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:
Brazell, Traditional Japanese Theater, “Introduction” pp. 3-43. 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


“Setsubun” in “A Demon in Love” in Don Kenny, 1989, pp

“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.

- **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

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**

Bethe and Brazell. *Nô as Performance: An Analysis of the Kuse Scene of Yamamba.* (Ithaca, N.Y. 1978) IBSN 0-939657-16-3


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, Thomas. *Zeami’s Style: The Noh Plays of Zeami Motokiyo.* (Stanford. 1986) IBSN 0-8047-1290-5

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)

Quinn, Shelley Fenno. *Developing Zeami: The Noh Actor’s Attunement in Practice.* (University of Hawai’i Press, 2005)

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

**Kyōgen**


**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 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)


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)


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 theatre – Japanese traditional musical drama, Noh, has been played for more than 600 years, which invites us today to experience the world of "Yugen" and "Myo", downright mysterious realm. Let's take a look at the history, the theater and meaning of masks to feel something unordinary, yet powerful energy of Noh. Brief History of Noh – Noh Theatre.

YUKI (snow) ©ç²¾ シテ 山田å¤ 沢美白 (imgrum). What is Noh? It is a major form of classical Japanese musical drama that has been performed since the 14th century. Simple stage props and characteristic Noh masks make it stand out from other performing arts. Kyogen is a type of comic drama. Like Noh and kabuki, it features only male actors but unlike noh and kabuki, the performers don't wear elaborate costumes, makeup, or masks. Instead, they wear kimonos and are accompanied by a chorus. In 2001, Kyogen was designated by UNESCO, along with Noh, as one of the Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity.

Dr. Jukka O. Miettinen of the Theater Academy Helsinki wrote: The short farces that are performed between the serious noh plays are called kyogen. Together, these two art forms are called nohgaku. Both forms have a lot in common. About Noh, a form of traditional Japanese theater originating in the 14th century. Kyogen are the comic pieces performed at intervals between the main Noh performance. They utilize satire and witty jokes and are often performed with rhythmical language and sometimes exaggerated actions to inspire laughter from the audience. Most kyogen pieces last for about 15 to 20 minutes and involve two or three actors. Plots are usually about stories that evolve in everyday life, such as men expressing their desire to find wives or farmers praying for good fortune. Kyogen performance. Where to watch Noh? Some of the easiest places to watch noh today are modern indoor theaters with an in-