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| Soganoya Gorō (1877-1948) |
| **[Enter any *variant forms* of your headword – OPTIONAL]** |
| Japanese actor, director and playwright. Creator of a new genre of modern comedy *kigeki* (also, *shinkigeki*). He wrote around 1,000 short comedies under the pen name, Ikkai Gyojin. His comedy style was inspired by humoristic as well as satirical and ironical laughter in Western style comedy such as Moliere. Many of his works are currently played by the comedy troupe, Shōchiku Shinkigeki. His signature pieces include: *The Flower of the Luffa* (1917) and *Cherry Trees in Leaf* (1933)  Soganoya became a student of *kabuki* actor Nakamura Sangorō in 1892 and made a stage debut as utility actor Nakamura Sannosuke at Osaka’s Naniwaza in 1893. In 1902, he met Nakamura Tokizo’s student, Nakamura Jidai (1869-1925) at the traveling kabuki troupe Osaka’s Fukuiza. In 1903, using their new names, Sannosuke as Gorō and Jidai as Jūrō, they formed Soganoya Brothers Troupe in order to create new comedy replacing the old style of comedy called *niwaka* established by Tsuruya Danjurō in Osaka. Their debut in 1904 at Yūokaza in Itami near Osaka was failure, but made a first success with *Funny Kanjinchō* acted for the travelling *kabuki* troupe, Nakamura Fukuen Ichiza in Wakayama, in which Gorō acted the role of Benkei and Jūrō Togashi. |
| Japanese actor, director and playwright. Creator of a new genre of modern comedy *kigeki* (also, *shinkigeki*). He wrote around 1,000 short comedies under the pen name, Ikkai Gyojin. His comedy style was inspired by humoristic as well as satirical and ironical laughter in Western style comedy such as Moliere. Many of his works are currently played by the comedy troupe, Shōchiku Shinkigeki. His signature pieces include: *The Flower of the Luffa* (1917) and *Cherry Trees in Leaf* (1933)  Soganoya became a student of *kabuki* actor Nakamura Sangorō in 1892 and made a stage debut as utility actor Nakamura Sannosuke at Osaka’s Naniwaza in 1893. In 1902, he met Nakamura Tokizo’s student, Nakamura Jidai (1869-1925) at the traveling kabuki troupe Osaka’s Fukuiza. In 1903, using their new names, Sannosuke as Gorō and Jidai as Jūrō, they formed Soganoya Brothers Troupe in order to create new comedy replacing the old style of comedy called *niwaka* established by Tsuruya Danjurō in Osaka. Their debut in 1904 at Yūokaza in Itami near Osaka was failure, but made a first success with *Funny Kanjinchō* acted for the travelling *kabuki* troupe, Nakamura Fukuen Ichiza in Wakayama, in which Gorō acted the role of Benkei and Jūrō Togashi. Producer Toyoshima Torakichi labeled their play as ‘reformed comedy’ and produced the same work at Osaka Dōtonbori’s Naniwaza using the name of Soganoya for the first time. The following production *Anonymous Extra* (1904) dealing with the Japan-Russo War created the comedy boom, which helped produce many comedy troupes in Osaka. Their style, similar to the old style, *niwaka,* has an aspect of parodies of *kabuki.* At the same time, it has a realistic acting style and modern sensitivity dealing with current topics. Shōchiku invited Soganoya Brothers Ichiza to Kyoto for the 1904 opening of Kyoto Asahiza*.*  In 1905, Soganoya made his first Tokyo debut at Shintomiza. The production was not very successful because the audience in Tokyo was unfamiliar with his Osaka dialect. In 1906, after making improvement, he made a success at Meijiza in Tokyo. The production included the short comedy, titled *Unhappy* and labeled as ‘French comedy’, treating a jealous wife and a henpecked husband similar to a *kyōgen* play *Hanako*. After 1910, Shintomiza became Soganoya’s base where the troupe reached its prime time. By mid 1910s, Soganoya had become estranged from his partner Jūrō, whose acting style was amusing and nonsensical  In 1914, Soganoya travelled and saw plays at theatres in Russia, Germany, Norway, Holland and England. In London he had seen Victorian melodrama, variety and vaudeville shows for three months. In the first production after the trip, Sogonoya used an actress for the first time in a social drama *Style 16 Clock* (1915), which was praised highly by socialist Kaizuka Shiburoku as a play for the people. Soganoya renamed his troupe as The People’s Theatre Wada Kyuichi Ichiza using his real name, in which all actors were listed in the production pamphlet using their real names. His only production staged at Osaka Nakaza was a failure as the experiment was regarded as arrogant by both the producers and the audience. In the same year, after returning his troupe’s name to Soganoya Gorō Ichiza, Soganoya regained his popularity. After the Kantō Great Earthquake, when Shōchiku’s Shinbashi Enbujō Theatre was newly opened in 1926, Soganoya moved his base to Tokyo and played three to four times a year at Shinbashi Enbujō until 1944. After he lost voice because of an operation for throat cancer in 1948, he acted on the stage pantomiming in Osaka. Shōchiku Shinkigeki was formed two months after his death. |
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