

KABUKI: Traditional Japanese Theater

The word kabuki is constituted of three kanjis (Japanese ideograms) which mean: dance, singing and ability technique. Appeared in early 17th century in the streets of the capital (Tokyo), this new theatrical artistic form was very avant-gardist. Women would have disguised in men and vice-versa to play controversial roles.



- Traditional Old Japanese Kabuki Representation Poster

In the mid 17th, the theatrical form developed considerably and gained visibility. Two main styles appeared then. The first one, called *Aragoto* style, represents the “hard” style inspired by the merchants from Osaka. The actors exaggerate their acting and the words as well as their make up. In the other hand, the *Wagoto* style is “softer” because it is primarily dedicated to tragic romance plays. But, mythologies, folkloric stories, historical events have also been readapted on stage.



- Kabuki Play Broadcast on TV/Film



- * Two Kids ready to perform
Credit: Susanspiritugallery.com

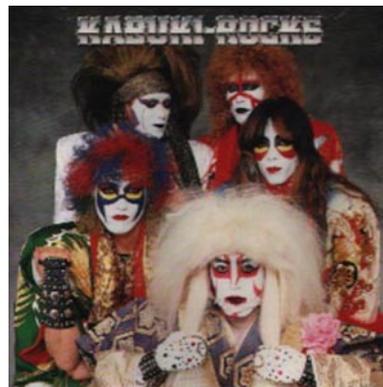
Kabuki is performed with live acoustic music, usually originated by traditional percussions and cords instruments. Also, the make up, the costumes (usually kimonos, traditional Japanese outfits) and the ton of voice are extremely important in Kabuki because the audience should be able to recognize the characters in a quick glance. Often, there is a mythological “diabolic” character that inspires fear and suspense.



- Two mythological characters (kind character vs. mean character)

Kabuki Today:

Extremely controverted at its creation, today, Kabuki is an art form considered extremely important in the Japanese culture. Big families’ traditions have passed the knowledge from generation to generation. Because of the rareness of the practice, there is tension between the families. However, each family developed its own Kabuki style/story throughout the centuries. The “scariness” of some Kabuki characters influenced contemporary artists: wrestlers, music bands, cartoons drawers etc.



Want to know more? Use this link to watch video edited by the UNESCO
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=67-bgSFJiKc>