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Family Plays

THREE TALES FROM JAPAN

Three Dramatized Folktales
for Children

by

ROBIN HALL



THREE TALES FROM JAPAN

Successful premiere and tour by the Crescent Players of Southern Connecticut State College in New Haven, Conn. Story theatre versions of three Japanese folktales, designed to be performed as a trilogy.

Folktale. Adapted by Robin Hall. From Japanese folktales. Cast: 5m., 5w., with doubling, or up to 14 (6m., 8w.). Included are three tales—The Magic Fan, The Princess of the Sea and The Little Peach Boy—which are as familiar to Japanese children as Cinderella is to us. The narrative theatre style is derived from the traditional Bunraku, Kabuki and Noh plays, and the author, who has lived and studied in Japan, gives detailed suggestions for each aspect of production. Simple, abstract set suggesting various locales. Suitable for touring. Costumes are black tights, Japanese socks, bamboo sandals, and happi coats with costume pieces added for different characters. Code: TM1

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THREE TALES FROM JAPAN

by
Robin Hall

THE MAGIC FAN

A humorous tale about a magic fan that can make noses grow long and short.

THE PRINCESS OF THE SEA

A dance drama which takes place in a fishing village, and in the fantasy kingdom of the Dragon King of the Sea.

LITTLE PEACH BOY

A hero story which is set in a mountain village, and on the Isle of the Devils, where the Ogres live.

CAST AND SETTING

The three stories are joined together, to be performed as a trilogy by a group of 10-12 travelling players.

The unit set can be put up in sight of the audience if desired, and in any case the actors should carry in their props through the house, at the beginning of the show.

This play was first produced by The Crescent Players of Southern Connecticut State College, New Haven, Connecticut, under the general supervision of Dr. Robert E. Kendall, Chairman of the Theatre Department, on the 24th of February, 1972. After four performances at the college the production was toured to Connecticut schools, with the following cast:

Stage ManagerMathew Krashan

The Acting CompanyChris A. DePino, Janice Kozlowski,
Daryl Lowenthal, Patricia O'Toole
Joanne Pattavina, Peter Laverty
Jeanne Jewell, William Cole,
Gary Kingsbury, Daniel Mainwaring,
Eric Peterson, Charlene Banks,
Vicki Lederer

The Play was Directed by Robin Hall

Settings and Costumes Desgned by Thom J. Peterson

Technical Direction by Sigurd A. Jensen

Sound Technician, Howard Hoffmann

Choreography by Rochelle Davis

THREE TALES FROM JAPAN

PROLOGUE

A flexible stage is needed for these three stories. The scene must change from forest to seashore, from temple garden to nobleman's home, to the palace of an underseas princess with no interruption. The background may suggest clouds or waves or merely an abstract setting. The only dimensional piece needed is a simple raised platform. It should suggest a Japanese building — a teahouse, an entryway or a humble home — merely by a simplicity of line, bamboo structuring and a thatched roof, varied by the occasional shifting of simple props. This structure must be small enough to be easily portable, strong enough to support a number of actors, high enough to provide an interesting elevation and, even more important, to offer visibility to the actors who, according to traditional Japanese custom, often sit on the floor.

At the beginning of the show the stage is empty. The Stage Manager enters and moves briskly about the acting area, checking on stage equipment and readying the platform for an anticipated performance. When his cast fails to appear he exhibits increasing impatience. He sits down on the platform steps in an informal manner, waiting.

Music is heard in the distance and a company of ten or twelve performers, dressed alike in Happicoats and tights, parades in noisily from the rear of the auditorium, advertising their show as they come. Two actors with mask and cover cloth perform a lion dance down the center aisle, the 'lion' snapping at the audience. Others with clappers and brightly colored banners go right and left, calling a come-on for their performance. Still others follow, in pairs, carrying bamboo prop baskets suspended on wooden poles (Ideally there should be one prop basket for each story to be dramatized.) and repeatedly calling out "wa-sho wa-sho" to keep themselves in rhythm. The actors are made up to look like oriental performers.

While the clamorous group approaches, the Stage Manager exhibits a sequence of responses — relief, boredom, impatience — and when they reach the edge of the stage, he confronts them in annoyance. They place their props on the stage and face him from the stage floor with their backs to the audience.

ACTORS: (Happily) Konnicki-wa! (Meaning, "Good Day!")

STAGE MANAGER: Good day, you say! (Furiously) Where have you been?

ACTORS: (Very happily) Working-boss. Advertising the show!
Telling all the nice people to come.

STAGE MANAGER: (Seething) They're here you imbeciles! The audience is here! You've kept them waiting!

ACTORS: (All innocence. All together.) Ah — so?

STAGE MANAGER: Look! (Indicating audience.)

ACTORS: Oh? (Turning slowly around and facing audience.) Ah!
(They Smile happily and bow profusely.) You come to see our
play? (They nod in response to their own question.)

STAGE MANAGER: (Sarcastically) That's what they're here for.

1ST ACTOR: (Puzzled) But they're not Japanese children.

2ND ACTOR: They're *American* (pronounced 'Amelican') boys and
girls! (Pronounced 'gahls')

ACTORS: They're American! (All grin.)

STAGE MANAGER: Yes! They want to know the stories Japanese chil-
dren like best.

ACTORS: Ah, sooooo!

STAGE MANAGER: Yes! (Snaps) Now, get on with it!

ACTORS: (They turn back and face hm.) Hai! Hai! (Picking up their
props in anticipation.)

STAGE MANAGER: We begin with — (Actors lean forward expectantly.
Stage Manager picks up a major prop, such as the fan.) — *The
Magic Fan!* Now!

ACTORS: "*THE MAGIC FAN!*"

(There is a great commotion and the music starts up again. The actors leap on stage, all of them chattering and running about in seeming confusion. Prop men hand out props from *The Magic Fun* basket. Prop baskets, lion costume, banners and clackers quickly disappear. Throughout this short sequence, the Stage Manager seems to be directing the activities. Despite the seeming confusion this set-up should be accomplished efficiently, with the audience catching just a quick glimpse of the major props. Then lights dim and the actors go off to prepare themselves by exchanging their basic outfits for their costumes in the first story. Costumes are kept as simple as possible to avoid long intermissions for costume changes. (See Notes on Costumes) The music fades and the first story begins.

(END OF PROLOGUE)

THE MAGIC FAN

A humorous tale about a magic fan that can make noses grow long and short.

CHARACTERS

STORYTELLER

TENGU CHILDREN The children of long-nosed goblins
who live in the forests

BADGER A mischief maker who plays tricks
on people and has the power to transform
himself into many forms

3 TREES Personified by actors

NOBLEMAN A wealthy and distinguished lord,
subject to apoplexy under stress

KIMI-CHAN His beautiful daughter, a spoiled
only child, ready and waiting for marriage

WIFE An anxious motherly type

NOVICE A young attendant of the temple

3 WISEMEN Not so wise

PROPERTY MAN

SCENES:

SCENE 1. A forest inhabited by Tengu

SCENE 2. The Teahouse of a Buddhist Temple

SCENE 3. The entry to a Nobleman's house

THE MAGIC FAN

SCENE 1. A forest inhabited by Tengu and such creatures.

(Lights come up partially, casting a dappled green light over the stage. The Stage Manager of the prologue moves into a spotlight and begins the story.)

DIALOGUE

STORYTELLER: Once, long ago,
there was—

A fan, a very special fan.
It was, in fact, a magic fan!
It could make noses grow long.
It could make noses grow short.
That's a fan of a special sort.
Now—one day in the forest—

TREES: In the forest were three
trees,
Three tall trees.
Swaying in the breeze.

STORYTELLER: The fan belonged to
a Tengu King
Who let his children play with
the thing.

2ND AND

3RD TENGU: Where is she?

TENGU: In the forest, among the
trees,
The Tengu children play.
The Tengu children hide and
seek
Every happy day!

MOVEMENT DESCRIPTION

He exhibits the fan, a large dance fan.

He flicks the fan open wide. He fans it, right side up. He turns it over and fans the other way.

Male actors, each carrying a maple branch, enter in formation. They take their places and sway in unison.

Places fan on branch of center tree. (Tengu are winged creatures, human in form, with long nails on toes and fingers, and with long noses and black, tousled hair. They live in the forests and can be heard laughing there. When they laugh all is well, but when the Tengu are angered they may be destructive. Tengu children are merry little creatures, with their child-like playfulness emphasized here. They move cautiously but quickly like creatures used to the ways of the forest.)

1st Tengu child runs in breathlessly and hides behind a tree. Others come searching. They peek from behind the trees and exchange hiding places, shrieking with joy as they play. They find #1. Then, all together—

Tengu are goblins!	<i>They jump forward in a scarey manner.</i>
1ST TENGU: Will you look at that!	<i>They stop and stare at audience.</i>
2ND AND	
3RD TENGU: What! What? What is it?	
1ST TENGU: Look!—at that boy over there!	
2ND AND	
3RD TENGU: Where?	
1ST TENGU: There!	
TENGU: He hasn't any nose! No nose! No nose!	<i>Screaming and pointing.</i>
2ND TENGU: At least—not much of a nose.	<i>They roar with laughter.</i>
1ST TENGU: It's O.K. as far as it goes.	<i>They snicker.</i>
3RD TENGU: And that girl! . . .	<i>Points into audience.</i>
1ST AND	
2ND TENGU: She hasn't got one either!	<i>They laugh.</i>
TENGU: We've got noses That are noses!	<i>They show them off, in profile.</i>
BADGER: A Badger strolled along one day To watch the Tengu children play. Badgers, of course, are very clever. They make jokes, They play tricks on folks.	<i>(The Badger has a sly animal appearance. He has a long tail and walks on his hind feet with front paws held close. Badgers are mischief makers. Although they are fairly clever they can sometimes be duped.) Confidentially, to audience. (Badgers can change form and they can put jinxes on people.) He withdraws temporarily.</i>
2ND TENGU: The magic fan! It can make noses grow long!	<i>Tengu child finds the fan in the crotch of the tree and hides it behind her back. The others get curious and approach her. She fans the nose of #1 so that it grows VERY long. The others shriek with delight. Tengu #1 is embarrassed and hides be-</i>

hind a tree but the nose still shows.

3RD TENGU: Look't that! It's sticking way out!

1ST TENGU: Make it grow little again?

2ND TENGU: O.K., whatever you say!

3RD TENGU: Now, it's just right! Gimme the fan!

BADGER: But Badgers don't have magic fans. Watch me get one!

Badgers can transform themselves into almost anything,—just like this!

I told you Badgers were clever! Watch!

Hello! I say—

Hello! again! May I play?

TENGU: No! Go way! Don't bother us!

This is a *Tengu* game!

Little girls are not the same.

BADGER: Then, I'll just watch—and eat some of these sweet molasses candies. Mmm-yum! I really *do* like candies.

They are deee-licious!

1ST TENGU: What do you say? Can she play?

TENGU: She can play with us all day. O.K.? O.K.! O.K.! Gimme a candy!

BADGER: Uh! Uhh! Uhhh! Manners! One for *each* of you. Oh!

She pleads.

The nose is fanned back to size. This is all in fun.

She grabs the fan and runs off, the others chasing after her.

Stepping forward.

He thumps his belly. Sound effects provide a special magic sound for the transformation as the Prop Man turns the Badger into a little girl by the addition of a kimona, obi, and head scarf, and the removal of the Badger mask. He becomes a rather awkward, peasant-type girl, but his tail is still noticeable. He approaches the Tengu children, hiding a sack of candies behind his back. He speaks in a high voice.

The Tengu children stop playing and look, but say nothing.

They aren't too pleased.

Nonchalantly.

As he nibbles.

They begin to get interested and gather hungrily about him, smacking their lips.

They go into a huddle. They agree to let 'her' join.

They surround the Badger, grabbing at the candies.

He distributes one candy to each of them.

And there's just one left . . .
Imagine *that*!

TENGU: Just one left over?

BADGER: For *me*! Don't you see?
But I'm not very hungry. So,
who shall get this extra candy?
I know what we should do!
Just to be fair to you—and you
—and you.

All of you, close your eyes!

Put down your fan, dear.

Right here!

Now, the one who holds his
breath the longest—That's the
one who is the strongest—gets
the candy! Ready? Now hold
your breath!

One, two, three . . .

Eyes closed so you can't see!

Four, five, six . . .

Seven, eight, nine, ten.

Big joke, eh? Woudn't you say?
I really put it over on those
Tengu kids.

TENGU: Oh! Oh! Where is it?
Where's the candy? It's *mine*!
Gone? You took it! No! You
did!

1ST TENGU: Where is that little
girl?

TENGU: Gone?

3RD TENGU: Where's my *fan*?

1ST AND

2ND TENGU: She *stole* it!

3RD TENGU: Oh . . . I'm so mad!

TENGU: We're all so mad! We've
been *had*.
After her!

Each, eagerly, expecting to get it.

Tengu are disappointed.

*He toys with them. They look
eager.*

All clamber for it.

Badger winks broadly at audience.

He lines the Tengu up.

They close their eyes.

(As an aside)

*Tengu with fan puts it down in
front of her. Badger laughs ma-
liciously.*

*They suck in their breath and
hold it, getting blue in the face.
Arms extend and they begin to
shake all over.*

*Badger tucks the fan into his obi,
pops the extra candy into his own
mouth, and starts to depart,
chuckling to himself. His voice
returns again to its masculine
Badger quality.*

He slips away.

*The Tengu can hold their breath
no longer. They collapse and
tumble about on the ground.*

*They begin to search for the
candy.*

They look about.

They look again.

They look at each other.

*They take off in a hurry, accom-
panied by their special musical
theme. The lights fade momen-*

THE PRINCESS OF THE SEA

A dance drama which takes place in a fishing village on the coast of the Inland Sea of Japan and in the fantasy kingdom of the Dragon King of the Sea.

CHARACTERS:

URASHIMA TARO A sturdy young fisher lad who is a friendly, happy-go-lucky type.

FISHERFOLK OF THE VILLAGE

3 CHILDREN Who tease the Tortoise

TORTOISE A large, ancient sea creature with a rough brown shell who speaks in a chanting style reminiscent of Noh drama.

FISH GUARD A nervous creature with a pouty fish mouth.

ATTENDANTS OF THE PRINCESS Attractive mermaid types.

PRINCESS A fabulously beautiful young woman, enamoured of Urashima. She is tiny, delicate, and she moves with fine style.

NOODLE MAN Who plays a flute.

OLD WOMAN A very ancient old dame who is kindly, but somewhat impatient and irritable.

PROPERTY MEN

SCENES:

SCENE 1. A fishing village on the Inland Sea of Japan.

SCENE 2. The same the next morning.

SCENE 3. The palace of the Dragon King.

SCENE 4. The fishing village, 300 years later.

THE PRINCESS OF THE SEA

SCENE 1. A fishing village on the Inland Sea of Japan.

Near a rocky beach nestle the huts of the fisherfolk. Behind are the green terraces of rice fields mounting up to the wooded hills. There is the sound of the surf and the first strains of a fisherman's work song. (See Notes on Music). The leader of the fishermen runs in, calling the villagers together. They answer from offstage and enter in good spirits, lining up along the beach (at the front of the stage), to haul in the fishing nets. This action is mimed. In unison, the fisherfolk pull vigorously on their imaginary nets, singing as they work.

Three little children enter with their elders and compose a colorful group, playing happily on the beach, catching crabs, collecting sea shells, making sand castles and occasionally joining in the song. As the words of the song are concluded a sturdy young lad, Urashima-Taro, enters with a good catch and stops to sort out his fish into a woven basket. On the opposite side of the stage, quite unobtrusive, is an ancient Tortoise with a large, brown shell. At the beginning of the scene his head and flippers are entirely hidden inside it.

DIALOGUE:

MOVEMENT DESCRIPTION

FISHERMAN: Hoy! Hoy! Come on! Help pull in the nets!

FISHERFOLK: Hai! Hai! All together now. Pull! Pull! Dokkois ho!

Fisherfolk enter from both sides of the stage. They tug at the net, singing as they work. As the song concludes they turn upstage, pulling the net over their shoulders, bringing it together in a circular bottleneck. This is timed with the concluding words of the song and the entrance of Urashima. The final musical phrases of the song support the following dialogue.

FISHERFOLK: Urashima san!
Good morning! O-hayo!

URASHIMA: Good morning!
Good morning!

He waves and bows. All freeze as the leader of the fisherfolk explains:

FISHERMAN: "A fisherman lived by the Inland Sea. A Tortoise changed his destiny."

FISHERFOLK: A Tortoise?

FISHERMAN: A Tortoise.

TORTOISE: A Tortoise!

Tortoise pokes his head out. Fis herfol k n oti a c d l a u g h t h e n c o n t i n u e t h e i r e x i t . T h e m u s i c c o n c l u d e s .

URASHIMA: Everyone knew Urashima Taro, the best fisherman in the village. Tai! Bonito! This is my lucky day.

Pro u d l y .

H e b e n d s o w t o s o r t h i f i s h . T h e T o r t o i s e b e s t i r s i t s e l f a n d m o v e s s l o w l y , u n s i l y , t h e b e a c h t o w a r d s t h e c h i l d r e n . T h e c h i l d r e n a r e o f d i f f e r e n t t y p e s . O n e m i g h t b e q u i t e s h y y o u n g a n d s m a l l e r t h a n t h e o t h e r s . O n e m i g h t b e f a t a n d s l o w m o v i n g . T h e r e w o u l d c e r t a i n l y b e a l e a d e r s o m e w h a t b r a s s t h a n t h e r e s t .

1ST CHILD: Saaa! Look at that big thing!

N o t i c i n g t h e T o r t o i s e .

2ND CHILD: A turtle! An enormous turtle!

3RD CHILD: It's a T o r t o s e , dumbie! And it lives in the sea.

2ND CHILD: Then, what's it doing here?

P u t d o w n .

1ST CHILD: It's coming right t o w a r d s !

S c r e a m i n g .

3RD CHILD: Let's get it!

OTHERS: Get it! Get it!

T h e y a l l s u r r o u n d t h e T o r t o i s e . A s i t m o v e s t h e y i m i t a t e i t , t e a s i n g a n d t a u n t i n g .

2ND CHILD: Make it pull its head in!

T h e y t o s s t h e b e a d t o i t . T h e T o r t o i s p u l l s i t h e a d a n d d i p p e n d a g a i n .

1ST CHILD: Get a stick. Poke it!

T h e y p o k e a n d p r o m p t l y . T h e T o r t o i s e s t a y s t i g h t l y q u e s t i o n e d .

2ND CHILD: Why doesn't its head come out again?

3RD CHILD: Pry it open!

T h e y f a i l t o p r y o p e n t h e s h e l l .

1ST CHILD: It won't open again!

3RD CHILD: Let's turn it over on its back!

T h e y a t t e m p t t h i s a n d w i t h e f f o r t t h e y s u c c e e d . T h e y s h o u t t r i u m p h a n t l y .

CHILDREN: Yes! Turn it over!

T h e T o r t o i s e i s l e f t t h e p l e a s e i n i t s b a c k w i t h i t s l e g s i g g l i n g .

URASHIMA: What's going on over there? Hello! What's happening? Whoa there! What do you think you're doing.

Urashima Taro has been absorbed in his own affairs but as this scene gets noisier he begins to pay attention. He shoulders his basket full of fish and approaches the children. At first they pay no attention to him.

2ND CHILD: Nuthin! . . .

1ST CHILD: We're just playing.

3RD CHILD: Leave us alone!
We're just teasing him a little.

URASHIMA: A little! You know if you don't put him back into the water he will die?

2ND CHILD: It's only a dumb ole turtle.

3RD CHILD: Tortoise!

1ST CHILD: And he's ours!

OTHERS: Yes, we found him!

URASHIMA: But it doesn't seem quite fair, does it?

CHILDREN: He's ours . . .

URASHIMA: Well, let's see . . . I've got an idea! Gold coins! . . . one, two, three . . . Suppose I give one of them to each of you. What could you buy, I wonder?

He puts down his basket and takes out a bag of coins. He plays with them a little.

CHILDREN: Candy! . . . or a new kite! . . . or some sweet rice cakes.

URASHIMA: Yes...anything you like! Now, each of you gets a gold coin . . . and I get the Tortoise. Okay? Well . . . what do you think? Is it a bargain?

He counts them out and places them in the children's outstretched hands.

They hesitate momentarily.

3RD CHILD: Okay! Come on . . . let's get some candy!

*The others agree.
They start off.*

2ND CHILD: Thank you, Urashima San! Sayonara!

Collects her shells and bows as she goes.

URASHIMA: Sayonara! Poor ole Tortoise! If you are as old as you look, you should be a wiser Tor-

Laughing, he turns Tortoise over. Helps Tortoise back into the water.

toise! They say Tortoises live to be a thousand years old. Maybe you're still young, eh? Maybe only 500 years old? Perhaps time moves slowly down there. Go on now. And take care, my friend. It's safer for you in the sea! Mother I'm back! Come see what I have brought!

He chuckles at the idea. Indicating the bottom of the sea.

The Tortoise swims away. It turns back once, seeming to nod to Urashima. He picks up his basket and goes home.

There is excited chatter within the house as the lights fade. This is a fast blackout merely denoting the passage of time.

SCENE 2. The next morning.

URASHIMA: The next day was unusually calm . . . not a murmur in the air, not a ripple on the water. Strange not a single fish! Come, on, fish! Where are you? Such an honor to be caught by the finest fisherman in all Japan! No? Oh, come on, fish!

Urashima looks out of his house, stretching and yawning. He runs to the edge of the beach. He mimes reaching down into the water.

He chuckles at his braggadocio.

TORTOISE: U-ra-shi-maaa! U-ra-shi-maaa Taaaaa-roooo . . .

Spoken in a strange, Noh-type chant.

URASHIMA: What was that? I thought I heard my name!

Listening.

TORTOISE: U-ra-shi-maaaa . . .

The Tortoise swims up to him.

URASHIMA: Oh, why, it's the Tortoise. Hello again, Tortoise! You can talk!

Recovering his composure.

TORTOISE: Urashima San . . . Thank you very much for your help yesterday.

Nods affirmatively. The Tortoise speaks slowly and Urashima must patiently wait for the words to come.

URASHIMA: Oh — don't mention it.

TORTOISE: I bring you an invitation . . .

URASHIMA: Oh?

Amused.

TORTOISE: . . . from the Princess of the Sea . . .

URASHIMA: Oh?

Interested now.

TORTOISE: . . . to visit the king-

LITTLE PEACH BOY

A hero story which takes place in a mountain village and on the Isle of the Devils where the Ogres live.

CHARACTERS:

OLD MAN	An elderly woodcutter.
OLD WOMAN	His wife, a fussy, warm-hearted old lady.
PUPPET'S VOICE	A high, appealing childish voice.
MOMOTARO	A 15 year old boy, the ideal hero type.
DOG	A large spotted creature who is pugnacious, boastful and self-centered.
MONKEY	A joking funster, clever, quick, agile.
PHEASANT	A confident, beautiful bird, the strong, silent type.
TOWNSPEOPLE	
OGRE	A dreadful giant with an ugly red face and pointed horns.

SCENES

- SCENE 1. A woodcutter's cottage in the forest.
- SCENE 2. The same, 15 years later.
- SCENE 3. Over hill and dale.
- SCENE 4. The Ogres' Castle on the Isle of the Devils.
- SCENE 5. By the seashore.

LITTLE PEACH BOY

SCENE 1. A tiny thatch-roofed cottage near a little stream, surrounded by a forest of bamboo trees.

DIALOGUE:

MOVEMENT DESCRIPTION

OLD MAN: Many years ago there lived an old man who was a woodcutter

Old man comes out of house with sack and cutting tools.

OLD WOMAN: And his old woman, who was a very good wife.

She enters with large woven basket for washing clothes.

OLD MAN: Each day the old man went into the forest to gather wood.

Old Woman helps him with his sack and bows him on his way.

OLD WOMAN: And the old woman took her clothes to the banks of the little stream to wash them clean.

She goes to the edge of the stage with her basket, takes clothes out individually, rubs them on the stones and lays them out to dry. A large peach, beach ball size, comes floating down the stream. It is dangled from a bamboo pole which is maneuvered by a hooded prop man. It should look round, pink and luscious.

Suddenly, a large peach came bobbing down the stream. Saaaaa—what a peach!

She watches the Peach, then thinks to herself.

I have never seen such a peach in my whole life!

I should get it for my old man!

She hunts for a stick but finds none. She tries to make ripples to affect the Peach. They do—it goes further away.

No . . . no! Come *this* way!

Over there, the waters are bitter.

Over here they're sweet.

She gets an idea and begins to clap her hands and to chant. The Peach responds. She sings a second time and the Peach bobs closer.

Shun the bitter. Shun the bitter
And come into the sweet
Come into the sweeeet!

She gets very excited, tucks up her kimono and wades into the stream, guiding the Peach to shore. She picks up the Peach and hurries home with it.

Such a beautiful peach for my dear husband! He will be so surprised.

She slips off her zori, enters the house and begins to putter around. Occasionally she looks out the door. Her mood gradually changes as time passes.

Where is that old man?

He is *late*! I wonder what he's up to! You never can trust an old man.

Looking outside to right and left, anxiously.

Impatiently.

OLD MAN: In due time the Old Man came back from home from the hills. He had been sleeping up there all the afternoon and he was in no hurry.

Old man saunters along slowly and speaks in leisurely fashion.

OLD WOMAN: Old Man! Hurry it up! Come on! Come on!

OLD MAN: Such a fuss! I'm coming!

OLD WOMAN: Well, hurry! Hurry! What's the matter with you?

OLD MAN: Now she wants to know what's the matter with me.

He stops.

OLD WOMAN: Oh! He makes me so angry! So, don't come then!

Calls out.

OLD MAN: Now, I shouldn't come.

He sits.

OLD WOMAN: I give up! Now I won't show it to you at all.

Shrieks.

OLD MAN: What? Show *what* to me?

He rises.

OLD WOMAN: Oh, nothing.

OLD MAN: Something special?

OLD WOMAN: Nothing . . . just a *peach*.

OLD MAN: A *peach*!

Hmmm, that sounds good.

He hurries home.

OLD MAN: Where is it?

She stands in front of the Peach.

OLD WOMAN: Come in! Sit down! and I'll show you. Now, look!

He sits on the floor. She stands aside and reveals the Peach.

OLD MAN: Ohhhhhhh . . .

In amazement, sucking in his breath.

OLD WOMAN: What do you think of that?

OLD MAN: Now—*that* is a peach!

Moving around it admiringly.

OLD WOMAN: Look at the size of it!

OLD MAN: That is the *biggest* peach I've ever seen!

OLD WOMAN: Yes, yes, . . . and I found it . . .

OLD MAN: It must be very tasty indeed.

OLD WOMAN: . . . floating down the stream.

OLD MAN: Good thing we didn't have to pay for it, eh? Shall we open it?

OLD WOMAN: Yes . . .
You cut it.

PEACH: Chotto matte, kudasai!

OLD MAN: Wwwwwhat was that?

PEACH: Please, don't cut me!

OLD WOMAN: Spirits. Evil spirits! Oh, what have I done! Please forgive! Forgive me!

CHILD: Please don't be afraid.

I have been sent to you because you wanted a child so very much.

OLD WOMAN: Yes, yes, it's true. We wanted a child so very much.

OLD MAN: To comfort us in our old age.

CHILD: So I have come to be your very own son.

OLD WOMAN: Our son!

He chuckles.

*She gets knife.
He raises the knife to cut.*

*Meaning, "Just a minute, please."
A small child's voice cries out protestingly. Old Man and Woman recoil in terror.*

They cling together, trembling.

She falls down, beating her head on the ground.

The Peach bursts open, revealing inside a lovely little boy. The couple watch in amazement. Child might be a glove puppet which is handled from behind the platform. It must resemble a small, attractive Japanese child.

It speaks in a very high childish voice. Child reaches out to the old couple. They move closer.

Tearfully.

CHILD: O-ka-san!	<i>He reaches towards the old Woman.</i>
OLD WOMAN: He called me Mother!	<i>She hugs him.</i>
CHILD: O-to-san!	<i>Reaches out towards Old Man.</i>
OLD MAN: He called me Father!	<i>He pats Boy on the head.</i>
OLD MAN AND OLD WOMAN: Our very own son!	
OLD WOMAN: But he must have a name!	
OLD MAN: A name?	
CHILD: A name!	
OLD MAN AND OLD WOMAN: Well . . . we'll call him—	
OLD MAN: Taro, our first born son!	
OLD WOMAN: Momo, after the peach. Momo-peach!	
OLD MAN: Taro!	<i>With increasing fury.</i>
OLD WOMAN: Momo!	
OLD MAN: Taro!!	
OLD WOMAN: Momo!!	
OLD MAN: Taro!!!	
OLD WOMAN: Momo!!!!	
CHILD: Momotaro?	<i>Tentatively.</i>
OLD MAN AND OLD WOMAN: Momotaro!	
OLD MAN: Momotaro! Little Peach Boy!	
OLD WOMAN: Momotaro, Born from a Peach!	
CHILD: Momotaro! Yes, I like that.	<i>All happily agree. Parents pick up the child gently and lovingly and turn toward the interior of the house. Lights fade.</i>

SCENE 2. The same, 15 years later.

The Old Man and Old Woman are still in the house. A handsome young boy stands between them.

MOMOTARO: Momotaro grew up to be a fine, handsome boy of fifteen.

Momotaro speaks proudly. His parents are very proud of him.

OLD MAN: Stronger than his peers.

OLD WOMAN: Wiser than his years.

OLD MAN AND

OLD WOMAN: A perfect son!

Momotaro beams.

OLD MAN: But times were hard.

They sadly shake their heads.

OLD WOMAN: Things were not like they used to be.

The three watch as the following scene takes place downstage.

TOWNSPEOPLE: What? What? What's happened? An invasion! There's an invasion!

Quick change of pace. Excitement and confusion. Beating of drums, lights flicker. People come running. They appear momentarily at various parts of the stage, giving out their reports.

Ogres! Horrible Giants!
With bodies all blue and red!
And pointed horns,
Sticking out of their head!
They kidnap the children!
The rice fields they ravage!
They burn the villages!
They're wicked! They're savage!

Oh, woe! woe! woe!

A chorus of moans and groans. Then the people withdraw quickly and the lights go up.

MOMOTARO: Momotaro knew that he had a special destiny.

Momotaro steps forward.

Father! I request your permission to go forth and fight those dreadful Ogres.

He bows low.

OLD WOMAN: Oh, but he's so young . . . only a boy!

She sets up a wail.

OLD MAN: He is no ordinary boy, Old Woman. He came to us as a

special gift from Heaven. Momotaro, my son, do what you must do.

MOMOTARO: Thank you, Father.

OLD WOMAN: So — his Mother made him some rice cakes.
Pe-ta . . . Pe-ta . . .

OLD MAN: And his Father gave him some armor and a little sword.

OLD WOMAN: Here is some kibi-dango for you—sweet rice cakes.

MOMOTARO: Rice cakes! My favorite in all the world!

OLD MAN: Good-bye, my son.
Be brave!

OLD WOMAN: Take care of yourself!

MOMOTARO: Don't worry, Mother.

ALL: Sayonara!

Resigned.

She pantomimes the pounding of the rice cakes.

Father dresses him in armor, gives him a sword.

Mother pats out rice cakes and wraps them in a furoshiki (scarf) which she offers to Momotaro.

Momotaro ties scarf onto a pole and dangles it over his shoulder.

They all bow and bid farewell.

Momotaro starts off, proud and unafraid. The old couple wave to him until he is out of sight. Lights fade momentarily.

SCENE 3. The journey over hill and dale.

MOMOTARO: "I'm on my way to the Isle of the Ogres.
They have bodies all red and blue!
Take care, you Giants!
You'd better *beware!*
Momotaro is looking for you!"

At midday, Momotaro sat down under a tree to eat one of the sweet rice cakes his mother had given him. Mmmmm! my favorite! Kibidango!

Walk music (See Music Notes.)

DOG: Man! (*Growls*) Go away!
Go away! (*Barks*) This is my

A large, spotted Dog leaps at him, menacingly.