

Kyogen (Tablet Text)

NEXT PERFORMANCE: Kyogen Play

Bo shibari (Tied to a Staff)

Kyogen is a traditional comedy theater that emphasizes physical humor, wordplay, and absurdity.

It originated from acrobatic performances that were once held during rice planting and harvest festivals.

Kyogen developed in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries alongside *noh* theater.

Kyogen focuses on situations in everyday life and uses colloquial language, which made it popular with ordinary people.

Modern *kyogen* is performed independently, between *noh* plays, or at festivals as an offering to entertain the deities.

Kyogen actors do not rely on many props beyond occasional small items that can be held in their hands.

The play *Bo shibari* (Tied to a Staff) tells the story of Taro and Jiro, two servants in a rich man's house.

Every time the lord leaves the house, they cause trouble and drink his *sake*. This time, however, the lord has a plan...

The Lord (in long trousers) enters with his servant Taro.

LORD: "I need to tie Jiro up before I leave, but he is quite strong... Whatever can be done?"

Taro notes that Jiro has been practicing self-defense with a staff.

TARO: "How about we wait for a chance and tie him to his own staff?"

Jiro is called to demonstrate his skills.

JIRO: “With just this staff in my hands, I have nothing to fear no matter where the threat comes from!”

As Jiro poses, the Lord and Taro grab him and bind his arms to the staff.

Jiro claims that he doesn’t understand why he was tied up.

While Taro is distracted, the Lord ties him up, too. Taro also claims that he doesn’t know the reason.

LORD: “You always drink my *sake* when I leave the house! Now stay like that and look after things while I’m gone!”

TARO: “Oh, he really left us like this!

[...]

Now I really want some good *sake*...”

Jiro realizes that they can still use their hands a little and manages to break into the *sake* storehouse.

JIRO: “It’s open, it’s open! Look at all these *sake* jars! This one is still sealed tight. I’ll take it!”

JIRO: “Let’s use our usual jumbo saucer!”

After serving Taro, Jiro tries to drink his share.

TARO: “What are you doing? You’ll spill the *sake*!”

JIRO: “Just watch! I can drink it just fine!”

Jiro can’t reach the *sake* saucer, so Taro offers to hold it for him.

JIRO: “Just as you said, it’s delicious!”

Taro and Jiro happily help themselves to more *sake* and sing a drunken song.

As they get more and more intoxicated, Taro sings and Jiro performs a dance.

While they are absorbed in their dance, the Lord returns home.

Reaching for more *sake*, Jiro sees the Lord's reflection in the saucer and tells Taro to look.

JIRO: "It's our master's sour, ugly face!"

TARO: "What an unpleasant expression!"

JIRO (laughs): "That's what he always looks like!"

LORD: "I knew it! You two stole my *sake* and got drunk again!"

TARO and JIRO: "Please forgive us!"

LORD: "Someone grab those lazy servants! You won't get away with this!"