

Noh time like the present...

A Tribute to Akira Matsui

24, 25 February 2017

LSO St Luke's
London

PROJECT REPORT

by Unanico Group, Richard Emmert & Jannette Cheong



‘The outcome is an unprecedented layering of tradition and innovation...

...*Opposites-InVerse* concluded an unforgettable evening of fusion between Eastern and Western performing arts.’

Marianna Meloni
Everything-theatre.co.uk

We all thought it was fabulous; brilliant, unusual, stunningly performed - in every particular. Bravo.. !

Rozzie Barda and friends

A Tribute to Akira Matsui...

Noh time like the present...

Introduction

This report, together with the special 62-page book produced as part of the special tribute to recognise and appreciate the work of professional noh actor, Akira Matsui, sets out the background, context and outcomes of this unique project.

Noh time like the present... provided a rare opportunity to experience the 650-year-old art of noh in performance as part of a bold collaboration with western ballet, opera, poetry, music and theatre. Together these classical genres demonstrated their contemporary relevance, flexibility and innovative qualities. Featuring internationally renowned professional noh artist, Akira Matsui, a Japanese Government designated 'Important Intangible Cultural Asset', working in collaboration with seven non-Japanese artists (Lucia Capellaro, Jannette Cheong, Richard Emmert, Piran Legg, Peter Leung, Meili Li, Hugh Quarshie), and two Japanese hayashi instrumentalists (Eitaro Okura and Kayu Omura).

The programme comprised three pieces with Akira Matsui in a lead role and a fourth piece with the hayashi instrumentalists only. Each piece highlighted how the 'essence' of noh inspires and brings a different kind of energy to western art forms.

Project objectives

- To celebrate the lifetime achievement of professional noh actor, Akira Matsui
- To give audiences the experience of a rare programme capturing the ethereal essence of the 650-year-old art of noh combined with western classical and contemporary theatre, dance, music and poetry to illustrate the relevance and versatility of noh in our time
- To create a new contemporary work that considers the phenomenon of 'opposites' (in opposition, attraction and balance) - drawing on science, philosophy and the art of noh
- To demonstrate that working cross-culturally brings new qualities to both noh and western performance creating a beautiful, experimental blending of Japanese and western art
- To deliver educational workshops to students who are keen to explore the 'essence' of noh, our project, and provide opportunities for them to interact with one of Japan's most talented noh actors and other members of the creative team, including the maskmaker, Hideta Kitazawa.

Rockaby by Samuel Beckett

The rendition of *Rockaby* by Samuel Beckett demonstrated the dramatic quality of noh. In this rare noh-influenced version, directed and performed by Akira Matsui, the 'Voice' was performed by Hugh Quarshie. The woman is found in the rocking chair at the beginning of the play and when the Voice begins, the actors appear to have a metaphysical presence - entirely possible with noh - reflecting the original monodrama, but as a stylized interpretation of Beckett's play - 'a moving monodrama fusing poetry, ritual, and drama'.

Noh Hayashi

The hayashi piece performed was purely for concert purposes and combined several instrumental pieces from noh. It began with a solo noh flute piece, called *nanori-bue*, used for a special type of entrance music. Next, the drums were featured in a free-rhythmic *ashirai* piece that might be used for either entrances or a short circling dance. The third piece was the piece *kakeri*, which is a short action dance featuring two quick tempo changes suggesting the unbalanced state of the dancer. Finally, there was *kakko*, music for a light, buoyant dance of a performer dancing with a small barrel drum.

Noh meets Bach

Akira Matsui has collaborated with classical, jazz and Asian traditional musicians. In each, Matsui maintains a strict adherence to noh traditional techniques while performing with a non-noh performer.

Noh Meets Bach is a musical collaboration between the powerful vocal style of noh and Western classical music, in this case it was three movements from *Bach's Unaccompanied Cello Suite No. 1*. The vocal text was in Japanese and comprised short excerpts from three different pieces in the classical noh repertory. The first, from *Yamamba (The Mountain Crone)*—a story of a dancer from the capital, famous for portraying the mountain crone, meets the real old woman of the hills on a trip through the mountains. The second, from *Hibariyama (Mt. Skylark)* —a story of a Minister who banishes his daughter to the high mountains due to a slanderous rumour, but is later reconciled with her. And the third, from *Funabenkei (Benkei on the Boat)*—the story of the great general Yoshitsune and his retainer Benkei as they quell the evil spirit of Tomomori that attacks them as they cross the Inland Sea by boat.

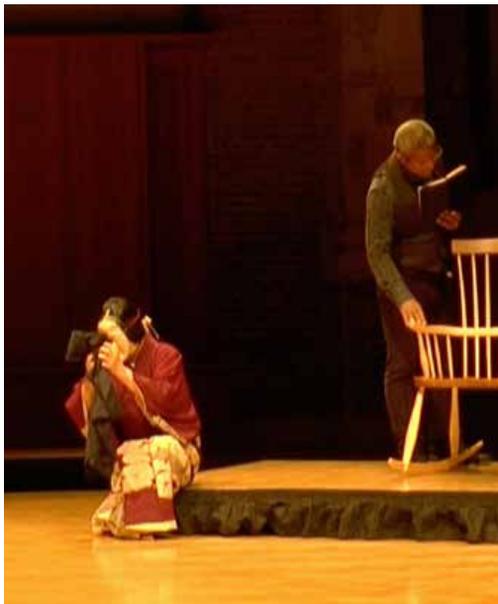
Akira Matsui's vocal choices, however, were based more on musical considerations rather than story content. The *Yamamba* selection was sung in a free-rhythmic dynamic singing style, *Hibariyama* was in a matched-rhythmic poetic segment sung in the melodic style, and *Funabenkei* was sung in a matched-rhythmic dynamic style.

PHOTOGRAPHS (Extracted from the archive film footage of the performance):

Top and middle left: *Rockaby* (Akira Matsui, Hugh Quarshie)

Middle right: *Noh meets Bach* (Akira Matsui, Lucia Capellaro)

Bottom: *Hayashi* instrumentalists (Left to right - Eitaro Okura, Kayu Omura, Richard Emmert)



Opposites InVerse by Jannette Cheong

The programme included the world premiere of ‘*Opposites-Inverse*’ using elements from classical noh theatre, including poetic structures, vocal and instrumental music, and the movement of a noh masked performer. The vocal elements, however, were sung in an operatic style and the movement was a combination of contemporary ballet and the intense grounded quality of noh.

Dancers: Akira
Matsui Peter
Leung

As collaboration, the intent was for all performers to stay true to their own practice, yet cross boundaries to create a new work combining their different disciplines and styles.

Singers:
Piran Legg
Meili Li

The piece reflects the opposites and differences in life that affect us all. It is in three parts reflecting:

Hayashi:
Eitaro Okura
Kayu Omura
Richard Emmert

1. differences that oppose each other, presented in the piece by a father and son unable to reconcile,
2. differences that are attracted to each other, presented as young lovers,
3. differences that find a balance, presented as an acceptance of one another and oneself (hence in the piece Akira Matsui performs as Peter, in a specially commissioned mask, made by Hideta Kitazawa, of Peter Leung’s face).

These cycles of change may seem more apparent in the natural world, but humanity also repeats such cycles time and again.

The work aims to provide food for thought about such universal patterns of change and what influences them. It is a conceptual work reflecting, and influenced by, science, philosophy and the art of noh.

“Our world is like an open book - the beginning, middle and ending of our story debated and explored by philosophers, scientists and artists alike.

The phenomenon of opposites is an intrinsic part of our story construct. We prove and disprove notions about life and existence – how we perceive, experience, understand and respond to our world. Something positive may also have a negative effect and vice versa.

Opposites challenge human behaviour, relationships and emotions. We are capable of arrogance and humility, greed and benevolence, love and hate and less can mean more.

Opposites are a measure – they help us moderate, compare and change our thinking, perceptions or behaviour, and ‘generally’ prevent us from going too far. Situations do not have to get worse before they get better.

Our world depends on the forces of action and reaction, equal and opposite they balance.

Generations of families, the mikros kosmos of human society, are often in opposition – parallel universes, the consequences of which may last more than a lifetime...

For, when everything is the same, nothing exists.

Melting snowflakes, order and chaos, life and death - eternal cycle - patterns of change...”

PHOTOGRAPHS of Akira Matsui and Peter Leung performing:

Top left & right:
From Part 1
Middle left & right:
From Part 2
Bottom left &
right:
From Part 3

*(Extracted from
the archive film
footage of the
performance)*

(Extract from the Opposites-InVerse Introductory thought piece - see programme for full introduction and libretto.)



Project Outputs and Outcomes

The project:

Outreach & educational activities

(*mask making activities were organised in partnership with **the Japan Foundation, London**):

16 Feb 2017:

East 15 Acting School, Southend Performance workshop

17 Feb 2017:

Sainsbury Institute for Japanese Arts and Cultures

(*Mask making lecture/demo)

18-20 Feb 2017:

Pitt Rivers Museum Oxford University (*Three Noh mask making lectures/demos)

18 Feb 2017

Performance workshop for Guildhall School drama students

20 Feb 2017:

Guildhall School of Music and Drama (Research seminar with Royal Holloway and SOAS)

21-23 Feb 2017:

More Noh mask making Lectures/demo in London (*Foyles bookshop), Durham (Oriental Museum, Durham University) and East 15 Acting School.

24-25 Feb 2017

*Dublin City University.

- Delivered **two performances at the LSO St Luke's as planned, to virtually sell-out audiences on the 24 and 25 February 2017 (see review and comments), and in the course of the planning and delivery gathered interest through social media by reaching out to 8261 people**
- Highlighted the **universality, contemporary relevance, flexibility and innovative qualities of different classical art forms** by bringing together noh with western theatre, opera and contemporary ballet
- Illustrated the 'essence' of noh - its dramatic, vocal, musical, dance, poetic qualities, and the use of the mask in the four separate pieces that made up the evening's programme, and through the educational programme of activities
- Demonstrated how western classical performance forms, such as opera, contemporary ballet and theatre, **can 'embrace' and work with other cultural classical art forms and illustrated that 'cultures' can work together, and that 'difference' can be celebrated and made integral to artistic endeavours**
- Encouraged academic and wider educational engagement through twelve related educational activities (research seminar, performance and maskmaking workshops) working **with seven different organisations**
- Provided a **not-for-profit, avant garde artistic, experimental cultural exchange, strengthening Japan-UK relations** with a range of outputs that included **a special 62-page book which included more than 20 international tributes to Akira Matsui** to celebrate his contributions to international cross-cultural exchange
- Has **provided rare archive film footage** of this unique live performance, and to make this work more accessible to a wider audience we are developing a short documentary film using footage that was shot at the time the artists were in London.

Review and comments:

SUMMARY

Excellent

“Watch it with an open mind and you'll discover a fascinating fusion between Eastern and Western performing arts.”

Everything Theatre Review

<http://everything-theatre.co.uk/2017/02/noh-time-like-the-present-lso-st-lukes-review.html?platform=hootsuite>

In the wonderful world of performing arts there is a theatrical discipline that has been kept alive from the 14th century to this day. Its name is Noh, or Nogaku, and it is a form of classical musical drama developed in Japan with a codified structure and a highly stereotyped set of conventional gestures. Performed for the most part by highly trained male actors, Noh relies on the use of typical masks and props to convey different emotions and identify a variety of characters. Normally based on traditional literature, the tales which are put on stage often represent the life of a supernatural creature, which takes human features to narrate a story. They are accompanied by the music of traditional Noh instruments like drums and flutes.

If you're not already intrigued by this description, then try to imagine the whole combined with a variety of Western specialities like opera, ballet and poetry. The outcome is an unprecedented layering of tradition and innovation, originally conceived as a tribute to the Noh genius Akira Matsui. Trained as an actor from the age of seven, Matsui is internationally recognised for his contribution to the understanding and diffusion of this discipline across the world and is regarded as one of the best Noh performers of all time.

First of the four pieces presented at LSO St Luke's was Rockaby, a dramatic piece by Samuel Beckett. This, read by actor Hugh Quarshie, describes the death of an elderly lady and Mr Matsui's hypnotic enactment on stage gave the words a heavy emotional charge. His repetitive and formulaic movements worked incredibly well as a visual counterpart for Beckett's obsessive and almost paranoid lines of loneliness and despair.

There followed Noh Hayashi, an extract of traditional music sung by Eitaro Okura, Kayu Omura and Richard Emmert, accompanied by a flute, an Otsuzumi and a Kotsuzumi – both hour-glass wooden drums of different sizes.

In Noh Meets Bach, the Unaccompanied Cello Suite No 1, played by Lucia Capellaro, became an unusually rich soundtrack for classical Noh lyrics. The cello's grave notes echoed Mr Matsui words and highlighted their intensity, whilst confirming the universality of music, with its ability to provoke emotions and transmit meanings, despite the use of an unfamiliar language.

Opposites-InVerse concluded an unforgettable evening of fusion between Eastern and Western performing arts. In this final part, Akira Matsui's purely stylistic routines intertwined with Peter Leung's contemporary ballet choreography and used a base of modern Noh composition by Richard Emmert, sung in English by opera baritone Piran Legg and countertenor Meili Li. The lyrics insisted, with a circular pattern, on the attraction and clash of opposite elements, like space and time, yin and yang, night and day, tradition and innovation. Noh Time Like The Present might not be everyone's cup of tea, particularly because of the lack of an explicit narrative plot and familiar visual references. Ultimately, however, it is a brilliant opportunity to witness the powerful structure of Noh and its long-lasting history. As a true theatre-lover, I felt privileged to live in a city that has such a varied and valuable cultural offering. If, in the future, you get the opportunity, go and see this fascinating performance with an open mind and be ready to discover, as I did, where the apparently antipodal performing traditions of East and West find their meeting point.

Rockaby Writer: Samuel Beckett

Noh Meets Bach Composer: Johann Sebastian Bach

Opposites-InVerse Writer: Jannette Cheong

Opposites-InVerse Composer and Director: Richard Emmert

Opposites-InVerse Choreographers: Akira Matsui and Peter Leung

Other comments

What we have put into this production (more than two years of work and thinking) will never be the same as what people take away - such as performance art and its transience experience (even for two performances of the same production). The feedback we have received for this unique and intentionally challenging programme has been extremely valuable in understanding how audiences in London respond to this kind of 'intercultural fusion of high art'. The following is a selection of comments.

Minister Shinichi Iida
Embassy of Japan,
London

"Mr Karasawa and I thoroughly enjoyed Matsui-sensei's performance and collaboration with western artforms. It was indeed an honour to be a humble part of your magnificent project."

Professor Sir Barry Ife
CBE FKC FBbk HonFRAM
FRCM FGS
Honorary Senior
Research Fellow
Guildhall School of Music
& Drama

"This project was skilfully programmed to take the audience on a fascinating journey across time and space. The three pieces in the first half introduced different aspects of noh, two of them in dialogue with western art forms: Samuel Beckett's *Rockaby* (spoken by Hugh Quarshie) and three movements from a cello suite by J.S. Bach (played by Lucia Capellaro). Akira Matsui played the old woman in the Beckett with compelling economy of means and was the singer in dialogue with the Bach.

Between these two cross-cultural pieces came a selection of instrumental interludes from the noh repertoire for flute and two drummers in which the musical language of noh was given full voice - strange and hypnotic to western ears but carefully structured and full of significance in the context of the plays themselves.

This opening survey of words, music, movement and song allowed the audience to become accustomed to the language of noh and to approach the final piece with a greater sense of familiarity. This was a major cross-cultural and cross-genre exploration of opposition, attraction and balance to a text by Jannette Cheong, bringing eastern and western dance and song together in a satisfying synthesis.

The performance took place in the exquisite surroundings of LSO St Luke's and the audience watched and listened with a notable quiet intensity. One came away from the performance with a great sense of gratitude for the opportunity simply to watch, listen and think."

Oliver Gordon
Licensing Department
Samuel French Ltd.

"I just wanted to send our deepest congratulations for a wonderful and inspiring evening on Friday.

I hope Saturday was an equal triumph. Do let me know if there is anything I can assist with in the future."

Brendan Griggs
Chief Executive
Great Britain Sasakawa
Foundation

"Thank-you for a wonderful evening last night. I found it exhilarating and inspiring. I was very moved by the final piece and it is still very much with me this morning.... I would have loved to stay to meet everyone, especially of course Matsui-sensei. Please do give my regards and compliments to Richard, who I hope to meet soon.

Very best wishes and congratulations."

Aidan White
Director and Founder of
the Ethical Journalism
Network

"Thanks for a great evening. I enjoyed it immensely. Your piece was beautifully played and I was genuinely touched. It's good to confront the stuff that makes us human. Congratulations and I hope you'll be inspired to do more."

Dr Ashley Thorpe
Royal Holloway University
of London

"I just wanted to add my congratulations. I was in the audience on Saturday night and thought that the evening was very very successful. I hope Matsui was pleased: his performance was excellent I thought."

Prof Matthew Isaac Cohen
Director, Centre for Asian
Theatre & Dance
Department of Drama,
Theatre and Dance
Royal Holloway, University
of London

"Writing briefly to say THANK YOU for putting together the extraordinary tribute to Dr. Akira Matsui which Min and I saw last night. It was a remarkable testimony to Matsui's collaborative strengths and ability to reimagine noh in diverse contexts. Particularly touching for us was the third number on the programme in which we could clearly hear Bach and noh chanting as two autonomous lines that nonetheless supported and enhanced one another. Please do convey our thanks as well to others involved in the evening, above all Matsui himself. "

Kimiko Aoki
Journalist/Producer

"I loved the cello and singing - dissonant but running together beautifully - as well as the dance of the *Opposites*.

My friend Keiko - who knows much more about art, including noh said the combination or the contrast highlighted even for her the power and quality of noh. I felt so, too.

I noticed also that the restrained power of Matsui sensei made Peter's every move feel strangely raw and vulnerable.

I hope the performance will find sponsors to tour, and that I will have the opportunity to see it again."

Helen Louizou

"My friends and I enjoyed the show very much especially the two younger ones who are very much involved with the Arts. They really felt its beauty and were intrigued by its artistic method and interpretation."

Robert Walgate
Science Writer

"Thank you so much for our fascinating evening last night! I'm so sorry I couldn't stay ... I'd love to have spoken to the Noh master, and learned more about what he was saying alongside the Bach, and about the strange Noh drum performances. Your own *Opposites* was fascinating, and the dancing very expressive; and your words exact and parallel to the physics I know. In fact I began to realize throughout the evening how much Noh is alike to a "theoretical emotics", seeking the utterly condensed, basic equations and differences with which to describe human emotions. Away with the frill and circumstance of a particular story! Talk about essence. Also like the sword strokes and life or death of a personal fight between two warriors, so somewhat militaristic. But that was negated by your "action and reaction", very beautifully portrayed in the last dance."

Nick Sanders

I hope that you are getting plenty of messages to mark a very remarkable achievement: it was quite some treat!

I thought that the whole team performed at an astonishingly high level. If I pick out only some of them, that is no criticism of the others, because they all deserve praise of the highest order. So apart from Matsui, who is of course in a special class of his own, I thought that Rick's setting of your words for the singers was exceptionally beautiful, that Hugh Quarshie was wonderful and that Piran must surely have a particularly successful artistic career in front of him, given his quality of impact on the audience. I could say something very warm indeed about each of the other five too: it was a very strong team. Congratulations!

Edmund Stenson

The event certainly made me want to attend more traditional Noh performances! I loved the chanting and music that accompanied Matsui's performances—it was incredibly haunting. I also very much enjoyed the Beckett piece.

Dr Andrew King
Professor
of English
Literature and
English Studies,
University of
Greenwich

“Loved it! What I especially appreciated was the courage displayed in grafting very different high art forms that each pride themselves on their lineage and aesthetic purity - but not only in one art form but in several. Crucially, there seemed to me a progression over the whole evening - a story of two characters who meet: European and Japanese performance cultures.

In the first “scene”, when Noh met Beckett, this was the easiest mix: the connections between them have been noted for decades. What was interesting for me was how far Matsui-sensei departed from the script by dancing. Beckett’s original is more still - more Noh - than the version Matsui-sensei beautifully and movingly presented us with here. What I particularly liked was the way we had to imagine the body of the old woman as still in the chair while the actor playing her became a kind of nochi-shite - the return of the character in the second half of a traditional Noh play as a ghost or spirit, but here all in the space of 15 minutes. It seemed in retrospect a prefiguration of what was to come in the same way a post-Beethoven symphony offers all structural elements at the outset. In this performance of Beckett the Japanese played with and in the European: the European provided a space for the Japanese to perform. The Japanese and European seem in a temporary balance of forces, the dance counterweighting the words in a way that could not have happened if Matsui-sensei had remained confined to the rocking chair as Beckett demanded of his actress (in that case the European would have won).

The musical interlude of the hayashi band seemed at first the “purest” part of the evening and to that extent seemed to stick out a bit at first. It seemed a triumphal scene where Japanese culture paraded its victory - until one realised that of course it WAS a hybrid and profoundly impure, as there was woman drummer who also performed the kakegoe, and an American fute player! It seemed the opposite of the first “scene” where Japanese male culture provided a space for excluded elements - the female and gaijin - to perform in.

In the third “scene” the narrative of the evening started to become clearer to me, as there was no concession to comfortable concepts of hybridity or blending: rather the Bach cello suite and Matsui-sensei’s vocalisations seemed to refuse dialogue, each pursuing their own courses irrespective of the other in a violently dissonant juxtaposition, neither giving way to the other, talking across each other, each concerned to show off their skill in various aspects of their art. I couldn’t understand the Japanese but the programme notes suggest that Matsui-sensei chose the extracts from the No plays precisely not to “harmonise” with the Bach but to display aspects of Noh vocal styles. Here instead was naked conflict played out in the audience’s ear: which should the ear tune into? It was impossible to hear both simultaneously. But which was dominant, which would win? Impossible to say: the individual listener had to decide. What was certain was conflict.

In retrospect I now realise that fourth “scene” - Jannette Cheong’s opera/ Noh/ ballet - was the climax and also a recapitulation and mirror-image of the first half. Exquisitely performed by Matsui-sensei and Peter Leung as dancers of Noh and the European ballet, by the hayashi band and by two honey-voiced singers (Li Meili as counter tenor and Piran Legg as baritone) it most obviously brought the two characters of Europe and Japan together. It comprised the longest and most complex “scene”, itself split into three, with the addition of an introduction that set out the theme, exactly as the three “scenes” of the first half of the evening were introduced with a brief disquisition by Richard Emmert. The second half revisited the first structurally like the second half of a Noh play where the events and characters of earlier return as ghosts, or in another universe. Here that other universe was a wonderful combination of European and Japanese musical and dance styles, both sides in dialogue throughout, enacting what it said. Opposite Inverse - opposites backwards, in rhythmic and musical form, revisited, mirrored. So the first scene, outlining a conflict between father and son where communication is impossible, echoed the last scene of the first part, the Bach-Noh non-dialogue; the second part, an erotic narrative where physical mirroring games were incrementally played out and played with, where difference seems elided until one realises at the end that it cannot be, harked back to the hayashi band’s hybrid performance; and then the beautiful dance where the two characters of Europe and Japan meet “equal and opposite” in balance - but only for a time, as death and snowflakes mark passing like the slow ceasing of the rocking in a chair.

A thoughtful evening: an evening for those who can themselves double and reflect on experience, who know in their souls and bones what the return of the shite really means, and the lesson it offers us all on the necessity for reflection in the face of the transience of all things.

THANK YOU Jannette not only for inviting us but also organising such a mental and aesthetic space and opportunity for us to view our other lives anew.

Can’t wait for the next event!”

**Graham
Marchant OBE
Arts
Consultant**

"Noh time like the present... was an extraordinary introduction to the Japanese art of Noh for someone like me who has very little experience of the art form. The performances were of a very high standard. Personally I sometimes found it difficult to hear Hugh Quarshie and I would have preferred him to be still and leave the movement to Matsui. The great Noh performer makes us so moved by the tiniest of steps that you could swear the mask was moving, so expressive is the actor.

The Japanese music which followed was in another language to me but it helped to prepare the audience for the second half of the evening, Matsui singing to a Bach suite for solo cello, well played I thought, was fascinating and almost convinced me that my prejudice in favour of leaving Bach alone was just that - a prejudice.

But the revelation of the evening was the extraordinarily successful mixture of genres displayed in "Opposites-Inverse". To mix opera and ballet with a Noh-inflected English text and Noh music was a huge gamble which completely paid off. Matsui was magnificent throughout and Peter Leung as his contemporary ballet partner was sensitive and affecting. The two singers were excellent and made the text clear and meaningful. But the whole was greater than the sum of its parts. It was thought-provoking, emotionally direct and a perfect length.

The audience reception showed how much people had been taken by it. It was very helpful to have the full libretto printed in the programme as it is a piece of poetry in its own right."

**Dr Margaret
Coldiron
Deputy Head of
BA World
Performance
East 15
Acting School/
University of
Essex**

"Thank you so much for helping to arrange the two wonderful workshops on 16 and 23 February with the artists from Noh Time Like the Present, which were hugely useful for the students on our BA (hons) World Performance.

The wonderful presentation that you, Professor Emmert and Matsui Akira provided was attended by about 50 second and third-year students on the BA (hons) World Performance degree course. The response was very enthusiastic and the students came away with a much deeper understanding of Noh music and dance and the experience of the Noh mask in performance. They were especially impressed with Matsui sensei's fully-costumed excerpt from Hagoromo and the demonstration by Matsui and Professor Emmert of how each Noh actor's work is unique. Your remarks about your own experiences with Noh and the process of creating a Noh play in English were also enormously helpful to these students who are studying the rudiments of playwriting and trying to find ways of incorporating non-European styles into their work. Students were so enthusiastic about what they saw, they immediately asked me to book tickets for the performance.

Hideta Kitazawa's visit was also enormously well-received. This was just the 34 second-year students who are currently studying maskmaking. It provided a wonderful opportunity to see first-hand the work of a master craftsman and to learn about the detailed and painstaking work of making a Noh mask. Mr. Kitazawa gave a wonderful demonstration of the use of the masks in performance and also allowed the students to not only see, but also try on his collection of Noh and Kyogen masks. His demonstration of the carving process and discussion of the nature and use of his tools was fascinating and will have an enormous impact on the future work of these students. They left the session really fired up and inspired.

A group of students came to the performance of Noh Time Like the Present on Saturday 25 February and were very impressed at the intensity of concentration among all of the performers and fascinated by the non-traditional approach of the entire programme. They were most interested and impressed with the final segment, the setting of your poems to Noh music with opera singers, Matsui and the ballet dancer, Peter Leung. Although the material was somewhat challenging for those unfamiliar with Noh, they found the excellent programme a huge help in gaining an understanding of the performances and the rationale behind them. I have bought a copy for our library as well as one for myself.

Can I also add that I was delighted to attend the symposium at Guildhall School of Music & Drama, which presented a really interesting and detailed discussion of the influences of Noh on European performance and vice-versa. It was a well-constituted panel and I found Hugh Quarshie's remarks particularly striking, since they got to the heart of the work we are trying to do in our World Performance course—that is, to break down the chauvinism of British actor training and to bring new (but actually old and well-established) approaches from other cultures into the world of the Euro-American theatre. Kitazawa's presentation at Foyle's was also marvellous and I was astonished at how many people were there! Noh is clearly not just a minority interest.

I do hope that the Japan Foundation will be able to bring more Japanese performances to London—especially more Noh and Kabuki. We just don't see enough of it! East 15 BA World Performance would really like to be able to have more artists come to show us their work. Many thanks again for all your help and congratulations on a brilliant set of events."

**THE JAPAN FOUNDATION
LONDON**

The Japan Foundation, London worked in partnership with the project team to bring master mask carver Hideta Kitazawa to the UK for a series of lectures/demonstration workshops as part of his Noh Unmasked tour. Mr Kitazawa's masks were used in the Noh time like the present performance and his lectures provided an enriching insight into traditional craftsmanship and the world of Noh theatre. Mr Kitazawa visited the following venues as part of his tour: SISJAC (Norwich), Pitts River Museum (Oxford), Foyles Bookshop (London), Durham University Oriental Museum (Durham), East 15 Acting School (Southend) and Dublin City University (Dublin).

Feedback forms received from each of the venues that contributed to Kitazawa san's tour can be found in the attached dropbox. They are extremely complimentary and grateful for the expert input from Kitazawa-san and the opportunity to see this, increasingly rare, art of mask making. .

https://www.dropbox.com/sh/esjvtmq2o6s93fc/AADd-InriG-056Ku2a-9p6_Ea?dl=0

**Andrew McLellan
Head of Education
Pitt Rivers Museum
South Parks Road
Oxford OX1 3PP**

Dear Jannette

[Hideta Kitazawa's three days work at the Pitt Rivers Museum] went extremely well. The Saturday turned out to be the busiest day in the Pitt Rivers' 140+ year history, 3,500 people over the day. There are a mixture of reasons for that, but Noh masks were a pull. People sat and watched and chatted for a long time, three hours for some people. We also had a very successful day on Monday with undergraduate furniture makers, a much more in depth two-way discussion over materials, techniques, tools and types of joint. The two Monday workshops with Rycote Wood college involved 30 undergrads. As far as the general public goes it is hard to say, but I would estimate that 1,000 people took an active interest in what went on, while around 4,500 people would have been at least aware and have had a quick look.

Best wishes

Andy

Also See Andy's blog:

<http://pittrivers-education.blogspot.co.uk>

On behalf of Kitazawa-san and all of the project team we would like to extend our sincere thanks to the Japan Foundation and all of the contributors for their warm welcome and kind hospitality for the planning, hosting of, and commitment to all of the individual activities in which Kitazawa-san participated.

Hideta Kitazawa
working with
students from
East 15 Acting
School in
Southend.

Photographs by
Margaret Coldiron





Noh time like the present...

Performance programme

A rare opportunity to experience the 650-year-old art of Noh, and the genius of Akira Matsui in performance as part of a bold collaboration with Western opera, theatre, ballet, music and poetry.

These classical genres demonstrate their universality, contemporary relevance, flexibility and innovative qualities.

24-25
February
2017
LSO
St Luke's

Rockaby

by Samuel Beckett

Performed by Akira Matsui, Hugh Quarshie

Noh Hayashi

Richard Emmert (noh flute), Eitaro Okura (Otsuzumi player), Kayu Omura (Kotsuzumi player)

Noh meets Bach

An extract from classical noh (Kantan) sung by Akira Matsui combined with Bach's Unaccompanied Cello Suite No.1 played by Lucia Capellaro

INTERVAL

Opposites-InVerse

A new noh-inspired work which draws on philosophy, science and the art of noh.

Performed & choreographed by Akira Matsui & Peter Leung

Written by Jannette Cheong

Composed and directed by Richard Emmert

Singers: Piran Legg (Baritone), Meili Li (Countertenor)

Hayashi Instrumentalists: Richard Emmert, Eitaro Okura, Kayu Omura



Dress Rehearsal
Photographs by
Clive Barda





Dress Rehearsal
Photographs by
Clive Barda



Sponsors, supporters & collaborators

Many people helped to bring this production to fruition. All of our collaborating artists would like to thank the following people and organisations for the contributions they have made. Without their belief in our work, their vision, understanding and support we would not have been able to realise this special tribute to Akira Matsui:

- Assis Carreiro MBE
- Clive Barda OBE, FRSA
- Daiwa Anglo-Japanese Foundation
- Dublin City University
- Embassy of Japan, London
- East 15 Acting School, Margaret Coldiron
- Great Britain Sasakawa Foundation
- Graham Marchant
- Guildhall School of Music and Drama
- Japan Foundation London
- Japan Society
- Japan Centre
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- Laura Sampson
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- Moss & Co Timber Merchants (suppliers of the lime wood blocks used for the mask making workshops)
- Nicholas Sanders
- Oriental Museum, Durham University
- Rockaby is presented by special arrangement with Samuel French Ltd
- Royal Holloway, University of London, Department of Drama & Theatre
- Oriental Museum, Durham
- Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford
- Sainsbury Institute for Japanese Arts and Cultures
- Satoko Shibata
- Sitting Firm Furniture (for the loan of one of their handmade rocking chairs)
- SOAS Music Department
- University of London Noh Society/ Noh Training Project UK.



'If, in the future, you get the opportunity, go and see this fascinating performance with an open mind and be ready to discover, as I did, where the apparently antipodal performing traditions of East and West find their meeting point.'

Marianna Meloni
Everything-theatre.co.uk

