

NISHIKI KAGE-E PROJECT 2.0 IN YAO, JAPAN

Mitsue Tanaka-Ikeda and Ryo Ando

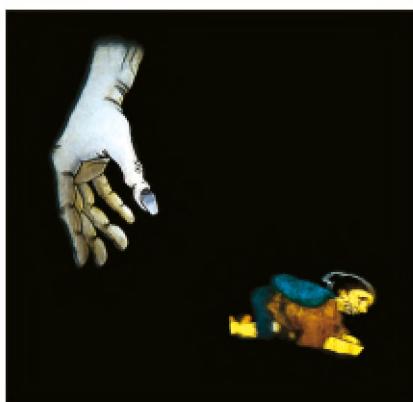
If you attended the 9th MLS Convention in 2013, you may well have enjoyed a performance of *Sakura Shiranami Hyoito-Bukuro* (a day when a burglar is possessed by a Mononoke, an evil spirit, amid falling cherry petals) by Ikeda-gumi from Japan. The tale entered the inexplicable magical world of a professional burglar experiencing one surprising incident after another as petals fall.

The story unfolds dynamically with traditional Japanese mechanical slides that work smoothly and efficiently. The screen changes from still, quiet blackness into a vivid, colourful world with moving images. At the same time, we feel as if some omnipotent presence was managing all the happenings on the screen.

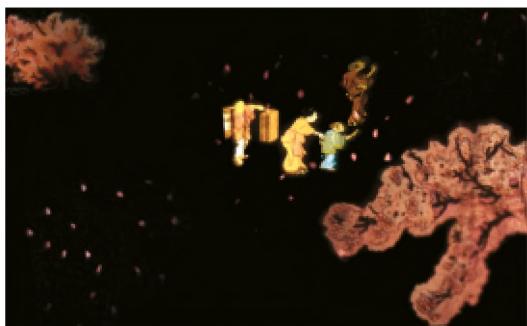
In this Nishiki Kage-e Project 2.0 (see *TML* 36 for an account of the first-year project) with Ikeda-gumi at Kyu-Uedake Jutaku, the cultural old house in Yao, the now second-year lanternists, aged from nine to 70-something years old, performed delicately and vividly with more expertise and the intense concentration of artisans.



1. A burglar is inhaled into an old man's bag



2. The burglar tries to escape from a hand appearing and disappearing in the dark



4. People enjoy the cherry blossom in full bloom



5. Operating the lanterns

traditional tatami mats, turned into a venue which directly synchronised with a time about 250 years ago. With a new member, the cast and directions have been updated for the new version. It takes 24 one-hour lessons in total during half a year for the lanternists to develop their skills and become increasingly competent at operating the lanterns.

"The programme started with *Fukusuke-Kojo* (a salute by a large-headed dwarf figure bringing good fortune), followed by *A Boar Hunt*, and concluded with *Sakura Shiranami Hyoito-Bukuro*. This was the greatest challenge for us all. Of course we were all nervous but at the same time eager and full of fighting spirit! In the darkness, we created

a 'space of wonders' with all the colourful projected images moving freely in the hands of the lanternists. They enthralled and enchanted the capacity audience.

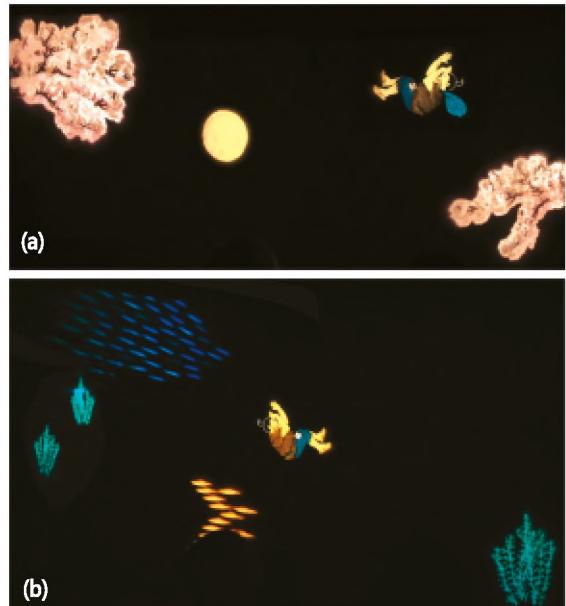
"Some of the voices from the audience commented: 'You showed a great improvement since last year', 'Wonderful performance!' and 'Nishiki Kage-e interests me'. We have no doubt that the tradition of Nishiki Kage-e has survived well till now."

This project moved on to Suita City Museum as part of the autumn special exhibition and on 17 November the company gave another performance.

*Translated by Yoriko Iwata
Photographs by Ueda Mitsuhiro*



Mr Ryo Ando, a curator of the house, as well as one of the lanternists, reports: "In the afternoon of Monday 4 November 2024, the substitute holiday for National Culture Day, the number of people gathering at Kyu-Uedake around 2 o'clock seemed to exceed the capacity. They came for the special occasion of Nishiki Kage-e projection – a space well covered with



3. (a) The burglar passes the great cherry trees and the moon and (b) he is then troubled by shoals of fish underwater



6. The creative lanternists take a bow at the end