

Madame Kangiku Sanjo (June Ito)
February 8, 1940 to April 28, 2019

Born on Feb. 8, 1940, Kangiku Sanjo began learning Japanese classical dance at the age of four. At the age of nine, she came under the tutelage of Kanya Sanjo V, then known as Miharu Bando, studying nagauta music and Japanese dance. She attained her natori (professional dance title) at the age of 16, performing “Kyoganoko Musume Dojoji” and “Yasuna” at Koyasan Temple in Little Tokyo.

Kangiku Sanjo became an apprentice (uchi deshi) with Kanya Sanjo V and assisted in instructing and producing the “Kabuki Classical Dance” and “Kayo Buyo Series” programs which were presented every year.

After the passing of Kanya Sanjo V in June 1989, she became the artistic director and official representative of the Kanya Sanjo V Kabuki Dance Company, dedicated to preserving the traditional Japanese art form.

During her career, Kangiku Sanjo had the opportunity of performing a specially choreographed dance, Shishi no Yume, with Kanya Sanjo V and Shoroku Onoe II (Kabuki actor and dancer), accompanied by Bunraku musicians of Osaka in 1969. She also appeared in David Bowie’s 1976 film, “The Man Who Fell to Earth”. In 1981, she had the opportunity of performing a specially choreographed dance, “Nagami Jishi, with then Senjaku Nakamura as the butterfly.

Kangiku Sanjo often traveled to Japan to study the latest dance techniques taking dance lessons from various dance instructors as well as attending many Kabuki performances at the Kabuki-Za in Tokyo as well as Osaka. She studied Jiutai Mai (another form of classical dance) with the late Hide Kanzaki II. She also studied percussion (ohayashi) and tea ceremony during her many trips to Japan.

While in Los Angeles, she studied Ikenobo with the late K. Mikami for many years assisting her with exhibits and demonstrations throughout the area as well as with exhibits for Nisei Week.

From January, 2003 through November, 2005, she lived and worked in Tokyo, Japan enabling her to further her studies of the history, evolution, backstage workings, choreography, costumes and props utilized in Kabuki Classical Dance.

Kangiku Sanjo was named the official choreographer of the 2019 Nisei Week parade ondo dances. Unfortunately, she was not able to participate as she was overtaken by illness. She was, however, able to complete the choreography of the ondo dances that were performed that year in the parade.

In the many opportunities she was named official choreographer of the Nisei Week parade ondo dances, she always had the distinct purpose of entertaining those who came to watch as well as the dancers who participated. With enthusiasm and joy, she would always say, “have fun

everybody!” Nisei Week held a special place in her heart and she would participate in the event as often as possible. She had a strong desire to uphold this traditional event and hoped that it would continue for many generations to come.

Kangiku Sanjo will always be remembered for her cheerfulness and wonderful smile. She will always remain in our hearts. Her legacy will live on.