

Su-bayashi: *Banshiki Gaku*

This is again a su-bayashi dance piece performed here by instruments only without dance. It is a rhythmical piece generally performed with dance in a full-Noh that has a Chinese setting. Midway, the flute melody slows, then modulates to a higher and more complicated pitch range.

Han-Noh: *Fuji*

A monk from the capital stops at Tago Bay and quotes a classical poem after seeing the wisteria in full bloom. A woman appears and tells him that she is the spirit of wisteria and disappears. When the monk is asleep, the wisteria spirit reappears and praises the wisteria's taste and dances. This is the part that is performed here. The wisteria spirit appears as a woman wearing a beautiful female mask and costume and wearing a crown in the shape of a wisteria flower. In Noh, the main character can portray a variety of people, or as

is here, plants. There are several plays in which the spirit of a plant appears in the form of a woman. Such a spirit appears in front of a monk because it wants to attain Buddhahood by having the monk recite the Lotus Sutra for it. In the Lotus Sutra, mankind's salvation by Buddha's mercy was likened to rain falling on plants, and it was thought that plants too could attain Buddhahood. In the part to be performed here, the discussion of plants attaining Buddhahood is omitted, with only the chant of the second part describing the beautiful purple wisteria flowers hanging on the green branches of the pine. When the instrumental dance begins, drums are added to make it even more gorgeous. The dancer's slow elegant dance does not express anything concretely, focusing instead on abstract beauty, though sometimes actions suggesting realistic actions related to the verses are included.

Biographies

Sano Noboru

Noboru was born into a family of Noh performers which includes his legendary uncle Hajime Sano. In 1970, at the age of 10, Noboru became a pupil of Hosho Fusao XVIII, the head of the Hosho School. Subsequently he continued his studies at the Tokyo University of the Arts. He holds the title 'Important Intangible Cultural Asset'. After his first performance in 1977, Noboru has performed major Noh pieces such as *Okina*, *Shakkyo*, *Dojoji* and *Midare*. Apart from professional performing, his passion is teaching Noh to young people. To do this he visits schools across Japan throughout the year to give workshops. In 2021, as part of Dance Dance Dance @ YOKOHAMA, the largest dance festival in Japan,

Noboru collaborated with a celebrated street dancer SAM to choreograph a new work.

Kawase Takashi

Born in Nigata prefecture, Takashi first studied Noh under Hosho Husao XX and Watanabe Junnosuke. After graduating from Tokyo University of the Arts, he began his apprenticeship in Noh with the Hosho school. He has performed many classical Noh pieces and is keen on collaborative works which fuse Noh and other art genres. His workshop group actively operates in Tokyo and his hometown in Nigata. His tenets are not to forget the beginner's humility, and the unity of body and mind.

Isso Yukihiro

Yukihiro is the eldest son of the late Isso Yukimasa, a prominent nohkan performer of the post-war era. Yukihiro first performed in public at the age of nine and has since appeared in most of the Noh plays in the classical repertoire. As well as the nohkan flute, Yukihiro also plays a variety of other Japanese and Western flutes. He has a deserved reputation for improvisation having performed with the likes of Cecil Taylor, Peter Brötzmann, and John Zorn. He has composed several new pieces for the Noh theatre including *Hengenka* which will be performed this evening. His latest album *Kaishidome* (返シドメ) explores new music based on the repeating patterns of the four melodic materials in Noh music called Ryo-chu-kan. Yukihiro holds the title 'Important Intangible Cultural Asset'.

Kakihara Mitsuhiro

Mitsuhiro studied otsuzumi initially under his late father, Kakihara Takashi, a prominent post-war Noh performer of the Takayasu school. Mitsuhiro first performed on stage at the age of seven. Today, he performs regularly across Japan and is passionate about training the next generation of Noh performers. Mitsuhiro is a graduate of the Tokyo University of the Arts and has been designated an 'Important Intangible Cultural Asset' by the Japanese government.

Tanabe Kyosuke

Born in Nigata, Kyosuke is one of the most sought after kotsuzumi players of the younger generation. His first encounter with Noh was at the Noh circle at Hosei University where he studied law. A professional Noh performance he saw changed his life and subsequently he joined the National Noh Theatre Noh training course. After this he continued studying under Okura Genjiro, a living national treasure of the Okura School. Kyosuke has played in many important Noh pieces including *Midare*, *Okina*, *Dojoji*, and *Shakkyo*. He believes studying Noh chant daily helps his Noh music performance which is to support the dancing and chanting of the shite actors.

Ubaura Risa

Risa is one of the most promising up-and-coming taiko drummers. She started playing the taiko drums at her local bon dance festivals (a Japanese/Buddhist custom to pray for the repose of the souls of ancestors with music, dance and feasting). This led her to undertake the rigorous specialist training at the National Noh Theatre, where she studied with taiko masters including Mishima Gentaro and the late Komparu Kunikazu. She constantly aspires to perform the more challenging classical Noh pieces and has recently performed *Midare* and *Shakkyo*.

Noh Reimagined Spirits of Flowers



Fuji (Wisteria) Evening of Classical Noh

Sano Noboru	shite actor	<i>Hosho school</i>
Kawase Takashi	shite actor	<i>Hosho school</i>
Isso Yukihiro	nohkan flute	<i>Isso school</i>
Tanabe Kyosuke	kotsuzumi (shoulder drum)	<i>Okura school</i>
Kakihara Mitsuhiro	otsuzumi (hip drum)	<i>Takayasu school</i>
Ubaura Risa	taiko (stick drum)	<i>Komparu School</i>

with special thanks to production manager Higura Yasuna

produced and curated by Akiko Yanagisawa (Mu:Arts)
and the International Noh Project Committee

Fri 24 Jun 2022
Hall One 7.30pm

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LAST FEW TICKETS – Tomorrow | Hall One 7.30pm

**THICK & TIGHT
NIGHT MOVES**

The finale event of Noh Reimagined 2022
Kurozuka (Black Mound), Two Moths in Real Time, Hengenka

KINGS PLACE Noh Reimagined



Introduction

Noh is a musical drama whose texts were mainly authored from the middle of the 14th century through the 15th century. Over the course of 600 years, it has become a sophisticated performance art well-suited to contemporary tastes.

The classical repertory of Noh contains about 240 plays which include fast-paced pieces, graceful pieces featuring women, and fierce pieces featuring demons. Yet its most distinctive characteristic is that the main character (known as shite) almost always wears a mask. The mask has delicate features that with minute movements create various expressions such as sadness or joy. To emphasize these expressions, the performer slides his feet on the stage lowering his center of gravity to minimize body movement. To concentrate the audience's attention on the chant and delicate movements of the shite, there are almost no stage sets, and the number of characters is generally limited from two to six.

Another feature of Noh is the importance of music. It can be said that the chant makes up for the lack of stage properties or numerous characters. It is the chant that explains the background of the story, and the emotions and actions of the characters. A chorus known as jūitai is generally made up of eight performers in a full performance. It sits to the side of the stage and is predominantly in charge of the chant. In this performance, there will be just one performer in this capacity. In addition, four instrumental musicians consisting of a flute (Nohkan) and three drums (kotsuzumi, otsuzumi and taiko)

largely create the atmosphere and tempo of the piece accompanying the chant, performing entrance music for the characters, and accompanying the dances. The Noh flute produces a mysterious sound that deviates from a clearly tuned scale due to the design inside its tube. However, its subtle pitches give a tonal colour which creates the characteristic atmosphere of Noh. On the other hand, in its dance melodies, the rhythm is often pulsatile. The dance of the main character is often the climax of a piece in which the flute plays a basic melody type with variations of tempo. The two hourglass-shaped tsuzumi drums always participate in the ensemble, while the barrel-shaped taiko stick drum participates only in scenes where non-humans such as gods and demons appear. The finely pulsating rhythm created by the two drumsticks of the taiko creates an extraordinary world with its atmospheric coloring.

In addition to performing entire Noh plays, a knowledgeable audience has long enjoyed partial abbreviated performances featuring individual instruments and/or single chanters performing a shorter highlight section of the full Noh play. Our performances today feature the music of Noh. The full instrumental ensemble of four instrumentalists is presented. However only two main character performers are included, and they will both sing and dance following typical abbreviated performance styles popular on the Noh stage. Thus, instead of the full complement of 15-20 performers necessary for a full Noh performance, there will be six performers performing such shorter highlight sections.

Programme

Su-utai:	<i>Shikainami</i>
Su-utai:	<i>Tamura-kiri</i>
Su-utai:	<i>Hagoromo-kiri</i>
Itchō:	<i>Funa Benkei</i>
Su-bayashi:	<i>Kakko</i>
Ikkan:	<i>Tsushima</i>
Su-bayashi:	<i>Ema-Kagura</i>
INTERVAL	20 minutes
Su-bayashi:	<i>Banshiki Gaku</i>
Han-Noh:	<i>Fuji</i>

Abbreviations

Su-utai refers to an abbreviated performance of unaccompanied chant. **Itchō** refers to an abbreviated performance with one person chanting accompanied by one single drummer. **Su-bayashi** is an abbreviated style of Noh performance which features the instruments alone without chant or dance. **Ikkan** refers to an abbreviated performance of flute only. **Han-Noh**, literally 'half-Noh', refers to an abbreviated performance which features the main second half of a play.

Acknowledgements



Programme Notes

written by Takakuwa Izumi
translated by Richard Emmert

Su-utai: *Shikainami*
This is a song from the Noh piece *Takasago*. Here the chant tells of the emperor's benevolent rule in a world of peace. It has been set at the beginning of the program as a prayer for the success of this performance and the peace and safety of the audience. It employs a singing style which is not melodic, but rather a dynamic chant style that is closer to speech.

Su-utai: *Tamura-kiri*
The last song (kiri) of the Noh play *Tamura* which depicts how the warrior Tamura-marō exterminated demons with the help of the "thousand-armed" Senjū Kannon goddess of mercy. It is chanted in a quick and powerful style.

Su-utai: *Hagoromo-kiri*
The song of the last scene in the popular play *Hagoromo* in which a heavenly angel has descended to earth to bring riches to mankind, then returns to the heavens while dancing. As it features a female character, unlike the previous two songs, it is chanted with a soft vocalization in a melodic style.

Itchō: *Funa Benkei*
The last scene in the popular Noh play *Funa Benkei* in which the ghost of a military commander who had died in battle appears out of the sea to attack the enemy general who had defeated him. Here the ghost is defeated again, this time by the power of prayer. In the usual full performance, the chant and dance would be accompanied by the flute and all three drums. This type of abbreviated performance focusses on chant and rhythm as it features the drummer performing special rhythms which are more complex than those used in a regular full performance.

Su-bayashi: *Kakko*
Kakko is generally a dance that was adopted by Noh from a folk performance style in which a dance was performed while playing a small drum (kakko) tied around the waist. It is a moderate-tempo piece with a matching flute melody. The taiko stick drum is not employed in this piece.

Ikkan: *Tsushima*
Tsushima is a song that was played as a part of a folk festival and was adopted as a solo piece for the Noh flute. The bass and treble parts are played alternately in a free, unmatched rhythmic style.

Su-bayashi: *Ema-Kagura*
This is another abbreviated piece for instruments only without the usual chant or dance. It is taken from the Noh play *Ema* and features a special version of a kagura shrine dance. The story of "Ema" is based on a central origin myth of Japan in which the sun goddess Amaterasu Omikami hides herself in a cave covering the heavens and earth in darkness. A shrine maiden dances a kagura dance in front of the cave to lure out Amaterasu Omikami who after opening the cave slightly is pulled out by the strong-armed god Tachikarao-no-Mikoto, bringing light back into the world. In the Noh, the dance features both the dance of the shrine maiden followed by the dance of the powerful god. The shrine maiden dance is of a moderate tempo, but in the powerful god dance that follows, the tempo becomes stronger and faster.

INTERVAL – 20 minutes