



What Is the Takarazuka Revue? The Story Behind a Century of Spectacular Theater

Takarazuka-ism: How It All Started

The Takarazuka Revue has been entertaining audiences for over a century with grandiose musical performances. You might be a bit surprised to learn that the creator behind this revue was a railway company that was involved in many groundbreaking projects in Japan.

In order to provide more insight about the Takarazuka Revue, this article will give a basic overview of its history and the motto that serves as the main pillar of its traditions.

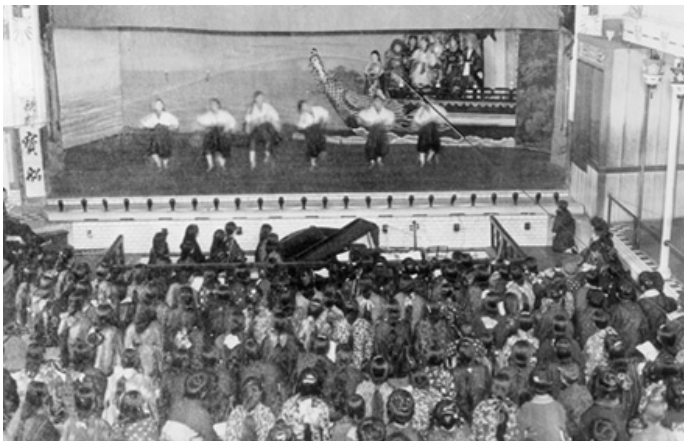
All it took was a flash of inspiration for our founder to create what has now become over a century of tradition. Could anyone have predicted the success when the curtains first rose on the stage converted from an indoor pool?

The Takarazuka Revue had its first performance in 1914.

It was founded by Kobayashi Ichizō, whose contributions include growing the Hankyu Railway, opening the Hankyu Department Store (which was also Japan's first department store built inside a train terminal), and assisted in the establishment of the Toho Group. He opened the Takarazuka Shin-Onsen hot spring resort in 1911 as an effort to increase domestic tourism along the Hankyu train lines. The same year, he also opened Paradise, a Western-style establishment with an indoor pool as its main attraction.

However, Paradise had to close after only two months, as mixed gender swimming areas were banned at the time. That is when the idea of using this venue to provide theatrical entertainment struck Kobayashi, and the Takarazuka Revue was born.

The first performance was held on April 1, 1914 in Paradise Theater, the indoor pool that was converted into a theater hall. A lid over the pool served as seating for the audience, while the changing rooms were set up as the stage. The performers in this memorable first production were 17 young girls between the ages of 12 and 17.



The theater in the converted indoor pool



A stage photo from the opera "Dom-Brako"

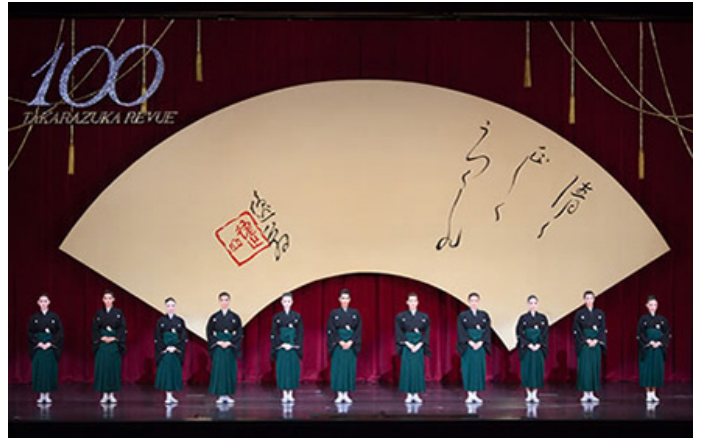


The last words of Kobayashi Ichizō, the Father of the Takarazuka Revue: “Modesty, Fairness, Grace”

The Takarazuka Revue's motto, “Modesty, Fairness, Grace” comes from the teachings of Kobayashi Ichizō. These three ideals serve as the main pillars for every show put on by Takarazuka even in our present time. Kobayashi’s goal with the revue company was to offer “popular theatrical entertainment that the whole family can enjoy together.” Kobayashi's last words referred to the fundamentals of performing arts: singing, dancing and acting that weave beautiful fantasies on stage. His words were also meant as an instruction for each Takarasienne to have proper etiquette, good manners, and not to forget their dignity as individual women and members of society. Although the world has changed a lot since the founder left these instructions behind, the spirit of these words is still deeply ingrained in every Takarasienne and staff member as they navigate their everyday lives.



Ichizō Kobayashi, Father of the Takarazuka Revue



Takarazuka Revue Hundredth Anniversary Chorus (2014)