



(Above)  
Sachiyo Ito will demonstrate the stylized technique of kabuki Thursday;

## CLASSIC FORM LEADS JAPAN DANCE SERIES

# KABUKI

OLD, NEW  
IN CONCERT  
AT NEWARK LIBRARY

By VALERIE SUDOL

**T**he delicate art of kabuki is highlighted Thursday when the Newark Public Library launches a three-concert series of dance inspired by traditional Japanese culture.

The programs are part of a two-month celebration of things Japanese sponsored by the library with the Newark Museum, the Metro Newark Chamber of Commerce and the Essex County Department of Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs.

The festival began April 7 with the annual Cherry Blossom Festival in Newark's Branch Brook Park, which as one of the largest displays of flowering cherry trees in the world rivals the Tidal Basin plantings in Washington D.C. Programs—all free—conclude June 20 with a presentation of formal Japanese ceremonies by chanting Buddhist priests and experts in rituals that accompany the serving of traditional cuisine.

But before the festival closes, dance enthusiasts will see concerts of kabuki, modern dance and mime all drawing upon the classical and folk cultures of the Japanese islands.

On Thursday, Sachiyo Ito demonstrates the stylized and formal technique of kabuki, which dates to the late 1500s. Performed as part of an operatic-scale drama, Grand Kabuki is limited to men. However, women excel as solo performers of kabuki dance, in which movement almost always is used to tell a story.

Integral to the effect is the elaborate costume worn by dancers, which enters subtly into the choreography. Western viewers should bear in mind that a twitch of the hem or sleeve is as much a part of the dance as more obvious steps, and props such as fans and scarves are considered to be extensions of the dancer's limbs.

Ito graduated with highest honors from the noted Hanayagi School of Dance in Japan, and has herself served on the faculty of New York University where she earned her masters and doctoral degrees in dance. She acted as kabuki consultant for the Off-Broadway production of "Pacific Overtures," and recently directed "Gombo Gitsune," the first Japanese opera premiered in the United States.

She has performed extensively at dance festivals, colleges and special performances. These last include dates at the Kennedy Center, the American Dance Festival, and New York City's Japan House and Asia Society.