

Bugaku (Program Text)

Bugaku court dances were performed primarily in the emperor's court. This form of dance was influenced by customs and court culture of mainland Asia and is characterized by stylized movements, elaborate costumes, and traditional instrumental music called *gagaku*. *Bugaku* has been passed down for over 1,200 years, making it one of Japan's oldest performing arts. It is still performed at certain court functions at the Imperial Palace and can occasionally be viewed at shrines, temples, and theaters. *Bugaku* was added to UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2009 as part of the "Gagaku" inscription.

This program presents an abridged performance of *Ranryo'o* (Prince Lanling), possibly the most famous dance in the *bugaku* repertoire. It is based on the story of a Chinese prince who was so handsome that he was not taken seriously as a military commander. To inspire his troops and intimidate enemies, he donned a fearsome mask and went on to lead his army to victory. The dancer's gestures symbolize directing soldiers in battle.