

Arts Council Tokyo Traditional Culture and Performing Arts – Experience and Appreciation
Program for Foreign Visitors

Noh Okina – Encounter with Deities
Press Workshop on Wednesday, August 30

Arts Council Tokyo (Tokyo Metropolitan Foundation for History and Culture) will offer a performance of *Noh Okina – Encounter with Deities* on Saturday, January 27, 2018. This program combines experience and appreciation of the authentic performance of traditional arts and develops understanding of Japanese traditional performing arts.

Before the special *Noh OKINA* performance, we are holding a press workshop on Wednesday, August 30 to offer an opportunity to experience and appreciate the unique Shinto ceremony of purifying Noh performers.

We look forward to your participation.

【Arts Council Tokyo (Tokyo Metropolitan Foundation for History and Culture)】

Arts Council Tokyo develops a variety of programs to encourage the creation and dissemination of arts and culture and to promote Tokyo as an international city of artistic and cultural attractions.

In order to improve the infrastructure and environment for new artistic and cultural creation, Arts Council Tokyo plays a key role in Tokyo's cultural policies by implementing programs that explore Tokyo's originality and diversity, promoting international cultural exchange and providing opportunities for promising young people who engage in a variety of artistic and cultural pursuits. Furthermore, Arts Council Tokyo will conduct projects that will serve as a driving force of the Cultural Program in the run-up to Tokyo 2020.

Arts Council Tokyo also conducts various projects and programs to increase enjoyment of authentic traditional culture and performing arts among those who are not familiar – people from overseas and children who carry traditional cultures in the future – under the theme of “Approaching Tokyo Tradition.”

【What is Noh?】

With a documented history of over six hundred years, noh is one of the oldest dramatic traditions in the world. In a typical play, a wayfarer meets a stranger who is in fact the unquiet ghost of some great personage of the past. As this figure's identity is gradually revealed, his or her psychology and aesthetic interest are explored through chanted dialogue and interpretive dance, until demons are quelled, hearts mended, the realm pacified. This therapeutic or benedictory element reflects noh's use as state ceremony, and it is one reason why warlords, bureaucrats, industrialists and other elites have often performed noh themselves as a means of self-cultivation. Over time, noh has developed in the direction of abstraction and subtlety of gesture, rhythm, melody and vocal tone. The playwright Zeami (1363–1443) advises actors to seek the “flower” of “hidden mystery” by cutting off representation and expression to create a kind of phantom limb syndrome of dramatic effect. Embrace the minimalism of noh, and you too will find it heightens your senses.

【Overview of press workshop】

- Date/time: 3:00–4:30 p.m. (reception opens from 2:30 p.m.), Wednesday, August 30, 2017
- Place: Kita Roppeita XIV Commemorative Noh Theatre (Kita Noh Theatre),
4-6-9, Kamiosaki, Shinagawa-ku, Tokyo Tel: 03-3491-8813
- Transportation: 7-minute walk from Meguro Station, JR Line, Tokyu Meguro Line, Toei Mita Line, Tokyo Metro
Nanboku Line
- Admission fee: Free
- Detail: Experience and understand Shinto ritual for *Okina* performance – Performers: Takehito Tomoeda,
etc.
Shinto ritual (*Sakazuki* ceremony) experience, explanation on *Noh Okina*, back-stage tour
- Organized by Arts Council Tokyo (Tokyo Metropolitan Foundation for History and Culture)
- Supported by and in cooperation with Tokyo Metropolitan Government
- Produced by Roppeita XIV Commemorative Foundation

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About the performance (January 27, 2018) *Noh Okina – Encounter with Deities*

Noh Okina – Encounter with Deities

This program is designed to help foreign visitors feel the essence of Japanese culture – a fundamental part of Japanese society – through the *Noh Okina* performance. It is more appropriate to say that foreign visitors will be offered an experience rather than a viewing opportunity. *Okina* is considered sacred, to Noh performance.

In ancient times, actors were not allowed to perform what they had never experienced or to show mimicry to the audience in ordinary spaces. Therefore, Japanese people believed that performance that moved and inspired the audience was deceptive behavior. By having deities in the space, however, the performance becomes true and excusable. Wearing a mask shows that the act has been permitted by the deities. In *Okina* performance, a performer (Tayu) puts on a mask while on stage. This shows that he is permitted by the deities and he can purify the place on the deities' behalf.

A performer who is allowed to wear a mask is a specially chosen person who has been permitted by the deities. Therefore, since old times, an actor who plays *Okina* needs to meet strict requirements. Before each performance, an altar is placed in a green room (*Kagami no ma*) in order to perform a Shinto ritual and purify the person who purifies the stage.

In this program, the audience is invited to experience the unique Shinto ritual of the Noh performer which will take place at a special altar in the lobby outside the hall before the *Okina* performance.

Program plan (January 27, 2018)

- Date/time: Doors open at 12:30 p.m. (experience program starts at the same time), performance starts at 1:30 p.m., Saturday, January 27, 2018
- Place: Kita Roppeita XIV Commemorative Noh Theatre (Kita Noh Theatre),
4-6-9, Kamiosaki, Shinagawa-ku, Tokyo Tel: 03-3491-8813
- Transportation: 7-minute walk from Meguro Station, JR Line, Tokyu Meguro Line, Toei Mita Line, Tokyo Metro Nanboku Line
- Admission fee: Adults 3,000 yen, Students 1,500 yen
- Organized by Arts Council Tokyo (Tokyo Metropolitan Foundation for History and Culture)
- Supported by and in cooperation with Tokyo Metropolitan Government
- Produced by Roppeita XIV Commemorative Foundation

Doors open at 12:30p.m. / Experience program

Guided by a Noh performer, the audience will participate in the same Shinto ritual that performers undergo at a special altar in the lobby to purify themselves and get ready to welcome *Okina Dayu* (which includes purification with salt and kiribi with flint-stones).

The box of the mask used for *Okina* will be placed at the altar and Shinto ritual will be held towards it. The audience will experience the same ritual that performers go through in *Kagami no ma*. The mask box will be moved with solemnity to the green room ten minutes before the performance and performers who are ready to perform will be purified. This means that performers and the audience are purified in the same manner under the same deities. It is a new initiative to let the audience experience an essential unity with the stage.

1:30–3:30p.m. / *Okina* with *Enma-Nyotai* performance

Recently, performances often only end with *Okina*. Originally, *Okina* in the form of *Shikigaku*, is officially followed by *Waki-Noh* (supportive Noh) with the theme of deities. In this program, *Enma* will be performed in a special direction called *Nyotai*, representing *Iwato Gakure*, the rock cave where Amaterasu Omikami, a sun god and one of the major Japanese deities went to hide. The program will be “*Okina with Enma Nyotai*.” *Okina Dayu* will perform both the Shinto ritual and the ancient world of Japanese mythology on stage. This is an aptly-selected play because the dance of Amenouzume in *Iwato Gakure* is considered to be the origin of Japanese performing arts.

3:45–5:30p.m. / Back-stage tour

Participants will witness the world of *Okina* and *Enma* in the green room and on stage. A carpet will be laid down so that the audience can stand directly on stage.

*Please note an English interpreter (and audio guide in English/Chinese) will be available for all programs.
Programs are subject to change.*