



KOKUHO (Kota)

27th
Year!

Autumn
Season
2026

Release: 2025

Cert (UK): 15

Country: Japan

Language: Japanese with English subtitles

Runtime: 2 hour 55 mins

Director: Sang-il Lee

Written by: Satoko Okudera, Shûichi Yoshida

Cinematographer: Sofian El Fani

Cast: Ryô Yoshizawa, Ryûsei Yokohama, Mitsuki Takahata



'Lee Sang-il's heartfelt and muscular epic (whose title means "national treasure") was a box-office smash on its Japanese home turf, winning a host of festival awards and an Oscar nomination. It's a mighty Cain-and-Abel drama spanning five decades, set in the rarefied world of kabuki theatre where some of the most exotically prized performers are the onnagata, the men who have mastered the rigorously observed discipline of playing women in classical kabuki roles, a convention which arose from Japan's 17th-century banning of women on stage, rather as they once were in England 100 years before' - Peter Bradshaw, Guardian.

The story begins in the 1960s, where Kikuo's father, a yakuza gangster, allows Kikuo to play an onnagata role in a kabuki play he has set up to entertain his guests. Kikuo's performance impresses an old kabuki actor, Hanjiro, who adopts him when his father is murdered. Hanjiro's own son Shunsuke first becomes Kikuo's friend, but later they fall out as Kikuo becomes the favourite. There follows decades of fighting between the two as Kikuo becomes more and more determined to be the best onnagata there is, at the expense of everything else in his life.

Interspersed through the film are Kabuki performances which, if you have never seen one, are a magnificent sight to see.

'The average response to seeing a nearly three-hour Japanese movie about the art of Kabuki may be that it's not your cup of (green) tea. But, you'd be sacrificing one of the awards season's most gorgeous and stirring movies' - Thelma Adams, AARP Movies for Grownups.

