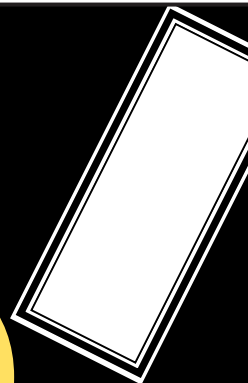


RAKUGO



“A raconteur extraordinaire!
One of a kind!”
-THE JAPAN TIMES

“Tightly controlled physical theatre!
Deft choreography of
body language and intonation!
And it’s also drop-dead funny!”
-METROPOLIS

“One of a kind!”
-NIKKEI ASIAN REVIEW

©Masaya Takagi

Date 27 January 2017
3:00pm (Sharp) : Invitees only
28 January 2017
3:00pm (Sharp) : Pass Available at the Embassy (limited seats)

Venue Embassy of Japan

(Mr. Sunshine will perform in English)



Organized by:

Embassy of Japan

Katsura Sunshine

Katsura Sunshine was born in Toronto, Canada, to a father of Slovenian origin. He studied classics at the University of Toronto, where he got his first introduction to the works of the Ancient Greek comic playwright, Aristophanes, and the renowned scholar of ancient comedy, Eric Csapo. He became involved in translating, adapting, and performing his own versions of Aristophanes' comedies for the Department of Classics.



name and part of the first (his master, Sanshi combined the first part of his name, "San", meaning "Three", with the Japanese word for "Shine", and gave it the Japanese pronunciation of the English word "Sunshine").

Sunshine received his professional debut in Singapore the following year, and completed his three-year Rakugo apprenticeship in November, 2012.

In September, 1995, his version of Aristophanes' "Clouds" opened at the Poor Alex Theatre in Toronto, and, buoyed by almost universally positive reviews, ran for 15 months before embarking on a tour of central and eastern Canada.

Sunshine is the first ever Western Rakugo storyteller in the history of the "Kamigata" Rakugo tradition, based in Osaka, and only the second ever in the history of Japan.

Sunshine went to Japan in 1999 to pursue studies in Noh and Kabuki Theatre, while working as an instructor of English Language at the prestigious Daigakushorin International Language Academy. He continued to write and produce musical theatre during this period.

Sunshine has performed in Singapore, the United States and Canada, London, Manchester, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Oxford, Paris, Sydney, Adelaide, Canberra, Sri Lanka, Hong Kong, Thailand, Ghana, Senegal, Gabon, South Africa, as well as throughout Japan. He currently divides his time between London and Tokyo.

On September 1st, 2008, Sunshine was accepted as an apprentice to the great Rakugo storytelling Master, Katsura Bunshi VI (then named Katsura Sanshi), and subsequently received the name Katsura Sunshine. In the Rakugo tradition, he received both his master's last

Sunshine has been appointed Cultural Ambassador for the Canadian Chamber of Commerce in Japan, and Friendship Ambassador for Japan and the Republic of Slovenia. He is also Artist in Residence at The Forge Venue in Camden, London.

What is RAKUGO?

About Rakugo

Rakugo is a 400-year-old tradition of comic storytelling in Japan. A minimalist performance art, Rakugo features a lone storyteller dressed in kimono, kneeling on a cushion, who, using only a fan and a hand towel for props, entertains the audience with a comic monologue followed by a traditional story. The storyteller differentiates characters in conversation by moving his head from left to right, as well as with subtle changes in tempo, posture, intonation, etc. Rakugo is an ancient art form, but it is still very much alive and well, with over 700 professional storytellers practicing today in the two main traditions of storytelling, that of Tokyo (Edo) and that of Osaka (Kamigata).



About the Monologue

Every Rakugo story is preceded by a comic monologue which consists of the individual storyteller's "material", and can be about almost anything, much like stand-up comedy. The storyteller often takes advantage of this monologue to provide hilarious explanations of how to enjoy and appreciate Rakugo stories, so that even the uninitiated can enjoy the story once it begins. Traditionally, the storyteller uses the monologue to "feel out" his audience, and actually decides which story to launch into once he can see what kind of audience he has.



About the Stories

There is a canon of several hundred traditional Rakugo stories which are widely performed still today, some of which are as much as 400 years old. The stories are thought to have originated as short comic anecdotes at Buddhist monasteries inserted into their sermons to keep people interested. The stories feature the comical and occasionally absurd shenanigans of stock characters common to neighbourhood life in Edo-Period Japan, and vary in length from 10 minutes to 40 minutes and occasionally even longer. In addition to these traditional stories, some storytellers compose their own stories. The most famous modern composer of modern Rakugo stories, Katsura Bunshi VI, has over 200 stories to his name, and only performs his own stories.



About the Apprenticeship

In order to become a recognized professional Rakugo storyteller, one must apprentice to a Rakugo master from whom one receives a stage name. The apprenticeship lasts for three to four years, and is very strict. Depending on the master, the apprentice may drink, smoke, or go on dates, and is subject to a strict curfew during the apprenticeship period. The apprentice cleans the master's house, does laundry, cooking, preparing and folding kimonos, and other chores, and learns the art of storytelling by watching the master perform and imitating. Throughout one's career, one is only allowed to perform a given story once permission to do that story has been granted by a master storyteller.



Rakugo Today

There are currently over 700 professional Rakugo storytellers practicing today. Of these, just over 30 are women. There is currently only one storyteller of Western descent. Almost all storytellers belong to one of five professional Rakugo associations. There are several theatres in Tokyo and Osaka that are specifically dedicated to staging Rakugo 365 days a year. Storytellers also perform in concert halls, at temples and shrines, schools and universities, community centres and cultural centres, and just about anywhere else you can lay down a cushion to kneel on.