

EXQUISITE CORPS

HAGOROMO

LIBRETTO - updated 3/24/2015

Prologue

The Hagoromo, the Angel's robe, sits in a still and silent heaven. The angel approaches her robe, as she does every morning, and when she touches it she breaks into three pieces—three living angels that are her one true nature.

The robe and the angels dance. The robe sometimes leads the angels and the angels sometimes lead the robe. Each shifts in shape and configuration, flying up to great billowing heights, and contracting to the leanest of windy forms. To the world below, this dance is the portentous movement of the clouds; to the heavens, this dance is daily life.

When the dance is complete, the angel returns the robe to its resting place and becomes a single body once again. She leaves. For her, this has been a day like any other.

Then, a pair of mischievous creatures enters—they are Kyogen-style tricksters, who have been watching the angel. They remove the Hagoromo from its perch and begin to dance. At first, their movements are joyous. The robe waves and billows as it did before, but soon the creatures are unable to control it. Instead of a dance, they have initiated a chase, and the robe drags them about before leaving their grasp entirely.

The Hagoromo falls to earth, where it lands on a small island in the Bay of Mio.

A pall falls over the creatures: they have disrupted the order of heaven.

First Dan

On earth, the fisherman Hakuryo stands on the shore of the Bay, mending his nets and looking out at the unsettled sky.

Chorus:

A path
A hush

Hakuryo:

A dim and loitering moon.

Chorus:

The dew
The pines

Hakuryo:

A fisherman on his way.

Chorus:

The waves
The bay

Hakuryo:

Clean breath-color of the spring.

Chorus:

Still voice of the waves and pine.

Hakuryo:

And in it all—

Hakuryo:

A path
A hush
A quickly fading moon

The dew
The sea

Chorus:

And in this all—

a sweetness—

And in all this
a beauty—

to put the mind above itself.

Could it be that the Hagoromo falls here, or does it happen earlier?

Hakuryo:

And yet the clouds are not themselves today.
The waves don't pitch their usual slant
and many boats come back to shore.

But I on shore, young fisherman,
know this ghost wind is nothing more
than the voice of the lasting pines.
Yes I on shore will go to sea.

Second Dan

Hakuryo sails across the Bay of Mio. Chorus for a bay's crossing. The language will be something like what's here, but I imagine it being expanded or repeated—or both.

Chorus:

Wind

hand of the waves

hand of the

wind

and the shore

becomes the distance

becomes the shore.

Hakuryo lands on the island.

Hakuryo:

And I have landed—

Chorus:

Drifted—

Hakuryo:

To a mis-

Chorus and Hakuryo:

-remembered

Hakuryo:

island in the salt-sweet bay.

And the air is full of—

Chorus and Hakuryo:

strange scent

Hakuryo:

ghost of a flower—

Chorus:

(flower of a ghost...)

Hakuryo:

That I cannot see.

Chorus:

That now you see.

Hakuryo:

Strange cloak. Strange color-smell-thing. Discarded mystery—

Hakuryo grabs the robe.

He begins to dance with it—a wild, lusty, simian dance. A dance of possession. As he does so, the angel slowly approaches from heaven. When she lands on the island, she bides, watching him.

The angel emerges from her hiding place.

She moves—

Makes sounds like birdsong—

Tries to communicate in several ways before:

Angel (*a sung sound approaching language*):

Aht—

Aht—

Aht—

I—

Aht—that mine—

I—
Aht that—mine-robe—that—

I-aht-that-mine-that-robe-that
—is

I-aht-that-mine-robe-that-is
I-aht-that-
At that mine-robe-that-is

And could you take-at-that—
And could you take-
And could you take-at-that—

And could you take-at-that-that-that-mine-robe-that-is?

And could you take-at-that?
No-for that mine-robe-that-is.

No-for-that
That—
That mine robe that is.
Oh that mine robe that is.

Hakuryo:
This? This?
A picked-up-thing—

Angel:
A heavenly robe.

Hakuryo:
A picked-up-thing.

Angel:
A heavenly robe.
Put back that-thing
That heavenly robe
Put back that thing that mine robe that is.

Hakuryo:
You are an angel then.

Angel:
—

Hakuryo:
And I a lucky man.

Angel:

—

Hakuryo:

And I a—

This is a heavenly robe.

A thing to keep and guard—

godly treasure for a down-trod age—

and for the loved ones of my house—

This picked-up-thing is mine, it no longer is your robe.

Angel:

I—that mine robe that is.

Hakuryo:

This picked-up-thing is mine.

It no longer is your robe.

Angel:

I—

that-robe-that-cloak-that—I—

that-robe-that-cloak-that—I—

that cloak I climb to fly—

That cloak I—

I need that cloak to fly.

Something with Hakuryo and chorus here.

Hakuryo:

He hears.

Her cries have made me strong

and if they make me cruel—

can we help the coldness of our hearts?

And he turns away.

Angel (*sounds more than words*):

Ah! Oh—ah! Oh—ah! I—

Please please—

Chorus:

He hears.

And he turns away.

Chorus:

Broken like a bird!

Broken like a bird!

Broken like a bird!

Broken like a bird!

Please please—

Broken like a bird I cannot fly!

Please— **Hakuryo:**
Please?

Angel:
Oh please!

Hakuryo:
Oh please—

Angel:
Oh please?

Hakuryo:
Oh please—
For broken birds there are worse worlds than this one.

Angel:
Please
please—

Chorus (*softer, maybe?*):
Broken like a bird

Chorus 2:
And
he
turns
a-
way...

Please
please—

Broken like a bird

Hakuryo turns to leave the angel.

Chorus 1:

She is a flower weeping

She is a small bird

wilting

She is a

small-bird

wilt

She is a

ing

flower

weep

ing.

She is a flower

weeping,

wet with dew of sorrow.

She is a small bird

She is weeping—

a flower

wilting—

Oh she is the

flower of birds

She is the

weeping

bird of flowers

wilting

She is the

small

bird

sor-

row

Angel:

I can no longer swim the wing-ways of the
kiss the hidden hands of clouds—

No, I am

trapped gazing at the sky—

trapped asking to the sky:

why let me gaze at all if you will not let me
kiss you?

Are you the one who brings the floating b
lets it tell me I am only
flesh

and the other side of flesh is sky?

The other side of (*flesh*) — is sky?

Do you mock me with your geese,

Raise my envy with your clouds?

Tell me I am only flesh

The other side of sky

I am only (*flesh*) —

The other (*side*) — of sky

I (*am*) — only flesh

The (*other*) — — side of (*sky*) —

(*I am*) — — only (*flesh*) —

(*The other side of*) — — — — — sky

(*I am only*) — — — — — flesh

(*The other side of*) — — — — — sky

(*I am only flesh*) — — — — —

(*The other side of sky*) — — — — —

(*I am only flesh*) — — — — —

(*The other side of sky*) — — — — —

Full chorus:

This is an angel fading.

This is an

angel

fading.

Dance, movement and music of an angel fading.

Third Dan

Hakuryo:

No.

Who could not yield
to an
angel

fading?

Angel:

—

Could your picked-up-thing be mine then?

Hakuryo:

—

I once heard of angels dancing.
Could this robe be given—for an angel's dancing?

Angel (*in happiness*):

Oh!

Chorus:

Dance that turns the moon...

Chorus 2:

Palace of the
moon.

Angel:

Yes!

Chorus:

Made keepsake for the earth...

Sadness of the
earth.

Sad—
palace of the earth.

Sad—
palace of the earth.

The robe—
please?

Hakuryo:

The dance, please.

Angel:

I cannot dance without it.

Hakuryo:

If I give it to you now, you will fly up to the sky. You will leave me dance-less.
I have been fooled before this.

Angel:

—
—
—

Please—
angels cannot lie.
Deceit marks only mortals.

Hakuryo:

Oh—

angel you have shamed me.

Deceitful, still I give this.

He holds out the robe.

But
let me touch it as you touch it.
Lose it as you take it.

Chorus:

Touch it as you touch it.
Lose it as you take it.

* * *

A dance between Hakuryo and the Angel in which they exchange the robe.