

Sat 30 Jun 2018  
Hall One 7.30pm

## THE PROGRAMME & NOTES

## INTERVAL – 20 MINUTES

### PART I

### PART II

# The Transformative Power of Noh



**Yukihiko Isso**  
*nohkan* flute

**Masaki Umami**  
*shite* main role actor

**Jiichi Asami**  
chant

**Mitsuhiro Kakihara**  
*otsuzumi* hip drum

**Kiyoshi Yoshitani**  
*taiko* stick drum

**Kyosuke Tanabe**  
*kotsuzumi* shoulder drum

**Atsushi Iriki**  
story

**David Toop**  
sound improvisation

**Wiebke Leister**  
photo performance

**Clod Ensemble**

## INTRODUCTION

Japanese classical noh theatre has a traditional repertory of some 240 plays which can take anywhere from 40 mins to over two hours to perform in their entirety. These plays usually feature two to five or more characters, a chorus of six to eight, two or three stage attendants and either three or four musicians.

Our programme this evening features *Shishi* (Lion Dance) from the popular classical Noh play *Shakkyo* (Stone Bridge), in which a lion, messenger of Manjusri Bodhisattva, appears at a stone bridge and dances with gorgeous, fragrant peony flowers. In addition, Yukihiko Isso's highly-acclaimed *Shishi 16*, a Lion Dance in modern style, and his brand-new composition with a story by Atsushi Iriki will be presented by all Noh performers. Arts group Clod Ensemble will premier their new piece *Snow*, a poetic monologue inspired by the restless spirits in Japanese Noh Theatre.

Notes for each of the pieces follow in their order of performance.

### *Echoes and Callings*

Wiebke Leister's and David Toop's collaboration *Echoes and Afterlives* for the last Noh Reimagined festival at Kings Place in May 2016 explored the significance of voice and masking through the moment when a mask meets a face. Their new piece *Echoes and Callings* combines live collage and sound improvisation to evoke the out-of-body existence of female demons.

We will be meeting Hannya. Or Namanari. Or possibly Hashi-Hime. All are angry spirits from Japanese Noh drama and storytelling. She will be met in different figurations and materialities, but we will encounter her as woman who has become a demon – transformed through pain or betrayal. Her image returns as ghosts, apparitions and echoes, seeking revenge and release. She is re-embodied, contradictory and intertextual, and we will follow her imaginary genealogy in word and image. Telling tales of silence and manifestation, pain and embodiment, stillness and fury – from abstraction to figuration. Body in pieces, mouth half-open, part shouting, part screaming; troubled and maltreated, yet setting out to frighten. Conjuring up her liminal existence as she reveals herself as a terrifying image that is being upheld. In this way, she has existed throughout times and cultures. But today, more than ever, recognized as released and untamed, and finally, speaking out loud.

### *Reflection*

Symbolism and consciousness are cutting-edge topics in neuroscience, as well as fundamental concepts in Noh. Such mental functions were acquired during primate brain evolution; the concept of 'reflection' – objectification of the self – and interactions among the brain, cognition and the environment play crucial roles in this, as explained in Iriki's talk earlier in the day. But Noh pioneered the depiction of reflection in unique forms of abstraction, as will be explored in this performance.

In part one (*jo*), the *shite* wanders through the wilderness, accompanied by music from *Sodengaku-no-mai* by Isso. It describes how evolution resulted in 'self-reflection' via an encounter with the gatekeeper of an old castle.

In part two (*ha*), the gatekeeper turns out to be a 'reflection' of the *shite* himself, who will become a deity. The music here includes a *fue* part that does not match the rhythm of the chant, a fast flute passage, and a progressive musical loop for the *shite*'s dance.

In the last part (*kyu*), the gatekeeper's voice reverberates around the wilderness, saying, 'This is your promised land, a land of yourself, but to be settled in this land, you have to leave this place on your own feet and go towards yourself.' Isso plays a horn flute for this scene.

At the climax, the *shite*'s two forms chant and dance, reaching a crescendo in symbolism and consciousness. Finally, the *shite*'s chants reverberate between the heaven, earth and man, saying 'Man is delighted when light is cast upon god, while god is delighted to see an enlightened man.'

Isso expresses the transformation of the *shite* and gatekeeper with an irregular call-and-response beat played on hip-drum and shoulder-drum, which is an innovative experiment in Noh music.

Composed by **Yukihiko Isso**, Story by **Atsushi Iriki**

### *Snow*

Featuring the voice of legendary New York performer Peggy Shaw and the virtuoso flute of Yukihiko Isso, words and music unlock the world of a traveller who finds herself thrown into darkness under the snow. In this poetic monologue, song and speech are fused as our traveller reckons with the ghosts that haunt her.

*Snow* is not a study of Noh but, as the title of the festival suggests, a reimagining, drawing on Clod Ensemble's distinctive musical and poetic language and inspired by words and images gathered during a recent trip to visit Noh Theatres in Japan. It was snowing.

Music by **Paul Clark**, Text by **Suzy Willson** and **Peggy Shaw**  
Directed by **Suzy Willson**, Lighting by **Hansjörg Schmidt**

Spoken by **Peggy Shaw**, Nohkan flute by **Yukihiko Isso**  
Sung by **Emily Burn**, **Elaine Ashworth**, **Victoria Couper**, **Clara Kanter**, **Daniel Thomson**, **Gareth Treseder**, **Laurence Williams**, **Alex Ashworth**

Producer **Roxanne Peak-Payne**, Associate Producer **Louise Blackwell**  
General Manager **Olivia Amory**, Communications Manager **Suzanna Hurst**, Assistant Producer **Kit Denison**

Thank you to **Richard Emmert**, **Lee Baker** and **Jo Allan**

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### *Shishi* (music from the 'Lion Dance' in the play *Shakkyo*)

*Shakkyo* is a play about a priest who has journeyed to China. Arriving deep in the mountains, he comes to a narrow stone bridge (*shakkyo*) over a deep ravine. The bridge is said to lead to the Pure Land of Buddha. The priest intends to cross the bridge but a young boy stops him and says it is extremely difficult for humans to cross. After relating various stories about the bridge, the boy disappears and a guardian lion (*shishi*—an imaginary lion-like animal and the attendant of the bodhisattva of wisdom) appears at the stone bridge and dances among the beautifully blooming peony flowers. The dance is accompanied by powerful music, which is often performed by instrumentalists without a dancer and features three drummers.

### *Shishi 16*

*Shishi* is the 'Lion' Dance, the instrumental music which accompanies the main dance in two noh plays, *Shakkyō* and *Mochizuki*. This arrangement by Isso Yukihiko comes from a structural suggestion of  $4 \times 4 = 16$  in how the piece is divided. Most noh flute music is considered to be played in the two modes of *ōshiki* and *banshiki*, words that come from the classical court music of *gagaku* and based on Chinese music theory consisting of 12 modes. The two modes of noh flute music are roughly equivalent to A major and B major in western music. This new arrangement includes a mode roughly equivalent to D minor, in effect creating a new melody to go with the original 'Lion' Dance music.

## PERFORMERS

### Yukihiko Isso (*nohkan* flute)

Yukihiko is the eldest son of the late Yukimasa Isso, a prominent nohkan performer of the post-war era. Yukihiko debuted at the age of nine and has since performed in most of the plays in the classical repertoire. Yukihiko also plays a variety of Japanese and Western flutes and has a deserved reputation for improvisation, having performed with the likes of Cecil Taylor, Peter Brötzmann, John Zorn and numerous Japanese musicians from non-Noh genres. In addition, he has composed new pieces for a Noh ensemble, which will be performed at the festival. Yukihiko has been designated a holder of an Important Intangible Cultural Asset by the Japanese Government. [issoyukihiko.com](http://issoyukihiko.com)

### Masaki Umano (*shite* main role actor)

Born in 1965 in Kyoto, Masaki Umano is a prominent actor of the Tessenkai group of the Kanze school. Umano performed his first Noh play at the age of seven. He has performed the lead *shite* role in numerous plays, including *Midare*, *Shakkyo*, *Dojoji* and *Mochizuki*. A graduate of Tokyo University of Arts, he has performed with the Tessenkai throughout Europe and the USA. Umano is a holder of an Important Intangible Cultural Asset.

### Jiichi Asami (*Jiutai* chant)

Jiichi is a renowned Noh actor of the Kanze School. He studied under his father, Masataka Asami, and the late Tetsunojo Kanze VIII. He is known for overseas performances, new and revived Noh works, and collaborating with artists from other backgrounds, including film makers. He has a performance base in the Yoyogi Noh Theatre, the only outdoor Noh theatre in Tokyo. He is also the holder of an Important Intangible Cultural Asset.

### Mitsuhiro Kakihara (*otsuzumi* hip drum)

Born in 1972, Mitsuhiro studied the *otsuzumi* from his father, Takashi Kakihara, a prominent post-war noh performer of the Takayasu school of drumming. Mitsuhiro first performed on stage at the age of seven. Today, he performs regularly in the Tokyo area and is passionate about training the younger generation of noh performers. Mitsuhiro is a graduate of Tokyo University of Arts and been designated an Important Intangible Cultural Asset by the Japanese government.

### Kiyoshi Yoshitani (*taiko* stick drum)

Kiyoshi started performing *taiko* at the age of 11 as an apprentice to Soemon Komparu, the 22nd head of the Komparu school of drumming. Since 1995, Kiyoshi has performed professionally throughout Japan. Based in Fukuoka, he has taught noh to and collaborated with various musicians in Okinawa in southern Japan. He has frequently performed abroad, first performing in New York at the age of 20, and most recently in Sydney, Australia in a performance of English noh. He has been designated an Important Intangible Cultural Asset by the Japanese government.

### Kyosuke Tanabe (*kotsuzumi* shoulder drum)

Born in Niigata city in 1980, Kyosuke is acclaimed as a highly talented young *kotsuzumi* player. He was trained in the National Noh Theatre and studies under Genjiro Okura, the Grand Master of the Okura School of *kotsuzumi*. Tanabe has performed major pieces including *Ran*, *Okina*, *Dojoji*, and *Shishi*.

### Atsushi Iriki

Iriki is a neuroscientist at the RIKEN institute and University College London, where he studies the evolutionary mechanisms behind the human brain acquiring intelligence and consciousness. He has become familiar with Noh through his grandfather practising Noh chanting and being acquainted with a professional Noh actor for more than 30 years.

### David Toop

David is a musician, composer, writer and sound curator. He has written seven books, including *Ocean of Sound*, *Sinister Resonance* and *Into the Maelstrom*. As an improviser he has recently collaborated with Rie Nakajima, Sidsel Endresen, Thurston Moore, Tania Chen, Miya Masaoka and Ryuichi Sakamoto.

### Wiebke Leister

Wiebke is an artist and researcher. Her works challenge the limitations of photographic representation, often focusing on the human face as a canvas, medium or agent. This April she travelled to Japan to visit Noh masters and study visualisations of female demons. Her exhibition *Echoes and Callings* is at White Conduit Projects in London until 29 July 2018.

### Clod Ensemble

For over two decades, director Suzy Willson and composer Paul Clark have developed a highly original performance language, creating provocative, finely crafted work, ambitious in scale and concept. Their work is presented across the UK and internationally.



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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**Yakult**



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Power of Noh

90 York Way  
London  
N1 9AG  
020 7520 1490

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