

Takasago & Between the Stones

Unique Classical and Contemporary Noh Theatre for the 2020 Japan Season of Culture



Watergate Theatre
Kilkenny

Main Performance

7:30 pm | 1 February 2020. €25

Mask Maker Presentation Talk

4:30 pm | 1 February 2020. €12

Booking: watergatetheatre.com

Tel: 056-7761674



Noh is a 650-year old highly aesthetic classical Japanese theatre style featuring dance, music and poetry.

This unique production comes as part of the **2020 Japan Season of Culture** which coincides with the **2020 Tokyo Olympics**.

Featuring acclaimed actor, Kinue Oshima, the only female professional noh actor in the Kita School; her brother, Teruhisa Oshima, one of the most sought after noh actors of his generation and his 11-Year old son Iori Oshima (already a noted rising star child actor) together with other celebrated professionals from the Kita school: Akira Matsui, Ryoichi Kano and Shigenobu Uchida. They will perform with Jubilith Moore, John Oglvee, Laura Sampson and Ashley Thorpe, members of the only international noh theatre company outside of Japan, Theatre Nohgaku. The Japanese Hayashi (instrumentalists are: Narumi Takizawa (flutist), Eitaro Okura (hip drum), Naoko Takahashi (shoulder drum) and Kiyoshi Yoshitani (Stick drum).

This is the third collaboration between Jannette Cheong (author) and Richard Emmert (composer). Such productions are rare. It is eight years since Jannette and Richard worked on a full noh production (*Pagoda*) with the Oshima family - the first English language noh to be written by a British writer to composed and performed using traditional techniques. And it was two years before in 2009 - when *Pagoda* had its world premiere tour to Europe, including Dublin.

The Takasago & Between the Stones European tour is co-produced with Unanico and in association with the Oshima Theatre and Theatre Nohgaku. Additional tour dates: 29 & 31 Jan: Southbank Centre, London, 2 Feb: Wexford, 4 Feb: Musée Guimet, the National Museum for Asian Arts, Paris. See betweenthestones.com



Comments on *Pagoda*
the first collaboration
between Jannette
Cheong, Richard Emmert,
the Oshima Theatre and
Theatre Nohgaku (2009)

*"Pagoda is a triumph. To have
created a new Noh play but
retained total authenticity is
nothing short of brilliant. It is
something that devotees of
Noh will savour."*

The Stage: 3 Dec 2009

*"It is no mean feat to develop
Noh and to write for such
an ancient form in another
language, but it is incredibly
effective. All in all, a very
special evening which may
have won over a new audience
and was certain to delight the
converted. Ballet.co.uk 3 Dec
2009*

*"We have seen noh earnestly
and brilliantly cross over
national borders"*

NISHINO Haruo, TOKYO
SHIMBUN, 3 July 2011



[https://www.youtube.com/
watch?v=FZNSXosN-ko](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FZNSXosN-ko)

In addition to the main
performances, the
production tour will include
the work of **master mask
maker, Hideta Kitazawa**,
who will give demonstration
talks as part of the project's
extensive two-year (2018-20)
'Getting to Noh' programme
of educational and outreach
work.

Read more about the programme:

Takasago, a classical Japanese noh, deals with the legend of the twin pines of Sumiyoshi and Takasago. Takasago will be performed as han-noh, literally a "half noh", featuring the dramatic second half.

Takasago as written by Zeami, this is one of the most important and well-known plays in the classical noh repertoire. The play deals with the legend of the twin pines of Sumiyoshi and Takasago personified in the first half by an aged couple. Sumiyoshi and Takasago are located across from each other on the Osaka Bay. According to legend, the spirit of the Sumiyoshi pine travels nightly to visit his wife, the Takasago pine, in a bond that defies age and time. The twin pines are also symbolic of two great poetic anthologies. By implication they suggest the prosperity of the land due to the observance of the high moral and aesthetic principles exemplified in these anthologies.

Three priests from Aso Shrine in Kyûshû are on their way by boat to visit the capital and decide to stop off at Takasago to visit the famed Takasago Pine. There they meet an old couple sweeping the pine needles and ask them why the Takasago Pine is considered a twin pine of the Sumiyoshi Pine which is far away. The old couple tells the legend of the pines before they reveal that they in fact are the spirits of the two ancient pine trees. They invite the priests to visit the Sumiyoshi Shrine to see its pine as well. In the second half, the part performed today, the Priests visit the Sumiyoshi Shrine where the young vigorous god of the shrine appears to them and dances.

Between the Stones is a new English-language noh that explores how the burden of grief turns into a celebration of life, friendship and love, through the healing power of gardens.

Between the Stones, a contemporary noh, is set in two gardens. In the middle of a typhoon a traveller, full of sadness grieving for lost loved ones, visits the beautiful Ryoanji temple stone garden in Kyoto. The traveller meets a woman gardener. The gardener understands the traveller's sadness and helps her appreciate the nurturing properties of the garden and how the art of raking the gravel enhances the beauty of the garden and evokes a peaceful soul - the gardener then disappears.

The ancient garden inspires the creation of a simple *karesansui* garden a few years later on an island in the West. This is the setting for Act Two when the woman gardener reappears and reveals she is the spirit of the garden - 'the Spirit of the Silent Waves'. The traveller is reminded of her visit to Ryoanji and speaks of the pain felt after losing lost loved ones and the courage of those who face death. The Spirit of the Silent Waves appears to question what such courage actually means, then describes the beauty of the final release before death 'like winter butterflies in a silent breeze...' and then the Spirit of Winter Butterflies emerges... The noh draws on the 'setting of the stones' - the creation of gardens - and the solace and space they provide for reflection. The traveller realises that two gardens far apart share a legacy - between the stones - of enduring peace, beauty and love which is revealed in the last poem... *'Winter butterflies released - silent in the breeze, silent in the ocean's waves...'*

Come and discover this play's unique connection with Ireland and Japan!

See also the project website: betweenthestones.com



Master mask maker,
Hideta Kitazawa at work
in his Tokyo Studio