

【Highlights of "Fight With a Carp"】

1. Main lead, Kataoka Ainosuke, will perform *hayagawari* (quick-change technique to transform into another character) to play 10 different roles on stage. Can you spot the differences?
2. *Chu-nori* (mid-air stunt) by Kataoka Ainosuke.
3. Actual water will be used on stage, creating special effects for the battle scene against the carp.

【Background of Kabuki program "Fight With a Carp"】

Popular Kabuki program, "Fight With a Carp" is an exciting tale about a protagonist who catches a giant carp fish, and defeats it in a battle. The old tradition of using water on stage dates back to Edo period (17th century). At that time, air-conditioning was not available hence performers would splash water during the fight scene, providing coolness to the stage and bringing joy to the audience. "Fight With a Carp" thus gained huge popularity as the representative Kabuki program for summer season.

When the first generation Ichikawa Udanji played the role of Takimado Shiganosuke in "Fight With a Carp" in 1876, the ingenious idea of using water on stage was a great hit. Since then, various technical improvements have been made according to the conditions of the theatre, such as installing a water tank on the stage or turning the *hanamichi* (passageway running from the stage to the audience seating area) into a water tank.

Kataoka Ainosuke, who plays Takimado Shiganosuke, is one of the Kabuki actors who have had multiple experiences performing in "Fight With a Carp". During the first public performance of 2012, fresh water was used alongside a fighting performance, which has not been seen on stage in a long while, creating a stage bursting with energy and bringing the audience great excitement. After receiving such great response, the play was performed again at Meijiza in Tokyo and Hakataza in Fukuoka in 2014. During the performance at Meijiza on May 2015, 17th century popular fiction "Legend of Tawara no Tota Defeating a Giant Centipede" was incorporated. Ainosuke played the role of five characters and received praise for the splendid performance. In June 2015 at Shochikuza in Osaka, Ainosuke performed *hayagawari* (quick-change technique to transform into another character), this time playing the role of 12 characters.

The show at Hakataza will be the first time in four years since "Fight With a Carp" was last performed. Ainosuke will play a total of 10 male and female roles, including the protagonist

Takimado Shiganosuke, the evil spirit impersonating Shiganosuke, prince of the carps, Seda Taira the servant, Sazanami the evil second wife, unemployed warrior Yogo Saemon, trading merchant Seibe, and more.

The attraction of this production lies in the stage acts that strive to provide entertainment through *keren*, which involves visually eccentric choreography. In the dramatic battle scene, the audience will come into contact with water. Audience seated at the front rows will receive a vinyl sheet cover. However, physically avoiding the water while watching the performance is part of the experience, and would heighten the feeling of unity with the performance. Kabuki actors will hang from the scaffold to perform *chu-nori* (mid-air stunts) and *hayagawari* (quick-change technique to transform into another character). In addition, tales of the courageous battle against the giant centipede, the drama-filled conspiracy between descendents of the clan, and the love story between pitiful Kozakura Hime and Shiganosuke (impersonated by the carp spirit) will be incorporated, creating a truly exciting performance.

The production will also star Onoe Matsuya, who is appearing in this performance for the first time, and Nakamura Kazutarou, who will co-star with Ainosuke. The feature of young, popular Kabuki actors, together with a performance that makes viewers realize the entertainment value of Kabuki, create a spectacular performance that will please the audience.

【Characters and cast】

1. Takimado Shiganosuke : Protagonist. Kozakura Hime is stalked by Nobuta Kiyoharu, and saved by Shiganosuke who happens to pass by. Kozakura Hime falls in love at first sight with the handsome Shiganosuke. Shiganosuke fights the evil carp spirit that is impersonating him.
2. Prince of Koi clan, Kinkoi : Poisoned by the unclean blood of the giant centipede, the prince is unable to become a dragon. He places a curse on the Tawara clan (later known as the Tsuru clan), and turns into a carp spirit.
3. Funagoro: A servant of the Koi clan, who brings news about the polluted blood of the giant centipede that is approaching.
4. Okugata Sazanami (villain) : The second wife of the master of Tsuru clan. Sazanami devises a plan to make her son, who was blinded by the Koi clan, the successor of Tsuru

clan. In order to do this, she plots to kill the Hime, the daughter of the first wife.

5. Yogo Saemon (villain) : Unemployed warrior who got chased out by the Tsuru clan. Following the orders of Okugata Sazanami and assistant chief retainer Awazu, he steals the legendary sword and attempts to kill Kozakura Hime.
6. Doguya Seibei (ally) : A trading merchant who is indebted to the Tsuru clan. He accidentally overhears the conversation between Sazanami and Yogo Saemon, and tries to protect Kozakura Hime from the assassination.
7. Kanpaku Chunagon Hirotsugu (villain) : A high-ranking government official. He makes use of Sazanami in order to obtain the legendary sword of the Tsuru clan, "Ryujin Maru".
8. Yakko Seda Taira (ally) : Servant of the Tsuru clan and bodyguard of Kozakura Hime. He tries to reclaim the stolen legendary sword.
9. Nobuta Kiyoharu : A laid-back samurai. Falls in love with Kozakura Hime at first sight, and aggressively pursues her.
10. Carp spirit (villain) : The other main lead. The carp spirit aims to destroy the Tsuru clan. He impersonates Takimado Shiganosuke and approaches Kozakura Hime, who is the potential successor of Tsuru clan.

The above 10 roles are played by Kataoka Ainosuke

- Tawarano Tota Hidesato : He attempts to defeat the giant centipede, but caused the lake to become polluted by its blood, leading to the death of the Koi clan and earns their hatred. (Onoe Matsuya)
- Seoritsu Hime : The goddess who granted the legendary sword "Ryujin Maru".
- Kozakura Hime (ally): Heroine of the story. Since her step-brother is blind, the family makes preparations to find a son-in-law to succeed the family. In order to stop this, her step-mother attempts to kill Kozakura Hime. (Nakamura Kazutaro)

- Tsuru Tamehiko: Son of Sazanami. Due to the curse of the Koi clan, Tamehiko lost his sight and his eligibility to become the successor of the family (Sawamura Sonosuke)
- Awazu Gozaemon (villain) : The assistant chief retainer of Tsuru clan who wants to overthrow the clan. (Ichimura Kittaro)
- Kuretake : The wife of a loyal servant of Tsuru clan. She tries to protect Kozakura Hime from the Sazanami's devious plots. (Kamimura Kichiya)
- King of Koi clan (Otani Keizo)
- Giant centipede
- Katada Gyobu : Servant of Kanpaku clan. (Ichikawa Namezo)

【Fight With a Carp - Synopsis】

The story starts from the top of the mountain overlooking Japan's largest river, Lake Biwa. Villagers living on the mountain would send one daughter to the giant centipede every year as sacrifice to appease it, so that crops would not be destroyed. Tawara no Tota Hidesato, the governor of Ominokuni, receives orders from the emperor to defeat the giant centipede. Tawara no Tota fires arrows, and uses the legendary sword (Ryujin Maru) bestowed by the goddess of Lake Biwa to slay the giant centipede.

The giant centipede bleeds heavily from its wounds and dies near Lake Biwa. At that time, a banquet is being held within Lake Biwa to celebrate the prince of Koi clan's (Kin-koi: Ainosuke) transformation from a carp into a dragon. At the moment, the servant of Koi clan urgently reports that the blood of the giant centipede has seeped into the lake. The polluted blood poisons every member at the event, causing them to die one after another. The prince loses his ability to become a dragon, and places an eternal curse on the Tawara clan and all its descendents before dying.

From then, 400 years has passed. Conflict is rising within the Tsuru clan, descendents of Tawara no Tato. The son of the second wife of the master of Tsuru clan, Sazanami (Ainosuke) is denied as the heir due to his blindness. In order to make her son the heir, Sazanami plots to kill the daughter of first wife, Kozakura Hime (Kazutaro). She seeks the help of a *ronin* (unemployed warrior) Yogo Saemon (Ainosuke). Meanwhile, Kozakura Hime

is enjoying spring in Kiyomizudera in Kyoto, viewing the sakura in full bloom with her servants and bodyguard (Seda Taira: Ainosuke). Her beauty captures the attention of a foolish samurai, Nobuta Kiyoharu (Ainosuke), who insists on marrying her and starts to pursue her aggressively. At that moment, a young, handsome warrior, Takimado Shiganosuke (Ainosuke) appears and saves Kozakura Hime. Kozakura Hime falls in love with Shiganosuke, who leaves without revealing his name.

On the one hand, there are villains from Nobuta Kiyoharu who wants to marry Kozakura Hime, to Kanpaku Chunagon Tachibana Hirotsugu who is plotting to steal the legendary sword, Ryujin Maru, bestowed to the Tsuru clan, and Sazanami who aims to gain power through the heir of the Tsuru clan.

On the other hand, there are kind allies including Kuretake, wife of Sasamura Jiro who serves the head of chief retainers, and a merchant of artifacts, Seibei (Ainosuke), who track the movements of the evil doers. In the midst of heavy rain in Oharano, as Seibei, Kuretake, Yogo Saemon and Seda Taira are fighting over the legendary sword, it gets stolen by the carp spirit impersonating Shiganosuke.

The entire clan is desperately looking for the stolen sword, Ryujin Maru. In the meantime, Kozakura Hime rejects the marriage proposal from Kiyoharu, and pines after Shiganosuke to the point of falling sick. Then, the man she was longing for, Shiganosuke appears before of her. Kozakura Hime is elated to reunite with Shiganosuke, and looks forward to spending time alone with him. However, by the power of the legendary sword reclaimed by Seda Taira (Ainosuke), the shadow of Shiganosuke appears on the *shoji* (paper sliding door) as a giant carp. This Shiganosuke is in fact the spirit of a carp that is living in Lake Biwa. Due to the long hatred towards Tsuru family, it plans to destroy and overthrow the clan. The real Shiganosuke appears and chases after the carp spirit. Shiganosuke ends up at Lake Biwa, where he enters a vicious death battle with the giant carp.