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# Ame

## PLAYHOUSE

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Written by Inoue Hisashi

Directed by Kuriyama Tamiya

Cast : Ichikawa Kamejiro, Nagasaku Hiromi / Umezawa Masayo, Takao Taka,

Yamamoto Ryuji, Ishida Keisuke, Sakou Yoshi, Yamanishi Atsushi, Uemoto Jun

In the second half of the 2010/2011 season, following the "Japan Meets" series, the NNTT will present Inoue Hisashi's Ame. In any discussion of contemporary theatre, Inoue is a great whose name cannot go unmentioned.

Inoue Hisashi wrote Ame in a burst while living in Australia some 35 years ago. Over a period of 26 years, this extraordinary work has been produced eight times for a total of 482 performances, all of which were directed by Kimura Koichi. Now Ame is coming to the NNTT as a new production, with direction by Kuriyama Tamiya. Handpicked by Inoue for the job, Kuriyama has previously used his deft directorial touch to create some outstanding productions of Inoue's work here at the NNTT and with the Komatsuza theatre company.

The play presents the story of Toku, a man who assumes another identity in a scheme to become rich, the people he encounters, and Otaka, the woman of fate. The tale is wrought in the beautiful Japanese that flows from Inoue Hisashi's pen. Through it, we see the pain, the sadness and the joy of people simply living their lives.

## SYNOPSIS

In an Edo town, near the Ryogoku Bridge. Toku, a metal collector who goes around gathering rusty nails and old pipe bowls, seeks shelter from a pouring afternoon rain. He goes under the bridge, where he meets an old derelict. The man asks, "Hey, aren't you Kizaemon-sama?"

Toku doesn't know who the man is talking about, and tries to ignore him. Undeterred, the old man becomes nostalgic.

Kizaemon is a man from a little place up north called Hirata. He married the daughter (Otaka) of a wealthy merchant about two years ago. It turns out Toku is the spitting image of this Kizaemon, whose whereabouts have been unknown since last autumn.

Toku tells the old man he's got the wrong person, that he was abandoned as a baby under this very bridge, and that he's been a scrap collector for as long as he can remember. But in the back of his mind, Toku has an idea.

"Is there any way I might see this woman, Otaka?"

Toku travels north, following the moving front of blooming cherry blossoms heading the same direction. He finally reaches Hirata in the province of Oshu. But while he may be the spitting image of Kizaemon on the outside, Toku knows nothing about the man. As he travels north from Edo to Utsunomiya, Utsunomiya to Shirakawa, Shirakawa to Fukushima, and on to Yonezawa and Hirata, the dialects keep changing and Toku's frustration is evident. He realizes that if he can't speak the dialect, there is no way he can take on this other man's identity. He gives up and decides to return to Edo the next morning, when suddenly he is recognized by the locals. They call out to him: "Kizaemon-sama!"

Hearing this, Toku makes up his mind to pretend to be Kizaemon. He concocts a story about losing his memory, as the people of the village gradually gather round.