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Danjūrō's Girls: Women on the Kabuki Stage by Loren Edelson

Danjūrō's Girls

Women on the Kabuki Stage

Loren Edelson

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DANJÜRŌ'S GIRLS

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Softcover reprint of the hardcover 1st edition 2009 978-0-230-60946-4

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First published in 2009 by

PALGRAVE MACMILLAN®

in the United States—a division of St. Martin's Press LLC,

175 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10010.

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Palgrave Macmillan is the global academic imprint of the above companies and has companies and representatives throughout the world.

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ISBN 978-1-349-37599-8

ISBN 978-0-230-61858-9 (eBook)

DOI 10.1057/9780230618589

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Edelson, Loren.

Danjuro's girls : women on the kabuki stage / Loren Edelson.

p. cm.—(Palgrave studies in theatre and performance history)

ISBN 0-230-60946-5 (alk. paper)

1. Kabuki—History. 2. Actresses—Japan—Biography. 3. Ichikawa, Danjuro, 1660–1704. I. Title.

PN2924.5.K3E33 2009

792.0952—dc22

2008027366

A catalogue record of the book is available from the British Library.

Design by Newgen Imaging Systems (P) Ltd., Chennai, India.

First edition: February 2009

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Printed in the United States of America.

This book is dedicated to Ichikawa Ohka, the artistic leader of the Nagoya Musume Kabuki Troupe. She inspired this book when we were in Amsterdam for the World Music Theatre Festival in April 2002. She was performing with her company, and I was there to give introductory talks and help with backstage interpretation. As she was applying her makeup a few hours before curtain, I remarked that the piece she was presenting, The Mirror Lion, was the same work that the great nineteenth-century actor, Ichikawa Danjūrō IX, had performed with his two daughters for their stage debut at Kabuki-za in 1893, one of the earliest recorded appearances of a kabuki actor with his daughters. Ohka put her makeup brush down, walked over to her suitcase, and retrieved a worn book. “Yes, I’ve been reading Suisen’s Mirror Lion,” she said, handing me a book edited by Ichikawa Danjūrō X that contains an extensive commentary on the play written by his wife Suisen, Danjūrō IX’s eldest daughter.¹

It was then that I decided to explore the connections between Danjūrō IX’s support of kabuki actresses in the nineteenth century and the sponsorship of women on the kabuki stage by the Naritaya house in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Thank you, Ohka.

¹ Ichikawa Suisen II, “Kagamijishi” [Mirror Lion], in *Kagamijishi* [The Mirror Lion], ed. Hokusabro Horikosi (*sic*, spelled elsewhere Fukusaburō Horikoshi) [Ichikawa Sanshō V] (Kyoto: Unsō Shuppanbu, 1948), 13–63.

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Acknowledgments ∞

This book began as a series of articles on the topic of women in Japanese traditional performing arts, which I wrote for the *Japan Times* in 1997. I am grateful to Yamaguchi Yoshie, the arts and entertainment editor, for telling me about Nagoya Musume Kabuki, the contemporary all-female kabuki troupe. Little did I realize at the time that my article on the company would lead to my doctoral dissertation, which served as the basis for this book.¹ I am indebted to members of the troupe for permitting me to attend numerous performances, watch rehearsals, and explore the frenetic activity behind the scenes.

I wish to express my profound gratitude to the former actresses of the Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki Troupe who took time to speak with me: Ichikawa Baika, Ichikawa Baishō, Ichikawa Ebimaru, Ichikawa Emiko, Ichikawa Fukushō, Ichikawa Himeshō, Ichikawa Hisayo, Ichikawa Kiyomi, Ichikawa Kobeni, Ichikawa Kobotan, Ichikawa Masuyo, Ichikawa Misuji, Ichikawa Sanpuku, Ichikawa Suzume, Ichikawa Toshie, and Onoe Umeno. Likewise, I am grateful to members of Nagoya Musume Kabuki: Hayashi Midori, Ichikawa Hisago, Ichikawa Kishō, Ichikawa Ohka, Ichikawa Misuya, Ichikawa Mitsuji, Ichikawa Sakurako, Kikuchi Yukie, and Sumiya Rie. I am grateful to the Yagi family for hosting me on several occasions and to Tokiwazu Tsunao for sharing his expertise in Japanese music.

Financial support from the Japan Foundation, the Graduate Center of New York (under the auspices of the Mario Capelloni Fellowship) as well as the City College of New York enabled me to conduct research in Japan and focus on writing after I returned to New York. The Cohen-Lortel grant gave me the opportunity to attend the World Music Theatre Festival. I am also grateful to the Social Science Research Council for inviting me to the Japan Studies Doctoral Dissertation Workshop in December 2004. Special

¹ Loren Edelson, "Danjū's Girls: The Ichikawa Family and Women on the Kabuki Stage" (Ph.D. diss., The Graduate Center, City University of New York, 2006).

thanks to all the participants and the faculty mentors: Barbara Brooks, David Howell, Mariko Tamanoi, and Robert Uriu.

I would like to thank Scripps College of Claremont, California, Sakuragaoka Museum of Toyokawa, Japan, and the Tokyo Metropolitan Foundation for History and Culture Image Archives as well as the Edo-Tokyo Museum for allowing me to reprint photographs. I am particularly grateful to the staff of the Sakuragaoka Museum for opening their archives to me, allowing me to photocopy materials on the Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki Troupe, and arranging my first interview with a former troupe member. I wish to acknowledge my gratitude to Ichikawa Ohka, Ichikawa Danjūrō XII, and Ogawa Tomoko for the use of the photograph that appears on the book cover. My thanks to Martha Walsh and the editors of the *Journal of Japanese Studies* for allowing me to reprint part of my article "The Female Danjūrō: Revisiting the Acting Career of Ichikawa Kumehachi," which appeared in the winter 2008 edition.

Additional institutions provided the source materials on which this book is based. My thanks to the librarians of the C.V. Starr Library of Columbia University, Hamamatsu City Central Library, Misono-za Library, National Diet Library, National Theatre (Kokuritsu Gekijō) Library, Ōtani Shōchiku Library, Ōya Soichi Library, Tokyo Metropolitan Library, and Waseda University Theatre Arts Library.

I wish to thank my outstanding dissertation committee: my adviser, Samuel L. Leiter, Marvin Carlson, Judith Milhous, and David Savran, as well as Daniel Gerould, Frank Hentschker, Lynette Gibson, and Pamela Sheingorn. Warm thanks to my exceptional teachers of Japanese language, literature, and history: Steven Ericson, Fujii Chieko, Donald Keene, Haruo Shirane, Henry D. Smith II, and Alan Tansman. Thank you, too, to Celia Braxton, Nicole Cohen, Paula Lawrence, Heidi Steinmetz Lovette, Ellen Anthony-Moore, Betsey Nevins, Jennifer McAllister-Nevins, Michelle Sieff, Terry Stoller, Yoko Shioya, and to my students in my spring 2008 class in Japanese Theatre at City College, who reenacted the 1880s debate on women on the kabuki stage with finesse and enthusiasm.

Further assistance was provided by Janine Beichman, Kei Hibino, Kudō Chinatsu, Matsumoto Kahoru, Matsumoto Shinko, Morinaga Masako, Claudia Orenstein, Tamaki Yoko, Yoshida Setsuko. Horiuchi Fumitomo and Isoguchi Tomomi of the Japan Foundation introduced me to kabuki actors and invited me to share my research at the Tokyo Foundation headquarters. Hayashi Kyōhei helped me decipher the letters of Ichikawa Sanshō V, Kodama Ryuichi gave a series of informative lectures on the Ichikawa

Danjūrō line of actors, and Kondō Tamao answered many questions. For generous photo expertise, I owe thanks to Del Hawbaker. I would also like to thank my editors at Palgrave Macmillan: Farideh Koohi-Kamali, Kristy Lilas, Brigitte Shull, and Don Wilmeth.

The Edelson and Katz families have been incredibly supportive from beginning to end. I am grateful to my in-laws, Nina and Eugene Katz, my parents, Judy and Richard Edelson, and my siblings, Rebecca and Eric. My 95-year-old grandfather, Max Edelson, deserves special thanks for reading and commenting on my dissertation. My son, Julian, arrived almost exactly ten months and ten days—as the Japanese would say—after I deposited my dissertation and has brought me happiness every day. Finally, I thank my husband, Jeremy Katz. Friends and colleagues assume (correctly) that Jeremy, as an information technology wizard, helps with computer-related problems but that is a tiny part of the massive role he has played in the completion of this book. He read numerous drafts, attended countless performances and conferences, listened to my ideas, shared his insights, transferred to work in Tokyo during my research year, took hundreds of pictures and reams of video footage, and learned how to play the *shamisen*. I thank him for his love, warmth, humor, passion, dedication, and all his help, big and small.

LOREN EDELSON
New York
September 2008

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Notes on Style ∞

- Japanese names are given with the surname listed first, followed by the private name, unless the individual has specified otherwise. Actors will generally be referred to by their stage names. In cases where actors have multiple stage names, I give the name by which the actor was called at that point in my narrative. In other words, there are several cases where one individual, over the course of his or her lifetime, possesses several different stage names.
- Unless otherwise indicated, all translations from Japanese articles, books, and texts are mine.
- The English title of plays are used in the text. A list of corresponding Japanese translations is available in the appendix.
- With the exception of Japanese words that have become part of the English lexicon, Japanese words are italicized. Generally, I have provided English translations on the first reference.
- I have transliterated Japanese and Chinese names and terms following the modified Hepburn and pinyin systems, which are the dominant romanization systems used in Japanese and Chinese studies, respectively. The one exception is when an individual has indicated a preference for an alternative spelling (i.e., Ichikawa Ohka, not Ōka).
- When possible, the birth and death dates of individuals are provided on the first reference.
- The reader will note that some titles of plays are in quotes, while others are in italics. This is done to differentiate the scenes or highlights of longer plays that are frequently performed independently from the full-length plays (*tōshi kyōgen*). Quotations will be used for single acts; full-length plays will be italicized. There are several cases where a scene, such as “Village School,” is performed so frequently as an independent work that it arguably could have been italicized, but quotations are used in order to alert the reader that it was excerpted from a longer work (in this case, *Sugawara and the Secrets of Calligraphy*).

- Although it is standard in most endnotes to omit the author's first name, I have retained the first name in the myriad of cases where the surname is "Ichikawa."
- The following abbreviations will be used for works that are referenced several times in the notes section:
 - *EHD*= *Engeki hyakka daijiten* [Theatre Encyclopedia]
 - *ISKK*= "Ichikawa Shōjo Kabuki kōenkai [Symposium on the Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki]
 - *KJ*= *Kabuki jinsei* [A Kabuki Life]
- Unless otherwise stated, all letters are from Ichikawa Shōjo Kabuki collection. Sakuragaoka Museum, Toyokawa, Japan.
- All articles by Ichikawa Baika that appeared in the *Mainichi shinbun* were part of her 1993 series "Matsuba-botan no ki" [Journal of Miniature Peonies].
- All articles by Kurokawa Mitsuhiro that appeared in the *Chūnichi shinbun* were part of his 1984 series "Maboroshi no Ichikawa Shōjo Kabuki" [Phantom Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki].
- The word "*shinbun*" (newspaper) is generally omitted in the notes. The full names of the newspapers noted are *Asahi shinbun*, *Chūnichi shinbun*, *Chūbu Nihon shinbun*, *Enshyu* [sic] *shinbun*, *Kyōto shinbun*, *Mainichi shinbun*, *Osaka nichichi shinbun*, *Sangyō keizai shinbun*, *Shizuoka shinbun*, *Tōkyō nichichi shinbun*, *Tōkyō shinbun*, and *Yomiuri shinbun*.