

National Bunraku Theatre
Autumn BUNRAKU performance, 2025

Date: Saturday, September 6 - Tuesday, October 14, 2025 *No performance on Sep. 12 & 24 / Oct. 6

Program A

Welcome to BUNRAKU!

On the occasion of EXPO 2025 Osaka, Kansai, Japan, we will present an English-language introductory video on Ningyō Jōruri Bunraku for the enjoyment of our overseas visitors.

Koi Nyōbō Somewake Tazuna

(The Beloved Wife and the Multi-Colored Horse Reins)

Shigenoi, a wet nurse in a feudal lord's family, and her young son Sankichi were separated from each other soon after Sankichi was born. After these years of separation they reunite by chance; however, for certain reasons Shigenoi cannot reveal her identity. She is distressed, torn between motherly love and her current circumstances. Meanwhile, pathetic Sankichi earnestly seeks a mother's love while putting up with hard work even as a young boy. The pricelessness of the parent-child bond will arouse the emotions of those in the audience regardless of age.

Hidakagawa Iriai Zakura

(The Cherry Blossoms at Sunset at the Hidakagawa River)

Consumed with deep affection for her beloved Anchin, Kiyohime transforms into a giant snake and crosses the Hidaka River. Presented is the "Watashiba (The Crossing at the Hidaka River)" scene that is filled with the depth of Gidayū-bushi and the charms of the stage direction unique to a puppet play.

Program B

Shinjū Ten no Amijima (The Love Suicides at Amijima)

Although he is a man with a family, Kamiya Jihē has been involved with courtesan Kinokuniya Koharu, even making a suicide pact with her. However, Jihē's brother Konaya Magoemon draws out her real intentions, which was that she truly hoped to be spared from committing this double suicide with Jihē. Overhearing her words, Jihē loses his mind. Persuaded by Magoemon, Jihē and Koharu decide to break up, out of consideration for Jihē. Despite such good intentions, the situation surrounding them takes an unexpected turn. Centering on the subtleties of human nature, the story continues to unfold, depicting a variety of closely related elements.

Program C

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Sonezaki Shinjū (The Love Suicides at Sonezaki)

A love-related suicide that took place long ago at the Tsuyunoten Shrine in Sonezakishinchi was dramatized for a Bunraku play by Chikamatsu Monzaemon. Shortly after its premiere in 1703, performances of the piece stopped; however, after a long hiatus it has gained in popularity since its revival in 1955. In the tale, the Hiranoya salesclerk Tokubē is defrauded of a huge sum of money, which was supposed to be returned to his master. At his wits' end, Tokubē secretly pays a visit to Ohatsu, his favorite courtesan at Tenmaya. Ohatsu then hides Tokubē under the floorboards. Not only being unable to fulfill his duty to his master but also having lost the trust of the public, Tokubē loses his will to live. Ohatsu decides to offer her life for him and asks him about his will. To convey to her that he is ready to die, he takes her ankle and moves it to his throat. The last journey of the couple, who have pledged to marry in the next world, is beautifully depicted.

Learn more about BUNRAKU

Visit → <https://www2.ntj.jac.go.jp/unesco/bunraku/en/>

INVITATION TO BUNRAKU

—Guidance for Japanese Puppet Theatre Appreciation—

*This website is provided in Japanese / English / Simplified Chinese / Traditional Chinese / Korean / German / French / Spanish.

