

MEDIA RELEASE

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JAPANFOUNDATION



The Japan Foundation, Sydney presents

An Introduction to Noh Theatre

@ *Noh to Now* lecture series,
Art Gallery NSW

The Japan Foundation, Sydney proudly presents a talk on Noh, a form of classical Japanese theatre, by Noh master and university professor **Naohiko Umewaka**. Titled '**Noh, and the Aesthetics of Restraint**', it will be held at the Art Gallery NSW on August 6 from 6pm.

Noh is Japan's oldest living form of theatre, and has been in practice continuously since the middle ages. Noh master Naohiko Umewaka comes direct from Japan to introduce this enigmatic tradition. Umewaka comes from a long and prestigious lineage of Noh masters, and his immersion in the world of Noh from an early age (he began performing at age 3) makes him an **authentic and authoritative voice**.

This is the second talk in a five-part lecture series titled ***Noh to Now: Traditions and Counter-traditions in Japanese Performance***, programmed and presented by The Japan Foundation, Sydney in conjunction with the **Art Gallery NSW's** *Theatre of dreams, theatre of play: nō and kyōgen in Japan* exhibition.

Says **Naohiko Umewaka**, "From a Western perspective, expression and restraint are largely seen as mutually exclusive, but in Japanese culture the two are tightly bound. This is particularly true in Noh. My talk will provide insight into the 'soft power' of restraint as a tool for expression, and will encourage people to think about the possibilities this opens up for performance, for both performers and viewers alike."

Says Japan Foundation, Sydney director **Nao Endo**, "As shown by the introduction of a [Japanese Traditional and Contemporary Theatre elective](#) in this year's **HSC curriculum**, there is increasing recognition of the value of Japanese performing arts traditions in the Australian community. We are excited to work with the Art Gallery NSW to offer this timely series, which blends authoritative voices and perspectives from both Australia and Japan."



Program

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| Jul 23 | Occupied Bodies: Re-thinking the Atomic Gaze in Ankoku Butoh
Dr. Adam Broinowski, Australian National University | You  |
| Aug 6 | Noh, and the Aesthetics of Restraint
Professor Naohiko Umewaka (Noh Master),
Shizuoka University of Arts and Culture | You  |
| Aug 13 | Song, Dance, Skill: Introduction to Kabuki
Dr. Shun Ikeda, Australian National University | You  |
| Aug 20 | Presence & Composition: Bunraku Puppet Theatre and Virtual Diva Hatsune Miku
Dr Yuji Sone, Macquarie University | You  |
| Aug 27 | The Allure of Gender-Bending Musical Theatre
Dr. Leonie Stickland, Murdoch University | You  |

Dates: July 23 and August 6, 13, 20 & 27
Time: 6:00 – 7:00pm (Doors open 5.45pm)
Venue: Centenary Auditorium
Art Gallery NSW
Art Gallery Rd, The Domain
Sydney
Admission: Free. No bookings required.
Enquiries: reception@jpf.org.au / 02 8239 0055 (The Japan Foundation, Sydney)
Website: www.jpf.org.au

YouTube Playlists available



Search 'Noh to Now' on [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com) to sample the genres in this program.

ABOUT NOH THEATRE:

Noh theatre is Japan's oldest continuing theatre tradition, and is listed by UNESCO as Intangible Cultural Heritage. Sometimes described as Japanese opera, it is known for its rich symbolism, slow movement and highly stylised expression. Noh developed in Japan in the Middle Ages and arrived at its present form in the 14th century; Noh costume reflects the kind of dress worn by the nobility in Japan around this time. Arguably one of the most recognisable elements of Noh is its many masks, which are changed over the course of a performance to signify changes in a character's emotional or psychological state.

ABOUT NAOHIKO UMEWAKA:



Noh master and university professor Dr Naohiko Umewaka was born into a lineage of Noh performers that dates back 600 years. He trained under his father, legendary Noh master Naoyoshi, and began performing at three years of age. Dr Umewaka continues to perform Noh at the highest level, in addition to writing and directing new Noh plays and conducting academic research on Noh as a professor at Shizuoka University of Arts and Culture in Japan. Dr Umewaka will also appear at an Art Gallery NSW [symposium on Noh theatre](#) on August 2.

ABOUT THE 'NOH TO NOW' LECTURE SERIES:

[Noh to Now: Traditions and Counter-traditions in Japanese Performance](#) is a five-part lecture series featuring local and international experts introducing different genres of Japanese performance. Spanning the centuries from the emergence of **Noh theatre** in the middle ages to the present day, the series explores both canonised and marginal artforms and artists, including Ankoku **Butoh** ('Dance of Darkness'), **Kabuki**, virtual songstress **Hatsune Miku** ([support act for Lady Gaga's recent US tour](#)), and all-female musical theatre troupe **Takarazuka Revue**.

ABOUT THE EXHIBITION AT ART GALLERY NSW:

The Art Gallery NSW's [Theatre of dreams, theatre of play: nō and kyōgen in Japan](#) exhibition was organised in cooperation with the Agency for Cultural Affairs in Japan. It features a total of 165 works related to Noh theatre—many from the prestigious National Noh Theatre in Japan—including exquisitely carved masks, richly embroidered Noh robes, and paintings depicting this ancient performing arts tradition. The exhibition is now open and runs until September 14 (closed for conservation purposes July 28-30).

ABOUT THE JAPAN FOUNDATION, SYDNEY:

The Japan Foundation, Sydney is the Australian arm of the Japan Foundation, which was established by the Japanese government to promote cultural and intellectual exchange between Japan and other nations. It runs a diverse range of programs and events, including exhibitions, talk events, grant programs and Japanese language courses for all levels from beginner to advanced. The Japan Foundation was established in 1972 with a global network of 22 offices in 21 countries. The Australian office was founded in 1977.



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For more information please see www.jpf.org.au or contact:

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