



Design: Masako Ban

歌舞伎? Kabuki?



Pera Pera Penguin's

5-minute Japanese Class by Hitomi Hirayama



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A friend of mine sent me an e-mail, which said: "Pole-san, **shamisen** (three-stringed Japanese music instrument) **no renshū** (practice) **wa dô desu ka** (how's ~going)? **happyô-kai** (Your concert) **wa raishū** (next week) **desu ne**. (Your concert's next week, right?) **iyoiyo** (finally) **ôzume** (?) **desu ne**. **kyokumoku** (program) **wa Pole-san no jūhachi-ban** (see Vol. 14) **desu ka?** **tochiranai** (?) **yô ni ochitsuite** (calm down) **ne**. **happyô-kai ga owattara** (after you finish), **donchansawagi** (?) **shiyô ne!** Ms. **Hirayama**, what do "ôzume," "tochiranai" and "donchansawagi" mean?

■■■ These words, and many other day-to-day expressions, can be traced back to **kabuki**. Your friend's e-mail can be translated as: "Mr. Pole, how's your **shamisen** practice going? Your concert's next week, right? You're coming to the end of your practice. Are you going to be playing the pieces you're best at? Stay calm and avoid mistakes. After the concert, let's go out for a night on the town!"

★The following words and phrases originated with **kabuki**. ★

(A)
板につく
ita ni tsuku
(plate)(sticking)

Foot movement is of critical importance in **kabuki**. Actors can improve their performance over time as they become used to moving across the stage (or place). They eventually become comfortable on stage, in turn making the audience feel more comfortable.→get used to: Such things as jobs, clothing and proper attitude gradually become natural to a person.

(B)
裏方
urakata
(behind)(staff)

While the actors are in the limelight, there is a large number of people working behind the scenes, such as on lighting, sets and costumes.→working behind the scenes

(C)
なあなあ
nānā
(Word for calling a recipient)

Common to **kabuki** plays is a dialogue between two actors in which one says, "**nā**," and the other replies with "**nā**." It is said they are able to communicate their intentions with a minimum of words.→The expression, "**nānā ni naru**" (coming to a quick compromise) has a negative meaning, implying a compromise with little discussion.

(D)
正念場
shōnenba
(gut)(place)

The most important scene in a **kabuki** play is "**shōnenba**"—the moment a character reveals his true intentions. In everyday life the word was changed to mean crucial point, moment.

(E)
どんでん返し
dondengaeshi
(reversal)(return)

A **kabuki** stage set piece that can be tilted backward 90 degrees revealing another set.→complete reversal (This is a negative expression implying that something has been overturned at the last minute.)

(F)
のべつまくなし
nobetsu-makunashi

The word "**nobetsu**" means "continuously," while "**makunashi**" means "no curtain," implying a long play without an intermission.→endlessly

(G)
めりはり
merihari
(Dent)
(protrusion)

The delivery of well-modulated dialogue with lines varying in speed, strength and pitch, making it clear and vivid for the audience.→varying location: matters vary

(H)
大詰め
ôzume

When a long play was performed on a single day, it was divided into two parts. The last scene of the first act was called the "**ôzume**."→final stage

(I)
どんちゃん騒ぎ
donchan-sawagi
(make noise)

The word "**donchan**" represents the sounds of gongs and drums. During a battle scene, gongs and drums are sounded to create a sense of great excitement.→wild merrymaking (Used negatively when referring to a drunken night on the town.)

(J)
とちる
tochiru

Forgetting or bungling one's lines. →bungling: to make mistakes

■ Choose the proper expression from above.

(1) The long trial was about to enter the final stage.

長かった裁判もいよいよ [] を迎えた。
nagakatta saiban mo iyoiyo [] **o mukaeta**
(trial) (finally)

(2) My older sister had a baby, and she's become used to being a mother.

姉は赤ちゃんが生まれて、お母さんがすっかり [] 。

ane wa akachan ga umarete okāsan ga sukkari []
(older sister) (baby) (born) (mother) (quite)

(3) Why do you always make the same mistake?

どうして、いつも同じ所を [] のかな?
dôshite itsumo onaji tokoro o [] **no kana?**
(why) (always) (same)(place)

(4) I went out for a night on the town last night for the first time in a long time, and I've got a hangover this morning

久しぶりに [] をして、今朝は二日酔いです。
hisashiburi ni [] **o shite kesa wa futsuka-yoi desu**
(long time) (this morning)(hangover)

(5) When we get used to each other, we are inclined to compromise easily.

慣れてくると [] になりがちです。
narete kuru to [] **ni narigachi desu**
(used to) (tend)

(6) I've been through a lot, but I've reached the crucial point.

色々ありましたが、ここからが [] です。
iroiro arimashita ga koko kara ga [] **desu**
(various) (from now on)

(7) High school girls were talking endlessly with each other on a train.

電車の中で女子高生たちは [] にしゃべっていた。
densha no naka de joshikōsē-tachi wa [] **ni shabette-ita**
(train) (inside) (high school girls) (talking)

(8) At the very last minute, the movie took a surprise turn.

この映画は最後の最後に [] があった。
kono eiga wa saigo no saigo ni [] **ga atta**
(movie) (at the very last minute)

(9) My job isn't very glamorous, but I'm proud of working behind the scenes.

地味な仕事ですが、 [] として誇りを持っています。
jimi na shigoto desu ga [] **toshite hokori o motte imasu**
(plain work) (pride) (have)

(10) Stop being so lazy! Vary the pace of your life!

毎日ダラダラと過ごさないで、生活に [] をつけよう。
mainichi daradara to sugosanai de sēkatsu ni [] **o tsuke yō**
(every day) (drag) (sugosuspend) (life)

Answers				
(1) 大詰め ôzume	(2) 板についてきました ita ni tsuite kimashita	(3) とちる tochiru	(4) どんちゃん騒ぎ donchansawagi	(5) なあなあ nānā
(6) 正念場 shōnenba	(7) のべつまくなし nobetsumakunashi	(8) どんでん返し dondengaeshi	(9) 裏方 urakata	(10) めりはり merihari