



The Kimono of the Geisha-Diva Ichimaru

Barry Till, Michiko Warkentyne, Judith Patt

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Ichimaru (1906-1997) combined her experience as a geisha with an extraordinary talent as a vocalist and musician to become a unique figure in the social history of twentieth-century Japan. Determined to distinguish herself, she studied music with the best teachers to be found in Tokyo's "floating world," or pleasure district. Ichimaru secured a recording contract in 1931 and never looked back as she won international renown.

In keeping with the geisha tradition of elegant dress, Ichimaru accumulated a striking collection of kimono over the course of her long career. After her death, the collection was given to the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria. In this colorful, well-informed, and satisfying little book, three members of the gallery's curatorial staff tell Ichimaru's life story and place it in the context of the floating world and the larger world of Japanese culture. They also provide detailed information on kimono construction, materials, dyeing and stitching techniques, styles and the cultural connotations evoked by those styles, and the secret language of kimono imagery. Color photographs accompany their descriptions, and Ichimaru's life is illustrated with color and black-and-white images.

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