

YUSHI AND THE THUNDER DRAGON

A Play in One Act for Children

by
Chuck Hudson

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Yushi and the Thunder Dragon

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DEDICATION

This play is dedicated to the memory of Phillip Hafer, a Wise Young Man. *

STORY OF THE PLAY

Yushi is the young hero who falls from his father's ship and loses his memory. In his quest for his identity, he meets The Wise Old Man who gives him direction, the lovely Sea Turtle who wins his love, and the Tanuki Badgers who comically beat their tummies and, in spite of their mischief, aid Yushi on his search. When Yushi meets the Terrible Thunder Dragon, he learns that he is the son of the Emperor, and because of his journey, will someday become the greatest Emperor of Japan. The mythic structure is made accessible to the children by the use of Japanese theatrical devices such as the Bunraku-like puppet manipulation of the Kurogo, dressed in the black of invisibility, and the beauty of the Japanese costumes, sets and music. Wonderful set, prop, lighting and costume opportunities await the producers of this charming play. *Premiered By The Children's Theatre Festival of Houston.* About 55 minutes.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(3M, 1W, + 6-10 extras.)

THE TANUKI *(Group of 6 or more.)*

KUROGO

EMPEROR

THE THUNDER DRAGON

THE SEA TURTLE

WISE OLD MAN

YUSHI

NOTE: See song lyrics and pronunciation guide at end of script.

ORIGINAL CAST: The Festivals Mime Company. Derek Alan Cecil, Phillip Hafer, Jennifer Aguilar, Joseph L. Ezernack, Noel Bowers, Robert J. Martin, Christine McPeters, Kristin Sigurthorsson, Curtis L. Weeks, Craig Welzbacher

SCENE ONE

(Japan, a mountainous region. It is evening and the moon is full. MUSIC is heard; and the TANUKI all come tumbling in singing and dancing and drumming on their tummies. From the opposite side of the stage enters the WISE OLD MAN. He crosses into the group of Tanuki and begins to sing and to pound his tummy, being used to doing so.)

WISE OLD MAN: *(Winded and laughing.)* Ah! My friends!
You wear me out! You are forever young, but I ... I am
grown old and can no longer play the way I used to.

TANUKI ALL: *(Fugue.)* Oh! No, no, no, no, no.

TANUKI #1: Ojii-san. You are not too old.

TANUKI ALL: No, no, no, no, no, no, no.

TANUKI #2: You have lost weight!

TANUKI #3: No more drum! *(Points to his plump belly.)*

TANUKI ALL: *(Pounding on their bellies in various
gymnastic ways.)* KOI, KOI, KOI-KOI, KOI, KOI! PON
POKO PON NO PON!

(THEY all laugh.)

WISE OLD MAN: Oh, you really are too much for me, you
Badgers. Now, go on your way for a while and let me rest.
I will play with you later.

TANUKI ALL: Oh! No, no, no, no!

TANUKI #4: But the moon!

TANUKI #1: The moon is full!

TANUKI #5: We always drum our tummies when the moon
is full!

TANUKI ALL: *(Mixing Japanese and English.)* Hi, yes, hi,
hi, yes. *(Two groups, drumming bellies.)* PON POKO
PON NO PON!

WISE OLD MAN: Oh, now there you go again, speaking
both Japanese and English at the same time. You know
how that confuses me. I never know when you are saying
“hi” in English and “yes” in Japanese! Now, which
language shall we speak ?

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TANUKI GROUPS 1 & 2: Japanese/English ... okay,
English/Japanese!

(THEY laugh.)

TANUKI #6: Wakata?

TANUKI #1: Got it?

WISE OLD MAN: Oh for goodness sake. You Tanuki have
far too much energy for me. Can you really understand
each other in two languages?

TANUKI ALL: Hi, hi, hi, yes, yes.

TANUKI 2, 3, & 4: Oh, si senõr, muy bien!

WISE OLD MAN: Now don't start speaking in Spanish, too,
or I'll never get this straight! Besides, Tanuki Badgers
should not talk when the moon is full. They should sing.

TANUKI ALL: Hi, hi, hi, yes, yes, hi, hi. *(Singing and
pounding their bellies.)* TSUN TSUN TSUKI YODA,
MINEDETE KOI, KOI, KOI!

WISE OLD MAN: Yes, but do you know the song in
English?

TANUKI ALL: HMMM ... uhhh, hmmm. PON POKO ...
tumm tummy ... Hmmm.

WISE OLD MAN: There now, you just go off into the forest
and think that one over for a while.

TANUKI ALL: *(Except #1)* Hi? Hmm, anno ... oh! HI! Oh,
no, no, no, OH! Yes! Hi. hi. hi. hi. Hmmm, No, no, no ...

TANUKI #6: *(In Norwegian.)* Jeg visste ikke at vi kunne
snakke et annet språk!

TANUKI ALL: Hunto!

WISE OLD MAN: *(Addressing the audience.)* There, a little
peace. They can make such a racket! You can only calm
the Tanuki down by making them think. Hm? Oh, you
didn't think I saw you there, eh? Well, up here in the
mountains of Japan, many strange things can happen.

TANUKI #1: *(Looks at public.)* Yipe!

*(HE jumps back, trips, falls, rolls on his back, rises, drums
his belly and dashes offstage.)*

WISE OLD MAN: *(Watching the TANUKI exit.)* See what I mean? Many strange and magical things are to be found here in Japan. This garden, for instance. It is empty, for no one could ever take all the racket made by the Tanuki Badgers when the moon is full. Still, it will be another magical night. Watch ...

(The TANUKI actors have changed into the KUROGO costumes and begin to enter with sticks and wires upon which are still marionettes of birds, butterflies, etc. which all look like Japanese drawings. The WISE OLD MAN discusses this.)

WISE OLD MAN: *(Continued.)* The Kurogo move as if they were in a dream. Dreams are strange and magical, too. Dreams change as we change. Dreams can be beautiful, dreams can be frightening, and dreams can help us find answers to difficult questions.

(The KUROGO react to him in disbelief.)

WISE OLD MAN: *(Continued.)* It is true. Dreams do help us find answers! And if you invisible Kurogo will help me, I will prove it.

(THE WISE OLD MAN has moved to a part of the stage where he may be present and comment on the tale as a Narrator, yet is removed enough not to steal focus. He will spend most of the play here and it should be designed in such a way that he may sit or stand comfortably. THE KUROGO move slowly into the positions for SCENE 2, THE SHIPWRECK as THE WISE OLD MAN continues.)

END OF SCENE

SCENE 2

(The Shipwreck. THE KUROGO will be moving cut out waves or material and a ship in which YUSHI and THE EMPEROR may fit; à la Kabuki; thunder effect often.)

WISE OLD MAN: Once upon a time ... *(Laughs.)* ... oh, I do love when a tale begins that way. Once upon a time, not too long ago, there lived a great and generous Emperor ...

(THE EMPEROR enters and THE KUROGO stop their movements and bow to him. He turns to THE WISE OLD MAN who does the same. The Emperor indicates to all to continue the story.)

WISE OLD MAN: *(Continued.)* This was a wise Emperor and he was very very good. *(Aside.)* Oh, yes! I knew him well. You see, I was a young boy when this story really happened. *(Continuing as Narrator.)* This great Emperor had a son, and his name was ...

WISE OLD MAN & EMPEROR: *(Calling.)* Yushi.

YUSHI: *(Entering.)* Yes Father. I am coming, Father.

(YUSHI and THE EMPEROR mime the action of the tale as the KUROGO manipulate objects and scenery.)

EMPEROR: Yushi, my son.

YUSHI: Yes, Father.

EMPEROR: We must hurry if we are to leave with the tide.

(The ship is brought on. YUSHI and the EMPEROR board.)

YUSHI: Where are we going?

EMPEROR: To the royal Kimono makers on the island of Kyushu.

YUSHI: Kyushu! I have never traveled that far before in my life!

EMPEROR: Well, it is about time that you did.

End of Freeview

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