



# **Circles of Fantasy: Convention in the Plays of Chikamatsu (Harvard East Asian Monographs)**

*C. Andrew Gerstle, Chikamatsu*

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The vibrant merchant culture of Tokugawa Japan gave rise to many new forms of art, none more fascinating than the puppet theater, J?ruri, created chiefly by Chikamatsu Monzaemon, the foremost playwright of popular Japanese drama. In this analysis of Chikamatsu's artistry, Dr. Gerstle focuses on features hitherto neglected by Western scholars the musical structure of J?ruri, integral to the form, mood, and movement of the drama. For extensive translations from the various types of Chikamatsu's dramas, Gerstle supplies the musical notations, which illuminate the sophisticated conventions of this unique and timeless artistic form.

Chikamatsu's art, combining puppets, text, samisen music, and chanting/narration, encompasses three major types of drama--history, contemporary-life, and love-suicide plays--each with distinct structural features. Gerstle shows how the music of J?ruri, a mixture of the samisen and chanting/narration, supplements the texts and expresses a dramatized action or emotion through complex changes in pitch, tempo, and style of delivery.

Richly illustrated with woodblock prints, this is a fascinating study, which will be welcomed by scholars of Japanese culture, literature, and musicology.

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