

## First of its kind Japanese musical to play at UCSD

**January 26, 1988**

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FIRST OF ITS KIND JAPANESE MUSICAL "UTAMARO" TO PLAY AT UCSD FEB. 12

"Utamaro", Japan's highly successful answer to the Broadway musical, will be staged for one night only on Friday, Feb. 12, at the University of California, San Diego Mandeville Auditorium.

The production is a musical biography of one of Japan's most famous Ukiyo-e woodblock artists, Utamaro, who is ranked in the presence of Japan's other revered woodblock artists, Hokusai, Harunobu, Sharaku and Hiroshige.

The big, bold production first appeared in Japan in 1972 at the famed Imperial Theater, starring Japan's treasured Kabuki actor Somegoro (now Koshiro) Matsumoto in the title role, Shimpa actress Yoshie Mizutani as his leading lady, and featuring such other Japanese headliners as Machiko Kyo, Frankie Sakai and Yuko Hama. It was the final work of the late renowned stage and screen scriptwriter, Kazuo Kikuta.

The script was rewritten by Toshio Fujita in 1985, and played to packed houses, winning the Cultural Affairs Agency Arts Festival Award and the Kinokuniya Drama Award (similar in rank to a Tony Award) for that year.

The musical score for "Utamaro" was written by Taku Izumi, one of Japan's most renowned composers. He has created more than 100 Japanese musicals to date. "Utamaro" is about the plight of an 18th century woodblock print artist, and Izumi points out the similarities of life in those days and life in the present.

Director Toshio Fujita uses the Milan Teatro Piccolo style of staging in which all performers are dressed in black, and then assume the guise of the characters by putting on simple costume pieces over their basic black.

The story takes place in the final days of the 18th century, when peasant revolts broke out in all parts of the nation. The entertainment district of the ancient city of Edo (Toyko) was a whirlpool of decadence. Young artists roamed the streets, among them Utamaro.

Utamaro finds Okita, a waitress in a tea house, and becomes successful through showing his portraits of her. Utamaro spends time joking and carousing with his friends, and one of their jokes causes a breakup between Utamaro and Okita, now lovers.

An increasingly stringent government casts a dark shadow, and times change for the hero. Having lost his love, he decides to throw himself into his art, through which he challenges the times. For his efforts, he is dragged away to prison.

The musical will be presented in Japanese. Translation in super titles will be provided. Ticket prices are: general admission, \$15; seniors, \$12; student, \$10, and may be purchased at the UCSD Box Office (534-4559) or from TicketMaster outlets.

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