

### **Engyōji and the Arts**

Stories about Engyōji, its monks, and the famous visitors it has received are woven into the fabric of Japanese literature and theater. An early example dates from the lifetime of the temple's founding abbot, Shōkū (910–1007), when the renowned literary figure and lady of the courts, Izumi Shikibu (976–1030), contacted him in search of spiritual guidance. Rich with Buddhist imagery, the *waka* poem she composed on that occasion was selected for inclusion in an imperial anthology, the highest poetic honor of its time. A stone monument to Izumi Shikibu stands just north of the Founder's Hall (Kaisandō).

A passage in the *Taiheiki* (Chronicle of Great Peace), one of Japan's most famous medieval war tales, recounts Emperor Godaigo's (1288–1339) momentous visit to Engyōji in 1333 to pray for victory over the Kamakura shogunate. As the *Taiheiki* was revised and popularized through stage plays in subsequent centuries, knowledge of Engyōji spread far and wide.

During the late fourteenth century, Noh theater rose in prominence as it gained popularity among the elite. Shōkū plays a critical role in the play *Eguchi*, written by Zeami Motokiyo (c. 1363–1443), who is often credited as the father of Noh. In the play, one character's recounting of a story about Shōkū provides the first clues that the play's main character, the deceased Madam Eguchi, may be an avatar of the Bodhisattva Fugen. In 2006, a production of *Eguchi* was performed on the stage of the Jōgyōdō to mark the 1,000th anniversary of Shōkū's death. The picturesque setting of the temple's Three Halls has also appeared in several major historical television dramas and movies, including *The Last Samurai* (2003), starring Tom Cruise and Ken Watanabe.