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## **Kutsukake Tokijiro**

By: *R. Pikser*



Photo: Kenji Mori

Kutsukake Tokijiro, a gangster with the heart of gold, was the creation of Shin Hasegawa, who created the genre of the wandering gambler. The stories had great success in Japan, especially from the 1930s to the 1950s. This play is a modernization of Mr. Hasegawa's 1928 drama. Jun Kim, artistic director of this project, has integrated B-movie sensibility, projections, dance, staged fights, and good old-fashioned acting to create a charming and nostalgic evening.

Tokijiro, bound by duty to repay several nights' lodging given him by a gang boss, must participate in the killing of a gangster from a rival family. However, he is not only a gangster, but a man of greater depths, a man of honor. He assumes responsibility for the pregnant wife

and young child of the man he has killed, protecting them from rival gangsters and trying to start a new life with them, outside of the gangster world.

Mr. Kim, Japanese but of Korean extraction, has used the various techniques available to him with a deft touch. Nothing is overdone, but each element fulfills its niche. The actors are not trained dancers, but between Mr. Kim, choreographer Kayoko Sakoh, and lighting designer Taizo Nishi, violence is created in a stylized and satisfying form. Mr. Kim, as the murdered gangster Sanzo and Hiroko Yonekura as his wife, who falls under the protection of her husband's murderer, are the only two actors who succeed in infusing a level of emotional reality into the stylization of the form.

This is enough for one to see the possibilities. However, as in American B movies, the stylization can successfully contain less than profound acting. The interweaving of Japanese spoken language (with supertitles), projections on the upstage movie screen, live music composed by Ryo Yoshimata with just the right suggestion of danger and violence, and the excellent movement all combine to make an enjoyable evening.

Team Kutsukake

At The Flea

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New York, NY

Tickets \$ 20

212-352-3101

<http://www.theflea.org> .