

Fukkyoku Noh **Taisanmoku** 泰山木
("Taisanpukun and the Tree")

The high-ranking court nobleman Sakuramachi no Chunagon, lamenting that cherry trees only blossom for seven days, conducts a prayer service to the Chinese god Taisanpukun, the god of Mt. Tai and son of King Yama (Enma-o), the King of Hell. A goddess appears and after waiting for the moon to set, secretly breaks off a spray of the blossoming cherries and quickly flies up to heaven. A gardener hears a sound and investigating, finds that a branch has been broken off a cherry tree, and reports this to Chunagon. Chunagon prays to Taisanpukun after which the god himself appears. The god censures the act of the goddess and yells for her to appear. She appears in the heavens carrying a cherry branch and dances. Taisanpukun, receiving the aid of various gods, insures that the blossoms will bloom for three times seven days.

Author: Unknown, although many secondary sources attribute it to Zeami (1363?~1443?). There is also some suggestion that Zeami had revised an early version of the play which suggests that it was written by the 14th or early 15th century.

Scene: Spring, mid-12th century, in the cherry blossom-covered mountains near Miyako, the capital, the present-day Kyoto.

Category: Fifth category (ending) piece in two acts, *mugen* (phantasm) noh, demon piece, with *taiko* □□stick drum.

Performance Practice: A Kanze school revival (*fukkyoku noh*) of the play which is current in the Kongo School only under the name Taisanpukun (泰山府君). Taisanmoku was the name of the text at Zeami's time. The Kanze revival was first performed in 2000 organized by the Fukuo *waki* school Fukuo-Kai. The Fukuo *waki* school is the only *waki* school which has the play in its repertory. The original revival featured *waki* actors singing with the *shite* actors of the chorus.

CHARACTERS (in order of appearance):

Waki □□(secondary actor): Sakuramachi no Chunagon, literally the "Cherry Blossom District Court Noble"—the name for the 12th century courtier Fujiwara no Shigenori who is said to have had a great love of cherry trees and planted many in the capital.

Wakitsure (companion secondary actors): Two attendants of Sakuramachi no Chunagon.

Mae-tsure (accompanying *shite* □main actor in first half): a heavenly maiden in the form of a young woman. Mask: *ko-omote*, *waka-onna* or *zo* (young woman masks).

Ai/Ai-kyogen (interlude actor): a gardener, servant of Sakuramachi no Chunagon.

Shite □□□(main actor): the god Taisanpukun. Mask: *tenjin* (god) or *kobeshimi* (small clenched mouth).

Nochi-tsure (accompanying *shite* actor in second half): the goddess.

SYNOPSIS: Scene by Scene □□□

A stage attendant places on stage a framed blossoming cherry tree.

1. *Waki/Wakitsure entrance*: The nobleman Sakuramachi no Chunagon enters with two attendants to *nanori-bue* solo flute, announces himself and says that he has come to spend the day in the cherry blossom-covered mountains. He complains that in the autumn, the autumn leaves color the mountains

for a long time, but the spring cherry blossoms last but seven days. He goes on to say that he is going to conduct a prayer service to Taisanpukun and ask that the cherry tree be allowed to blossom longer. They sing a travel song about their trip into the mountains and how they must hurry and conduct their service for the cherry blossoms. [*nanori, kakaru, sashi, ageuta*]

2. *Tsure entrance*□□□□□□□□: A young woman enters to *issei* entrance music and sings of the cherry blossoms appearing like billowing clouds, of her desire to close the cloud passageway so she can linger in her form as a young woman by these blossoms on this spring night. The chorus for her sings of her own existence being as fragile as these blossoms, of the thin cloud cover which blankets the pines and clothes the descending moon, and the exquisite beauty of the blossoms. [*issei, ageuta*]

□□3. *Tsure/Waki exchange*: The young woman and Chunagon both sing as if in exchange but actually not to each other. She sings of getting close to the cherry trees so she can break off a blossoming branch, of sneaking up to the trees unseen, but then of seeing someone under the trees. He sings of a spring night being worth a thousand gold coins, of the moonlight on the blossoms, and of lying under the trees but being unable to sleep as the moon shines upon the blossoms. The chorus sings for the woman of being embarrassed to break off a branch in the bright moonlight. [*sashi, kake-ai, ageuta*]

4. *Waki/Tsure exchange*: In exchange, the chorus for Chunagon sings of being grateful for the beautiful spring night, the festive celebration underneath the blossoms, and the breezes that pass through the pines and on to the blossoms. The woman then sings that this is the time she must break off a branch of blossoms because in seven days they will be gone. The chorus again sings of the blossoms of Yoshino as well as the thousand cherry trees of Sakuramachi (cherry blossom district). In exchange they sing of the sinking moon hidden by clouds and the shade of the blossoms. The chorus then for the woman sings further of her desire to break off a spray of blossoms this night. [*rongi*]

5. *Tsure exit*: The woman and then the chorus for her describe how the moon sets and the sky darkens enabling her to approach the tree, break off a branch, and quickly fly off and back to heaven. [*sashi, kake-ai*]

6. *Ai-kyogen narration*: A gardener hears a sound and investigating, finds that a branch has been broken off a cherry tree. He reports this unmerciful act to Sakuramachi no Chunagon, then urges the nobleman to pray to Taisanpukun to protect the cherry blossoms. [*mondo, katari, mondo*]

7. *Shite entrance*: The god Taisanpukun enters and announces himself as the guardian of the five worlds of the afterlife. He recognizes that he has been called upon in order to extend the life of the blossoms and notes that flowers are sentient and therefore worthy of such a request. Realizing that a branch has been broken off a cherry tree he demands to know who did such an unfeeling act and looking into his mirror discovers it is a goddess from heaven. [*nanori, kake-ai, uta*]

8. *Nochi-tsure entrance and dance*: The chorus and the god describe how the whole world shakes and the sky is filled with light, how the god can see the heavenly maiden in her feathered robe with the spray of cherry blossoms, and how music is heard from the heavens. The maiden dances a *tennyo-no-mai* heavenly maiden dance. [*kake-ai*]

9. *Shite dance*: The chorus and the god describe how the heavenly maiden comes down again to earth crowned by a withering branch but how Taisanpukun, with the help of the many gods, causes the cherry branches to miraculously blossom again, He dances a *maibataraki* dance. [*noriji*]

10. *Conclusion*: The god and the chorus describe how he uses his powers to make the cherry trees blossom for three times seven days. [noriji] [Richard Emmert]