



Satsumahayato Kuniwakamaru pays a visit to Itsukushima Shrine

～Synopsis～

【about 30min】



① At the beginning of the Edo period (about 1600~1867), a prince, Shimazu Kuniwakamaru lives in Satsuma, which is present day Kagoshima.



② Kuniwakamaru plans to pay a visit to Itsukushima Shrine in Aki, which is present day Hiroshima, to pray for a victory in war, and peace for his family.



③ He visits Itsukushima shrine with his chief retainer (underling) Niromusashinokami. They enjoy the beautiful mountain and ocean scenery on the way to the shrine.



④ To their surprise, five columns of colored water appear from the ocean as a symbol of the God of the shrine.



⑤ The two surprised and delighted men are welcomed to the shrine as beautiful music plays and the female God Benzaiten dances.



⑥ They make an offering to the shrine and pray for their wishes to be fulfilled.



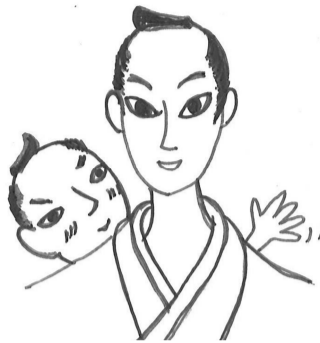
⑦ The God of the shrine and Benzaiten revealed their spirit forms and accepted their prayers.



⑧ They greatly appreciated the help from the Gods, then returned to Satsuma.

Yame Fukushima no Tourou Ningyou 八女福島の燈籠人形

Kuniwakamaru and Musashinokami are decorative puppets, so they do not move on the stage. Their attendants will perform on the stage. Do not miss their performance.



The highlight of this program is the puppet performance. Pay attention to the puppet operators' skill.

What role do the puppets on the stage play?



➤ **Benzaiten** (Female God)

: Horizontally controlled puppet. Benzaiten is one of the Seven Gods of Fortune. It is said that Benzaiten is deeply connected with the Itsukushima shrine. In this program, she welcomes Kuniwakamaru and Niromusashinokami and listens to their prayers.



➤ **Shimazu Kuniwakamaru**

: Decorative puppet on the stage. Shimazu Kuniwakamaru is the prince of Satsuma. He visits Itsukushima shrine to pray for his prayers to be fulfilled.

There is no fox for this program.



➤ **Kuniwakamaru's servant**

: Sub controlled puppet. Do not miss this puppets' performance.



➤ **Niromusashinokami**

: Decorative puppet on the stage. Niromusashinokami is the chief retainer (underling) of Satsuma. He visits Itsukushima Shrine with Kuniwakamaru.



➤ **Benzaiten's servant**

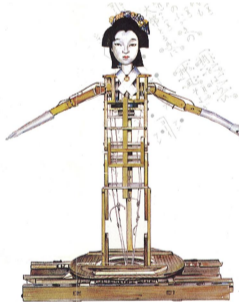
:Horizontally controlled puppet.

What's going on inside the stage?

Japanese theater form

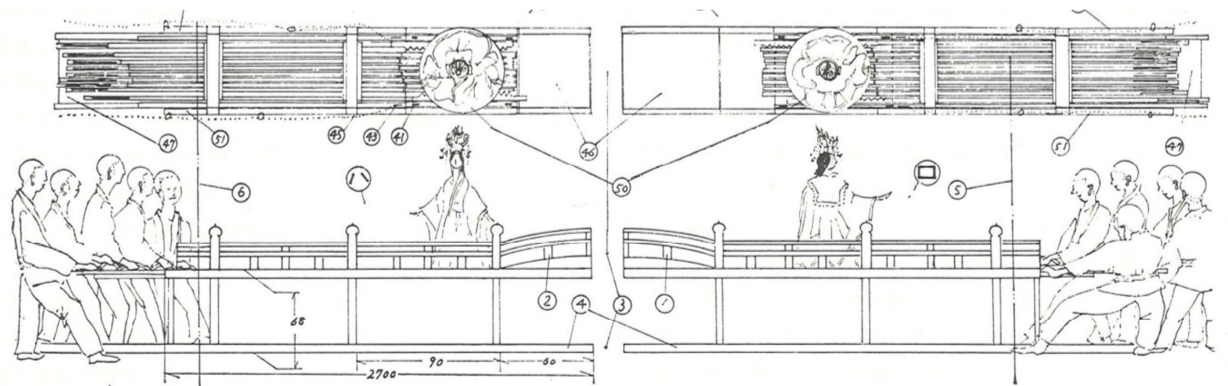
(Kyogenkata)

Kyogenkata plays a role in matching the timing of the puppets' operating team with the musical accompaniment. Since the puppet operating team and the musical accompaniment do their roles on different floors of the theater they cannot make eye contact with each other. The *Kyogenkata* beat wooden clappers and the puppet operating team and the musical accompaniment match the timing by listening to the sound of the clappers. The *Kyogenkata* plays a very important role.



Songs · Musicians (Uta · Hayasikata)

Uta · Hayasikata is the musical accompaniment. The singer tells a story using the melody. The band is composed of *Shamisen*, a Japanese stringed instrument, *Tsudumi*, a Japanese hand drum, and *Taiko*, a Japanese drum. The singer and the band perform live, matching the puppets' performance.



Guardians (Kokenyaku)

Kokenyaku are children who stay on the side of the stage during the program. They are used to take care of the puppets, doing such things as straightening out the puppets' costumes.



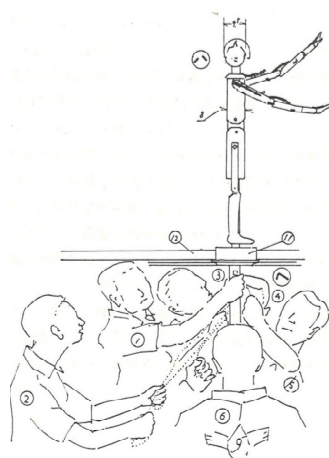
Costumes (Ishoukata)

Ishoukata is the team that takes care of the puppets' costumes. A puppet changes costumes several times during the program. Changing costumes quickly is called *Sunuki*.



Horizontal control (Yokozukai)

Yokozukai is a team that operates puppets from both sides of the stage. On each side, 6 person teams operate the puppet. It is quite difficult to operate the puppet from the sides. The highlight of the operation is *Okuriwatashi*. This means moving the puppet smoothly from left to right and from right to left. To perform a successful *Okuriwatashi*, the two teams must match the timing very carefully. Pay attention to the moment the puppets move from side to side.



Sub control (Shitazukai)

Shitazukai is a team that operates the puppets from below the stage. Since they are constantly looking up to operate the puppets from below, it is physically challenging work.