

Hooza Kabuki Theater

The first incarnation of the Hooza Kabuki Theater was an open-air stage located on the grounds of the local Mimayano Hie Shrine. Kabuki theater was tremendously popular in rural areas during the Edo period (1603–1867), as it was one of the few forms of entertainment. Around 1827, the stage was dismantled and reconstructed in its present location, and a permanent structure was eventually built around it.

The Hooza Kabuki Theater's longevity can be attributed to the local community's passion for *ji-kabuki*, grassroots Kabuki performed by amateur actors. Performances are held at the theater annually on May 3rd and 4th in conjunction with the festivals of the neighboring Hie and Kumano Shrines. The theater can accommodate an audience of around 600 people.

The Hooza Village Theater Preservation Society has managed the theater since its formation in 1961. The Society is made up of amateur actors and theater enthusiasts. In 1998, they put on a production of *The Treasury of Loyal Retainers* that was so successful that the group traveled to perform in Osaka and Nagoya. The performance was reprised in Paris, France and Salamanca, Spain in 2018. In addition to Kabuki, the Society aims to train new generations of shamisen musicians, a traditional Japanese stringed instrument, and the *tayu*, who narrate the story along with the action of the play.