

A Fan, a Cloth and Your Imagination

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Think sit-down as opposed to stand-up comedy. Equipped with only a fan, a cloth and a pillow on which to sit, Rakugo artist Katsura Kaishi had a Tulane University audience in stitches during a recent performance on the uptown campus.

Kaishi performed the traditional Japanese comic storytelling art in the Stibbs Conference Room of the Lavin-Bernick Center. Remaining seated for the duration, he told classic stories and portrayed a repertoire of characters using only facial expressions and body language.



Learn about Rakugo, the Japanese comic storytelling practice, in this interview with performer Katsura Kaishi produced by Brandon Meginley.

"It's rigid in some ways, but there has been change and adaptation [over time]," says Michael Wood, professor of practice in [Asian studies](#) in the School of Liberal

Arts.

The advent of the radio brought the performing art into the homes of millions, popularizing Rakugo in Japan. With television and the Internet, however, the comic actors have had to adapt the traditional stories to make them more relevant to younger audiences and accessible worldwide, Wood says.

Kaishi is one of few Rakugo actors to translate his work into English. The Agency for Cultural Affairs in Japan named him a cultural ambassador in 2007.

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