assistant to reveal a new kimono of different design beneath it and unfastens the bindings of his wig to let his hair fall free. This is accomplished on stage as the play progresses and the spectator can savor the skillful and exciting technique in full. To peel off the outer kimono top and tuck it in at the waist, thus revealing an under kimono, is called *bukkaeri*, which can be translated as "sudden change" (Plate 15, left figure).

In pure dance pieces featuring an *onnagata* actor, the whole outer kimono may be quickly removed, revealing another kimono beneath it. The technique is called *hikinuki*, or "pulling out," referring to the pulling out of the basting threads which hold the outer kimono together. It takes a stage assistant about thirty seconds to take out all but one of the eight basting threads. This is done while the actor dances. Then, with a final deft pull, the assistant removes the last thread and whisk away the top and bottom halves of the kimono. In the blink of an eye, the actor is seen in a totally new and brilliant costume. Hikinuki is purely a theatrical technique designed for visual effect (Plates 29–32). It does not indicate that the personality of the character has been changed.

The stage assistant who works on stage in view of the audience is not unique to kabuki. He appears in no, joruri puppet theater, Indonesian puppet plays, and Chinese opera. Perhaps in no other form of theater is the stage assistant used so often and with such an effect. There are two types of stage assistants seen on the kabuki stage. The personal assistant to a leading actor is called *köken*, literally "see behind," for he sits upstage in the shadow of his master during performance. Normally he is an actor, a pupil of the actor he is assisting; occasionally in dance-style performances he may be the choreographer or one of his assistants. The *köken* straightens the actor's costume or wig after violent actions, helps make costume changes, fetches hand properties (fan, letter, pipe, sword) and takes them away. He may even serve tea to the actor after a demanding speech (a famous example of this is when the *köken* of the actor playing the hero in *Wait a Moment* serves the actor a cup of tea at seven-thirty on the *hanamichi*) (Plate 33). In an emergency, the *köken* is prepared to assume his master's role. As Earle Ernst says, the *köken* "in freeing the actor of these obligations enables the actor to perform his true
PLATE 30. Quick change (benge).

PLATE 31. Quick change (benge).
function—that of acting." The köken dresses in formal kimono, stiff wide vest, and trousers in shosagoto and some history plays to enhance the visual beauty of the scene (Plates 11, 18, 30, 31, 32). In other plays he is dressed completely in black and is conventionally assumed to be invisible. The second type of stage assistant is a stagehand, called kyōgen kata, similarly dressed in black but distinguishable from the köken by his duties and demeanor. The kyōgen kata moves scenery and large set pieces, and runs the curtain open and closed. He moves furtively, scurrying on and off stage as if he did not really belong there, while the köken sits unobtrusively but casually on stage for as long as he is needed.93

9. Kata of Staging
Stage machinery and scenic devices make possible a number of performance kata. The banamichi dates from the first third of the eighteenth century. The very important seven-three acting and roppō exits owe their existence to this unique stage area reaching into and through the audience. Colorful processions of thirty or forty people moving onto or off the stage are also a performance kata of kabuki made possible by the banamichi. The present Kabuki-za in Tokyo is so large that a procession of courtesans, samurai officials, or a neighborhood gang of toughs can travel a distance of nearly 150 feet through the audience and across the stage (the banamichi is 65 feet long, the stage 93 feet wide). And the impression of distance covered is even greater than the actual distance, because of the physical intimacy of actors and spectators. In 1793 the first permanent revolving stage was installed in the Nakamura-za in Edo. Soon thereafter it became a standard feature of kabuki stages in Edo, Kyoto, and Osaka (this was one hundred years before the revolving stage was used in Europe).94 A multiscene play can be performed with continuous action with a revolving stage. In a typical example, actors close a scene by rising and exiting from the room they are in. The revolving stage begins to turn and they walk through an adjoining exterior setting which comes into view. They continue walking through the setting until the next set appears. Assuming this is a building, the actors walk through a gate, enter the building, and the second scene begins. As long as the actors walk at the same speed that the stage turns, they are always in sight. Three settings and three adjoining exterior sections can be placed on most revolving stages. Consequently, a script, which on reading seems disjointed because of numerous
scene changes, appears more unified in performance when the revolving stage is used.

A half century prior to the revolving stage, various types of traps were introduced to kabuki. Generically, all these devices, which raise actors or scenery up to stage level through a hole in the floor or lower them out of sight, are called seri, literally "press" or "push." When a trap is raised, this is referred to as seriage, "push up," or seridashi, "push out." Lowering is called senoroshi or serisage, both written with the same characters but pronounced differently and meaning "push down." Most traps are located within the revolving stage. At the Kabuki-za in Tokyo, three such traps within the sixty-foot-wide revolving stage are capable of raising or lowering entire sets. The revolving stage of the National Theater in Tokyo is equipped with sixteen traps which can be raised and lowered independently or in any combination desired. The function of small traps is to allow an actor to make an unexpected and sudden appearance or disappearance, a staging kata analogous to the costume kata of transformation. This interpretation is reinforced by the fact that the single small trap which is strategically located at the seven-three position of the banamichi, and called suppon, is used solely for supernatural appearances and disappearances.

There is a difference between the scenic spectacle of kabuki and of Western-influenced musical revues and musical comedies in Japan, as a visit to the International Theater in the gaudy Asakusa entertainment district, for example, will show. Here spectacular burning castles, fountains of steam and water, crashing sets, and wheels of revolving lights follow each other in a dazzling visual display. But scenic spectacle of this type is never seen in kabuki; lavish and beautiful though a stage set will be, it is not allowed to become the dominant focus of interest, to exist independently of the actor. Rather, a kabuki stage setting supports the actor and caters to his needs, just as the costuming techniques do. The final scene of Beniien the Thief can be taken as an example. Benten fights a long and intricately choreographed battle (tate) against scores of attacking police on the roof of a temple. The roof is constructed three dimensionally and equipped with small steps in the middle to allow Benten and the police to leap, climb, and struggle on its slanting surface (Plate 23). In stage jargon, it is a "practical" scenic unit, because it is used to support action. Then, Benten commits suicide and leaps off the roof and out of sight through an open trap. The roof, which has now ended its usefulness, is folded backwards while the elaborately painted temple building itself rises slowly on a trap until it reaches its full two-story height. Standing alone on the upper level, Nippon Daemon, the gangster leader, defiantly proclaims to the police below, "I wait! Impatient! Come, take me to retribution and to death!" The temple is painted Chinese red with multicolored panel inserts. Unquestionably the temple is a gorgeous spectacle, but its main function is the practical one of lifting an actor to a dominant stage position for the final lines in the play. The movable temple roof and the lifted temple structure serve the performance kata of the actor.

Some very interesting acting kata are built around curtains. The standard kabuki curtain, called jōshiki maku, or "formal curtain," is
a draw curtain, pushed to stage left to open and pulled to stage right to close. Its pattern of alternating broad stripes of green, rust, and black is a distinctive mark of the kabuki theater and derives from the curtain first used by the Morita-za in Tokyo during the early Meiji period (other formal curtain patterns of the period—black, rust, and white of the Nakamura-za, for example—soon dropped out of use). Drop curtains, doncho maku, were known, but it was considered so inferior to draw a curtain that its use was relegated to minor, unlicensed theaters. Drop curtains still are not used in kabuki today as part of performance technique.

The formal curtain is run open and run closed to steady ki clacks (the hard wooden ki are stuck together in the air, making a clear, penetrating sound), which grow louder, then fade away. When the curtain is run open on the typical scene, the stage is empty of players. This kata is called bakibutai, literally “swept stage” (or karabutai, “empty stage”). Music from the chōbo stage left, from a dance ensemble onstage, or from the geza musicians offstage right, create a moment of suspense before a single sharp clack of the ki signals the first actor’s entrance. It is considered inartistic to open the curtain on a throng of milling actors or to catch a small group in the midst of conversation, as if peeping in on them unexpectedly, as we so often do in Western theater. If a scene must begin with a large group on stage, a special curtain kata has been devised to make such a scene opening as dramatic as possible. The formal curtain is run open to reveal another curtain behind it, a “light blue curtain,” asagi maku. This is hung loosely from above and, at the sound of a single sharp clack of the ki it is released, falls, and is scooped up and run offstage by several stage assistants. In an instant, the cast is revealed in tableau. Another clack of the ki and the actors begin the scene. If but one or two actors are to be revealed, this is usually accomplished by lifting them into the scene on a trap. Two stage assistants hold a small curtain (usually black or red) in front of them until they are in place. Again, at a signal from the ki, the curtain is dropped and the actors are suddenly seen posed in dramatic tableau.

If an exit down the banamichi occurs at a play’s climax, it is often made more theatrical by performing it in a kata called “outside the curtain,” maku soto. It begins as the actor moves from the main stage to seven-three on the banamichi. Either in silence or to a furious tsuke pattern of kata kata and loud beats of the large drum (ōdaiko) in the geza, the formal curtain is slowly pulled across the stage. But, instead of closing the curtain completely, the bottom corner is held back so as not to cover the slits in the geza wall, which look out over the banamichi. The actor is now “outside the curtain,” the main stage is closed off, and the audience’s full attention is directed on the actor and his exit (Plates 11, 19). Through the slits in the geza wall, the musicians watch the actor’s exit movements and time their music to them. If the actor’s seven-three acting is deemed to be particularly important, a shamisen player (and sometimes a singer as well) will stand before the curtain where the banamichi joins the stage and from there accompany the actor’s movements (Plate 25). Well-known examples of maku soto acting are Benkei’s tobiroppō exit, which concludes The Subscription List and Kumagai’s departure in Chronicle of the Battle of Ichinotani (Plates 20, 25).

During the early and mid-years of the nineteenth century, a number of staging kata were developed which are referred to in kabuki as keren, literally “stage tricks.” A four-volume book for backstage workers (Okyōgen Gakuya no Honsetsu), published in 1858 and 1859, illustrates 342 keren techniques of acting and staging, among them, skeleton costuming, floating in the air as a ghost, pouring red liquid starch on a wound to simulate dripping blood, water pans from which an actor can arise as a dripping corpse, and a device of tubes and bamboo pipes to drench the stage with a curtain of rain. In 1784, Danjūrō V plunged into a vat filled with water in the last scene of Sukeroku: Flower of Edo and the term hommitsu, or “real water,” came into the vocabulary to describe this and numerous kata in which the actor emerged dripping wet from tubs, streams, lakes, and rainstorms. An anecdote relates how female fans of Danjūrō VIII (1823–1854) fought for the privilege of buying water from the vat into which he plunged when he played Sukeroku.

Techniques for making quick costume changes, called hayagawari, came into use so that an actor could play several roles in rapid succession. Capitalizing on the idea, the playwright Tsuruya Namboke IV wrote The Scandal of Osone and Hisamatsu (Osone Hisamatsu Uki-nano Yomiuri) in 1813, so that one actor could play seven roles. The challenge was taken up by the onmagata actor Iwai Hanshirō V, who played the maiden Osone, her lover Hisamatsu, Omitsu who also loves Hisamatsu, a geisha, a maid servant, Osone’s mother, and the married woman Oroku. Hayagawari became so highly developed, that an actor could literally walk off the stage and reappear an instant later costumed in a new role. Thanks to quick-change techniques,
Danjūrō VII was able, in the November 1815 “face-showing” production at the Kawarasaki-za in Edo, to play ten different roles, a record that still stands. I saw a delightful relic of quick-change kata in a performance of The Treasury of Loyal Retainers (Kanadehon Chūshingura) in Tokyo in 1961. In Act V the old man Yoichibe slips into a thatched hut looking for the man who has stolen his purse. There he is killed by a highwayman, Sadakurō. The actor playing Yoichibe slipped his right arm and leg through a slit in the hut’s straw covering, looked carefully about, and then eased the rest of his body inside. Meanwhile the costume on the right side of his body was being changed (unseen, of course) and just as his left hand and leg disappeared inside, the newly costumed right arm and leg of Sadakurō slipped out through the slit and into view, and the actor gradually reemerged in his new guise, having never completely left our sight.

KATA AS INDIVIDUAL INTERPRETATION

At the third, and most differentiated, level of kata there are those variations of performance technique which we can ascribe to the individual interpretation of the actor. All great actors of the past created their own special ways of playing important scenes. In conversations about kabuki acting you will hear, “Oh, he’s doing Kampei (in The Treasury of Loyal Retainers) in the kata of Kikugorō VI,” or “that kimono color is Utaeemon’s kata.” In fact, the word kata is perhaps more widely used by the ordinary fan of kabuki to refer to individual actors’ styles, than to the broad performance styles or to standard performance techniques. A whole genre of kabuki writing consists of books relating how different actors performed famous scenes, creating on this occasion some new kata, and on that occasion another kata. Actors change kata for a number of reasons, some valid, some frivolous. I have selected a few examples here to suggest something of the nature of these changes and what their significance is for kabuki acting in general.

 Actors create new kata to express a new interpretation of a role or scene. We can take the play Nozaki Village (Nozakimura) (1780) as an example (by coincidence, it happens to be another dramatization of the Hisamatsu-Osome-Omitsu story mentioned earlier). The play ends as the young ne’er-do-well Hisamatsu leaves. Remaining behind are his grieving father, Kyōshaku, and the maiden Omitsu, who loves Hisamatsu but is forced to give him up. The traditional kata for Omitsu at this point has her facing full front, her hands on the old man’s shoulders, creating a comforting picture of filial piety and courage. But this kata was radically changed by Kikugorō VI when he played the role of Omitsu. Because he saw her, not as a valiant heroine, but as a young girl defenseless against the implacable demands of a harsh feudal code, his Omitsu turned her back to the audience, fell to her knees before her father, and sobbed uncontrollably as the curtain was closed. Behind her the father stood and faced the audience, thereby making him, not Omitsu, the stronger of the two characters. Kikugorō VI was famous for this kind of personal interpretation of classic roles along new psychological lines.

A number of kata came into existence simply because actors had certain abilities or certain weaknesses. Ichikawa Danjūrō IX was famous for his powerful style of elocution. As a consequence, playwrights such as Mokuami composed special tsurane and yakuhara sections in which Danjūrō’s vocal excellence would shine. Nakamura Utaeemon V (1865–1940), who was crippled by lead poisoning, found he could not perform the Ichikawa family’s usual kata for Yoshitsune’s seven-three entrance in The Subscription List. This calls for Yoshitsune to stop, shade his eyes with the straw hat he is carrying, and look upward to the right and to the left, as the chorus sings, “the hills, surrounded by the mist of spring.” Unable to bend his torso as this kata requires, Utaeemon created a new kata which was easier for him: while holding the hat at shoulder level, he turned back and looked down the hanamichi. As Kikugorō VI became increasingly stout in later years, he altered traditional kata to suit his physical limitations. It is of interest to note that once created, these new kata became standard very quickly. Other actors studied them and made them their kata as well. Thus today healthy young actors dance Utaeemon V’s abridged kata, thin actors are true to the kata of chubby Kikugorō VI, and actors with merely normal voices strain to reproduce the thunderous vocal kata of Danjūrō IX.

A kabuki actor, like an actor in any theater, does not become famous by being like everyone else. His popularity can only grow from the audience’s recognition that he has some quality not the common possession of other actors. The good kabuki actor, the actor with confidence in his ability, always strives to put an individual stamp on his acting kata. Some individual differences of kata may seem of minuscule importance—Ichimura Utaeemon will tie on his hat with a white cord when playing Togashi in The Subscription List, while Ichikawa Sadanji will tie his with a purple cord. To dismiss
these differences as merely trivial, however, would be to miss their point. They serve to set one actor's art apart from the other, even when the actor is performing a role in which the *kata* allows but little variation. There is the often-cited case of how Uzaemon came to create new *kata* for many standard roles. When he was a young actor trying to establish himself, his competition was Danjūrō IX and Kikugorō VI, who were praised even in their time as two of the greatest actors ever to perform kabuki. He decided the only way he could possibly attract the audience's notice was to offer something neither of his competitors did and so he purposely created *kata* unlike theirs. For example, because Kikugorō, in *The Treasury of Loyal Retainers* played Kampei's suicide in a grave manner, Uzaemon played the scene lightly and subtly.104

**CONCLUSION**

In this discussion the most obvious types of acting *kata* in kabuki have been touched upon. It should be clear that to describe kabuki acting is not a simple matter. There is no single kabuki-style. Rather there are several styles operating at several levels. There are at least five, broad, historical styles: pantomime; a vigorous, bravura style; a soft, almost feminine style; a style based on performance techniques of the puppet theater; and a dance style incorporating three different dance strains. Then there are scores of standard performance techniques some of which can be traced to historical styles but most of which are not today linked directly with them but may be used with considerable freedom in any of the styles: *mieg*, *roppō*, fighting *kata*, costume changes, seven-three acting, *tsuke* patterns, and so on. Finally there are the variations of these *kata* associated with individual actors. If we want to describe the acting style of a play in detail, all three levels of *kata* must be involved. To illustrate this, *The Subscription List* can be taken as an example. The historical style of the play is *shosagoto*: the action of the play is executed in dance movement to musical accompaniment. And because the play is purposely close to its no origins, it is a *shosagoto* of the *matsubame* type. Within this style Benkei is acted in *aragoto* style, somewhat modified to suit the play's no characteristics, while Yoshitsune is acted close to *wagoto* style. Standard acting techniques include: eight *mieg*, important entrance and seven-three acting on the *banamichi*, *roppō* and acting outside the curtain, and passed-along dialogue vocal technique. The traditional performance *kata* were created by Ichikawa Danjūrō VII and most actors will follow these *kata*. But because the play is one of the most popular in the repertory there are many minor variations in *kata* attributed to other actors: Nakamura Utaemon V created new movement *kata* for Yoshitsune's seven-three acting; Togashi's hat cord may be white or purple; Benkei moves onto the *banamichi* in his final dance when performed according to the *kata* of Bandō Mitsugorō; every detail of Onoe Kikugorō VI's *kata* for the play is published in a comprehensive prompt book and is followed by young actors in the Onoe family today,105 and so on.

I have mentioned a number of reasons for new *kata* coming into being. But not everything in kabuki favors change. There are strong forces which tend to preserve existing *kata*. Until recently the leading actor of a troupe had authority to specify which *kata* other actors would follow, thus considerably limiting the possibility of other actors creating new ones. From the days of early kabuki acting families, hereditary acting names and a hierarchical system for awarding them to actors within the family, and the concept of "secrets" of family acting tradition (i.e. no gei) all powerfully contributed to the maintenance of existing *kata*. Kabuki acting is essentially a hereditary monopoly of certain families and, by and large, it is no more possible to become a member of an important acting family than it is to become a member of the British royal family. You are born into it or you are adopted into it (if you are talented enough). As an actor increases in skill, he is awarded family names of increasing prestige, the most important name being reserved for the family's leading actor, Danjūrō in the Ichikawa family or Kikugorō in the Onoe family, for example. A young actor's teachers were not only masters of kabuki acting, they were likely to be his relatives as well, normally including his father. The young actor's advancement depended upon how well he learned the family *kata* and how well he performed them. Hence there was great pressure on him to preserve exactly his family's traditional acting *kata*.

When a young actor was to act a role for the first time, he was taught how to do the role in its entirety. Instruction was not a right of the pupil. It was a privilege. As a rule only one actor in each generation of an acting family was taught a role. He observed minutely every nuance of the *kata* for that role and he practiced assiduously under his teacher's direction. He was expected to learn the *kata* without variation and to perform the role in public just as he had been taught. If the leading actor of the troupe requested him to alter his
way of performing, to better support the leading actor’s role, he was expected to seek his teacher’s permission. Even in later years when he performed the changed kata a second or third time, it was appropriate for him to seek out his teacher to say, “Today, I humbly wish to perform in a different way.”106 Nowadays the learning system is less strict. Several pupils may learn the same kata from one teacher and a pupil’s obligation to his teacher has not the same binding force it had, say, fifty years ago. Still, the traditional kata for performing a role is valued highly and once learned it is not lightly tampered with.

The process of passing on kata from generation to generation is essential to kabuki art. And it may be given several interpretations. From the point of view of the individual actor, learning and performing kata are intimately related to the actor’s search for identity. The actor needs to create new kata in order to assert his individuality, yet this runs counter to his respect for traditional kata. The two forces tend to check each other, with the result that in the actor’s work neither unregulated newness, applauded by some segments of the audience, nor slavish adherence to tradition, rewarded by family elders, becomes dominant. They are balanced in a state of healthy tension. The balance will differ for each actor—some inclining toward new ideas and some toward established forms—and according to circumstances, but it has always been maintained. As long as actors can continue to create within the framework of traditional kata, kabuki will remain the living theater art that it is today.

Looked at in broad perspective, a kabuki actor travels a “way of art,” or geido. Geido, in the world of Japanese performing arts, is parallel to shinto, or “way of the gods,” in Japanese religion and bushido, or “way of the warrior,” in Japanese military science and ethics. In each there is a known path to knowledge and the initiate is guided in his steps along the path by a master already proficient in its secrets. In kabuki, this means the actor learns a total “way of art” which, while it encompasses specific forms of kata, looks beyond them to a total approach to kabuki acting. The young actor must be guided by a master, for, as the great no actor and playwright Zeami wrote, an artist without a master is a “man without a way.”107 At each step of an actor’s development, there is the dual knowledge that one level of artistic skill has been achieved, with its concomitant satisfaction, and that a yet higher level of attainment lies ahead, stimulating further study and improvement. Learning existing kata then does not pit pupil versus teacher’s conception, or creation versus tradition (as we would expect in the West). The ideal pupil so completely absorbs the totality of the way, that his approach and his master’s are one. As Gunji Masakatsu says of kabuki, “kata exists through recreation, the pupil incarnating the art of the master and the master living again in the art of the pupil.”108 Change is not denied in this view, only its importance is. It is assumed that change will take place and that when it occurs it will be incorporated into the broad stream of the actor’s way of art, causing no more than a ripple on its surface.

There is unanimous agreement that the creation of beauty is the principal aim of kabuki. This is accomplished chiefly through the system of kata, wherein the content of any play is molded in performance into artistically pleasing patterns of sights and sounds. The patterning of dialogue into phrases of seven and five syllables and of thoughts into divided speeches; the melodic patterns of geza, chobo, and dance music (nagauta, kiyomoto, tokiwazu) that spin a web of sound, hour after hour, around the unfolding stage action; the patterns of tsuke, insistent, demanding, blocking out in hard-edged rhythm a play’s high points marked by mie poses; the pattern of depicting action in sequences of finely wrought tableaux in which actors, on stage musicians, and stage assistants are part of the visual stage picture; brilliantly costumed processions passing through the audience; kaleidoscopelike transformations of color and design in costume-changes—these are all patterns, or kata, which, irrespective of their contextual significance, give pleasure to the spectator. A foreigner of Japanese first seeing kabuki, perceives that there are patterns, vivid and colorful, though he cannot yet identify what the patterns consist. He can respond to the beauty of form, movement, sound, and color in these patterns without knowing what they “mean.” The critic Tobe Ginsaku has observed that the invariable first reaction to kabuki, “My! How beautiful!” is intuitively right.109 (The connoisseur of kabuki has a more complex reaction: he simultaneously perceives what the patterns of kata are, relates the kata to the play’s meaning, and responds to the beauty of the kata.)

When, in the Meiji era, Japanese scholars were called upon to interpret kabuki to the Western world, the strong emphasis in kabuki upon beauty and form proved very disconcerting. Kabuki did not fit the Western conception of what good drama should be and Japanese critics were prone to follow these imported standards derived from literature. “Those imbecile arts of the Tokugawa period—ukiyo- wood-block prints and kabuki,” sniffed one well-known scholar.110
Now we recognize that the performing arts (geiko) have aims and methods which are distinct from literature (bungaku) but equally legitimate. We can see that kabuki is one of the most thoroughly "artistic" theater forms in the world, precisely because of its concern for beauty and that it is the kate of kabuki acting which comprises the remarkably rich vocabulary through which this aim of beauty is achieved.

NOTES
3. See plate 170 in Kawatake, Zoroiku.
4. The tiger skins can be seen in a number of illustrations. One of the best is Kawatake, Zoroiku, plate 167.
8. Plate 1 in Shuzui, Zutsutsu and plate 168 in Kawatake, Zoroiku probably are of prostitute-assignation plays. The plate on the third page following p. 222 of Kawatake Shigetoshi, Nihon Engeki Senki (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1959), is identified as an onna kabuki scene of prostitution assignation; hereafter cited as Kawatake, Senki.
10. Shuzui, plates 7-b, 9, 10, 13, and later in the Genruko period (1688-1703), plate 23. See also plate 174, Kawatake, Zoroiku.
12. Kawatake Zenshi, the plate on the fifth page following p. 222.
15. Music may also be considered part of kate. See Kiyagaya Naoko, Kabuki no Kata (Tokyo: Sogensha, 1957), p. 11; hereafter cited as Kiyagaya, Kata.
17. To these five, broad styles, Kiyagaya would add "tachimawari fighting and kenjutsu magic tricks" (Kata, pp. 47, 50), and Sato, tachimawari (Nihon no Geino, p. 215).
18. Jidaimono, or historical plays, may be performed in at least three styles (arakoto, maruhon, and ibozagoto) and rezenmono, or domestic plays, in three styles (regularly as wagoto or maruhon, and occasionally, as in Sakuraku, as aragoto).
81. Gunji uses the term *kata* in *Kata* (p. 79). *Shōmen o kuru*, "pausing front," is used in Kawatake, *Jisen* (p. 102) and *Daijiten* (3:218) to describe acting while facing the audience.

82. Gunji Masakatsu observes that *shōmen engi* probably came from nō. The *shite*, or lead actor, in nō monopolizes center stage, almost constantly facing front, while the *washi*, or secondary actor, is forced to take a theatrically weak position downstream, left, where he is not only out of the action but behind a pillar (*Kabuki no Bigaku*, pp. 45-46).

83. It is interesting to speculate to what extent the static scene in kabuki is a "realistic" depiction of formal and controlled patterns of living in pre-Meiji Japan or is a theatrical convention. Conversely in Western drama most of the constant moving of actors from table, to chair, to mantelpiece, to sofa, and back again, is not a "realistic" reflection of the way we behave in a living room; it is a theatrical device the director employs to maintain audience attention.

84. *Tsurane* is not written with Chinese characters in its kabuki usage, but the term is believed to have come from *tsurane*, meaning "linked things," in *enren* and *sarugaku* performance (*Daijiten*, 4:44).

85. See the famous *tsurane* spoken by the hero in *Wait a Moment*, now traditional and included in published scripts (in Gunji, *Jūhachibanshū*, pp. 154-155).

86. *Daijiten*, 4:44.

87. *Yakuhana* is so named because the kabuki manner of delivery resembles that of yakuhana, or "exorcism," chants imitated to drive out demons in the February *seisubon* ceremony (*Daijiten*, 3:432).


89. Three different versions are published in Gunji, *Jūhachibanshū*, pp. 401-402.

90. *Battari* and *bato bata* are briefly mentioned in *Daijiten*, 4:445, 445. However, I am indebted to Nakamura Toyoshi, the doyen of *tsukke* playing in kabuki, who kindly explained and demonstrated *tsukke* patterns nowhere mentioned in written sources.


92. The detailed nature of kabuki acting techniques can be seen in the listing in *Daijiten* (4:533) of the six types of *kabuki*, each identified by a different term but differing only in the manner of kimono removal.


95. *Karugo*, or "black boy," is an informal name often applied to both the black-robed *kōken* and *kyōgen* kata.


99. The four volumes of the original have been republished as *Okyōgen Gakuya no Honshū*, in *Kabuki no Bunkan*, Series 2 (Tokyo: Kokuritsu Gekijo, n.d.).


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