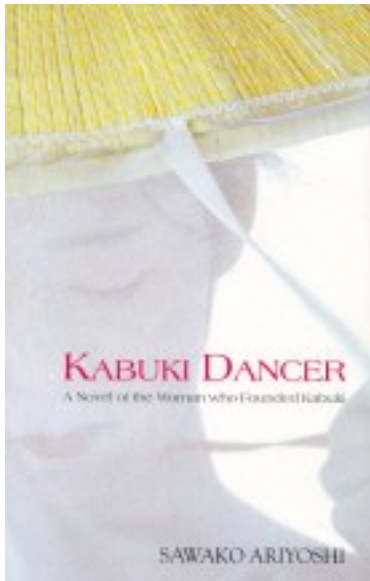


kabuki dancer



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著者:Sawako Ariyoshi

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From Publishers Weekly

In this overlong and underwhelming history lesson disguised as a romance, Ariyoshi takes for her protagonist Okuni, the 17th-century inventor of Kabuki theater. From humble origins in a provincial village, Okuni ends up running a dance troupe in Kyoto, performing and choreographing with such innovative genius that she comes to be known as "Best in the World." But despite her fame, Okuni's life is troubled: she falls for men who are too inept or villainous to remain with her for long, and her reputation and theater are eventually destroyed by a suitor she spurned 20 years before. Passages throughout detail contemporary political affairs in a didactic fashion, and the descriptions of Okuni's experiments in kabuki, while earnest, remain inert. The novel first appeared in serial form in a Japanese woman's magazine during the late 1960s, and it shows (the meaning of the word "kabuki," for example, is repeated every 30

pages or so). Moreover, Ariyoshi's vision of Japan seems to admit only two possible motives for people's actions: love and long-simmering resentment. And that's a shame, because she has obviously done a great deal of research and knows her subject thoroughly.

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From Library Journal

Ariyoshi was a very popular writer in Japan who characteristically dealt with historical themes and was not often translated into English. This novel, originally serialized in Japan in Women's Topics (Fujin Koron) from 1967 to 1969, is a depiction of the life of Okuni, a historical figure generally credited with giving birth to Kabuki, the popular Japanese theater form. The work is interesting in that it pays deserved homage to Okuni, who has been a somewhat neglected figure since women performers were eliminated from Kabuki early in its development. While the historical milieu of late 16th-and early 17th-century Japan is carefully depicted, the prose is somewhat flat, the characters are unconvincing, and events proceed matter-of-factly, leaving the reader with a bland impression of what history suggests were complex, passionate people living in an exhilarating and eventful time. This might find a place in large collections having an insatiable audience for historical fiction; otherwise, it is not recommended.

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目录:

[kabuki dancer_下载链接1](#)

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