

One of the most well-known traditional performing arts in Japan, kabuki is an intriguing, multi-faceted theater performance that traces its origins back to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Looking at its male-dominated form now, it is important to remember that kabuki was originally pioneered by female performers, but their involvement was outlawed in the early seventeenth century when it was deemed too provocative. Today, female roles are still performed by men.

A few characteristics make kabuki distinct from other Japanese performance art. Most prominently, the actors don full-face makeup (*kumadori*) and elaborate costumes. This makes kabuki Japanese theater at its most physical, with heavily stylized and exaggerated movements. Kabuki plays are based on traditional texts and literature: some regale audiences with tales of the glory of the ruling samurai class back in the day, while others are based on the lives of everyday folk.

The Kabukiza Theater in Ginza is an icon of kabuki, with frequent performances that change in program on a monthly basis. It also features a permanent interactive exhibition where you can learn about this UNESCO-recognized enduring art form. Don't miss the shopping center on the second basement floor, where you'll find a variety of kabuki-related gifts and souvenirs.