**Shōchiku Company Limited** (松竹株式会社) is a Japanese entertainment industry that owns theatres, film studios, production companies for motion pictures and theatre, real estate and other business such as music recording and publishing.

In Kyoto in 1895, one of the founders of Shōchiku, Takejirō Ōtani (1877-1969) became a theatrical promoter for Sakaiza. In 1900 Ōtani purchased Sakaiza and renamed it Kabukiza and became a theatrical promoter of Tokiwaza. In 1902, Ōtani and his twin brother Matsujirō Shirai (1877-1951) established a production company Matsu Take Partnership Corporation (renamed as Shōchiku Company in 1937) and opened Meijiza (later Shōchikuza). By 1909, the company purchased most of the major *kabuki* theatres in Kyoto and Osaka including Minamiza, Nakaza and Asahiza. In 1909, the company purchased Bunrakuza and produced the first *ningyo joruri* performance. Since when Shōchiku purchased modernized Shintomiza, the site of the Meiji era’s Theatre Reform in 1911, the company began expanding its business to Tokyo. Ōtani was in charge of Tokyo while Shirai, Kyoto and Osaka. In 1914 Tokyo’s Kabukiza became under Shōchiku’s management, and by 1929 all *kabuki* actors became affiliated with Shōchiku. Under the influence of creator of *shimpa* Kawakami Otojirōand Kawakami’s troupe actor Shizuma Kojirō, Shōchiku modernized the production system by establishing multiple ticket prices, abolishing selling food and drink in audience seating areas, shortening the length of productions, modernizing/westernizing the theatre building and improving sanitary conditions of the theatre.

Shōchikuproduced adaptations of Western masterpieces such as *King Lear* and *Le Tartuffe* written in a modern, colloquial speech and gradually extended its repertoire to *shimpa,* modern comedies, revues and variety shows. Shōchiku invited the comedy troupe Soganoya Brothers Ichiza, formed by Gorō and Jūrō for the 1904 opening of Kyoto Asahiza.Following the comedy boom sparked by Soganoya Comedy, Shōchiku formed the comedy group at Asahiza in 1906*.* Gorō continued to act in Shōchiku’s theatres in Osaka and Tokyo till his death. In 1928 Shibuya Tengai, recommended by Jūrō, formed the comedy group, Shōchiku Home Drama. In 1948, Gorō and Tengai’s groups’ members formed Shōchiku Shinkigeki led by Tengai and young Fujiyama Kanbi.

In downtown Tokyo, when Asakusa Opera’s popularity came to prime time in 1919, Shōchiku formed Shinsei Opera Company to produce Asakusa in Shōchiku-owned theatres in Japan. Influenced by Takarazuka Girls Opera, Shōchiku Girls Opera Group (Later, SKD) was formed. Its *Tokyo Dance* (1930) at Asakusa Shōchikuza attracted many audiences and became a local specialty of Tokyo. The following year Asakusa Shōchikuza became a revue theatre, which became the base of popular comedian Enomoto Kenichi’s troupe Pierre Brilliante in 1932. Enomoto’s contract with Shōchiku continued until 1937 when he moved to Tōhō and brought extreme popularity. At another Shōchiku-owned theatre called Tokiwaza, other comedy troupes including Furukawa Roppa’s *The Kingdom of* Laughter, performed. In 1930, Tokyo Theatre, a modern theatre newly built to stage both theatre and film, was opened in the district of Tsukiji, whose premiere was Hasegawa Shin's film *When I Became a Sumō-wrestler Champion* (1931).

Shōchiku’s involvement with film began in 1920 when the company established Shōchiku Kinema Gomeisha (Shōchiku after 1937) and opened a studio in Kamata, Tokyo. Inside the studio, Shōchiku Kinema Acting School was established under modern Japanese drama *shingeki*’sleader Osanai Kaoru. Shōchiku’s first film was *A Woman from the Island* (1920) at Tokyo’s Kabukiza. In 1936, Shōchiku moved the film studio to Ofuna. The company produced early silent films and talkies, including the first talkie Gosho Heinosuke’s *The Neighbor’s Wife and Mine* (1931) and the first color motion picture Kinoshita Keisuke’s *Carmen Comes Home* (1951). Shōchiku’s leading film directors include Yasujirō Ozu, Kenji Mizoguchi, and Mikio Naruse. Shōchiku also imported and produced foreign films since 1920, including Paramount Pictures’ *The Ten Commandments* (1923). In Osaka, Shirai built the first Western style movie theatre Shōchikuza in 1923, whose premiere was German film *The Love of Pharaoh* (1922). Female only Osaka Shōchiku Opera Company’s song and dance was performed as an attraction of the film.

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