

Yoshitsune and the Thousand Cherry Trees

義経千本桜 河運法眼館の場

performed by Kyo-machi 京町

Showtime: 8PM

Synopsis

(This story is set in the aftermath of the Genpei War, fought between the Minamoto and Taira clans. Yoshitsune was a legendary warrior on the Minamoto side, and the younger half-brother of Minamoto no Yoritomo, who established Japan's first bakufu military government.)

Having fallen out with his brother Yoritomo, Yoshitsune seeks refuge at the mansion of Kawatsura Hogen on Mt. Yoshino. A messenger announces the arrival of his mistress Shizuka Gozen and Yoshitsune's retainer Sado Tadanobu, whom he had entrusted with protecting Shizuka. This confuses Yoshitsune as he had just received a visit from Tadanobu a moment ago.

When Shizuka enters she is surprised to find that Tadanobu has vanished from her side. She recalls a puzzling observation that Tadanobu has often appeared abruptly whenever she beat the drum gifted to her by Yoshitsune. Yoshitsune asks her to beat the drum right then to resolve the mystery.

It is revealed that the "Tadanobu" that had been accompanying Shizuka is actually an orphaned fox. The drum that Shizuka carries was actually made from the skin of the fox's parents. Missing them, the fox disguised itself as Tadanobu to be close to the drum and hear its sound, which recreates the voices of its parents.

Grateful for the fox's protection of Shizuka and touched by its family attachment, a stark contrast to his own estrangement from his brother, Yoshitsune rewards the fox with the drum. Overjoyed, the fox warns them of an impending surprise attack from the monks of Mt. Yoshino, allowing Yoshitsune to thwart their plans.

(Theatrical highlights: Great passion and skill is poured into conveying the fox's heartrending parental attachment when it reverts to its real form in front of Shizuka. The use of stage devices to enact the appearance and disappearance of the fox also provides exciting entertainment.)