

PROGRAM

伊達娘恋緋鹿子－火の見櫓の段－

DATEMUSUME KOI NO HIGANOKO － HINOMI YAGURA NO DAN －

“Oshichi’s Burning Love – The Fire Watch Tower”

BACKGROUND

Written by Suga Sensuke,
Matsuda Wakichi and
Wakatake Fuemi

First performed at the
Kitahorie-no-shibai Theatre,
Osaka, in 1773

Chanters

Toyotake Rosetayu
Takemoto Aikodayu

Shamisen Musicians

Toyozawa Tomisuke
Takezawa Dango
Toyozawa Ryouji

Puppeteer

Yoshida Seizaburo

In 1657 a great fire destroyed more than half of the Japan’s capital city Edo (now Tokyo). It lasted for three days, and is estimated to have claimed more than 100,000 lives.

This Bunraku play is based on a real life incident that took place in the days following the great conflagration.

Oshichi, is the 16-year-old daughter of a greengrocer whose family business was destroyed in the fire. While taking refuge at the Kissho-in Temple, she falls in love with a handsome youth, Kichisaburo. Even after the family’s home is rebuilt, she continues to meet her lover in secret.

As the opportunities to see him become more infrequent, Oshichi’s infatuation grows. Thinking that she could move back to the temple if another fire swept through the city, she sets fire to a neighbor’s house. She is arrested for arson and burned at the stake.

Oshichi’s plight was immortalized in Ihara Saikaku’s novel “Five Women who Loved Love,” and became the subject of numerous dramatizations.

SYNOPSIS

In this version of the story, Oshichi is portrayed as a duty-bound heroine who chooses to sacrifice her own life in order to save that of her lover.

Kichisaburo has lost a treasured heirloom and is sentenced to die. Oshichi has recovered the family sword, but cannot leave the city because of the night curfew. In a desperate attempt to reach him, she climbs the fire tower to sound a false alarm, knowing that her actions will lead to her own demise

THE TEXT

Love is like a leaping flame, blazing where it will. Consuming all before it, leaving ash. No snow or ice can stop its burning path.

News, at last! Her lover's missing heirloom sword is found! Her friends now have it. She must bring it to him by dawn... Or else his life is forfeit, and his name and honor gone!

But the curfew gates are shut! The whole city is under night lock-down. No one can get through, till daylight. What can she do?

He will not know! At dawn he will take his life in atonement... Unless she gets the sword to him, gets them to raise the gates! She is desperate. She is frenzied. She rails against the Fates.

The fire tower is her only hope. On top is the fire alarm! Sound it, and all the curfew-gates are opened, for the fire brigades to pass. Can she do it? She will have to! Although it means her life!

A false alarm is a capital crime, everybody knows. And execution is by fire. But her lover is a warrior and must go back to his people. They can have no future ... that is fate. How can she live without him? She would rather turn to ashes... Than to live a hell on earth!

Her courage ignited by the flames of her love... She begins the perilous climb! The snow flies, and ice coats the ladder. She cannot grip, she slips and slides, she strains and struggles. Until at last the fire-bell is in her grasp. It echoes through the frozen town. The guards wake from their doze.

"A fire! A fire! Open the gates!!" And all at once, the streets are free. Now she can reach him! She can give her life for his. She races off on her final journey... And into legend!

