

While the opera-like noh theater was largely associated with the nobility, kabuki emerged as the theater of the people. There are two types of kabuki plays: more formal *jidaimono* based on historical events that often tell tales of the ruling samurai class, and *sewamono*, stories that revolve around everyday folk, with themes such as romance and moral conflict taking center stage.

In the past, a kabuki performance sometimes stretched on to become a full day's entertainment, with patrons coming and going as they pleased. These days, a show is usually around four hours; it consists of a few acts with several short intermissions plus a longer meal break lasting about 30 minutes.

One distinctive characteristic of kabuki theater is that actors sometimes break through the fourth wall to address the crowd directly. Similarly, audience members can yell out the actors' names as a form of encouragement, known as *oomukou*. Needless to say, a kabuki show is always lively, and the staging plays a role in enabling this immersive experience. The elevated pathway that extends from the stage into the audience, known as the *hanamachi* and unique to kabuki, often blurs the line between the performers and the spectators. This, coupled with interesting props and stage features including trap doors and false walls, results in an engaging show that is historically rich and visually captivating.