

CLASSICAL JAPANESE THEATRICAL DANCE FORM ON DISPLAY AT UBC

Kabuki performers ready for prime time



photo submitted

IZUMI Tokuho in "Kasane." Tokuho's first stage appearance was when he was three years old. The Kabuki performer specializes in onnagata or female roles and is a member of "Ko-no-Kai" with Fujima Shogo.

■ **Odori: The World of Kabuki Dance.** Frederic Wood Theatre, UBC, April 10 and 11 at 7:30 p.m. Tickets \$25/\$20/\$15 available by calling 604-822-2678. Free lecture demonstration on Kabuki dance featuring the artists and Dr. Julie Iezzi from the University of Hawaii tonight at 7:30 p.m.

Cheryl Rossi

Contributing Writer

AS an actor, dancer, choreographer and director, Colleen Lanki went to Japan in 1995 because she'd always been drawn to the aesthetics of Japanese theatrical dance.

She stayed seven years.

"(I) really, really enjoyed the theatricality and the transformative quality of kabuki dance," Lanki said. "And the fact that people were doing it at 80, 85-years-old, I thought, I like this. This is fantastic."

Now the non-profit arts society she founded, TomoeArts, which promotes, teaches and performs Japanese classical dance, is bringing four 100-year-old kabuki dances to

Vancouver, performed by her and masters from Japan, and outfitted by costume experts.

Odori: The World of Kabuki Dance runs April 10 and 11 at the Frederic Wood Theatre at the University of B.C. On April 9, TomoeArts is offering a free lecture and kabuki demonstration.

Kabuki theatre was the primary theatrical entertainment during Japan's Edo period from 1603 to 1867, and odori was the dance form used in kabuki performances with intricate costumes and compelling storylines.

Lanki's longtime teacher, Fujima Shogo, who's performed on international stages for two decades, will depict a low-ranking samurai in a performance with comic elements. He'll don white or red makeup and wear a wig that's partially a bald plate and tousled like he just got out of bed because his character is a bit rough and tumble.

Male dancer Izumi Tokuho, who specializes in dancing female roles, will sport an intricate lacquered-looking wig made from human hair, fit expressly for his head with metal plates, as all wigs for kabuki dance are, to play a young maid servant.

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Costumes specific to stories

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Fujima Monyo will dance a male role and also act as the koken, or stage attendant for the other dancers, so he'll bypass a full costume and wig in favour of Japanese formal wear, which is easier to move in.

All kabuki dance performances feature such an attendant who works in full view of the audience — the dances are even choreographed to incorporate this individual, who handles dancer's fans or adjusts their costumes and wigs.

Lanki, a tall, blond Finnish-Scottish-Irish-Canadian will embody a retired courtesan living in the mountains who's recalling her life in the big city.

Her costume or fan will likely include motifs of mountains, maple leaves or fall, when the story is set, because kabuki costumes are specific to the stories.

A costuming demonstration will take place

at the Museum of Anthropology on April 10 at 2 p.m.

All of the dancers coming from Japan have been studying classical dance since they were children, with two of them first performing when they were three. The average age of the dancers in Odori is 40.

"In the world of dance, this is a prime time, really," Lanki said.

She said when she tells those in the know the ages of the dancers, "the response is, 'Oh good, they're young. That's excellent.'"

Lanki formed TomoeArts a year and a half ago. Last year it presented the contemporary Ten Nights of Dream at the Centre A gallery. Lanki plans to alternate contemporary and classical productions, presenting one major show each year.

For more information about Odori: The World of Kabuki Dance and related events, see www.tomoearts.org, or phone 604-822-2678 for tickets to Odori.