

## Japanese Dance

Dance is featured in one of the most famous Japanese legends. Amaterasu, the sun goddess, is horrified by her brother's behavior and goes to hide in a cave. Several other gods try to lure her out. Ultimately, it is the goddess Uzume dancing on an overturned tub that gets her to leave the cave. Japanese dance and theatre can be classified into six basic types: early dance, noh drama, kyogen comic interludes, bunraku puppet theatre, kabuki, and modern dance and theatre.

### Early dance

Kagura: a reenactment of Uzume's dance

Gigaku: a dance of Buddhist worship, using masks, imported from Korea

Bugaku: a court dance imported from China

Dengaku: a folk dance originating from harvest ceremonies

Sarugaku: a mimetic dance, often telling comical stories

### Noh

Noh is a heavily stylized form of theatrical dance. Its origins lie in religious dance practices. The movements are typically very slow and controlled, and actors often use masks to portray characters. The music is in the form of a small orchestra, with chant-like vocals. It is only performed by men.

### Kyogen

Kyogen plays are short comic interludes within noh plays. Noh plays often deal with tragedy, so kyogen acts as a comic relief. It may have grown out of sarugaku.

### Bunraku

Bunraku uses large, detailed puppets to tell stories. They have been described as being amazingly lifelike, and the stories are often quite violent.

### Kabuki

Kabuki is a dance theatre that began as a dance performed by women. The government soon decreed that only men were allowed onstage. Vibrant costumes, makeup, and highly stylized movements help the actor portray their character. Kabuki plays sometimes use the same stories as noh plays.