

Destinies Intertwined: A Talented Woman in a Man's World

Painter

Katsushika Ōi (*1800-†1866) 葛飾応為

and

Rakugo Performer

Hayashiya Anko (*1986) 林家あんこ



← PDF

Contact Information

Hayashiya Anko Management: Mitsuhiro Abe (Mr) ✉ motomakui@gmail.com / ☎ 070-9027-1537

Rakugo – The Art of Japanese Story-Telling

There are many stage arts that only exist in Japan – such as kabuki or bunraku. One of the lesser-known ones is *rakugo*.

European audiences maybe know stand-up comedy, or in the German parts of Europe *Kabarett - rakugo* however is quite different. During a *rakugo* show, there is only ever one performer on stage, kneeling on a cushion. From there he or she does not move for the entire length of the story they tell. The only props used are a fan and a handkerchief called *tenugui*.

The fact that this Japanese stage art is different from Europe's theatre and comedy tradition does not mean Europeans cannot understand and enjoy *rakugo*. There are thousands of *rakugo* stories, some to make audiences laugh or yet others are moving and make you cry.

Today, in total, there are about 900 *rakugoka* in the whole of Japan, mainly in the Osaka and Tokyo areas. Out of these 100 are female, and Hayashiya Anko is one of them.

So what do *rakugoka* do on stage – as they do not move and only have to props – and do not change costumes either? In the bat of an eye the performer turns from a precocious child, to a dumb country boy, a sly prostitute, miserly merchant, a rowdy craftsman or a strict wife. Just like in the Italian Commedia dell'Arte *rakugo* has its own set of characters that appear again and again in the many stories. How these characters are interpreted however depends totally on the actor. Each actor interprets the stories differently, often reacting on the spot - depending on the audience, the season, their mood and the atmosphere in the theatre – the performer will choose one of the stories in their repertoire. So even if the audience has seen the story before, they will not get bored. In that sense, one could say that *rakugo* is similar to folk and fairy tales.

In the introduction, called *makura*, the performer might talk about something they saw on TV, their family, about politics or something that just happened backstage. Much of the performance is improvised.

It is not easy to become a *rakugoka*. First of all, if a young man or woman finds a master, that they would like to learn with, they approach him (or her¹), asking them to become a disciple. In the first instance, the master is likely to decline.

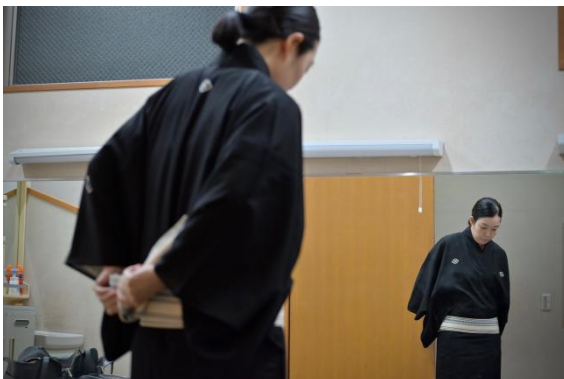
If however, after some time, the master does decide to take the applicant as disciple, they will do so not only promising to teach them their art, but look after the apprentice. Since the master has been taught and provided for by their own master during their apprenticeship back in the day, they are now returning the favour by educating a new generation of performers.

During the first three or so years, the apprentice works as *zenza*. During this stage the apprentice learns everything at *rakugo*-theatres called *yose*. There, they serve their elders and mostly does everything backstage to run the show: folding up kimonos, pouring tea, playing the drum. On stage, *zenza* only perform simple, short stories. During these years of apprenticeship, they are not allowed to date, drink or smoke, but with times, things are getting less strict.

Once the elders approve of the *zenza*, that they know the art well enough and has mastered the manners necessary for back-stage and on-stage work, the *zenza* is promoted to *futatsume*. As *futatsume*, they no longer



Hayashiya Anko



¹ Only about two dozen women are currently masters and as such allowed to take in their own disciples.

Contact Information

Hayashiya Anko Management: Mitsuhiro Abe (Mr) ✉ motomakui@gmail.com / ☎ 070-9027-1537

have to do the stage work, are allowed to wear a *haori*-jacket, smoke, drink and date. Foremost, they also can do longer *rakugo*-stories now. However, a *futatsume* also is independent now and responsible to obtain stage opportunities him or herself.

After another 8-12 years of *futatsume*-apprenticeship, the young performer is promoted to *shin'uchi*, i.e. becomes a master. In most cases, older masters decide when the timing is right. Some schools also have a test to attain mastership.

After promotion to master, the performer now can take own disciples themselves and, what is most important, that they can headline the show at the *yose*-theatre. This privilege is mostly reserved to the eldest and/ or most popular performers.

Hayashiya Anko is a *rakugoka* of *futatsume*-rank who is currently attracting attention for her *rakugo* story "Hokusai's Daughter" (*Hokusai no musume*).

Contact Information

Hayashiya Anko Management: Mitsuhiro Abe (Mr) ✉ motomakui@gmail.com / ☎ 070-9027-1537

Hayashiya Anko Profile

Date of Birth: Born May 7, 1986
Place of Birth: Sumida Ward, Tokyo
Grew up in Sumida Ward as daughter of *rakugoka* Hayashiya Tokizō II.

Education:

April 2002, graduated from Kyōka Girls' High School

April 2005, graduated Tōyō University, Faculty of Letters, Department of Japanese Literature and Culture.



Anko on

at the

. a

Rakugo Career:

- March 21st, 2013: Starts training under Hayashiya Shinpei
- April 2013: First *rakugo* performance with the story *Jugemu*
- May 1st, 2014: Starts *yose* training under the stage name Anko
- May 21st, 2017: Promotion to *futatsume*



Anko as

- November 2021:

Appointed as 21st Sumida Ward Goodwill Ambassador, a role through which she energetically showcases the appeal of her home district, Sumida Ward. The ward is renowned as the former residence of the distinguished artist **Katsushika Hokusai**, celebrated for his woodblock print series "Thirty-Six Views of Mount Fuji," featuring the famous "The Great Wave off Kanagawa." Less widely recognized is that **Hokusai's daughter, Katsushika Ōi**, was also a talented painter. Inspired by Ōi's work and her connection to a woman who lived in the same area two centuries earlier, Anko crafted a *rakugo* story with **Katsushika Ōi as the central figure**. She debuted this story in her solo *rakugo* shows, bringing to life the legacy of Ōi's art.

Hobbies: Watching performances (kabuki, musicals, plays), traditional Japanese dance, sewing

Special Skills: Nankin ball juggling, Godzilla *kappore*-dance, Ultraman *kappore*-dance, *Jiasobi*-wordplay

Regular TV Appearances: Assistant on Nippon Television's "Shōten" Airing every Sunday evening at 5:30 PM.

Contact Information

Hayashiya Anko Management: Mitsuhiro Abe (Mr) ✉ motomakui@gmail.com / ☎ 070-9027-1537

Katsushika Ōi Profile

Katsushika Ōi, also known by her real name Oei, was a renowned painter and third daughter of Katsushika Hokusai. Widely recognized for her masterpiece "Yoshiwara Night Scene" (*Yoshiwara Kōshi Saki no Zu*), she has garnered a substantial fan base in Japan and abroad. Often referred to as "the Rembrandt of Edo", Ōi spent the majority of her life as an assistant to her father, Hokusai.

Synopsis of "Hokusai's Daughter", Anko's *rakugo* story depicting Katsushika Ōi life

Surrounded by paper and brushes, Hokusai and his daughter live a meagre life as painters. Although Hokusai's daughter, Ōi, is not allowed to establish herself as an artist, she receives an order for a painting as "Ōi," a name she had long aspired to inherit. At the same time, her father falls ill, and Ōi, while having to support her father, starts to establish herself as a painter. However, when they were unable to continue their art due to restrictions imposed by the shogunate, they went West of Edo (today's Tokyo), to the small town of Obuse, in today's Nagano Prefecture, where with the help of their patron, Takai Kōzan, and completed a painting of phoenixes. After completing the work, Ōi's father and master, Hokusai suddenly died. She continued to work painting *nishiki-e* (multi-coloured woodblock printing) for a living, Ōi meets a woman who entices her to take up the challenge of her masterpiece "Yoshiwara Night Scene" (*Yoshiwara Kōshi Saki no Zu*).

What inspired Hayashiya Anko to create "Hokusai's Daughter"?

Upon assuming the role of the 21st Sumida Goodwill Ambassador to promote her hometown, Sumida Ward, Anko encountered Katsushika Ōi's masterpiece, "Yoshiwara Night Scene," daughter of the renowned Hokusai. The painting's depiction of light and shadow left a big impression, resonating with delicacy, impact, and a sense of melancholy. Intrigued, she looked up the artist, to discover that despite her talent, Ōi's legacy was relatively modest, having spent much of her life assisting her father rather than cultivating her own body of work. Anko was moved by Ōi's story, thinking about the immense pressure Ōi must have felt living in the shadow of her father, a revered genius, and the obstacles she encountered as a female artist in a predominantly male domain. Drawing parallels with her own experiences as a rare female in the male-dominated world of *rakugo*, Anko was inspired to weave a *rakugo* story that would bring to light Katsushika Ōi's overlooked story, aiming to honour her life and



Katsushika Ōi's "Yoshiwara Night Scene"

contributions to Japanese art history.

Rakugo shows about Hokusai and Ōi

June 17, 2023: "Hokusai no musume" o kiku kai ("Hokusai's Daughter")



Contact Information

Hayashiya Anko Management: Mitsuhiro Abe (Mr) ✉ motomakui@gmail.com / ☎ 070-9027-1537

At Sumida Triphony Hall (Tokyo, Japan)

November 2, 2023

“*Eshi ha tsurai yo*” (Painters have it tough) Pre-show
At Ori Tokyo Cafe (Tokyo, Japan)

November 3, 2023:

Edo Bunka Taiken. Rakugo o kanshō shiyō.
(Edo Culture Experience. Let's watch Rakugo!)
at Sumida Hokusai Museum (Tokyo, Japan)

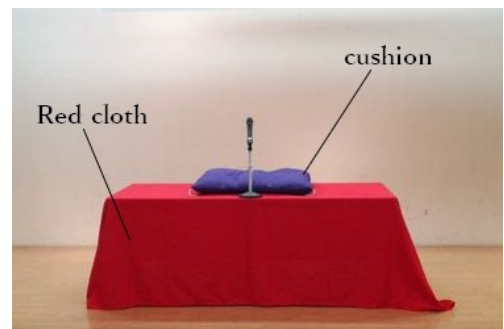
November 5, 2023:

“*Eshi ha tsurai yo*” (Painters have it tough)
At Sumida Hokusai Museum (Tokyo, Japan)



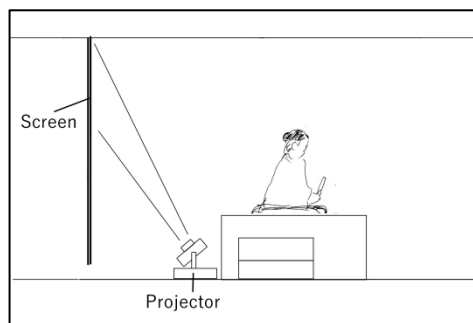
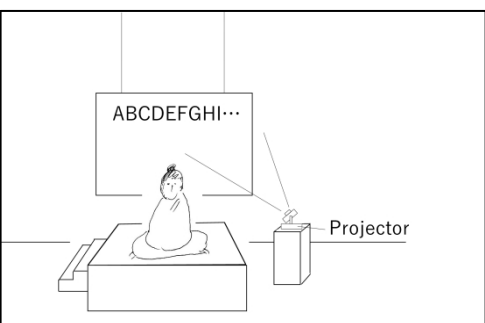
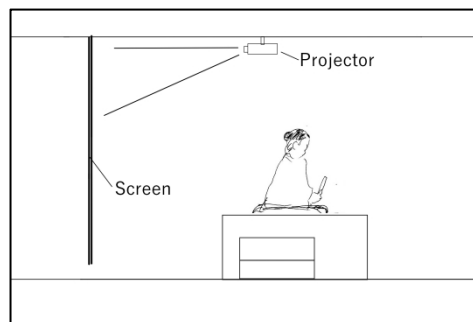
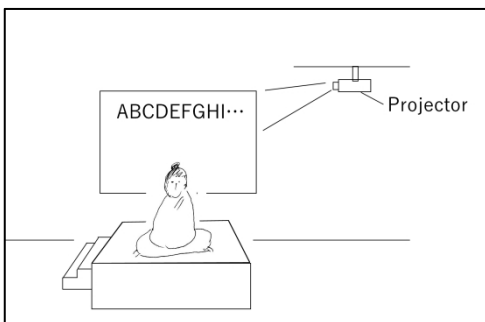
Minimalism: It's Easy to Stage a *rakugo* Show

- A stage (90 cm to 180 cm in width, 90 cm to 180 cm in depth 70 cm to 90 cm in height) on which the performer can kneel
- Microphone and microphone stand (should there be more than 50 people in the audience)
- Screen for supertitles
- Projector
- HDMI connection to projector



Provided by Hayashiya Anko:

- Supertitles translated in the local language, or English if preferred
- Red cloth and cushion



Positioning and Alignment:

- Position the supertitles in a location that doesn't require the audience to significantly divert their attention from the stage action.

- Adjust the placement to prevent the performer's shadows from obstructing the supertitles.

- Ensure the projector's light does not shine in the actors' or audience's eyes, possibly requiring the use of angles or specialized projection equipment.

Contact Information

Hayashiya Anko Management: Mitsuhiro Abe (Mr) ✉ motomakui@gmail.com / ☎ 070-9027-1537


Anko's Motivation: Taking "Hokusai's Daughter" to Europe

Anko's decision to take her *rakugo* piece, "Hokusai's Daughter," to Europe is deeply rooted in the broader issue of **women's historical overshadowing by their more famous male counterparts**. Through the lens of Katsushika Ōi, the talented yet underrecognized daughter of the illustrious Hokusai, Anko seeks to spotlight the rich, yet often neglected, contributions of women to art and culture. This initiative resonates with a critical examination of the identity challenges women have historically faced when in relationships with famous men. Such dynamics have often led to women's talents being overlooked, their identities submerged beneath the achievements of their male relatives or partners.

The story of Katsushika Ōi provides a poignant example of a woman who, despite her immense talent and contributions in the field of painting, was overshadowed by her father. The European presentation of "Hokusai's Daughter" will serve as a catalyst for dialogue with the countless women whose accomplishments have been disparaged because of their publicly recognized association with men.

This endeavour is not just about unearthing the hidden stories of artistic and intellectual women; it is also about challenging and changing the narrative, allowing these women their rightful place in history. Anko's work highlights the importance of **looking beyond the surface to recognize and appreciate the depth and breadth of contributions women have made**, despite the societal and personal struggles they faced. It is a call to action to reexamine and revalue the roles of women in history, to ensure their talents, struggles, and achievements are not forgotten but celebrated and studied alongside their male counterparts.

By sharing "Hokusai's Daughter" with a European audience, Anko not only honours the legacy of Katsushika Ōi but also sparks a vital dialogue about gender, creativity, and recognition in the arts. It is a reminder that **the story of art and human achievement is incomplete without acknowledging the contributions of women**, often hidden in the shadows of famous men. Through this international engagement, Anko aspires to inspire a re-evaluation of historical narratives, fostering a more inclusive appreciation of cultural heritage that duly recognizes the contributions of all individuals, regardless of gender.



あanko三十六景
～落語家が語る葛飾北斎～

林家あanko
落語 × 富嶽三十六景
北斎作品の解説と落語の公演

2024年
5月6日 月祝

【開演】14:00 / 【開場】13:30
前売 2000円 / 当日 2500円
(全席自由)

ご予約・お問合せ
こちらQRコードからもご予約いただけます！
タカライ企画・古典芸能研究会
090-1034-0864 (安藤)

主催：林家あanko事務局 共催：タカライ企画・古典芸能研究会

Should you still be in Japan on May 6, please be invited to join the below show:

May 6, 2024

Anko Sanjūrokkei (Thirty-six Views of Anko)

Rakugo Performance and

Explanation of Katsushika Hokusai's works

At Nakano Geinō Shōgekijō (Nakano, Tokyo)

Contact Information

Hayashiya Anko Management: Mitsuhiro Abe (Mr) ✉ motomakui@gmail.com / ☎ 070-9027-1537