This class looks at different forms of Japanese performing arts. The first half of the term will focus on the study of nōgaku, Japan’s performing art combining dance, drama, poetry, mask and costumes through literary and performance analysis. After spring break, the course will shift its focus to kabuki and bunraku. The course is led by Diego Pellecchia (noh scholar and practitioner) and Galia Todorova Petkova (specialist in Japanese performing arts and gender).

Students will learn about the history and aesthetic conventions of traditional performing arts, presented as living traditions in the context of contemporary Japanese society, using a combination of textual and audiovisual materials. The course will provide ample opportunities to attend performances, visit artisans’ laboratories, and participate in workshops with renown Japanese artists, to complement a solid academic background about the arts with a more direct, hands-on approach to the topics covered.

Performances often take place during the weekend: students are encouraged to check the syllabus at the beginning of the semester and keep those dates open. Outings are regarded as compulsory activities; presence will be counted toward the final grade. Students are expected to prepare readings in advance. Preparation will be tested with quizzes and short tests. As part of the final assignments, students will choose a topic for further individual research and present the results at the end of the semester. Presentation formats may include academic papers, translations, or creative works based on research. After the final presentation, students will write a 2500-3000-words essays and further elaborate on the same topic. Readings and other handouts will be provided by the lecturers in advance.

Outings: This semester we will attend performances on January 27th, February 24th, March 24th, April 7th. In addition, we will visit the atelier of a noh mask maker on February 7th.
COURSE SCHEDULE

Jan 15  Introduction to Japanese theatre
Read before class

Jan 17  Introduction to noh
Overview of the history of noh from its origins until today.
Read before class
Further reading
  • “Suma Bay” in Brazell, K. TJT, pp. 442-455. [This is a kabuki version reinterpreting the Atsumori story]

Jan 22  Noh play focus: TBA
Readings TBA depending on the plays that will be scheduled for Jan 27. (Typical readings for this kind of focus class are: a full translation of a noh play, with introduction and notes; an article related to the background of the subject matter of the play.)
Read before class

Jan 24  Noh play focus: TBA
Readings TBA depending on the plays that will be scheduled for Jan 27. (Typical readings for this kind of focus class are: a full translation of a noh play, with introduction and notes; an article related to the background of the subject matter of the play.)

Jan 27  Noh performance observation: noh and kyogen
We will attend the performance of two noh plays (analyzed in class) and of one kyogen play (analyzed at home) at a Noh theatre in Kyoto.

Jan 29  Post-performance discussion
During this kind of meeting we will go through the notes we took during the
performance, exchange opinions, ask questions, and investigate further the plays we attended. In this session we may also create content to populate a digital database on noh theatre.

Jan 31  **Nenbutsu kyōgen**
In this class we will look at various forms of nenbutsu kyōgen, a type of masked pantomime performed on the occasion of Buddhist rituals.  
Read before class
- [http://www.mibudera.com/kyougen.htm](http://www.mibudera.com/kyougen.htm)

Feb 5  **Noh and kyogen masks**
This class examines noh and kyogen masks within the history of Japanese performing arts. The class will also cover aspects of mask making in preparation to the 2/7 field trip.  
Read before class

Further reading

Feb 7  **Visit to a Noh mask carver’s laboratory**
To do before the field trip
- Based on readings and class activities, prepare questions to ask the mask carver.

Feb 12  **NO CLASS**

Feb 14  **Noh play focus: TBA**
Readings TBA depending on the plays that will be scheduled for Feb 24. (Typical readings for this kind of focus class are: a full translation of a noh play, with introduction and notes; an article related to the background of the subject matter of the play.)

Feb 19  **NO CLASS**

Feb 21  **Noh play focus: TBA**
Readings TBA depending on the plays that will be scheduled for Feb 24. (Typical readings for this kind of focus class are: a full translation of a noh play, with
introduction and notes; an article related to the background of the subject matter of the play.)

Feb 24  
**Noh performance observation: noh and kyogen**
We will attend the performance of two noh plays (analyzed in class) and of one Kyogen play (analyzed at home) at a Noh theatre in Kyoto.

Feb 26  
**Post-performance discussion**
During this kind of meeting we will go through the notes we took during the performance, exchange opinions, ask questions, and investigate further the plays we attended. In this session we may also create content to populate a digital database on noh theatre.

Feb 28  
**NO CLASS**

Mar 5  
**SPRING BREAK**

Mar 7  
**SPRING BREAK**

Mar 12  
**Edo-period performing arts**
We will look at the various genres performed during the Edo period and their social context.

*Read before class:*

Mar 14  
**Introduction to kabuki: origins and history**
Overview of the thriving performance culture in the late sixteenth century, which brought to the birth of kabuki, and of kabuki’s development afterwards.

*Read before class:*

Mar 19  
**The kabuki actor**
We will examine kabuki as an actor’s theatre, the close relationship between actors
and spectators, and its influence on the stage construction and conventions.

Video: TBA

Read before class:


Further reading:

Mar 21  NO CLASS (National Holiday)

Mar 24  Performance observation: kabuki or bunraku
We will attend a kabuki or bunraku performance in Kyoto or Osaka. Depending on the programs’ schedule this date might change.
Read before class: TBA, depending on the plays we will observe.

Mar 26  Performance of gender in kabuki: masculinities
We will look at the ways in which gender and the body have been presented on the stage: role types and acting patterns, focusing on the aragoto and wagoto style of masculinity.
Video: excerpts from the plays Shibaraku (Wait a Minute!) and Kuruwa Bunshō (Tales of the Licensed Quarter).
Read before class:

Mar 28  Kabuki: the making of onnagata
We will explore the female impersonation in kabuki: history, acting techniques, body construction, role types, prominent onnagata.
Video: TBA

Apr 2  Bunraku puppet theatre: history and performance
Overview of the development of bunraku and the elements of performance: puppets, puppeteers, music accompaniment and chanted narration, stage
conventions and effects.

Read before class:

Apr 4  Bunraku puppet theatre: the texts
Battles and love suicides.
Read before class: TBA

Apr 7  Performance observation: kabuki or bunraku
We will attend a kabuki or bunraku performance in Kyoto or Osaka. Depending on the programs’ schedule this date might change.
Read before class: TBA, depending on the performance we will observe.

Apr 9  Influence of kabuki and bunraku I
This class will look at the influence of kabuki and bunraku on other genres of traditional theatre.
Read before class: TBA

Apr 11 Influence of kabuki and bunraku II
This class will look at the influence of kabuki and bunraku on Japanese film.
Read before class:

Apr 16 Student presentations 1
Students will present their final projects. Students will receive feedback from peers and from the instructor, which they will be expected to include in their final paper.

Apr 18 Student presentations 2 (Hand in final assignments)
Students will present their final projects. Students will receive feedback from peers and from the instructor, which they will be expected to include in their final paper.
Textbooks (copies of selected sections will be provided).

Recommended

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


Keene, Donald. *Twenty Noh Plays.* (New York. 1955)

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


Spirits from Japanese Noh Plays of the Fourth Group (Cornell East Asia Series, Cornell East Asia Program 1993 & 1995)


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, Thomas. Zeami’s Style: The Noh Plays of Zeami Motokiyo. (Stanford. 1986)

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


Rimer and Yamazaki, tr. On the Art of the Nô Drama: The Major Treatises of Zeami. (Princeton.


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)

Kyōgen


Morley, Carolyn. *Transformation, Miracles, and Mischief; The Mountain Priest Plays of Kyōgen* (Cornell East Asia Series, East Asia Program, 1993)

General Japanese Theater and other Japanese Theatrical Arts

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


Keene, Donald. *Nô 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
ikei no nô shôzoku no haykusugata. Heibonsha. (Tokyo 1984)

ikei 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)

Takeda, Sharon Sadako & Monica Bethe. Miracles and Mischief; Noh and Kyôgen Theater in Japan. (Los Angeles County Museum, 2002).


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)

Blacker, Carmen. The Catalpa Bow: A Study of Shamanistic Practices in Japan. (The

Hall, J.W./Takeshi, T. (ed) *Japan in the Muromachi Age*. (Berkley, 1977.)


**Bunraku and Kabuki**


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


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