# **Kabuki Activity**

Objective:

Students will gain a basic understanding of Kabuki as an art form by creating a Kabuki mie.

 Materials Needed:

Youtube clips  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aPg5XWIexMk&list=PL11BEBFF4345279C9> (3:30-4:50)  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hlTQUzPZU8Y> (watch whole thing)

Watch first clip—this is Kabuki. Kabuki originated from Noh theatre, however, there are some distinct differences. The idea of spectacle became very significant in Kabuki. It was the first pop culture theatre to come out of Japan. People had favorite actors and came to see shows with big dance numbers. While it is still very traditional and codified, there is a more relaxed nature in Kabuki versus Noh.

Watch second video clip.   
– kanji (sing, dance, skill)  
– originally very avant garde—done by women, taken over by men  
– elements of mie  
– storytelling techniques (interaction with audience)  
– only lit by candle

Mie- During a highlight moment of a kabuki play, an actor will strike and hold a pose while making dramatic gestures that might include craning their neck or crossing their eyes. This postural movement, called a “mie”, introduces a new class of beauty on stage, impressing the actor and the scene upon the audience. Also, a mie is generally accompanied by a concurrent sound effect called a “tsuke”, which further adds to the depth of the effect. In the lingo of kabuki, this ensemble action is called “mie o kiru” (literally, “to cut a mie.”)

The mie in kabuki has a similar role to techniques like close-ups and stop motion in modern film. It adds a dramatic flair to the production and gets the audience on the edge of their seats. The development of kabuki predates advanced stage lighting, and mie are an example of how the Japanese of old cleverly created ways to bring theatrical changes to the stage.

Instructions: (10 minutes)

We are going to create a mie for each of us to do practice on today. Each person needs to pick a cartoon or animated character. This cannot be a real person.

We are going to split up into groups of three.

In your groups of three, you are all going to make sure you have different characters. Then, following the three steps of mie, you are going to create mies for each of your characters. When we come back together, each group is going to write their three characters on the board, perform their mies, and we are going to guess which character belongs to which mie.

 Discussion: (15 minutes)

How easy/difficult was it to guess the characters?  
What parts of the mie most helped us realize who the character was?  
What do we know about each of these characters that was manifested in the physical nature of the mie?  
What are other ideas of things people could have used to accentuate the characters?  
How does this apply to the characters you are choosing for your monologue?