

*The ABC of BUNRAKU*

The World of BUNRAKU is presented by YAGI Saki, a Freelance announcer who is active in various fields. She explains to the audience the roles of *Tayu* (narrator), Shamisen player and puppeteer, and reveals some little-known aspects of their performance.

*Sugawara Denju Tenarai Kagami (Sugawara's Secrets of Calligraphy)*

Act : Terairi / Terakoya

In the village of Seryō, in the mountains far from the capital of Kyoto, Takebe Genzō, a former retainer of Kan Shōjō, runs a small village school. Having been entrusted with the care of Kan Shōjō's son, Kan Shūsai, Genzō and his wife, Tonami, pretend that Kan Shūsai is their own child.

While Genzō is away, a child arrives with his mother, seeking enrollment in the school. Leaving her son, Kotarō, the mother makes her departure from the school. At this point, Genzō returns, all color drained from his face. It has been discovered that he has been harboring Kan Shūsai, and he has been given the terrible order to behead the child. He considers killing one of the other pupils as a substitute, but they are all farmers' children, who could never pass for the son of a court aristocrat. When Tonami introduces him to the new pupil, Kotarō, however, Genzō sees that the boy is of noble upbringing, and he decides he must kill Kotarō in Kan Shūsai's place.

Soon afterward, Shundō Genba and Matsuōmaru, servants of Kan Shōjō's political enemy, Fujiwara no Shihei, arrive at the school. Matsuōmaru, who knows what Kan Shūsai looks like, has come to identify the head of the boy handed over by Genzō as that of Kan Shūsai. Reminded to obey his orders to behead Kan Shūsai, Genzō has no choice but to behead the substitute, Kotarō. Matsuōmaru is shown the head of the slain child and declares that it is unmistakably that of Kan Shūsai. The party then departs the village school, bearing the head.

Just as Genzō and Tonami are breathing a sigh of relief, Kotarō's mother, Chiyo, arrives to collect her son from school. Genzō attempts to kill the mother as well to conceal his deeds, but Chiyo evades his sword and makes the surprising statement, 'Has my son died usefully in taking Kan Shūsai's place?' At this point, Matsuōmaru reappears. The fact is that Kotarō was the only son of Matsuōmaru and Chiyo. Although a servant of Kan Shōjō's enemy, Shihei, Matsuōmaru wanted to be of service to Kan Shōjō, who had given Matsuōmaru his name and to whom Matsuōmaru owed a debt of obligation. Matsuōmaru effects a reunion between Kan Shūsai and his mother, Kan Shōjō's wife, whom Matsuōmaru has rescued from the enemy. Dressed in white mourning kimono, Matsuōmaru and Chiyo conduct the funeral rites for their son, Kotarō.