

## Noh Shunkan 俊寛

The priest Shunkan conspired with Fujiwara no Naritsune, the governor of Tamba, and Taira no Yasuyori, a high police official, to overthrow the powerful prime minister, Taira no Kiyomori. As a result, they were banished to the isolated island of Kikaigashima.

The play begins with an emissary announcing that a pardon has been granted to Naritsune and Yasuyori and that he has to travel to the island to deliver it. On the island, meanwhile, the three exiles longingly recall their life in the capital. When the ship arrives with the pardon, they are at first overjoyed. But Shunkan is just as suddenly devastated when he finds out that he has not been included. The two pardoned embark saying they will plead Shunkan's case. In despair, Shunkan is left alone on the desolate island.

Author: Unknown. Attributed by various sources to Zeami (1363?-1443?), recent scholarship suggests otherwise. Possibly Komparu Zenchiku (1405-1470?).

Scene: Autumn. The second year of the Jijō era (1178). First briefly the capital (Kyoto); then the island of Kikaigashima ("Devil's Isle"), located between Satsuma province of southern Kyushu and the Ryukyu Islands, in the present Kagoshima prefecture, Kyushu.

Category: Fourth category miscellaneous (compassion) play, present-time noh without taiko.

Performance practice: Performed by all schools. Kita name: Kikaigashima (鬼界島)

Characters (in order of appearance)

- Waki (secondary actor): an emissary of the prime minister Taira no Kiyomori. Carries a pardon for Naritsune and Yasuyori.
- Ai/Ai-kyōgen (interlude actors): a ship's captain.
- Tsure (companion actor): Fujiwara no Naritsune, the former governor of Tamba in exile with Shunkan.
- Tsure (companion actor): Taira no Yasuyori, a lay priest and former police official of the capital also in exile with Shunkan.
- Shite (main actor): Shunkan, a Tendai sect Buddhist priest who has been exiled for conspiring against Taira no Kiyomori. Wears a special Shunkan mask with priest's costume.

Synopsis: scene by scene.

1. Waki and Ai entrance: An emissary of Kiyomori enters to the nanoribue flute music and announces that an amnesty has been granted along with the state prayers for the safe delivery of the Empress (Kiyomori's daughter). It includes Naritsune and Yasuyori on the isle of Kikaigashima. He asks a ship's captain to prepare a ship to take him there. They exit.
2. Tsure entrance: To shidai music, Naritsune and Yasuyori enter. They sing of their exile on Kikaigashima and how, when they were in the capital, they had vowed to make a pilgrimage to the ninety-nine Kumano shrines between the capital and Kumano. Since they are in exile, they have made replicas of all the images of the shrines and worship daily at them, carrying out

purification rites.

3. Shite entrance: Shunkan enters to issei music and sings of the hopelessness and despair he feels about his life in exile.
4. Tsure and Shite exchange: Shunkan meets Naritsune and Yasuyori on the path and says he has brought wine for them. Yasuyori looks in his pale and sees only water. Admitting that it is water, Shunkan says that water was the wine of the gods and reminds them of the Chinese wizard Hōso who drank water of a mountain stream and lived for more than 700 years. With the chorus singing for them, they mime the drinking of wine, but they are reminded of their grief due to their long exile from the capital.
5. Ai and Waki entrance: To issei music, the ship's captain enters with a frame boat followed by Kiyomori's emissary who enters the boat. The emissary sings of the speed of their fast ship. The captain announces their arrival at Kikaigashima.
6. Waki, Shite and Tsure exchange: Asking for those who were exiled, the emissary announces that he has a letter of amnesty which he hands to Shunkan, who in turn gives it to Yasuyori. Yasuyori reads aloud that he and Naritsune have been pardoned. Shunkan says that because he is not included there must have been a mistake. The emissary says that Shunkan must be left behind.
7. Shite's lament: Shunkan laments that he has committed the same crime but is not to be released with the two others. He wonders why he alone must remain to suffer in this dread place. The chorus describes the scene singing of his profound anguish as even the birds and beast cry. Shunkan again unrolls the letter and searches it over and over. Wondering if he must be dreaming, he pounds the earth to awake himself.
8. Shite and others exchange: Naritsune and Yasuyori prepare to leave as Shunkan clings to Yasuyori's sleeve. The emissary refuses to allow him to board. The ship embarks as Shunkan grasps its rope. The ship captain cuts the rope and pushes the boat into deep water. Shunkan calls out to the ship and finally throws himself on the beach weeping.
9. Conclusion: The emissary, Naritsune and Yasuyori sing that they will plead on Shunkan's behalf. Yelling over the water, Shunkan asks if they will truly petition for his release. They promise to do so and telling him to wait. The chorus describes how Shunkan watches the ship sail out to sea and weeps as it vanishes over the horizon. [Richard Emmert]