

Twelve Plays of the Noh and Kyōgen Theaters

Edited by
Karen Brazell

Assisted by J. Philip Gabriel

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Cornell University East Asia Program

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Editorial Assistance by
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Translators

Monica Bethe
J. Philip Gabriel
Janet Goff
Carolyn Haynes
H. Mack Horton
Earl Jackson, Jr.
Eileen Katō
Jeanne Paik Kaufman
Susan Blakeley Klein
Etsuko Terasaki

East Asia Program
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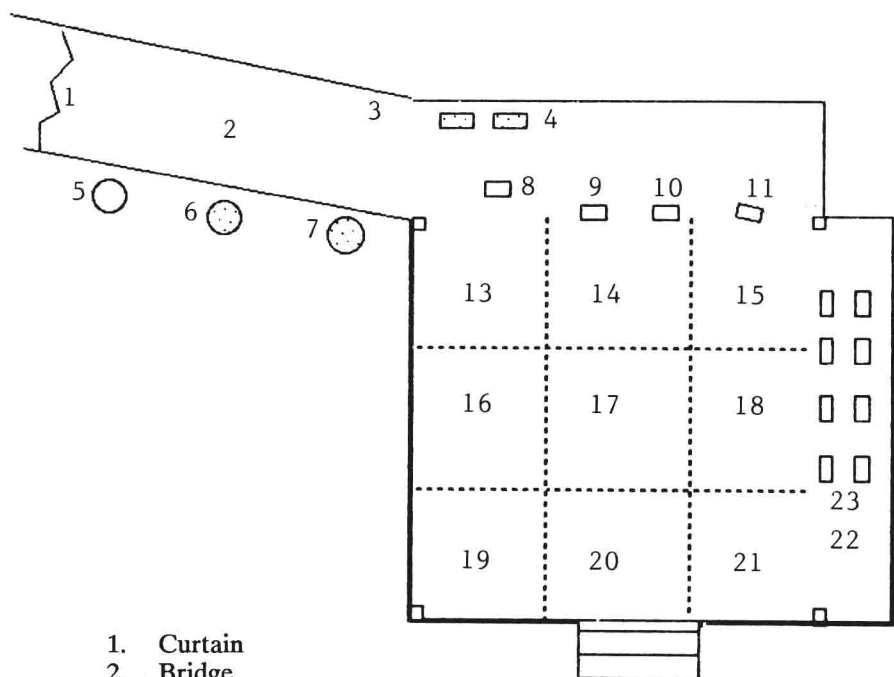
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TWELVE PLAYS OF THE NOH AND KYŌGEN THEATERS



- | | |
|---------------------|------------------|
| 1. Curtain | |
| 2. Bridge | |
| 3. Kyōgen seat | |
| 4. Stage attendants | |
| 5. Third pine | |
| 6. Second pine | |
| 7. First pine | |
| 8. Stick drum | 16. Right center |
| 9. Hip drum | 17. Center stage |
| 10. Shoulder drum | 18. Left center |
| 11. Flute | 19. Corner |
| 12. Side door | 20. Front Center |
| 13. Shite spot | 21. Waki spot |
| 14. Back center | 22. Waki seat |
| 15. Back corner | 23. Chorus |

1. Diagram of Noh Stage



2. *SAIGYŌZAKURA* Izumi Yoshio as the spirit of the cherry tree. Courtesy of the actor.



3. *IKARIKAZUKI* Sugiura Motozaburō as the ghost of Tomomori. Photograph by Ushimado Masakatsu.



4. **KAKITSUBATA** Izumi Yoshio as the spirit of the kakitsubata iris. Courtesy of the actor.



5. *GENJI KUYŌ* Takabayashi Kōji as Lady Murasaki. Photograph by Ushimado Masakatsu.



6. *ŌEYAMA* Awaya Kikuo. Courtesy of the Noh Research Archives of Musashino Women's College.



7. *MIWA* Kanze Hisao. Courtesy of the Noh Research Archives of Musashino Women's College.



8. *SEMI* Nomura Mansaku as the ghost of the Cicada. Photograph by Yoshikoshi Ken.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Diagram of Stage	vii
Photographs	viii
Foreword	1
From the Age of the Gods	
<i>Unoha</i> (Cormorant Plumes)	5
Jeanne Paik Kaufman	
<i>Miwa</i> (Three Circles)	23
Monica Bethe	
Love and Poetry in the Classical Era	
<i>Unrin'in</i> (The Unrin Temple)	39
Earl Jackson, Jr.	
<i>Kakitsubata</i> (The Iris)	63
Susan Blakeley Klein	
<i>Saigyōzakura</i> (Saigyō and the Cherry Tree)	81
Eileen Katō	
<i>Genji kuyō</i> (A Memorial Service for Genji)	99
Janet Goff	
Medieval Warriors, Women, and Demons	
<i>Ikarikazuki</i> (The Anchor Draping)	115
J. Philip Gabriel	
<i>Yoshino Shizuka</i> (Lady Shizuka in Yoshino)	131
Etsuko Terasaki	
<i>Ōeyama</i> (The Demon of Oeyama)	147
H. Mack Horton	
Follies and Foibles (Kyōgen plays)	
<i>Bōshibari</i> (Tied to a Stick)	169
Eileen Katō	
<i>Semi</i> (The Cicada)	187
Carolyn Haynes	
<i>Hōshigahaha</i> (The Baby's Mother)	195
Carolyn Haynes	
Afterword	
<i>On the Nature of Noh</i>	205
Karen Brazell	
Notes on Contributors	233
Glossary of Japanese Noh Terms	237
Bibliography	243

FOREWORD

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS

Karen Brazell

Noh is an art form which creatively synthesizes. It braids together strands from Chinese traditions, Japanese classical court literature, mythology, legends and tales, and weaves them into a ground of arts, ideas, and events from medieval culture. The noh theater, which in the broad definition used here includes kyōgen plays, ranges from the silly to the sublime; it draws on materials from the earliest myths to contemporary domestic situations; it uses the simplest of plots (a priest meets a ghost) to produce the most complex significations (a single stage figure presents a pair of lovers, the spirit of a plant, and the concepts of enlightenment and salvation). All this is done with an economy of means (especially in terms of movement, props and music) which is quite extraordinary.

This anthology introduces the English reader to twelve plays, nine noh and three kyōgen, which reveal the variety of ways in which this theater incorporates many types of earlier texts. The plays are roughly ordered by the chronology of their source materials, an organization which, in the case of the

2 Introductory Comments

noh plays, generally parallels the order in which they are performed.¹ The first two plays, *Unoha* and *Miwa*, draw on some of Japan's earliest myths and legends. The four middle plays are based on important classical texts: the *Tales of Ise* is the major source for both *Kakitsubata* and *Unrin'in*; the *Tale of Genji* is the subject of *Genji kuyō*, and the poems of Saigyō are central to *Saigyō zakura*. *Yoshino Shizuka* and *Ikarikazuki* use material from the medieval *Tale of the Heike*, and *Ōeyama* is probably based on a late 14th century picture scroll. The three *kyōgen* plays, which would be performed between the noh plays, all draw on elements from the noh plays, as well as on aspects of medieval society.

The ways in which these noh and *kyōgen* have incorporated earlier texts, playing them off one against the other, interpreting and re-interpreting them in the course of a single play, is one of the major topics of the Afterword. That essay also discusses the plays in terms of their rhetorical strategies and the nature of their main characters. First, however, the plays are presented with as little comment as possible to allow the reader to encounter them directly. The translations have been put into similar formats with approximately the same level of information provided for each. However, no attempt has been made to standardize the style of the translations, for the richness of noh is best seen through the attempts of translators grappling to transpose it.

Producing this anthology has been a cooperative effort. The translators have worked and re-worked their contributions willingly and have provided materials and ideas about their plays. J. Philip Gabriel not only put most of the texts into the computer, editing and reformatting as he copied, but he also contributed substantial editorial comments and ideas. Monica Bethe did the drawings on each title page and the diagram of the stage, obtained the photographs, and worked on the glossary. The calligraphy on the title pages was done by the noh actor, Izumi Yoshio, and Kurosaki Akira provided expert help with the layout. Their assistance is much appreciated.

As the title of this volume suggests, it owes a debt to an earlier anthology, *Twenty Plays of the Nō Theatre*, edited by Donald Keene with the assistance of Royall Tyler. Three of the participants in this volume (Brazell, Katō and Terasaki) were students of Keene's some 20 years ago when the translations for *Twenty Plays* were being produced, and six of the present translators (Gabriel, Haynes, Horton, Jackson, Kaufman and Klein) are of the next generation, having studied noh in more recent years with Brazell. Several of them are already teaching yet another generation, a new group of scholars to whom

¹Since the Tokugawa period that order has been: plays about deities (*Unoha*), warrior plays, women or wig pieces (*Kakitsubata*), miscellaneous plays (*Genji kuyō* and *Yoshino Shizuka*), and demon pieces (*Ōeyama*). The other four plays translated here may each be performed in more than one category; see the individual translations for details.

Keene's works, both his translations and his scholarship, continue to serve as an inspiration.

The contrasts between *Twenty Plays* and *Twelve Plays* reveal some of the progress the study of the noh theater has made in the last two decades in the West. In 1970 some of the most popular plays in the noh repertory had yet to be translated; by now enough translations have appeared that we can turn to less well known, yet important, plays. *Unoha*, for example, was written by Zeami, but is no longer in the active repertory and was not available in an annotated Japanese edition until 1983. Another play translated here, *Ikari-kazuki*, is still performed by two schools of actors, yet rarely appears in Japanese anthologies of noh. *Unrin'in* exists in two quite different versions, the older of which has only recently been revived. Translations of both versions are offered here. *Twelve Plays* also includes three kyōgen translations; there are none in *Twenty Plays*.

Not only have the number of English translations of plays increased dramatically since 1970, but many volumes of noh studies have also been published in English.² This wealth of information allows us to assume a greater understanding of noh on the part of our readers. Consequently the notes in this volume are more technical than those in *Twenty Plays*, and we include the names of the *shōdan* (segments), assuming that they will be meaningful to a growing number of readers. The expertise of the translators has also grown. As the Notes on Contributors at the end of the volume reveals, many of them have practiced noh themselves and/or have participated in the creation of "modern" noh plays. Several are preparing their own book-length studies on a variety of subjects related to the noh theater. The future of noh and kyōgen studies in English looks brighter than ever before.

²In addition to Keene's excellent introduction to noh (1966), see Hoff and Flindt 1973, Bethe and Brazell 1978 and 1982, Komparu 1983, and Hare 1986, as well as translations of Zeami's works by Rimer and Yamazaki 1984, Nearman 1978, 1980 and 1982-83, and Izutsu 1981. Useful volumes of translations have been done by Tyler 1978 (2 vols.) and Shimazaki (5 vols.) 1972-82.

