

Japanese Silent Film Screening with Live Performance

The Asian Studies Center
presents a screening of

Jirokichi the Rat

(Itō Daisuke, 1931)

Tuesday, February 26, 2019

Frick Fine Arts

Reception in Cloister 5:30pm – 6:30pm

Performance 6:30pm

Brief Q&A to follow performance

Featuring live performances with

Kataoka Ichirō, benshi

Tom Roberts, jazz pianist and silent
film musician

Generally sponsored by the Japan Iron and
Steel Federation and Mitsubishi Endowments
University of Pittsburgh and the Asian

Studies Center

Once called “poets of the dark,” benshi (film narrators) brought silent films to life through commentary and vocal performance, giving voice to the characters on screen. Dressed often in a tuxedo and perched on a podium beside the screen, the benshi was an integral and indispensable part of film entertainment in the silent era. As many as 8000 benshi were performing across the country and the Japanese empire by the 1930s, and their popularity—and power—slowed the introduction of sound film in Japan.

About the Benshi



Pitt welcomes Kataoka Ichirō from Japan, a practicing benshi whose performances have delighted audiences in Japan and around the world. A graduate in Theater Arts from Nihon University in 2001, Kataoka discovered kami shibai and other traditional forms of verbal arts. He has studied under legendary performer Sawato Midori since 2002. He has performed a range of film genres, including period and contemporary Japanese film, western films, anime, and news.

About the Pianist



Tom Roberts is one of the leading exponents of early jazz piano in the world today. Tom has recorded over 40 albums and has performed throughout the United States and Europe. Beside his pianistic artistry Tom is a versatile music historian with special focus on the Early Jazz era. He has contributed articles for magazines such as *Piano Today* and is a frequent guest at National Public Radio.