

Chapter 1 : Yoshitsune Senbon Zakura Introduction

Yoshitsune Senbon Zakura (ヨシツネ千本桜), or *Yoshitsune and the Thousand Cherry Trees*, is a Japanese play, one of the three most popular and famous in the Kabuki repertoire.

Act I scene 1: Act I scene 2: She learns that her husband is alive and sets out to find him with her son and accompanied by her retainer Kokingo. Act II scene 1: To console her, he gives her the tsuzumi drum, and tells her to think of it as part of himself. To stop her from following them, his soldiers tie her to a tree. After they leave, an enemy underling spies her and the drum. At this point no one is aware that this Tadanobu is not the real one, but a fox that has disguised itself as Tadanobu in order to be close to the drum, which is made from the skins of its parents. Act II scene 2, 3 and 4: Tomomori, a Heike warrior who is believed to be dead, is passing himself off as the proprietor. In fact, he is waiting for the chance to avenge himself against the Genji by killing off their general, Yoshitsune, who is staying at the house. Tomomori intends to attack Yoshitsune at sea, but the latter is prepared and eludes the attack. But the great warrior no longer wishes to live. After an emotional speech, he climbs to the highest reef and ties an anchor rope about his waist. Raising the anchor above his head, he throws it into the sea. As the great coil of rope disappears over the edge; he gives a final downward glance, and is pulled backwards off the peak into the waves. This is the most dangerous scene in the play to perform as the actor has to throw himself backwards into the air but not so far that he hits the backdrop, and hope that a mattress has been properly positioned to cushion his fall! Act III scene 1 and 2: While resting in the lower village of Ichimura, they are met by Gonta, a local bully who skillfully cons them out of their money. Later they are attacked by Genji forces, and in a spectacular fight, Kokingo sacrifices himself to save his mistress and her son. Act III scene 3: Yazaemon has been harboring the Heike lord, Koremori, at the shop and is passing him off as an assistant. He has given Koremori permission to marry his young daughter, Osato, who is besotted with him. But as Osato is flirting with Koremori, Gonta arrives with the intention of squeezing some more cash out of his mother to cover his gambling debts. He has been banned from the house by his father, but he knows his mother is a soft touch. He quickly hides it unobserved in another of the empty sushi tubs, and then talks privately with Koremori, advising him to move the following day as the authorities suspect he is hiding there and have demanded that Yazaemon produce his head. Koremori, however, seems not to be in the mood, so Osato retires alone. Koremori cannot bring himself to join her in bed and instead confesses to her sleeping form he is already married with a child. Soon after messengers arrive warning that their house is to be searched by the official Kajiwara and Osato sadly but bravely sends the family off. Unfortunately all this has been overheard by Gonta who says that he will pursue Koremori and hand him over for the reward money. As he takes off he grabs the nearest sushi tub and disappears down the hanamichi. Gonta reappears leading a woman and child bound and gagged. Kajiwara inspects it and confirms the identity. At this point the audience is horrified that Gonta can sink so low and despises the fact that he has done all this for money. Kajiwara is pleased with the outcome and leaves, but not before presenting Gonta with a valuable kimono belonging to the emperor Yoritomo which he can sell for a great price. No sooner has Kajiwara left than Yazaemon in a rage stabs Gonta. Act IV scene 1: They muse about which carries the greater weight--love or duty. To lighten their mood they dance and recall tales of valiant battle, while looking at the precious drum. As they depart, Tadanobu follows Shizuka, and as he starts down the hanamichi, his appearance changes. Using a costume technique called bukkaeri, in which threads are pulled out and the outer costume is pulled down to reveal another inside, Tadanobu becomes more fox-like in a white costume decorated with gold foxfires. He leaps high in the air several times and then skips down the hanamichi. Act IV scene 2: Soon Shizuka arrives safely but agrees that there is something different about this Tadanobu who is the real one. She recalls that the one she traveled with kept appearing and disappearing at odd moments, but would always return if she struck the drum. Tadanobu is ordered to be held captive until the mystery is solved. To test which Tadanobu is real, Shizuka strikes the drum and the other Tadanobu suddenly appears. He soon admits contritely that he is an imposter and reveals himself in his true fox form. He explains that he followed the drum as a way of fulfilling his filial duties, but he realizes that by causing the real

Tadanobu and others trouble he has brought shame on his parents and will leave. Yoshitsune overhears his pitiful story and presents the grieving fox with the drum. Filled with joy the fox plays with the drum and hears his parents warn him of a coming attack on the mansion. Act IV scene 3: He has to face a pack of foxes, which he finally succeeds in chasing away. Noritsune is easily captured, but Yoshitsune orders his release on one condition: Act V scene 1: Some priests, allies of Noritsune, attack Tadanobu, but he easily drives them off. Noritsune arrives and is easily beaten by Tadanobu who is aided by the magic powers of the fox. Just as Tadanobu is about to make the final thrust to finish Noritsune off, Yoshitsune arrives, accompanied by the child-emperor Antoku. Yoshitsune bids Lady Shizuka farewell and sets out to find a new hideout as it has become obvious that his brother Yoritomo has discovered that he has been in hiding at the Kawatsura Mansion. And Tadanobu leaves with lady Shizuka to accompany her back to her home in Yamato.

Chapter 2 : Four Seasons in Japan: Yoshitsune and the Thousand Cherry Trees

A masterpiece of eighteenth-century Japanese puppet theater, Yoshitsune and the Thousand Cherry Trees is an action-packed play set in the aftermath of the twelfth-century Genji-Heike wars.

But a little bit of information about a few of the terms and the plays makes it even better. It is based on many legends and plays about Minamoto no Yoshitsune, but the focus of the drama is not so much on Yoshitsune as it is on three other characters: The great Heike general Taira no Tomomori , Gonta, the villainous son of a sushi shop owner and the magical fox Tadanobu. Often performances today concentrate on the sections for just one of the characters. The play is set after the wars between the Genji and Heike clans, which the Genji clan won and now Minamoto no Yoritomo rules Japan as the shogun in Kamakura and his younger brother Yoshitsune serves as his agent in Kyoto. Although Yoshitsune was largely responsible for the victory, Yoritomo begins to suspect that Yoshitsune may be scheming with the imperial court to take power for himself and these suspicions are encouraged by people who want to divide the two brothers. In the first scene of Act I, Yoshitsune receives the Hatsune drum from the retired emperor as a reward for his part in the victory. But the gift comes with the statement that the front skin of the drum represents the older brother i. Yoritomo and the back skin represents the younger brother i. So if Yoshitsune were ever to actually play the drum and hit the front skin, this could be interpreted as meaning he is determined to attack Yoritomo. Yoshitsune gets out of this by saying that he will treasure the drum, but will never play it, showing that he has no intention of going against Yoritomo. In the second scene, this time it is an emissary from the shogunate in Kamakura that has come to investigate Yoshitsune among the accusations including one about the drum , is that Yoshitsune presented three heads of high-ranking Heike generals that proved to be false: Tomomori, Koremori and Noritsune. Yoshitsune says that he knows that all three are alive, but presented the false heads to keep the country at peace and he can search quietly for the three. As far as anyone knows, in history all three died, but this fantastic idea sets up the framework for the entire play. There is no turning back now and Yoshitsune and his men become fugitives. There are persistent legends that instead of dying in the final sea battle at Dan-no-Ura, Koremori became a priest at the Kumano shrine on the Kii peninsula, or took off from there to go by boat to the Buddhist Fudaraku paradise actually a way of committing suicide. Both Koremori and his son Rokudai were regarded with great caution by the new shogunate since they were descendants of the main line of the Heike clan and could be used as a center of loyalty to gather Heike forces once more. The boy became a Buddhist priest, but eventually was executed by the Genji. They are well cared for by the boatman Ginpei, his wife Oryu and little daughter Oyasu. When men sent by Yoritomo try to capture Yoshitsune, Ginpei throws them out angrily. The weather has gotten better and Ginpei says to prepare to leave. They have disguised themselves as commoners in order to attack Yoshitsune and avenge the destruction of their clan. The men that Ginpei threw out at the beginning of the act were actually his own men, who put on an act to convince Yoshitsune that Ginpei was on his side. But Yoshitsune knew what was going on all the time and his side is victorious. In the end Yoshitsune agrees to take good care of Emperor Antoku and the heavily wounded Tomomori throws himself into the sea, tying the rope to a gigantic anchor around his waist, throwing the anchor into the sea until the anchor pulls him with it. But he gives her the precious Hatsune drum as a keepsake of him and ties her to a tree to prevent her from trying to join him by force. But while she is tied up, men sent by Yoritomo attack her, especially one who lusts after her. Yoshitsune is grateful and gives Tadanobu a set of his armor and his name and orders Tadanobu to keep Shizuka safe in Kyoto. But this "Tadanobu" is actually a magical fox that is attracted by the Hatsune drum and has taken the form of the real Tadanobu to get close to the drum. From ancient times Yoshino has been a mountain fortress closely associated with the imperial court. It also is famous for its cherry blossoms, which gives the play its title. Yoshino and she travels there with Tadanobu. He keeps disappearing, but always reappears when she plays the Hatsune drum. This is a dance scene and begins as Shizuka looks for Tadanobu and plays the drum. They do a series of dances together to relieve the sadness of the road. Tadanobu constantly seems to want to get close to the drum. In a vigorous dance, Tadanobu recalls that battle, first an encounter between two warriors that

were so equally matched that when one tried to run away, the other grabbed the back flap of his helmet and the tugged back and forth until rather than either being defeated, the flap broke off. Then Tadanobu and Shizuka recall that his brother Tsuginobu became a human shield for Yoshitsune, but he died by an arrow from the powerful warrior Noritsune another one of the false heads at the beginning of the play. Often there is a humorous fight scene with a warrior lusting after Shizuka and Tadanobu uses his fox magic to defend her. This dance was featured in the full-length version of the dance special in the season. Yoshitsune has taken refuge on Mt. Yoshino in the fortress of Kawatsure Hogen, but he is under the constant threat of attack. His retainer Sato Tadanobu arrives to join him, and Yoshitsune asks about Shizuka, but Tadanobu says he knows nothing of what he is talking about. He has been at his home in the remote northeastern country and has only now returned to Yoshitsune. Yoshitsune is afraid that Tadanobu has betrayed him but then, the arrival of Shizuka and Tadanobu is announced. Shizuka examines the Tadanobu that is there closely and says that he looks a little different from the one that traveled with her. He shows his fox nature with a unique costume and all kinds of stage tricks. Yoshitsune is moved that this animal has such deep feeling for his parents when he and his brother are now at war with each other. Finally Yoshitsune gives Tadanobu the drum and the fox leaves ecstatically This act sometimes ends with the final fight with a band of warrior priests. Tadanobu uses his fox magic to help Yoshitsune. The leader of the gang is a warrior priest named Kakuhan, but this is actually Noritsune in disguise, the last of the false heads.

Chapter 3 : YOSHITSUNE SENBON ZAKURA

Yoshitsune and his friends, still on the run, are now staying in the inn at the port, owned by Gimpei and his wife Oryu. They are waiting for better weather to be able to board. A few servants and.

Plot[edit] The fullest version of Yoshitsune consists of fifteen scenes in five acts. Though this was originally intended to be performed across the better part of a day, modes of performance have changed, and the full version would today take twice that long, due to the style and speed of current forms of acting. For this reason and others, Kabuki plays are almost never performed in their entirety today, and Yoshitsune is no exception. The first, second, and fourth scenes of Act One are the most rarely performed today. The fundamental structure of the play is very much in keeping with that of Japanese traditional drama forms as a whole. Also, Yoshitsune follows the traditional five-act structure and the themes traditionally associated with particular acts. Act One begins calmly and auspiciously, including scenes at the Imperial Palace. Act Two features combat. Act Three is something of a sewamono insertion into the jidaimono tale, turning away from the affairs of warriors and politics to focus on the lives of commoners. Act Four is a michiyuki journey, metaphorically associated with a journey through hell. Act Five wraps up the plot quickly and returns to themes of auspiciousness. The following plot summary is based on the full fifteen-scene version. They discuss the consequences of the battle of Yashima , [a] and the fact that the bodies of several members of the Taira clan, who were supposed to have died in the battle, have not been found. Tomokata also presents Yoshitsune with a drum , called "Hatsune", supposedly used several hundred years earlier by the Emperor Kanmu , and thus a precious, rare, and powerful object. The minister describes the symbolism of this imperial gift, explaining that the two drumheads represent Yoshitsune and his brother Yoritomo. The Emperor orders that Yoshitsune strike at his brother, as he would strike the head of the drum. The following scene introduces Wakaba no Naishi, wife of Taira no Koremori, and her young son Rokudai. The pair are explained to be in hiding in a monastic hermitage near the town of Saga , and enter along with a nun who has been sheltering them in her home. A man comes to the house and is soon revealed to be Kokingo Takesato, a Taira retainer. He explains, to their surprise, that Koremori still lives, and that he has come to escort the pair to be reunited with him. Another man then arrives, this one an agent of the Court, seeking the wanted Naishi and Rokudai. Kokingo, in his disguise as a wandering hat seller, along with the nun, attempts to discourage him and turn him away; though the Imperial agent sees through the ruse, Kokingo strikes the man with a wooden pole and makes his escape, along with his two wards. She expresses her apologies on behalf of Benkei, who made some uncouth and inappropriate remarks to the Imperial agents at the presentation of the drum. Though Benkei is portrayed as cool, collected, eloquent, and quite clever in other plays, in this one he is loud, obnoxious, and violent, leaping to action without thinking. A guard enters and informs the group of an impending attack upon the mansion by forces belonging to Yoritomo, and Benkei immediately leaps to face them, but is held back by Shizuka. He presumes they have gone to Yoshino , and chases after them. The monk apologizes, and is forgiven by his lord, at the suggestion of Shizuka. However, Benkei then offers that since their journey will be long and dangerous, a lady such as her should not be subjected to such things and should be escorted back to the capital. She refuses, and in order to prevent her following them, or killing herself in grief, they tie her to a tree, along with the drum Hatsune, and leave her. She replies that their only boat is already promised to their other guests, and a small scuffle occurs between the two as the warrior accuses the woman of harboring Taira fugitives and seeks to enter the room where Yoshitsune and his retainers remain. Just then, the merchant Ginpei makes his first entrance, carrying an anchor over his shoulder, a strong symbolic reference to his true identity as the fugitive general Taira no Tomomori. He argues briefly with Sagami, and throws the warrior out of his house. Introducing himself briefly, and expounding on his identity as a boatman and merchant, he then suggests that they set sail, despite the weather. As Yoshitsune and his retainers dress and prepare for the journey, Ginpei has an aside in which he dramatically reveals himself to the audience as the Taira general Tomomori. He explains to Tsubone that he intends to kill Yoshitsune while out at sea, the rain and dark of night obscuring the battle. He heads out to the boat, as Tsubone and the Emperor change clothes, removing their disguises. Tsubone takes

the Emperor to the seashore, and prepares to have them both drown, sacrificing themselves. But they are pulled back by Yoshitsune as he returns to the shore, and assured of their safety; he has no intentions of capturing or killing the Emperor of Japan. Tomomori, not killed, returns just a few moments after Yoshitsune, and is appalled that his schemes have fallen apart so quickly and easily. Tsubone kills herself, seeing that she cannot serve Tomomori any longer, and the general, recognizing the futility of his schemes, his failure to slay his enemies, and the doom wrought upon his entire clan by the evil actions of his father Taira no Kiyomori, throws himself into the sea, tied to an anchor. Act Three[edit] Act Three opens as Wakaba no Naishi, her retainer Kokingo and son Rokudai pause at a tea shop along their journey to find her husband, Taira no Koremori. They sit down to rest, and a young man in traveling clothes, by the name of Gonta, joins them soon afterwards. Kokingo notices a few moments later, and Gonta returns, apologizing for his mistake. Gonta, attempting to swindle the samurai, accuses him of being a thief, and a battle very nearly breaks out. Though aggressive with words, he is no match for the samurai in a fight, and hides behind a bench while Kokingo only grows more angry and brandishes his sword. Gonta is thus left alone with Kosen, the proprietress of the teahouse, who it turns out is his wife. She scolds him for being a swindler and a gambler; in his response, he explains his life story. The son of Yazaemon of the Tsurube sushi shop, he became a swindler, thief and gambler in order to support himself and his love for Kosen. Disowned and kicked out of his house, he struggled to earn money to buy Kosen out of indenture. Though he describes his intent to rob his mother that night, he is talked out of it by Kosen, and they return home. The next scene focuses on Kokingo, Rokudai and Naishi, pursued by Imperial officers. Already wounded, Kokingo fights off one of the officers, Inokuma Dainoshin, and then sinks to the ground, exhausted. As Naishi weeps over him, he claims he cannot go on, and implores Naishi and her son to forget about him, and to continue on to see Koremori. He promises to follow them after he regains his strength. The pair leave him then, and exit, continuing on their journey. The warrior then dies, just as a group of townsmen, including the sushi shop owner Yazaemon, come upon him. A young man named Yasuke has been living with them for some time, and is due to be married to Osato as soon as Yazaemon returns. Gonta explains to his mother that he is leaving for good, to turn himself around and make something of his life, but asks for some money, claiming that he was robbed on the road on his way there. She places several silver kanme coins in a sushi tub for him and sends him off. Just then, Yazaemon returns; fearing that he should learn that his wife stole from the shop to give to Gonta, they hide the sushi tub among the others. Yazaemon then comes in, calls out for his family, and hides the head of Kokingo, wrapped in his cloak, in one of the other tubs. He explains to Koremori that he just came across Kajiwara Kagetoki, an agent of the shogunate, who suspected him of harboring the general, and that for his safety he might flee the area. As Osato and Yasuke Koremori lie on their wedding bed, preparing to consummate their relationship, he confesses to her not his true identity, but that he has a wife and child in another province, and asks that she release him from his pledge to marry her. By coincidence, the wandering Wakaba no Naishi then arrives at that same house, seeking lodging for the night. Koremori glances outside, realizes who they are, and welcomes them in. He attempts to explain his infidelity to his wife, his romance with Osato coming from a desire to repay Yazaemon for taking him in; Osato overhears, and bursts into sobs. She welcomes Rokudai and Naishi into her home, offering them the seats of honor, and explains her side of the story, asking for forgiveness from Naishi. She fell in love with this gentle man, she explains, whom her father brought home, not knowing that he was secretly a noble. Word comes of the arrival of shogunal officers, and Koremori, his wife and child exit. Gonta arrives, then, declaring to Osato that he intends to turn over the three to the authorities in exchange for a reward. His sister begs him not to, and he grabs the sushi tub with the silver coins and flees after the three. Soldiers then appear, along with Kajiwara, and surround Yazaemon. A shout is heard from outside, as Gonta returns with a woman and child, tied up and being dragged behind him. Yazaemon curses his son as he aggravates the wound, but as he dies, Gonta explains to his father that his deceptions were for good intentions all along. He claims that he intended to give the silver to Koremori for traveling expenses. He then reveals that the woman and child turned over were not Naishi and Rokudai but his own wife and child, Kosen and Zenta, who willingly and voluntarily sacrificed themselves to save the nobles. Koremori, Naishi, and Rokudai then return, alive and safe, disguised as tea merchants. Seemingly, Kajiwara intended all along to spare Koremori,

and granted him in this indirect way a disguise with which to safely escape. Koremori cuts off his topknot , becomes a lay monk, and separates himself from both his families for the final time. Act Four[edit] The fourth act begins with a michiyuki dance scene, which follows Shizuka as she seeks to catch up with Yoshitsune and his party. The journey is narrated by an offstage narrator, in the bunraku style, and there is very little dialogue. As she travels through the countryside, Shizuka decides to play the Hatsune Drum, in order to entice birds to follow her, not knowing the magical or metaphorical significance of the drum. As soon as she does so, a white fox emerges, romps across the stage and then disappears behind a low hill, from which emerges Tadanobu. Several of the monks here are known to be enemies of Yoshitsune, and a letter has just arrived from the capital asking them to hunt him down. The monks discuss, and even those normally hostile to Yoshitsune decide that as monks it is their duty to aid people in need. Thus he declares his stance alongside the shogunate, for the safety of the temple. But he also assures them that he intends to kill the warrior should they do so. Tadanobu is asked by his lord about his stewardship of Shizuka and replies, confused, that he has been in his home province with his ailing mother since the end of the war, and has not seen Shizuka. Shizuka is reunited with her lord, but the Tadanobu who had been escorting her seems to vanish. The first Tadanobu explains to Shizuka that he has not been escorting her and has not seen her in some time; the other retainers confirm that this second Tadanobu is nowhere to be found in the building. She then notices that this Tadanobu is wearing somewhat different clothing, and comes upon the idea of beating the Hatsune Drum to summon her escort. She explains that the drum always attracted her escort, and made him behave strangely. The final scene thus begins with Shizuka beating the drum, and a fox rushes into the room, becoming Tadanobu, who bows before her. Shizuka then suddenly pulls a sword and slashes at Tadanobu, who dodges the attack. Mesmerized by the drum, Tadanobu still manages to avoid continued attacks as Shizuka demands that he reveal his identity. He then tells his story, revealing in the process that he is a kitsune , a fox spirit. The drum was made hundreds of years earlier from the skins of his parents, powerful kitsune whose magic was employed to bring rain. A costume quick-change transforms Tadanobu into his kitsune form, who explains that though he has lived a very long time and gained magical powers, he has been unable to ever care for his parents. Failing to fulfill acts of filial piety prevents him from gaining respect or status among the kitsune, and so for centuries he has sought out this drum.

Chapter 4 : Yoshitsune and the Thousand Cherry Trees : Stanleigh H. Jones :

The Paperback of the Yoshitsune and the Thousand Cherry Trees: A Masterpiece of the Eighteenth-Century Japanese Puppet Theater by Stanleigh Jones Jr. at Shop the Holiday Gift Guide Top Toys of the Season.

Partly for that reason, he said he wanted to express parent-child attachment at the performance in London. Can it touch the hearts of the audience this time? I heard that the exciting scene of the fox flying out over the audience using a technique called chunori appealed to the audience in London. It was premiered as a bunraku play in , as a kabuki play in A tsuzumi drum a hand drum used in traditional Japanese music was made to do a ritual for rain. Its drumskins were made from a pair of year-old foxes which were parents of the fox in disguise. Although the fox had its wife and children, it was not giving up on seeing its parents. The fox aims at the drum that she received from Yoshitsune. When Shizuka and Yoshitsune meet again, the fox is exposed as an imposter. It reveals itself and confides feelings about its parents to them. They are deeply touched by its words and try to call it back by tapping the drum. But the drum makes no sound. Lingering farewell makes the drum lose its sound. Yoshitsune is very impressed by their family love. Although he craved affection and acceptance from his brother, Yoritomo cast off Yoshitsune. He give the drum to the fox that has come out of hiding. It hugs the drum for joy and flies out of sight. Then it shows its thanks by repeling an enemy. Yoritomo, Yoshitsune and Shizuka were historical figures. They were hit with tragedies. The Japanese audience laughs over its fox-like funny gesture, is impressed with its acrobatic movement and is moved to tears by its touching speech. What does Yoshitsune have to do with the fox?

Chapter 5 : Yokogawa Kakuhan and Kitsune Tadanobu in the play Yoshitsune Senbon Zakura | ASU Digital

From June 4th to 15th, the kabuki play titled "Yoshitsune Senbon Zakura (Yoshitsune and the Thousand Cherry Trees) " is being performed at the Sadler's Wells Theater in London.

The manner in which the art has conducted itself is almost like a secret rite, or an initiation into cabal. It is then a rare opportunity to enter into an edifying experience for students of the arts, and in particular performance arts. Kabuki has stayed close to its origins, so to and watch it in a London theatre in is to be put in a time machine and transported to ancient feudal Japan when kings were kings and warriors existed in the true sense of the word. For a modern, Western audience Kabuki can be trying but utterly mesmerizing at the same time. The elocution is stilted and emphatic. In Kabuki, melodrama is the key much like ancient Roman and Greek theatre. This melodrama is coupled with elaborate costume, and a constant layer of sound-design that is not restricted to one area of the theatre creating a dynamism that maintains audience interest. He is the latest member of the great Ichikawa Danjuro acting dynasty which stretches back to the 17th century. It is known to be more aggressive, and riotous. What struck me the most was how it is easy to see the things that Butoh has taken from Kabuki. Teachers of Butoh such as Atsushi Takenouchi talk of transforming the energy on stage, a process that dancers work with. In Butoh, if you are a tree, you must be wholly the tree, projecting the energy of a tree. It is used to punctuate climactic moments. The actor adopts highly stylized poses, with head rotations and popping eyes. The crossed eye which is common in Butoh also has its roots in Kabuki, as does foot stamping. The result is a symphony of sounds and movements both aggrandized and subtle, talking to each other. Another strict convention followed is that there are no women in Kabuki. Shizuka is a very one-dimensional character with limited movement and a limited range of emotions. A supernatural theme plays out, and as is commonplace in Japanese folklore and mythology, the white fox makes an appearance. Chunori or stage tricks are employed constantly with the most spectacular occurring at the end, as Ichikawa Ebizo affects his final transformation.

Chapter 6 : Key Kabuki Words - KABUKI KOOL - NHK WORLD - English

Play title: Yoshitsune Senbon Zakura Yoshitsune and the Thousand Cherry Trees: Authors: Takeda Izumo II Miyoshi Shōraku Namiki Senryū I: History: The play "Yoshitsune Senbon Zakura" was originally written for the puppet theater and staged for the first time in the 11th lunar month of in Ōsaka at the Takemotoza.

Fox, a magical fox who adopts the appearance of Tadanobu Heike Clan General, believed to have died during the decisive sea battle at Dannoura. Kajiwaru Kagetoki, retainer Act 1. Shigeyori urges leniency for the soldiers but Benkei recklessly cuts off their heads and proceeds to play with them in a barrel as if washing potatoes. He then forgives Benkei and they set off for Daimotsu Bay to board ship for exile in Kyushu. Yoshitsune forbids Shizuka to join the group, gives her the drum, and has her bound to a tree to prevent her from following. A villain taunts her and seizes the drum. His secret motive is to stay close to the drum, which is made from the hides of his parents. Yoshitsune witnesses the actions of Fox-Tadanobu, rewards him with his own armor, and entrusts Shizuka to his protection. Shizuka beats the drum as they exit along the hanamichi walkway [through the audience] and Fox-Tadanobu reveals his fox nature by his actions. In reality, Ginpei is the Heike general, Tomomori, resolved to kill Yoshitsune. He climbs the hill on a promontory, ties a huge anchor to his body, throws the anchor into the sea and, wrenched in afterward, somersaults backwards. Wakaba no Naishi, his wife, accompanied by her young son, Rokudai, and the faithful retainer, Kokingo, is searching for Koremori. The group rests in the village and encounters the villainous Gonta. Gonta secretly switches packs with Kokingo, later makes the error known, and then claims that twenty gold coins are missing from his pack. Not wishing to attract attention, Naishi orders Kokingo to pay Gonta that sum. In a subsequent pursuit into a bamboo grove by Genji constables, Kokingo becomes separated from Naishi and Rokudai, and is killed in spectacular fashion. The constables lasso the defiant Kokingo from many directions, raise him high, and then stab him repeatedly. Yazaemon, the owner of a sushi shop in a nearby village, is harboring Koremori disguised as Yasuke, his young apprentice. He comes upon the body of Kokingo and decapitates it, to present the head to the authorities as that of Koremori. Yazaemon is also the father of Gonta, whom he believes to be a good-for-nothing. In Scene 2, at the sushi shop, three sushi buckets stand in a row on stage. Gonta spies Yazaemon returning and hides some money stolen from his mother in one of the buckets. Yazaemon enters and stows the head in another bucket. In the evening Naishi and Rokudai enter and are joyously reunited with Yasuke-Koremori. Gonta overhears, mistakenly takes the bucket with the head, and rushes off to claim a reward from the authorities. As Yazaemon is about to open the bucket containing the money, Gonta appears dragging two prisoners, their faces obscured by gags, who he claims are Naishi and Rokudai. Kajiwaru rewards him with a precious robe and leaves. Yazaemon promptly stabs Gonta, appalled at his apparent treachery. When the robe is unfolded, Buddhist garments and a rosary tumble out indicating that Kajiwaru was not duped. Michiyuki; and The Fox Act 4 moves back to the story of Shizuka and the fox, including only a brief episode involving another Heike general, Noritsune. Scene 1, set amid the cherry blossoms, is often performed as an independent dance piece. Shizuka and the Fox-Tadanobu set out on a michiyuki journey to rejoin Yoshitsune in his hideout on Mt. Fox-Tadanobu comforts the disheartened Shizuka by teaching her a folk dance concerning the Battle of Dannoura. The genuine Tadanobu arrives and Shizuka is perplexed until she hits on a way to discover which is the fox. She asks both Tadanobus to hide and then strikes the drum. The fox cannot resist the call of the drum and his costume transforms to that of a white fox. He performs numerous acrobatic tricks, magically appears and reappears through stage traps, and adopts the voice and gestures of a fox. Fox-Tadanobu confesses his filial loyalty to the drum and is rewarded with it by Yoshitsune. Soldiers led by Noritsune, formerly disguised as the Zen master, Kakuhan, attack. Fox-Tadanobu bewitches the attackers by flying through the air, and reconciles Noritsune with Yoshitsune by demonstrating that Yoshitsune has kept the emperor alive.

Chapter 7 : Yoshitsune Senbon Zakura - Wikipedia

Adapted from a puppet play from , Yoshi-tsune and the Thousand Cherry Trees begins as Yoshitsune, a 12th-century general, is forced to flee into the countryside after a power struggle with the.

Chapter 8 : Shizuka Gozen - Wikipedia

Yoshitsune's flight became the subject of many tales and plays which were crowned by the masterpiece Yoshitsune Senbon Zakura (Yoshitsune and the Thousand Cherry Trees), first written as a jÅruri (puppet) play in and so popular that it was adapted into kabuki within weeks.