Japanese Traditional Theater: Noh and Kyōgen
Monica Bethe and Diego Pellecchia

This class introduces several traditional Japanese performing arts with a focus on noh and kyōgen. Field trips include performances, festivals, and artisan studios.

Classes will introduce various aspects of each performing art—text, music, dance, stage and staging, costumes, masks—through readings and visuals, and also hands-on experience. Focus will be on noh and kyōgen, but sections will also cover kagura, bugaku, mibu kyōgen, bunraku, and kabuki.

Students will be expected to prepare the readings before time and to choose a topic for further study to be presented at the end of the semester. These can be academic research papers, translations or new plays composed in the style of one of the arts, work with costumes/masks/sets, or other field work.

In addition to the semester-end presentation, students will need to write a 7-10-page paper developing their presentation ideas. There will also be quizzes and worksheets.

The basic text is Karen Brazell: Traditional Japanese Theater. Columbia University Press, 1998, but readings will be taken from various sources. All field trips not marked “optional” have required attendance.

Jan 12  Overview of Japanese traditional performing arts
Reading:
This is your textbook and the first chapter gives an overview of the course.
Background reading:
“Pleasures of Noh” “Nō and Kyōgen as Literature” in Keene, Nō and Bunraku. P. 13-27

Jan 14  Noh and Kyōgen: From ritual to stage entertainment (Okina, Tsurukame and Kazuraki)
Read before class

Okina (Handout)


Jan 17 Performance at Kanze Kaikan: Okina, Tsurukame, Kazuragi
Jan 19 Text and stage art: discussion of the performance
Reading:


Jan 20 Optional: festival with yudate kagura at Jōnangū near Takeda station.

Jan 21 Noh music: vocal and instrumental (Hagoromo)
Related reading


Read before Jan 24: Naniwa (Handout)

Jan 24 Noh Performance at the Kongo Noh Theater: Hagoromo and Naniwa

Jan 26 Noh movement
Related Reading


Jan 28 Kyōgen: history, text, technique (Setsubun). Mibu kyōgen
Read before class


Further reading:

Explore:
- [http://www.mibudera.com/kyougen.htm](http://www.mibudera.com/kyougen.htm) Mibudera site with plot summaries and examples of plays and some music.

Feb 2  **Fieldtrip to Mibudera to see Mibu kyōgen**

Feb 3  Optional: setsubun related rites in Kyoto and Nara

Feb 4  Pre-noh performing arts.  PROJECT PROPOSALS DUE

Read before class:

Feb 9  The formation of classic noh

Read before class:
- For reference in class: read as many as you can beforehand
  - *Kamo* by Zenchiku in Brazell. TJA pp.44-60

Feb 11 **Spring trip: NO CLASS**

Feb 16  Noh and kyōgen costumes and props.

Read before class


Further reading


Feb 18 Fieldtrip to Costume Workshop
Feb 23 Noh and kyōgen masks

Read before class:

Tanabe, “The Birth and Evolution of Noh Masks” in Miracles and Mischief. p. 43-69


Nomura Manzo, Nearman “Behind the Mask of Nō” and “Mask Making” Pp. 20-64, 171-176

Feb 25 Fieldtrip to Mask maker
Feb 27~ March 6 Spring Break
March 8 Composing noh

Read before class:


March 10 Zeami’s theories (Kadensho, Nikyoku Santai Ningyōzu)

Read before class

Hare, Zeami’s Performance Notes, “Fushi Kaden” p. 25-75 and “Figure Drawing of the Two Arts and the Three Modes.” Pp 139-149

Quinn, Developing Zeami: The Noh Actor’s Attunement in Practice. P. 1-21

March 12 Tentative Performance of Noh at Kawamura Stage
March 15 Shōki

Read before class:
Shōki (Handout)


Related reading


March 17 Ceremonial noh and noh culture. QUIZ, PROJECT PROPOSAL UPDATE DUE

Reading to be decided.

March 20 Performance of Noh Shōki at Kongo Theater

March 22 Tamura and Hyakuman
Read before class:
Tamura in 10 Noh Plays, NGSK, 1955, pp, 19-36

March 24 Kasuga Ryūjin
Read before class:
Kasuga Ryūjin in Tyler, Japanese Nō Dramas, pp. 142-155

Further Reading

March 27 Performance of noh Tamura, Hyakuman, Kasuga Ryujin at Kanze Kaikan

March 29 Amateur performers through the ages
Reading to be decided.

March 31 “Atsumori” from The Tales of the Heike→noh→kowakamai→kabuki/bunraku
Read before class, in this order:
“The Death of Atsumori” in Royall Tyler, tr. The Tale of the

Atsumori in Brazell, TJT, pp 126-142

Ko Atsumori, Keller Kimbrough tr. In Oyler and Watson, ed. Like Clouds or Mists, Cornell East Asia Series, 2013, pp. 247-260


Suma Bay, tr. James Brandon, in Brazell, ed. TJT, pp 442-455

April 5  Kabuki

Read before class:


April 7  Bunraku

Read before class:

Keene: Nō and Bunraku, p. 123-146, 159-165

plays (to be announced)

April 9  Performance of Bunraku at the National Bunraku Theater, Osaka (date flexible)

April 12  Student Presentations

April 14  Student Presentations

April 19  Papers due

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Translations
Bethe, Monica and Richard Emmert. *Noh Performance Guides: Matsukaze, Fujito, Tenko, Atsumori, Aoinoue, Miidera, Ema.* (National Noh Theater)


Tyler, Royall. *Japanese Nô Dramas.* (Penguin classics, 1992)

A Cycle of Noh Plays, Pining Wind. (Ithaca, N.Y. 1978.)

A Cycle of Noh plays, Granny Mountains. (Ithaca, N.Y. 1978.)

To Hallow Genji: A tribute to Noh, Self published, 2013


Noh Performance commentary


Brandon, James R, ed. *Nô and Kyôgen in the Contemporary World* (University of Hawaii, 1997)


Lim Beng Choo. *Another Stage: Knze Nobumitsu and the Late Muromachi Noh Theater.* (Cornell East Asia Series, 2012).


**Theory and secret writings**


Hare, Tomas. *Zeami Performance Notes.* (Columbia University Press, 2008)


Rath, Eric C.  *The Ethos of Noh: Actors and Their Art.*  (Harvard University Asia Center, 2004)


Pinnington, Noel.  *Traces in the Way: Michi and the Writings of Komparu Zenchiku.*  (Cornell East Asia Series, 2006)

**Kyôgen**


General Japanese Theater and other Japanese Theatrical Arts

Adachi, Barbara. *Backstage at Bunraku* (Weatherhill, 1985)


*Japanese Theater in the World* (Japan Society, 1997)

Parker, Helen S. E. *Progressive Traditions: An Illustrated Study of Plot Repetition in Traditional Japanese Theater* (Brill, 2006)

Costumes and Masks

*Iikei no nô shôzoku no haykusugata*. Heibonsha. (Tokyo 1984)

*Iikei no nô men no hyakusugata*. Heibonsha. (Tokyo 1983)

*The World of Noh Costumes*, Yamaguchi Orimono, Inc. (Kyoto, 1989)

*Patterns and Poetry: Nô Robes from the Lucy Truman Aldrich Collection*. (Museum of Art Rhode Island School of Design, 1992)


The Tokugawa Collection of Noh Costumes and Masks. (Japan Society. New York, 1976.)


Background (classics)
Anthology of Japanese Literature to the 19th C. Penguin Classics.


McCullough, Helen (tr.). The Tales of the Heike.

Philippi, Donald (tr.). Kojiki. (Tokyo. 1968.)


Background (historical and cultural)


O’Neil, G.P.  *Early Noh Drama.*  (London and Bradford, 1958)

Ortolani, Benito.  *The Japanese Theatre from Shamaistic Ritual to Contemporary Pluralism.*  (Leiden, N.Y. etc.; E.J.Brill; 1990) (also in paperback)

Bunraku and Kabuki

Brandon, James,  *Chūshingura: Studies in Kabuki and the Puppet Theater.*  (University of Hawaii Press, 1982).

Brandon, James, William Malm, Donald Shively.  *Studies in Kabuki: Its


Keene, Donald, tr. Four Major Plays of Chikamatsu. (Columbia Paperback, 1961).

Parker, Helen, Progressive Traditions: An Illustrated Study of Plot Repetition in Traditional Japanese Theatre. (Brill, 2006).
Now, Noh is usually composed of one kyōgen play between two Noh plays. Noh masks | sigusr0. Noh performances are codified using the iemoto system, which is a Japanese term that refers to the founder of a Japanese school of traditional art. Noh evolved from folk art forms such as Dengaku and Shirabyoshi. Noh was initially performed only for the Japanese aristocracy. During the Muromachi Period (1336-1573), Zeami Motokiyo and his father Kan’ami, both actors and playwrights, established the Noh theater of today. It became a popular form of entertainment for all social classes during the Edo Perio