

Hanamichi and Kari Hanamichi

The *hanamichi* (lit. “flower path”) is an additional part of the stage in a Japanese kabuki theater. It is a long, raised narrow walkway that runs to the left of the center of the main seating area from the back of the theater, through the audience, to connect with the main stage. The walkway can be used for a variety of scenes, providing settings such as a road, the aisle of a castle, or even the ocean. When the actors use this walkway they move right in the midst of the audience, adding great drama and excitement to the play. The actors appear from behind the *agemaku* curtain. This opens with a clattering sound made by wooden blocks to alert the audience that the actors will appear, further building up the dramatic tension.

The walkway is 1.3 meters in width and 14 meters in length. It leads to the small waiting space called the *toya*, where the actors enter and exit. In addition to being used for characters’ entrances and exits, the *hanamichi* is also used for scenes taking place apart from the main action. It is an integral part of the kabuki stage.

A *kari hanamichi* (secondary *hanamichi*) runs along the right side of the theater from the back of the theater to the stage. It is 0.8 meters in width, 14 meters in length. This sub-*hanamichi* was originally created in the Edo period as a pathway to the audience seats. But the players of old realized its potential dramatic effect and began using it in the kabuki plays as a secondary *hanamichi*. The Kanamaruza uses both *hanamichi* so the audience can enjoy the kabuki at its best.