

Great Actor of Old Kabukiza

Photo: Shochiku, Co.



By the time you receive the July/August issue of *Japan SPOTLIGHT* in early July, demolition work will have begun on the Kabukiza theater in Tokyo's Higashi-Ginza area – just a stone's throw from the offices of the Japan Economic Foundation – in the lead-up to construction of a new Kabukiza. From the middle of the 20th century up until the present day, Kabukiza has created history, and is packed with the memories of many distinguished actors who have already passed away. Perhaps many readers may only have a tepid interest in such Japanese *kabuki* actors of the past. However, cultural assets with a long history are the pride of a country and I think it is important to treasure such traditional culture and to let as many people as possible outside Japan know how wonderful they are – just as the French publicize the French language and culture to the world – since doing so enriches the hearts and minds of both the Japanese and people from other countries.

If I were to be asked which great actor epitomizes the soon-to-be-demolished Kabukiza, I would cite “the late Nakamura Kanzaburo” (the father of the current Nakamura Kanzaburo). Among his successful roles was one of Kamiyui Shinza (*Photo*), a rascal of the street who was a character created by Kawatake Mokuami, a *kabuki* playwright of the late Edo period. The city of Edo (today's Tokyo), just like London at that time, had become decadent, particularly toward the end of the Edo period, and there were many criminals. The late Kanzaburo embodied both the frightening and pathetic aspects of the villain of this period, making the darkness of Edo physically real to the audience. He was an eminent *kabuki* player who was active until the 1980s, and it is possible to enjoy his excellent performance on DVD and other media. I think there must be products with English subtitles. I recommend that you buy a video should you have an opportunity to visit Japan.

M. Haraoka

News

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Please take a look!

