

The Spirituality of Noh

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(Note: This is an outline of the talk. The names of the dance steps demonstrated are given in parentheses)

I. The Concept of Noh

- A. Noh is a performing art with a history of over 600 years
- B. Noh combines a wide range of arts: architecture, painting, costumes, song, music, drama, crafts, language, recitation, dance and masks
- C. The reason for its longevity is the nature of human spirituality, which longs for true goodness and spiritual beauty and has a strong aversion to impurity and licentiousness
- D. Noh is a unique drama that aims for an abstractness which is quite the opposite of realism
- E. The expression of Noh appeals to the human desire for creativity
- F. Noh expresses the source and essence of Japanese culture: the Japanese language, song and dance, *bunraku* (puppet plays), instrumental trios, *jiuta* (ballads), and new Japanese drama

II. Noh and Truth/Goodness: Religious Concepts and Precepts

- A. The concepts of reward and punishment in Noh is based on deeds (*ingaouhou*) and on the idea of the transmigration of souls (*rinne tenshou*)
(Dance step demonstrated: *Shoujou*, orangutang)
- B. Noh expresses the basic precept against taking life and describes the agony of hell waiting for those who enjoy killing
(Dance step demonstrated: *Ukai*, finishing with cormorants)
- C. Noh expresses the prohibitions against lewdness, the use of abusive language and imbibing alcohol
(Dance step demonstrated: *Momiji-gari*, gathering maple leaves)
- D. The concept of courtesy (*reishitsu*) in Noh
(Dance step demonstrated: *Chouryou*, stretching goodness)
- E. The concepts of generosity (*kanyou*) and mutual respect (*sougou keiai*)
(Dance step demonstrated: *Miwa Hakurakuten*. Miwa [Bai-jui] was an ancient Chinese poet)

III. Noh: Beauty, Spirituality and Artistry

- A. Musical instruments: drum, small drum, Noh flute with one tone, dance rhythm (*maibayashi*)
- B. Song: melody, words, strong and weak recitation, pauses (*danrakushi*), swaying (*yuri*), tone (*iro*), excitement (*nori*), single recitation, (*dokkin*), joint recitation (*renkin*, *sakuyo*, *banbayashi*)
- C. Dance movements: *sashi-iri-biraki*, left and rights turns, *kakutori*, *shimai*, *mai-bayashi*
- D. Costumes

E. Noh masks (*kokaji*)

IV. Noh Performance

A. Viewing of Noh and Kogen : a video, *Boushibari*

B. Dance performance by Professor Tsunoi: Chanting (*rengin*)

(Dance steps demonstrated: *Hagoromo*, The Cloak of Feathers)