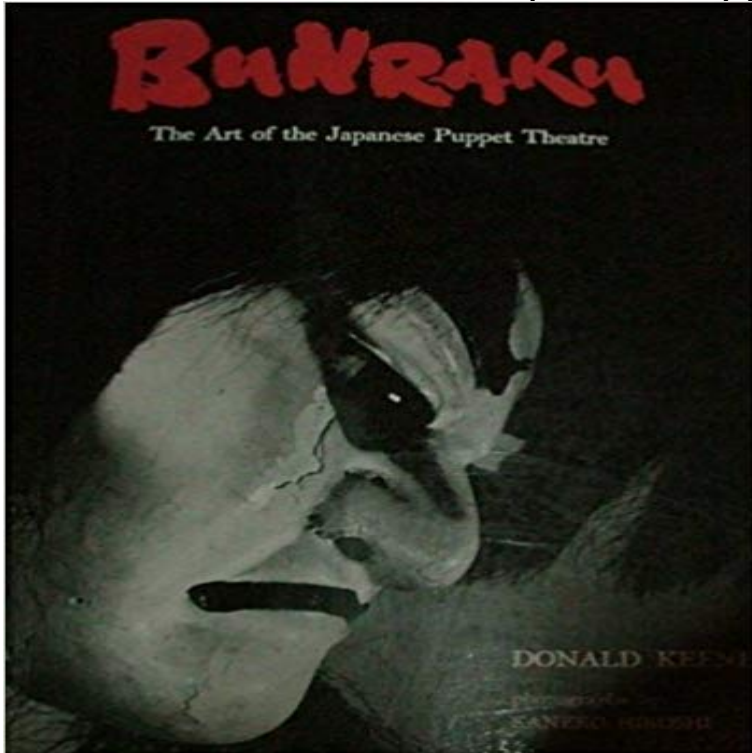


Bunraku: The Art of the Japanese Puppet Theatre



Front flap notes: Unlike puppets and marionettes in other parts of the world, which have almost always been considered unworthy of the serious theatregoers attention, the puppet theatre in Japan has long been accepted not only as adult entertainment, but as a highly refined dramatic art. The eighteenth century, in fact, saw a period lasting over fifty years during which Bunraku's popularity easily exceeded that of Kabuki, ...probably the only instance in theatrical history where puppets have been preferred to actors for such a long time. Bunraku remains also as the only theatre of dolls for which literary masterpieces have been especially composed, including works by the great Chikamatsu Monzaemon. Even the clothes that the puppets wear are as lavish, as painstakingly prepared, as those of any live actor in Kabuki or No. Bunraku, then, is utterly unique. The men who wrote Bunraku plays, knowing the skill and versatility with which the puppets could be manipulated, felt free to provide situations in which the entire range of human feelings was expressed. That the dramatists could with confidence demand so much of a doll theatre is an eloquent tribute to the highly disciplined and dedicated men who make the puppets come alive for the audience. No less important are the chanters who interpret and recite the texts, and the musicians whose vibrant *samisens* add a final, vital element to the unforgettable atmosphere of a Bunraku performance. This new revised edition in paperback of the original hardbound work by Donald Keene represents the most authoritative and penetrating study of Bunraku ever to appear in English. The photographs were selected from among more than seven thousand, almost all taken by Kaneko Hiroshi over a long period of years.

