



PRESS RELEASE

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Center for Puppetry Arts Welcomes Bunraku Puppet Masters for Special Workshop

Atlanta, GA - September 2009 Atlantans have a rare opportunity to learn from **Kiritake Kanjuro III**, a Japanese Bunraku master puppeteer with over forty years of theater experience and numerous international accolades. **Bunraku** is a unique and revered traditional Japanese puppetry art form; Kanjuro III has donated two historically significant Bunraku puppets, the lovers Osome and Hisamatsu from the play 'Nozaki' to the Center for Puppetry Arts' Museum collection. The characters divergent familial backgrounds ultimately cause them to commit love suicide—an overarching theme in Bunraku theater. As the largest American organization dedicated solely to the art of puppetry, the Center for Puppetry Arts is a cultural steward of the art form's international and historical legacy.

To mark this significant donation, renown Bunraku puppeteer Kiritake Kanjuro III and Dr. Michiko Ueno-Herr are giving a Bunraku manipulation workshop at the Center for Puppetry Arts on **September 26th**. Kanjuro III accolades include recently being awarded the Bunraku Grand Prize by the National Theater of Japan. At the age of 14, Kanjuro III was apprenticed to one of the most versatile puppeteers in Japan and would go on to play a key role in Bunraku's recent revival.

After World War II, the number of Bunraku puppeteers declined and conservation measures were taken by the Japanese government. Shortly thereafter, the Bunraku puppetry art form was declared a national treasure. Puppetry is an international communication form with roots in nearly every culture and has the power to teach universally recognizable lessons. Thematic Bunraku dramas revolve around Confucian concepts of loyalty at the cost of personal feelings and underscore the tragedy that ensues. Younger generations have become attuned to the past through Bunraku puppetry.

Historically, Bunraku puppets range in size from two-and-a-half feet to four feet in height requiring three puppeteers for realistic manipulation-- one for the feet, the left arm, and the right arm and head. As a result of precise synchronization this ensemble work evokes tremendous emotion through its beauty and realism. The beautiful puppets seem to move about freely like humans and appear to be alive. The training process is rigorous; it takes ten years to master manipulating the feet, twenty years to master the left arm, and thirty years to master the right arm and head (the features that most define the puppet's personality).

The **"Introduction to the Art of Bunraku Puppet Manipulation"** workshop will be presented in English to the public in the Education Classroom at the Center for Puppetry Arts on **September 26, 2009 from 2:00-4:00PM**. The workshop, made possible through the generosity of puppet collector and scholar Nancy Lohman Staub, features multimedia demonstrations highlighting the fascinating three person Bunraku puppet manipulation process. Cost is \$25 for the general public and \$20 for Center members.

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Center for Puppetry Arts® is a unique cultural treasure – a magical place where children and adults are educated, enlightened and entertained. Since 1978, the Center has introduced millions of visitors to the wonder and art of puppetry and has touched the lives of many through enchanting performances, curriculum based workshops, and the hands-on Museum as well as Distance Learning and outreach programs. Center for Puppetry Arts is a non-profit, 501(c)(3) organization and is supported in part by contributions from corporations, foundations, government agencies, and individuals. Major funding is provided by the Fulton County Board of Commissioners under the guidance of the Fulton County Arts Council. Major support is provided by the City of Atlanta Office of Cultural Affairs. These programs are supported in part by the Georgia Council for the Arts (GCA) through the appropriations from the Georgia General Assembly. GCA is a Partner Agency of the National Endowment for the Arts. The Center is a Member of Theatre Communications Group (TCG), the national organization for the American Theatre, and the Atlanta Coalition of Performing Arts. The Center also serves as headquarters of UNIMA-USA, the American branch of Union Internationale de la Marionnette, the international puppetry organization.