



Four Major Plays of Chikamatsu

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Chikamatsu Monzaemon (1653-1725) wrote some 130 plays, chiefly for the puppet theater, many of which are still performed today by puppet operators and Kabuki actors. Chikamatsu is thought to have written the first major tragedies about the common man. This edition of four of his most important plays includes three popular domestic dramas and one history play. Chikamatsu's domestic dramas are accurate reflections of Japanese society at the time: his characters are samurai, farmers, merchants, and prostitutes who speak colloquially, and who people the shops, streets, teahouses, and brothels that constituted their daily environment. The heroes and heroines of these plays gain their tragic stature from their conflict with society. "The Love Suicides at Sonezaki" and "The Love Suicides at Amijima" became so popular that they initiated a vogue for love suicides, both in life and onstage. Donald Keene's translation of the original text is presented here with an introduction and a new preface to aid readers in their comprehension and enjoyment of the plays.

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