

Interlude: Kuri-yaki (“Baking walnuts”)

The master goes out for business, giving an order to Taro-kaja to bake walnuts for expected guests. Taro-kaja immediately starts baking them. When he tries to see if they are baked all right, he tries a bite at one. Finding it so tasty, he is unable to stop devouring one after another. When he comes to himself, he finds that he has consumed all forty walnuts. As evil luck would have it, the master comes home. When asked by the master, Taro-kaja says he has offered two of them to the man-and-wife deities presiding over the kitchen range. The master is rejoiced at the good deed. Taro-kaja continues saying that another 34 have been distributed to the children of the deities. What could be his excuse of the remaining four walnuts?

Noh: Yamamba (“Mountain Hag”)

Hyakuma Yamamba, a dancer, who has won fame by performing dancing of the mountain-hag's wandering from hill to hill, is on her way from Miyako, across the Lake Biwa, to the Zenko-ji temple in Nagano Prefecture for the purpose of having rites performed in honour of the thirteenth anniversary of her mother's death. On entering a mountain pass called Agero-goe, on the border between Etchu and Echigo Provinces, she is suddenly overtaken by darkness, out of which a village woman appears and offers the party lodging overnight at her hut. To the affrighted dancer, she says she is the real mountain-hag, famous in the Hyakuma's dancing; that she has stopped the party in order to see her dancing performance of the mountain-hag's transmigration. The dancer, suppressing fright, is ready to perform it, when the woman interposes that she will appear again in her true form and dance herself after the manner of Hyakuma, if she kindly does so in the moonlit stillness of night. So saying, she disappears.

In due course of time, the mountain hag appears in snow-white hair, with a hammer-shaped staff in hand. She dances and preaches that, by taking the ground that Good and Evil are one and not two things, all form of existence is reduced to emptiness. She compares her rounds of mountains to her soul's transfigurations without end. Finally, having performed another dance miming her peregrinations round the mountains in flowers, in moonlight, and in snow, she is lost from sight.

The real center of enjoyment in the play lies in the mountain-hag's grand scale of mountain rounds, preaching that all is vanity, that all form of existence is reduced to emptiness. The flowers in the lobby are arranged in the way of the Saga School to give you an atmospheric invitation into deep mountains.

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