

# TOUR REPORT

*London, Dublin, Oxford, Paris  
2 - 10 December 2009*

## K I Y O T S U N E & P A G O D A



**OSHIMA NOH THEATRE / THEATRE NOHGAKU**

Report prepared by Jannette Cheong: January 2010

# Introduction

**The Oshima Noh Theatre of Hiroshima Prefecture, Japan, and Theatre Nohgaku, based in Tokyo and New York, collaborated for the first time in a joint production of classical and contemporary noh theatre from 2-10 December 2009 in London, Dublin, Oxford and Paris.**

This was a rare and unique international production featuring an extract from the 15th century classical warrior play KİYOTSUNE and the world premiere of PAGODA, a new English-language Noh play written by Jannette CHEONG with music and direction by Richard EMMERT; the first time for a strictly English-language noh play to be written by a British playwright as a fully realised noh performance. The production also included "*Getting to Noh*": a programme (supported by major institutions before and throughout the tour) of public workshops, lectures and educational activities to introduce the history, structure, dance, music, costumes and masks of noh.

## Objectives

The purpose of this project was:

**To bring both classical and new, contemporary 'noh' theatre to audiences in Europe**

**To combine the talents of two different 'noh' theatres:** to produce a unique programme of 15th century classical Japanese 'noh' theatre and a new, contemporary English-language 'noh' play

**To deepen the understanding of classical and contemporary 'noh' theatre** of the general public in London, Dublin, Oxford and Paris through a programme of public lectures / demonstrations, talks and workshops associated with the tour

**To develop young people's creativity and self-expression through writing and arts workshops;** at the same time help them understand, at first hand, some of the elements of one of the world's oldest theatre forms

To help **sustain an interest in 'noh' theatre** through the production of schools materials and general information that will be made available, and thereafter accessible worldwide, through the websites of the key project partners

**To forge new relationships between Japan and Europe** and thereby **enable a deeper cultural understanding** through the *art of 'noh'*, all too often regarded as esoteric

*Scenes from PAGODA noh  
World Premiere at the  
Southbank Centre,  
London, UK*



## International Collaboration

This international project brought together many skills and talents from Europe, Japan and the USA. Twenty-six people participated in the tour including the writer, the mask-maker and the artist who created the Pine Tree scroll paintings. The European production involved major institutions adding significant value to the tour through the programme of activities coordinated by Jannette Cheong to fully utilise the distinctive characteristics and talents offered by the two theatre companies working together.

The **Oshima Noh Theatre** is part of the Kita school, one of the five main actor noh schools. It features members of the Oshima family, four of which participated in the tour - both production and performance. The Oshima family is one of the Kita school's most active traditional noh families and they brought all the traditions and their years of accumulated experience from the classical and modern world of Japanese noh, in a new and exciting way, to this unique production.

**Theatre Nohgaku** is an international company comprised of Japan and North American-based members. Its mission is to create and present English-language plays in traditional noh style complete with hayashi musicians, masks, costumes and stage sets. Founded and

led by Artistic Director, Richard Emmert, (who has spent over 35 years studying, teaching and performing classical Japanese noh in Japan) it was able to demonstrate through this major production how it serves as a unique cultural and artistic intermediary between Japan and the English-speaking world.

The production performed in London and Oxford as part of the **Japan-UK 150 Festival** celebrations, and in Dublin and Paris to complete a two-week tour to Europe.



**THE PINE TREE**  
**BY ALLAN WEST**  
 (LA MAISON DE LA CULTURE DU JAPON, PARIS)

## 'GETTING TO NOH'

The production included '*Getting to Noh*' an educational outreach programme that included workshops, lectures and educational activities to introduce the history, structure, dance, music, costumes and masks of noh. The schools element of the programme was coordinated by the **Japan Society** in collaboration with the **Victoria & Albert** and **Pitt Rivers Museums**.

All London and Oxford workshops were popular and very well attended. The schools activities began in September 2009 with a short workshop at various secondary schools in London and Oxford, plus a teachers' workshop at the Victoria & Albert Museum, led by **Richard Emmert** and **Kinue Oshima** accompanied by **Jannette Cheong**. The workshops provided pupils with an overview of noh theatre: its movements, its music and its language. A total of six such school-based workshops were held in London (one involving two schools) and Oxford in early September, making for an exhausting schedule for the visiting performers and a memorable lesson for **over one hundred students**.

Four London schools continued to work on an project that enabled them to use what they had learned in September to create their own noh-inspired work. Pupils were introduced to the idea of a 'travel scene' and then tasked with creating their own theatrical response, taking inspiration from Pagoda's themes of *migration* and *identity*. Pupils and teachers worked independently, coming together for a master class at the Southbank Centre in November to develop further their performance. On 3<sup>rd</sup> December, pupils from **Westwood Girls College** for Languages and Arts, Croydon; **George Green's School**, Tower Hamlets; Negus Sixth Form Centre at **Plumstead Manor School**, Greenwich; and **Blackheath High School** performed their noh-inspired pieces in front of a public audience at the **Southbank Centre**."

**Extract from a report on the educational outreach work by Anna Mehta-Davis, JAPAN SOCIETY**

*"Thank you to you and all your colleagues who made the "Getting to Noh" project such a success. We ...learned so much. I also wanted to say how wonderful we thought both plays were yesterday, we were mesmerised and the performances have left me with memories for a long time to come. The Spirit of Meilin coming from within the Pagoda in such beauty and magical mystery was an absolute highlight of my theatre-going career."*

**Jessica Banks: Head of Drama, Blackheath High School**



London Schools perform their noh-inspired work at the Southbank Centre, London, UK

## Mask-making and other workshops

During the tour, eleven other workshops / outreach activities were undertaken. **Richard Emmert** led four general 'Introduction to noh' and discussion workshops / seminars working with several members of the production in London (with all members of the **Japanese hayashi** at the British Library, and **Masanobu Oshima** and **John Oglevee** at SOAS), in Dublin (with **Akira Matsui** at Trinity College) and in Oxford (with **Jannette Cheong** at the Nissan Institute). Seven mask-making workshops were undertaken by **Hideta Kitazawa**, the maker of the four new masks produced for PAGODA noh. Three days were spent at the **Victoria & Albert Museum** giving open demonstration workshops in the *Toshiba Gallery for Japanese Art and Design* working alongside the gallery's special display of noh masks, costumes and prints '*Elegant Accomplishments - The Art of Noh Performance*' which was put on to coincide with this production's visit to London as part of the '*Getting to Noh*' programme. (Exhibition dates: 7 September 09 to 7 March 2010).



*HIDETA KITAZAWA at work; and the four masks produced for Pagoda: Meilin (Act 1), Bai Li, the daughter, and Meilin (Act II).*

'It was very good for us here at the V&A to be involved with the whole Noh project and the teacher and schoolchildren workshops held here were extremely popular and all those who attended went away inspired. Having Kitazawa-san here for three days demonstrating his mask-carving skills in the environment of the Japan gallery adjacent to classical robes and masks brought the various arts associated with Noh performance to life for our visitors.'

*Gregory Irvine, Senior Curator, Japan, Asian Department, Victoria & Albert Museum*

'Another extremely successful series of activities with mask-maker Hideta Kitazawa took place at the Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford. Children watched the carving of noh masks before making their own contemporary noh-style masks from paper and other materials along with staff and volunteers from the Museum education department on day one; over 900 hundred visitors were able to watch Hideta Kitazawa working in the galleries, and 78 children and 80 adults participated in the 'Family Friendly' workshop. On day two a further mask-making demonstration and informal introductions to noh masks were made to over 700 gallery visitors in the Museum over a four-hour period.

Focussed school events took place on Monday 7th December with three class groups (78 children aged 10-11 years) from Edward Feild School in the morning and a group of 40 design and technology students from Grantham College, Lincolnshire, in the afternoon, one of whom was so inspired she said she that she would raise funds to "*go to Japan to train in noh mask making as an apprentice*". In addition a group of children with special needs from Chilworth School participated in the event.'

*Julia Nicholson, Joint Head of Collections, Pitt Rivers Museum*

## SUMMARY OF PROJECT OUTCOMES

- The **first joint, international production of classical Japanese, and English noh** using Japanese 'hayashi', traditional masks, costumes and staging
- A **sell-out World Premiere** in London, and **three other premiere performances** (in Dublin, Oxford and Paris) of a new contemporary noh play 'PAGODA' (6 out of 8 performances were sold out, the remaining two were very well-attended)
- Use of six specially **commissioned scroll paintings** representing the **Pine Tree backdrop** by celebrated artist: Allan West, throughout the tour
- The production of new, specially **commissioned costumes, masks and staging** for PAGODA
- The production of a **special full-colour publication** to introduce the European tour and to provide background information to the **history of classical 'noh'** as well as articles to introduce **the development of English noh and the writing of Pagoda**
- Publication of the **original full English libretto** of PAGODA, and a specially **commissioned French translation** by Pierre Rolle
- Specially **commissioned translations** of KİYOTSUNE, in French by **Jacques Montredon** and, in English, by **David Crandall**
- A **photographic record of the project** by celebrated **photographer**: Clive Barda and other 3 other photographers (Sohta Kitazawa, David Surtasky, Jannette Cheong)
- A **video record of performances** in London (by Weiwei Si and NHK) and in Paris (by Maison de la Culture du Japon)
- Special **noh demonstration and reception at the Japanese Embassy in London** to welcome the production to London as an official event of the **Japan-UK 150 Festival**
- **Reception and noh demonstration** organised by the Japanese Embassy in **Dublin at the Royal Hibernian Academy** hosted by the **Japanese Ambassador and his wife**
- **Public lecture-demonstration** by Richard Emmert and the production's Japanese Hayashi **at the British Library with over 139 attendees** resulting in a lively discussion and interaction with the audience enabling a range of general and technical questions to be explored
- **Student workshops for music and performance** at **SOAS** (University of London), and **Trinity College (Dublin)**, to give students first hand experience of noh performance techniques and unique access to the rehearsals of Pagoda
- **Six school-based workshops** involving members of the tour **working with over 100 young people** aged 15-17 years old to learn about the unique qualities of noh, and for four schools - the opportunity to **create and perform their own noh-inspired work**, the beauty of which was **appreciated by a public audience at the Southbank Centre**
- Associated **mask-making and performance workshops** organised by the **V&A** for **17 specialist teachers** from across England, and **126 primary school pupils**. **Hideta Kitazawa** delivered **six days of mask-making demonstrations** to the delight and interest of the public and schools **at the V&A**; and similarly to **over 1,600 public and more than 100 school children at the Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford**. **A further two public mask-making demonstration/talks were made to sell-out audiences in London (Japan Foundation), and in Paris (at la Maison de la Culture du Japon)**
- **NHK news report on the Pagoda project** to approximately **10 million viewers in Japan** through its Channel 1 news programme on the 2 Dec (reporting on the first night), <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1V5BkOJL718> and also as part of a **special news feature programme on 13 Dec 2009** (Channel 1, World Network Programme)

Left to Right:  
HAYASHI:  
Eitaro  
OKURA,  
Narimi  
TAKIZAWA,  
Mitsuo  
KAMA,  
Hitoshi  
SAKURAI,  
and  
PAGODA  
CHORUS





## REVIEWS AND VIEWS

"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." <http://www.thestage.co.uk/reviews/review.php/26428/kiyotsune-pagoda>

**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. [http://www.ballet.co.uk/magazines/yr\\_09/dec09/ck\\_rev\\_oshima\\_noh\\_theatre\\_of\\_hiroshima\\_and\\_theatre\\_nohgaku\\_1209.htm](http://www.ballet.co.uk/magazines/yr_09/dec09/ck_rev_oshima_noh_theatre_of_hiroshima_and_theatre_nohgaku_1209.htm)

**Ballet.co.uk 3 Dec 2009**

"...With the benefit of the libretto, the audience could enjoy the lean poetry of Cheong's words. But combined on stage with the mesmeric effect of chanting voices and slow, understated movement, one was left wondering how so much could be conveyed with such economy of expression..."

<http://www.tribunemagazine.co.uk/2009/12/17/theatre-bringing-the-noh-tradition-up-to-date/>

**The Tribune, Arts review. 17 December 2009** (NB The review has a few factual inaccuracies)

"Having had the good fortune of attending the 'double bill' of the traditional noh Kiyotsune and the brand-new (English-language) Pagoda (by Oshima Noh Theatre and Theatre Nohgaku) yesterday, I can only hope this production will travel the world even more widely than it already has. While some of my fellow spectators (both old Noh hands and total newcomers to the genre) had their doubts about the length of the English-language play and about Jannette Cheong's original libretto (after all, what contemporary playwright could possibly rival Zeami?) I found Pagoda a deeply moving experience, not least because of the beauty of the final dance and all the radiant singing, with total dedication, of (among others) Jubilith Moore and the chorus. Since the singing was (as far as I can tell) in the traditional Noh style and in English, surely this particular production has proved such an approach can be artistically successful!"

**Part of a thread of several weeks regarding performative translations & the question of Japanese traditional performing styles performed in other languages.**

"I wasn't sure what it would be like, as I am not that keen on traditional productions of Noh, and some cultural amalgamations are pretty awful, but I liked it, and it even renewed in me a sense that I should find out more about Noh theatre in general."

"Rare opportunity to see a joint production of Classical and Contemporary (in English) Noh play. It was a good way to introduce Noh play to Japanese, who are not familiar with Noh like myself, let alone local audience."

"The first section provided a glimpse of a noh play which is part of the 'canon' but the second play, in English, gave me an overall view of what Noh is about. After watching that I think I 'got it'."

**Comments received following the Oxford performance 21 December 2009**

"The warmest congratulations on a tremendous achievement last night. Not just having written a wonderful, poetic work but also to have brought it to life with all the huge effort and perseverance that required."

**Clive Barda: Photographer 3 December 2009**

"Pagoda' was itself a triumph. Many congratulations ... to all who took part in a most moving and memorable event."

**Ken Garland: Designer 3 December 2009**

"This is just to thank you for enabling a truly wonderful evening to happen. I feel very privileged to have been able to witness such a powerful event. ...I found Pagoda both beautiful and moving, ...and want to congratulate you on so successfully mastering the form and spirit of Noh in such a personal yet universal way, permitting a proper catharsis to take place for the audience."

"Truly memorable, and moving. A superb form"

**Andrew King and friend: 3 December 2009**

"..We thoroughly enjoyed both plays. I was particularly moved by the story in Pagoda which is beautifully written. Having not seen Noh theatre before ... I was really looking forward to the event and was not disappointed. I feel particularly privileged to have had the rare opportunity to have seen it in English."

**Amaia Irizar (Guests of Mitsubishi Electric Europe) 4 December 2009**

"I really enjoyed the performances by the pupils. Given the time that some of them had to rehearse, the results were of a very high standard. Similarly, thank you so much for the opportunity to experience professional Noh theatre. It was a rare and fascinating privilege."

**Adrian Deakes: Victoria & Albert Museum 4 December 2009**



*"A brief email to congratulate you on the success of Pagoda.... (We) both thoroughly enjoyed the Oxford performance and you have proved that Noh in English 'works'"*

**Greg Irvine: Senior Curator Japan, Asian Department, Victoria & Albert Museum 4 Jan 2010**

*I am still full of impressions from the performance at Purcell Room. It was just fantastic. I saw a lot of noh plays in Tokyo, some in Osaka and Kyoto, but yours showed me how profoundly impressive noh can be when given a new impetus of freshness!*

**Ivan Rumánek: 6 December 2009**



*"It was indeed a triumph and we hope that you have every possible success in Paris. And the programme is both beautiful to look at and a model of its kind as far as the content is concerned."*

**Nick Saunders: (After the Oxford performance) 8 December 2009**

*"I attended the performances of Kiyotsune & Pagoda at the Purcell Room, London December 3, and the talk afterwards. It left a strong impression on me. Pagoda was like simultaneously seeing an ancient 2500-year-old Greek tragedy and a radical new direction in theatre, at the same time seeing the unveiling of the true inner being of Noh. Partly due to the beautiful writing, hearing it in English and the authenticity of all the performances, it was like seeing the heart and hidden life of Noh. Jubilith Moore's performance was haunting; her presence, sustained over the whole piece was like an Aikido master, and her voice had such heart-felt power and a compelling integrity. Without outwardly trying to reproduce the Noh vocal technique, her voice came from that same place inside, only now without any stylistic mask or veil. It was a true voice. And without wearing a mask she somehow appeared to reveal the mask behind the mask, or the still inner face. She put herself right there, exposed, and didn't waver. This has given me a lot to think about and was a revelation. I thank you all."*

**Max Reed: (Message sent to TN on 12 December 2009)**

*"I would like to express all my respect and my enthusiasm to yourself and the artists for the Nô plays I saw yesterday. On behalf of Mitsubishi Electric Europe, I am proud and honored to have participated to such a project."*

**Eric Pellerin: Directeur Général Adjoint, France, Mitsubishi Electric Europe 10 Dec 2009**

*"I am glad to hear that the remaining performances were a success, although I never expected it to be any other way. Introducing the project last week at our Japanese Headquarters, everyone was extremely impressed and I got a lot of positive feedback."*

**Hans-Joerg Hinkel: Strategic Planning/Corp Communications Manager, Mitsubishi Electric Europe 22 December 2009**

*"I am still glowing with Noh excitement! Both plays were compelling although it was Pagoda that really had me spell-bound because the story was so poignant & the libretto so tender: "Autumn leaves drift west and east, some paths meet, some not...Thread of a loving mother, worn bare with years passed...How can we see so far, and know so little..." Gosh, I was riveted! For me (and for my friends) a very memorable evening."*

**Teacher of English working in Tokyo: (After the Oxford performance) 15 December 2009**

*"..Many congratulations on the success of Pagoda. I saw it at the Southbank in London and thought it was a very interesting project indeed. I think Noh plays in languages other than Japanese sometimes raise a few eyebrows, but I thought this was really intelligently and thoughtfully done."*

*"The students found it very interesting and enabled them to access Noh techniques in a more straightforward way (especially the qualities of speech, the effect of the chorus on both a thematic and emotional level, and the structuring rhythms of Noh)..."*

**Dr Ashley Thorpe: Department of Film, Theatre & Television, University of Reading 16 December 2009**

*"I would like to extend my sincere congratulations to you on the great success on your Noh project. We have received a considerable amount of good feedback from our clients. Both Japanese and non-Japanese guests sent us messages stating that they enjoyed the performance very much and that it was a unique and memorable experience to be able to enjoy both traditional and new English Noh at the same time with such great performers."*

**Jun Mizoguchi: Managing Director and Head of SMBC Europe; CEO Sumitomo Mitsui Banking Corporation Europe Ltd 17 December 2009**

*"It was a pleasure to work with you and your team. I thoroughly enjoyed the performance, the reception, and the overall experience of seeing noh in English and in Ireland for that matter! I had never seen it so finally realise what it is all about!! Well done to you all. You did tremendous work that was hugely visible to all on our side. I hope you can return again some day."*

**Darina Slatery: Ireland Japan Association (Sponsor) 16 December 2009**

*"I wish to express my sincere appreciation to you for informing me of the Noh Theatre performance last Saturday. It was simply splendid and quite mesmerizing, for a while, I felt that I had been*



transported back to Kyoto. I must confess that, being a purist, I had certain reservations about a Western troupe of actors performing Noh and some misgivings about the play 'Pagoda' through the medium of American-English, but they were dispelled by the performance and production. Three friends had accompanied me and they were deeply impressed by the performance. I hope that there will be more Noh theatre productions brought to Ireland in the future. Congratulations to you and the organisers for arranging such a magnificent cultural experience."  
**Friend of the Japanese Embassy (Dublin) 23 December 2009**

'Just to say how interesting we found the Getting to Noh event last night. Yasuyo Ohtsuka (Curator Japanese Section) and I both learned a lot about Noh (which perhaps we should have known already!) and my guest, who is a flautist, found it fascinating to have the opportunity to ask very specific questions. Also, it was informal and aimed specifically at a Western audience so that things which Japanese might be expected to know (but probably don't...) were explained clearly. The Q&A session was an excellent idea and the number of questions shows how engaged the audience was'.  
**Hamish Todd, Head of Japanese Section, The British Library 13 January 2010**

**Interviews with the French media** included a three-page article in *Planete Japon* and an extensive article in *La Terrasse* involving Jannette Cheong and Rick Emmert, [http://www.journal-laterrasse.fr/article\\_desc.php?men=1&id\\_art=4801](http://www.journal-laterrasse.fr/article_desc.php?men=1&id_art=4801) circulated throughout France; and an interview with Kinue Oshima <http://www.toutpourlesfemmes.com/conseil/Theatre-no-interview-de-l-actrice.html> for *Toute Pour Les Femmes*.



Left to right: PAGODA World Premiere, Southbank Centre, London, UK. Jubilith MOORE, the traveller; Kinue OSHIMA, Meilin; Lluís VALLS, Fisherman/Lighthouse Keeper; Elizabeth DOWD, Spirit Daughter; Teruhisa OSHIMA, Spirit of Bai Li/Meilin's Son; Kinue OSHIMA, Spirit Mother



## SPONSORS AND CONTRIBUTORS

Many people have helped to bring this production to fruition. It would be impossible to mention them all by name but without their support, kindness and interest in our work it would not have been possible to bring this unique production to Europe. We are extremely grateful to all of our sponsors and contributors for their support. In particular, we must thank the Agency for Cultural Affairs of the Government of Japan, for its vision in understanding that this project was as much about trying to appreciate what we experience in our own time, as it was about understanding of the traditions of the past. All of our sponsors, contributors and supporters have given us a warmth and generosity that has added far more value than the financial support needed for a production of this kind.

The following organisations sponsored and/or supported activities associated with the tour:

- Supported by the **Agency for Cultural Affairs Government of Japan** in the fiscal year 2009 (*Sponsor*)
- **Japan Foundation** (*Sponsor*) (*& workshop venue, London*)
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- **John Lewis Partnership** (*Sponsor*)
- **The Great Britain Sasakawa Foundation** (*Sponsor*)
- **Sumitomo Mitsui Banking Corporation Europe Ltd** (*Sponsor*)
- **Japan-UK 150** (*Sponsor*)
- **Japan Embassy, London** (*Sponsor & First lecture demonstration followed by reception*)
- **Japan Society** (*With special thanks to Heidi Potter and Anna Mehta-Davis for their assistance to the tour, and for planning and coordinating the education activities and working closely with the Victoria & Albert and schools*)
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- **Japan Airlines** (*Sponsor*)
- **Oxford Sasakawa Fund** (*Sponsor*)
- **Southbank Centre, Purcell Room** (*Sponsor & London theatre and world premiere venue*)
- **School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS, University of London)** (*rehearsals venue, and workshops*)
- **Victoria & Albert Museum** (*London venue for education activities, and exhibition of Noh artefacts*)
- **The British Library** (*London venue for public lecture*)
- **Keble College, University of Oxford** (*Oxford theatre venue*)
- **Pitt Rivers Museum** (*Oxford venue for Noh Mask Exhibition and educational activities*)
- **Nissan Institute** (*Venue for Open Seminar*)
- **Japan Embassy, Dublin** (*Sponsor & Dublin lecture/demonstration followed by reception*)
- **Samuel Beckett Theatre, Ireland** (*Dublin theatre & workshop venue*)
- **Ireland-Japan Association** (*Sponsor*)
- **Japan-Ireland Travel** (*Sponsor*)
- **Moss Timber Merchants** (*Sponsor*)
- **Maison de la Culture du Japon, Paris** (*Sponsor, Paris theatre & workshop venue*).
- **Translators of the Librettos: Kiyotsune: David Crandall** (*Japanese to English*) and **Jacques Montredon** (*English to French*), **Pagoda: Ryoji Terada** (*English to Japanese*), **Pierre Rolle** (*English to French*)

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**Finally, our thanks to all the teachers and students who participated in the educational workshops/project, and to all our supporters, contributors and most importantly, all the artists and production team, for helping us to share this rare experience of 'the art of noh' with so many.**

*Photography credits pp 1, 2, 4, 5, 7 Clive Barda; pp3 Sohta Kitazawa; pp 6 & 8 Jannette Cheong*

