

Koshiki Noh **Shojo 猩々**
(The Elf)

A man named Kofu was rewarded for his filial piety with a dream in which he was told that he would become rich if he sold sake in the market place. He followed the dictates of the dream and now has become quite prosperous. One of his customers who comes every market day to drink his sake is an elf who can imbibe endlessly without getting drunk. This mysterious elf has told Kofu that he lives in the sea and the prosperous sake merchant has come down to the nearby Shinnyo estuary to await the elf's appearance. When the elf at last appears in the middle of the night, Kofu pours him sake as the elf sings of the glories of this "chrysanthemum elixir." He then dances for the sake merchant and when finished promises him a very felicitous well of sake which will never run dry.

Author: Unknown.

Scene: An autumn night; the Shinnyo estuary near the village of Yozu (Yang-tsu) at the foot of Mt. Kanekinzan in China.

Category: Fifth category ending (felicitous) piece, phantasm (mugen) noh in two acts, *chu-no-mai* (medium dance) piece or *midare* ("confused" dance) piece, with *taiko* stick drum.

Performance Practice: *Shojo* in its present-day standard form is performed by all five schools and also known as *Shojo Midare* or just *Midare*. This *koshiki* "old style" variant is the older full play in two acts instead of today's common one act piece. This revival of the full play was first performed in 2003 by the Otsuki wing of the Kanze school.

CHARACTERS (in order of appearance):

Waki (secondary character): the prosperous sake merchant Kofu.

Maeshite (*shite* main character in the first half): a mysterious being.

Ai (interlude character): a merchant.

Nochishite (*shite* in the second half): an elf. Mask: red-faced elf (*shojo*) unique to this play.

Nochitsure (accompanying *shite* character in second half): an accompanying elf.

SYNOPSIS: Scene by Scene

1. *Waki entrance:* The prosperous sake merchant Kofu enters to *nanori-bue* solo flute music and tells how he had a dream rewarding his filial piety in which he was told that he would become rich if he sold sake in the marketplace. He has followed the dream and indeed become prosperous. One of his customers is a mysterious man who can drink endlessly without getting drunk. Today when this customer comes he will ask him who he is and where he is from. [*nanori*]

2. *Maeshite entrance:* The customer enters to *issei* music and sings making references to the bottom of the sea, a wave pillow and the uncertainty of floating sleep. [*issei*]

3. *Waki/Shite exchange*: Kofu notes that his peculiar customer has appeared. The customer asks for his usual sake and this time Kofu says he will not give him any unless he reveals who he is and what is his name. The customer replies that this is not a proper thing to say to someone in the market even if it involves a great amount of jewels. There may be mixing but never arguing. Kofu replies that truly arguing is wrong but when it comes to drinking sake—together they comment—that it allows them to discuss many things. The chorus for Kofu sings how sake leads one on even though one might wish to stop and therefore asking one's name seems appropriate. [*mondo, kake-ai, uta*]

4. *Shite narrative*: The customer with the chorus decides to reveal who he is saying that although he is neither a Buddha nor a human, there are six paths of living things and he is a *shojo*, an elf that lives in under the white waves of the sea. He lives in the Yozu (Yangtse) river near the harbor visited by the prince himself, a place mentioned in famous poems, where ships from both east and west stop, and where the “chrysanthemum water” (sake) is known to flow endlessly. Kofu and the shojo along with the chorus further speak of the joys of sake and finally the elf leaves disappearing under the waves of the river. [*sashi, sageuta, ageuta*]

5. *Ai narrative*: A merchant relates further background.

6. *Waki wait*: Kofu sings of having come to the Shinnyo estuary to await the elf in the middle of the night. [*ageuta (machiutai)*]

7. *Nochishite entrance*: The elf enters with an accompanying elf to the stately sagariha music and in exchange with the chorus sings of “chrysanthemum water” (sake) as an elixir to prevent aging, the joy of drinking with friends, how sake keeps one warm no matter how strong the autumn winds blow, the glories of drinking on a clear autumn night, and the sounds of the flute and drums as the elf prepares to dance. [*wataribyoshi*]

8. *Shite's dance*: Singing of the clarity of the autumn voices carried by the winds from across the sea, the elves dance the *chu-no-mai* “middle dance” or the more complex *midare* whose “confused” steps suggest a slightly tipsy elf.

9. *Conclusion*: The elf promises the merchant a well of sake, then with the chorus sings of drinking throughout the night from a well which doesn't run dry, the glories of an autumn night with sake cup in hand, the beauty of the moonlight over the estuary, the tipsiness one begins to feel after a night of drinking, falling asleep and then waking up to find that the well of sake is still full, and wishes for endless good fortune. [*noriji*]
[Richard Emmert]