



Utagawa Kuniyoshi, *Haru no Kotobuki* (New Year's Congratulations), between 1847 and 1852, woodcut, 36.5 x 25.6 cm (left sheet); 36.5 x 25.4 cm (central sheet 2); 36.6 x 25.5 cm (right sheet), Montreal Museum of Fine Arts.

*Haru no Kotobuki* (New Year's Congratulations) by Utagawa Kuniyoshi (1797–1861) depicts a scene from a kabuki play, which is a form of traditional Japanese drama featuring stylized song, mime and dance. The presence of several drop curtains in the background and the relatively small size of the audience identify this woodblock triptych print as a depiction of a minor theatre. In the centre panel, a kabuki actor holds his drum while making a silly face at the audience. Surrounding this man are members of the audience—mostly women—who share their varying reactions to this childish display. Notable among them are an old woman, a young girl and a visiting official. The old woman, situated in the left corner of the centre panel, expresses her relative disinterest in the actor's performance through her exasperated facial expression and slack posture. In the same panel, a young girl, while amused, turns away shyly from the actor with her head down. Other striking details in this print include the repeated body postures across

the composition, the meticulous rendering of the fabric, as well as the landscape in the far right corner. In one of the corners of each panel, an artist's signature, publication seal and censor seal are included.

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