

Noh Miidera 三井寺

(“The Miidera Temple”)

A Mother, distraught at the disappearance of her son, prays to the god Kannon at Kiyomizudera temple to help her find him. She is told in a dream to visit Miidera temple. She does so on a full moon night when the priests are moon-viewing along with her young son who has become an acolyte. The Mother, deranged, strikes the temple bell and causes a disturbance. But Mother and son are then reunited.

Author: Often attributed to Zeami Motokiyo (1636?-1443?) but recent scholarship suggest a later author.

Scene: The Kiyomizudera temple in the capital, the present day Kyoto; then, autumn, the time of the harvest moon at the Miidera temple near Otsu in the province of Omi, the present Shiga prefecture, at the south of Lake Biwa.

Category: Fourth category miscellaneous of fifth category (mad woman) play, present-time (genzai) noh in two acts, without taiko stick drum.

Performance practice: performed by all five schools shite schools of Noh.

Characters (in order of appearance)

- Maejite (first half shite main actor): The Mother of Senmitsu

Mask: mature woman (fukai or shakumi).

- Ado-Ai-kyôgen/Ado-ai (secondary interlude actor): Man at the Gate.

- Kokata (child actor): the boy Senmitsu.

- Waki (secondary actor): a main priest of Miidera temple

- Wakizure (accompanying waki actors): Two or three Companion Priests.

- Omo-ai-kyôgen/Omo-ai (main interlude actor): a Temple Servant.

- Nochijite (second half shite): the same woman as above.

Mask: same as above.

Synopsis: Scene by Scene

1. Shite entrance: A Mother enters in silence, kneels, and prays to Kannon, asking what has become of her son. She briefly dozes, than wakeswakes saying that she has had a divinely inspired dream. She decides to relate it to a man who always consoles her.
2. Ado-ai/Shite exchange, Shite exit: The Man at the gate announces himself. He greets the Mother and she tells him that she had a dream telling her to go to Miidera temple in Omi. The Man tells her it is auspicious because the “O” of Omi stands for “meeting”, and the “Mi” of Miidera stands for “seeing” She will surely meet her child there. The woman leaves to ashirai naka-iri exit music.

Stage attendants place on stage a tall square bamboo frame prop belfry (shôrô) with a roofed bell

chamber containing a small bell.

3. Kokata/Waki/Wakizure entrance: The boy Senmitsu and priests of Miidera temple enter to shidai music. The Main Priest tells of having taken on the boy as an acolyte, and how now they are going to have a moon-viewing party. The priests sing of the full moon night, and how the evening sun beseeches the moon.
4. Omo-ai/Waki/Wakizure exchange: The Temple Servant entertains the boy with a short humorous dance, then notices an uproar outside caused by a madwoman approaching. He wants to invite her in to have her dance, but the priest refuses. The Servant decides to act as if he is chasing her away but on the sly lets her in.
5. Shite entrance: The distraught Mother enters to issei music and sings of traveling from to Miidera, and of her madness and pain. The chorus sings of her tangled thoughts and confused heart. She dances a kakori anguish dance. The chorus for her sings of how she would give up the beautiful poetry of blossoms, maples, moon, and snow all for the safe return of her child.
6. Waki/Shite admirations: .The Priest sings of the entrancing moon, and the Mother sings its luster and perfection. The chorus sings of the mountains, and distant forest, and small ferryboats on the lake below which cross it and seemed beckoned by the moon.
7. Omo-ai/Shite exchange: The Temple Servant tells of drinking and having forgotten to ring the late night bell. As he rings it, the Mother strikes him with her fan and demands to ring it, too. The Servant refuses. The Mother sings of the bell’s exquisite sound reminding her of the bell of Kiyomizudera temple. The chors sings of the moonlit night though which the bell rings clear..
8. Waki/Shite exchange, Shite’s action: The Priest stops the woman from ringing the bell. The Mother recalls poems about bells and the moons asking why the priest should stop her just because she is mad. With the chorus, she sings of the voice of Dharma Law heard through the bell’s ringing. The chorus sings of the 108 delusive passions fading and the five obstacles clearing with the bell’s tone, and the ultimate truth radiating from the moon.
9. Shite’s narrative dance: The chorus and Mother sing of various poems sung in praise of bells tolling the voice of Dharma Law, of bells ringing as blossoms scatter, as lingering lovers part at dawn, and in old age while recalling the past. Again the Mother laments her inability to find her child.
10. Kokata/Waki exchange, Kokata/Shite reunion: The boy Senmitsu re-reveals that he had been captured by slave traders before coming to this temple and that the woman is in mother. The Mother speaks of her Joy and the embarrassment of her madness. The chorus sings how this reunion is now a time for joy., and of the bell which alerted others to her madness yet brought about their reunion.
11. Conclusion: The Chorus describes how the Mother and child, now united, return home to happiness. [Richard Emmert]