

Kyomai Dance (Tablet Text)

NEXT PERFORMANCE: Kyomai Dance

Kyomai is a type of traditional Japanese dance that originated in Kyoto.

Most people experience *Kyomai* by watching *geiko* and *maiko* performances.

Geiko are traditional female performing artists who entertain guests at *zashiki* parlors with dances, songs, music, and games.

In other regions, *geiko* are called *geisha*.

Maiko are young apprentices who are training to become *geiko*.

In this show, *Kyomai* is generally performed by *maiko* from the Gion Kobu district.

The *geiko* and *maiko* of Gion Kobu study the *Kyomai* dance of the Inoue school, which took shape in the eighteenth century.

Many theater and dance arts flourished during that mostly peaceful time.

The Inoue-school style of *Kyomai* was developed in *zashiki*, relatively small parlors where guests were entertained with song and dance.

The *Kyomai* dance of the Inoue school was inspired by *noh* theater and its stylized movements, which are finely controlled and full of meaning.

It also integrated the elegant movements of dances performed at the emperor's court.

Please enjoy the first charming dance of the evening.

Kyomai is known for graceful, feminine movements and for telling stories and expressing emotions elegantly through dance.

In addition to the standard folding fan, dancers sometimes use thin cloths, lanterns, umbrellas, or other small props.

A single prop can represent various objects or actions: for example, the fan may be used to mime pouring tea.

Kyomai dance is accompanied by singing and *shamisen* music.

When young women become *maiko*, their training involves more than just dance, but includes a variety of other traditional arts.

Maiko practice almost every day, and lessons may consist of dancing, singing, and playing *shamisen*, drums, flute, or *koto*.

After several years of apprenticeship, *maiko* become *geiko*.

Geiko and *maiko* who specialize in dance are called “tachikata,” and those who focus on music are called “jikata.”

Even after *maiko* become *geiko*, they continue to take lessons and polish their arts.

Now, please enjoy the classic ballad, *Gion kouta* (A Song for Gion), with English lyrics.

Please note that the following is not a literal translation.

Gion kouta (A Song for Gion)

A hazy moon hangs over the Higashiyama mountains.

Night after night, the dim glow of torchlight illuminates blushing cherry blossoms, so sweet they seem like a dream.

Love is hidden behind flowing kimono sleeves.

Loving Gion, longing for Gion... Oh, the swaying of the long *obi* sashes!

In summer, she cools herself by the Kamo River. How fair is her neck, faintly illuminated at twilight!

Lips burning red like Mt. Daimonji fires, secret tears glisten in the glow of the lantern.

Loving Gion, longing for Gion... Oh, the swaying of the long *obi* sashes!

The waters of the Kamo River are growing low. Over the quiet murmur of the river, the evening bells are tolling.

The autumn winds cry in the dark among the weeping willows standing bare and gaunt.

Loving Gion, longing for Gion... Oh, the swaying of the long *obi* sashes!

The snow falls silently outside the round window. Lovers finally meet again after long being apart.

Shadows dance in the lantern's glow through the cold night.

The call of the river plover near their shared pillow means that the lovers must soon part once more.

Loving Gion, longing for Gion... Oh, the swaying of the long *obi* sashes!