

HAGOROMO

SCENARIO updated 3/24/2015

Some basic information:

Dancers

The show has two main dancers:

- Wendy Whelan as the Angel
- Jock Soto as the Fisherman

Vocal parts

Singers, including those voicing the Angel and the Fisherman, are located on the Musicians Platform:

- The Angel is a soprano
- The Fisherman is a contralto.

In addition, there is:

- A Girls Choir with 8-12 members
- An adult soloist leader

Instrumental parts

Dulcimer, guitar, violin, flute, harmonics, bassoon, percussion, contrabass-flute

Puppets

The two angel puppets operate in a standing “bunraku”-style, with three puppeteers apiece.

In addition, there are two puppeted Clown characters, and the Hagaromo silk is at times itself puppeteered.

Set elements

Five rolling “wagons” are envisioned: two in Heaven and three on Earth.

- 1) In Heaven, the Hagaromo “altar”, on which it hangs
- 2) A heavenly ikebana-like sculpture
- 3) On Earth, a pier

- 4) An island in the Bay of Miwo, on which might sit a tree (in which the Hagoromo hangs)
- 5) An earthly ikebana-like sculpture

PART ONE: PROLOGUE

The Heavens

The play begins in the heavens. As the audience enters, they see a folded piece of silk, either hanging or displayed on a rolling wagon somewhat like an altar.

The musicians enter and take their places onstage.

Part One A: The Angel

First Dance:

The Angel makes a solo walk to the main stage on which is ceremoniously hanging the Hagaromo. This long walk is the first dance of the evening and, as well, the first meditation. It should be long and hypnotic enough that the audience can be welcomed into timeless-time.

Second Dance:

A. She performs a ritual dance around the Hagaromo before touching it. This dance seems to invoke the puppeteers who file in while the dance is performed (they move in what appears to be a synchronized unit – taking extremely quick, small, silent steps).

B. As the puppeteers reach the main stage, they assemble into a curved phalanx with highly engineered economy (the far left and right puppeteers holding limp angel puppets).

C. As a continuation of this dance, the Angel lifts the Hagaromo (a very light, thin piece of silk) from its ceremonial stand and performs a brief solo.

D. Eventually, she and brushes the Hagaromo over each puppet. Each one springs to life after being touched, and joins in the dance with the Hagaromo silk, illustrating that the Hagaromo allows the Angel to take her fullest, triadic form.

Third Dance:

In this movement sequence we observe a similarity in approach to “puppeting” the puppet angels and the human Angel. To achieve this: the human Angel will assume slightly puppet-like qualities (as a technical exercise, it should be executed with utter clarity and conviction). Likewise, the puppeteers will be making every effort to allow their Angel puppets to appear human. This dance is precise, like a Swiss-watch or kaleidoscopic, as its patterns evolve and intermingle. The Hagoromo is delicately passed and shared between them.

Fourth Dance:

A. As the rigid patterns of the former dance break apart, the puppet Angels take to flight (here we begin to see how unlike the Angel puppets are from their human counterpart). All the while, the human Angel expresses a quiet joy (as they are part of her, she enjoys flying with them - as they are separate from her, she enjoys the thrill of witnessing this part of her own beauty).

B. Two of the six Angel puppeteers break away and begin manipulating the Hagoromo (now a puppeteered object), which consists of interchangeable pieces of silk that can be swapped out to suggest that the garment has an elastic and changeable nature. At times, the Angels’ dance with the Hagoromo suggests elements of flight. Baroque though these movements may be, they nonetheless suggest a high degree of control.

Fifth Dance:

Following the Fourth Dance, this Fifth Dance somewhat “plays in reverse” elements of The Third Dance (musical motives may repeat), then the Second Dance (wherein we see her place the Hagoromo on the Ceremonial Stand and the puppet angels, once again seen alive and at attention on either end of the phalanx, go limp). The puppeteers file out and following them, the Angel.

Part One B: The Clowns

Sixth Dance:

A. As the Angel exits, *a spotlight hits on two puppet-beasts (the “Clowns”),* lurking in a corner of the stage. They are traditionally playful, mischievous creatures with “hands” – perhaps a fox and a monkey, or a baby dragon?

They have been there all along, living in the shadows, and (like us) watching the angelic spectacle. They eye the Hagaromo as a kind of forbidden fruit.

They approach the Hagaromo, remove it from its perch and begin to play with it. At first, their dance is joyous, but in time, they lose control of the (puppeteered) Hagaromo.

B. Gaining in size, strength and dynamism, the Hagaromo begins to suggest natural forms such as clouds, wind, sky, and other atmospheric elements. Furthermore, it appears to have a mind and will of its own.

After overwhelming the Clowns, it flies off like a powerful winged dragon, descending to Earth.

Between Parts One and Two: A PAUSE –

In silence? To musical accompaniment?

The scene is reset, in full view of the audience.

In the transition from heaven to earth, the “altar-piece” wagon and “ikebana” wagon are removed and three new wagons are brought onstage: one represents the dock where the Fisherman hangs his nets; one holds an ikebana-like sculpture representing the nearby shore; and one represents an island in the bay of Miwo (which may contain sculptural elements resembling a tree or trees.)

The Earth section of the performance begins to unfold entirely without puppets in a world that is brightly lit with the white-glowing light of “daylight” (balanced HMIs; colored backgrounds.)

This is a world where there are no shadows. Every surface, banal and beautiful, ordinary and ornate, glamorous and gritty, lives in the same overall bright whiteness. Even the proscenium architecture, extending into the auditorium, is glowing brightly.

As the musicians tune their instruments for the beginning of Part Two, *The Hagoromo* drops out of the sky, a loose piece of silk and lands where it may. A black-clad puppeteer comes on stage, picks it up, ceremoniously folds it, and places it in on a “tree” on the Island of Miwo.

At around the same time, the Fisherman appears on the dock, where he looks at the sky.

PART TWO: THE ENCOUNTER

The Earth

1. The dock

Music begins. On the dock, the Fisherman Hakuryo reflects on the beauty of the sky and the water and on the strange weather. The water is rough, and while less bold fisherman are all heading their boats to shore, he resolves to fish nevertheless and heads his boat into the bay.

As this text is being sung, the Fisherman's character is established through movement: we see him mend his nets and do other daily tasks. Eventually, we see him decide to set sail despite the strange weather.

As he crosses from the dock to the island, there is some sort of dance representing a boat journey. At the same time, the silk backdrop may be manipulated to resemble the choppy seas.

2. The island.

Following his journey by boat, the Fisherman lands on the island. (Perhaps this is his usual destination, or perhaps he has been blown off-course by the strange winds.)

In a nearby tree, he discovers the fallen Hagaromo – a robe so rich and strange that he has never seen, or even imagined, its like.

3. The Fisherman dances with the robe

The fisherman seizes the robe and begins to dance with it. This is a moment where he is at his most greedy and clownish (and perhaps also his most “human”). Like Aladdin finding the lamp, he is overcome with the joy of possession.

As the Fisherman dances, the Angel journeys to earth.

4. The Angel presents herself

When the Angel arrives at the Island, she observes the latter part of the Fisherman's dance.

She then presents herself to the fisherman.

The Angel attempts to speak to the fisherman, but does not know how. She tries several languages before eventually landing on sung English.

5. The bargain

When the Angel and the Fisherman finally intersect, the musical worlds of heaven and earth jarringly come together. During their dialogue, the Girls Chorus is singing text that describes the encounter from an "objective" point of view.

The Angel explains that she can never again fly to Heaven without her feathered robe. On Earth, she will soon die.

The Fisherman sees the robe as the salvation of his family and his old age. He will never again glimpse such wealth.

6. Pas de deux – The exchange

Eventually, the Fisherman agrees to return the robe to the Angel in exchange for a dance. He asks to receive the dance before giving over the robe so that he can be sure he won't be cheated, but the Angel reminds him that she cannot dance without her robe, and that angels, unlike humans, are incapable of lying.

Moved by her predicament, the Fisherman hands over the robe, in a great act of compassion. He has traded his own future in exchange for her life.

At the moment that both the Angel and the Fisherman hold the robe, they dance an extended pas de deux.

The dance ends when the fisherman fully surrenders the robe to the Angel.

7. The Angel's ascent

Once the Angel has possession of the robe, she re-divides into three and begins the dance that represents her ascension to the heavens.

The dance echoes and is a heightened version of the Hagoromo dance from the beginning.

As the Angel ascends, she is revealed to be one of many thousands of angels in the heavens. (This visual effect may involve the choreographic involvement of the Girls Chorus.)

The Fisherman briefly sees the divine forces that are all around him, and then they disappear. He is left alone onstage as the lights fade.

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