
Maibayashi: *Yōrō* (“The Waterfall of Longevity”)

(A dance by the *shite* in formal attire, of the climactic part of *Yōrō*, with the accompaniment of the chorus and musicians)

Hearing that in Mino Province (Present-day Gifu Prefecture) there is a miraculous waterfall whose water, when drunk, produces a wonderful effect of rejuvenation and vigor on whoever drinks it, Emperor Yūryaku (r.456-479) dispatches an imperial messenger to prove the truth of the story. At the waterfall the messenger meets an old man, who turns out to be the God of the mountain and who praises, by offering a congratulatory dance of joy, the advent of waterfall as the great sign of peaceful reign of the emperor.

Kyōgen: “A Bag for Prolonging Life”

Tired of his garrulous wife, the lord is determined to get himself divorced from her. His wife, thus driven to extremities of her married life, starts packing important things in a large bag. But her particularly precious item not to be left behind is ...

Ichchō: *Yoroboshi the Blind*

(Acting the final section of the play by the *shite*’s singing and Drum-beating alone.)

Banished from home on a false charge, the boy named “Yoroboshi” turns blind because of shock and grief, and he is daily found begging in the neighborhood of Tennoji-temple. His father Takayasu-no-Michitoshi, who later discovers his son’s innocence, greatly laments his rash act, and starts a week’s alms-giving in the temple-yard, praying to the Kwannon for the boy’s happiness in this world and the next. On the last day of his alms-giving, he spies the blind boy walking in the sanctuary, talking gracefully of the scent of plum blossoms falling on his sleeves or describing the celebrated landscape of Naniwa Bay at its sunset. There is no mistaking the identity of the blind boy. He is Shuntokumaru, his own banished son. Announcing themselves as father and son, they go home to the village of Takayasu.

【Intermission】

Noh: *Saigyo-zakura* (“Saigyo’s Cherry Tree”)

A beautiful spring day in Kyoto, with cherry blossoms at their best. In Saigyo’s hermitage in the Western Hills, the famous cherry tree is now in full bloom. Monk Saigyo, however, having some particular reason to remain quietly by himself this year, orders a monk servant not to let in cherry viewers into the garden.

But cherry viewers who came all the way from central Kyoto, only to find no admittance at the entrance gate, are not easily turned away. Learning that they travelled such a long distance to have a look at the cherry tree, he praises the loving heart of the people, and allows them in, although breathing out the following waka-poem in a low voice:

Cherry blossom viewers Visit here in their legions.

What a pity, lovely blossoms! ’Tis where you are to blame.

Later in the evening while Monk Saigyo and other visitors are sleeping out underneath the cherry tree, the spirit of flowers appears before him and asks why he blamed the blossoms some time ago. Saigyo replies that he merely wanted to express his feeling of regret against the visitors’ disturbance, as he had hordes of visitors. But it is simply Saigyo’s personal view of the world, the spirit maintains, and not that of all living things. Flowers and plants are insentient and without feelings of their own, and therefore they may not be held to blame.

Here Monk Saigyo concedes that the spirit is right. The spirit, looking withered and feeble outside, yet firm and incisive in the teaching of Buddhism, now begins to guide Monk Saigyo, by chanting and by dancing, through the famous cherry spots in Kyoto: starting with Lord Konoe’s weeping cherries, known as the earliest blossoms in Kyoto. Then they visit Senbon, the thousand cherry trees lining the avenue, and the profusion of blossoms at Bishamon Hall and several other glorious cherries along the Eastern Hills including Land God’s flowers at Kiyomizu. They finally come down to Storm Mountain in the west, covered all over by cherry trees, whose glorious cherry petals, when scattered by the wind over the river-surface and intercepted by weirs at Ōi River, are woven into a beautiful carpet of snow.

Dawn is approaching by now and the spirit quietly fades away.

Takao Saijo