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 text book 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 城南宮 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**


“Mushrooms” in Brazell, TJT, p 245-254.

**Further reading:**

**Explore:**

http://kyogen-in-english.com/ Don Kenny’s site  
http://www.mibudera.com/kyougen.htm Mibudera site with plot summaries and examples of plays and some music.

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<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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<tr>
<td>Feb 2</td>
<td>Fieldtrip to Mibudera to see Mibu kyōgen</td>
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<td>Feb 3</td>
<td>Optional: setsubun related rites in Kyoto and Nara</td>
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<td>Feb 4</td>
<td>Pre-noh performing arts. PROJECT PROPOSALS DUE</td>
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Read before class:


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<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>Feb 9</td>
<td>The formation of classic noh</td>
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Read before class:


For reference in class: read as many as you can beforehand


*Kamo* by Zenchiku in Brazell. TJA pp.44-60

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<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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<tr>
<td>Feb 11</td>
<td>Spring trip: NO CLASS</td>
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<td>Feb 16</td>
<td>Noh and kyōgen costumes and props.</td>
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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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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)


Keene, Donald. *Nō and Bunraku: Two Forms of Japanese Theatre.* (Columbia University Press, 1990)

*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 nō shōzoku no haykusugata.* Heibonsha. (Tokyo 1984)

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

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

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


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


**Background (classics)**

Anthology of Japanese Literature to the 19\textsuperscript{th} C. Penguin Classics.

McCullough, Helen (tr.). \textit{Tales of Ise: Lyrical Episodes from Tenth Century Japan.} (Tokyo 1968/1978.) UTP 3093-87052-5149.

McCullough, Helen (tr.). \textit{The Tales of the Heike.}

Philippi, Donald (tr.). \textit{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).
Noh, a major form of classical Japanese dance-drama that has been performed since the 14th century. Developed by Kan'ami and his son Zeami, it is the oldest major theatre art that is still regularly performed today. Although the terms Noh and nōgaku are sometimes used interchangeably, nōgaku encompasses both Noh and kyōgen. Traditionally, a full nōgaku program includes five Noh plays with comedic kyōgen plays in between; an abbreviated program of two Noh plays with one kyōgen piece has become Noh theatre, traditional Japanese theatrical form and one of the oldest extant theatrical forms in the world. Noh’s name derived from nō, meaning “talent” or “skill” is unlike Western narrative drama. Rather than being actors or “representers” in the Western sense, Noh performers are simply. Kyōgen, humorous sketches, are performed as interludes between plays. A program may begin with an okina, which is essentially an invocation for peace and prosperity in dance form. Get exclusive access to content from our 1768 First Edition with your subscription. Subscribe today. Three major Noh roles exist: the principal actor, or shite; the subordinate actor, or waki; and the kyōgen actors, one of whom is often involved in Noh plays as a narrator.