

What is the Takarazuka Revue? The Secret Story Behind a Century of Spectacular Theater

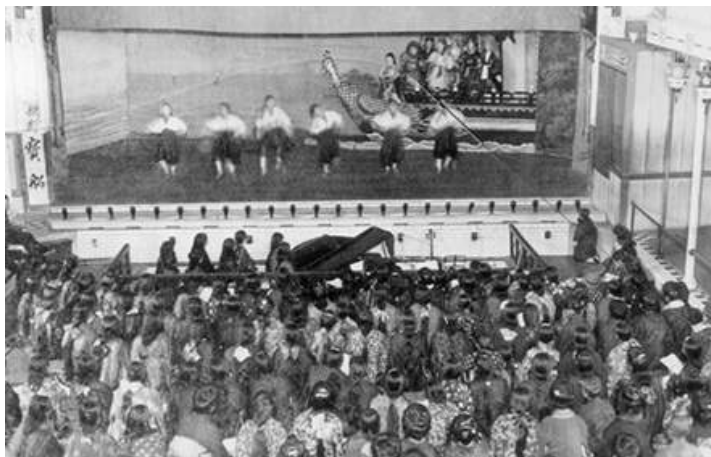
The Start of a Brilliant History & Takarazuka-ism

Over the course of a century, the Takarazuka Revue has amused and moved audiences. You might be a bit surprised, though, to learn that the creator of this magnificent theater was a railway company—one that has been involved in a series of groundbreaking projects in Japan. To learn about allure of the Takarazuka Revue, the theater company that comes out with new production one after another—let's first take a look at its history and the motto that serves as the basis for its traditions.

Our founder's flash of inspiration initiated a century of Takarazuka Revue. When the curtain first rose on a stage built on a converted indoor pool, who knew it would last this long?

The Takarazuka Revue opened in 1914. The theater's founder was Ichizo Kobayashi, the man who contributed to the growth of the Hankyu Railway, opened the Hankyu Department Store as Japan's first department store built inside a train terminal, and worked hard to help found the Toho Group. When Mr. Kobayashi created the Takarazuka Shin-onsen hot spring resort in 1911 as part of a strategy to lure passengers onto his trains, he opened Paradise, a Western-style two-story building featuring an indoor pool. However, Paradise was forced to close after only two summer months because co-ed swimming was banned at the time and the attraction had no hot spring facilities. So when Kobayashi thought of using this location to provide entertainment, that was the beginning of the Takarazuka Revue.

The first performance was on April 1, 1914 in a theater built in the converted indoor pool. A lid over the pool served as audience seating, while the changing rooms were the stage. The performers in this memorable first production were 17 young girls ranging in age from 12 to 17.



The theater in the converted indoor pool



A stage photo from the opera "Dom-Brako"



The last words of Ichizo Kobayashi, the Father of the Takarazuka Revue: "Modesty, Fairness and Grace"

The Takarazuka Revue's motto of "modesty, fairness and grace" comes from the teachings of Ichizo Kobayashi. His goal was to offer "popular theatrical entertainments the whole family is sure to enjoy." Kobayashi's last words refer to the basics of performing arts—the singing, dancing and acting that create brilliant fantasies on the stage—as well as a desire for each Takarasienne to have etiquette and a good sense of proper manners, and to not forget their dignity as individual women and members of society. Even through the changes accompanying the passage of time, this spirit is a deeply ingrained part of every Takarasienne and staff member.



Ichizo Kobayashi, Father of the Takarazuka Revue



Takarazuka Revue 100th Anniversary Chorus (2014)