

Maibayashi: *Kochō* (“The Butterfly”)

A dance of gratitude, offered in the final part of *Kochō* by the spirit of a butterfly, to the accompaniment of drum, flute and chorus, when her wish to maintain friendly relations with all flowers—so far plum blossoms alone having not accepted her—is realized by virtue of the sutra the monk has recited for her.

Interlude: *Hagidaimyō* (“The Lord and the Bush Clover”)

The lord, having finished his business in the capital, decides he would like to visit a beautiful bush clover garden before going home to his province. Taro-kaja, his servant, immediately suggests a splendid garden. There is one problem, however. The owner, a man of sophisticated tastes, never fails to ask visitors to compose a waka-poem before allowing them to leave. The unpolished lord is devoid of talents in this respect, but follows him, believing that the piece Taro-kaja has supplied him with will smooth his way out of the garden. He recites the first five syllables to the owner as instructed, who grows excited and immediately demands to hear what follows. But soon the lord’s memory fails, and in his confusion, he supplies anything but right words, to total incomprehension on both sides.

Noh: *Ohara Gokō* (“The Imperial Visit to Ohara”)

Guarding the Emperor Antoku, a 7-year-old boy, from attacks by members of the Genji clan, the Heike clan deserted the capital for territory in Western Japan, in order to reestablish themselves and regain their former power and glory. But at the sea battle of Dan-no-ura, as the afternoon tide turned against them, the Heike were totally defeated by the Genji fleet, and the whole family with most of their retainers were drowned deep under the water. Nii-dono, Taira-no-Kiyomori’s wife, and mother of Tokuko (1155-1213), empress and mother of the Emperor Antoku, held the young emperor in her arms, and telling him that a paradise would exist under the waves, jumped into the dark sea. No sooner had Tokuko seen her son drowned than she attempted to follow his fate. However, she was dragged out of the water by Genji soldiers and now lives in a nunnery in Ohara, north-east of Kyoto, where she prays daily for the repose of the deceased Emperor Antoku and the Heike family.

Quite unexpectedly, one summer’s day, the Emperor Goshirakawa (1127-92) pays her a visit in her bleak and desolate retreat. As father of the Emperor Takakura and grand-father-in-law of Tokuko, he gently inquires about the terrible scenes she witnessed during the final battle of the Heike in her last hours on the boat. He then asks her to describe how the Heike people faced death, showing particular interest in the death of the Emperor Antoku. In reply to his queries she narrates her tearful story.

(Takao Saijo)