Kabuki was born in the early seventeenth century as a form of popular entertainment combining music, dance, and acting. In the all-male world of kabuki, actors who specialized in women's roles are known as onnagata. Although onnagata emerged in the early days of kabuki, their characteristics, lifestyles, and pubic persona have changed immensely over the course of history. This talk will provide an introduction about onnagata acting and will discuss their performance of gender, the differences between premodern and modern onnagata, and the cultural training by which male onnagata actors become performers of femininity.

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