

Divine Fools:

Introduction to Japanese Performing Arts.

Dr. Darren Ashmore.



Divine Fools: Traditional Japanese Performing Arts.

3 credit hours (6 credit hours per week)

Winter Semester 2009/2010

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This introductory course to Japanese traditional performing arts: *gagaku/bugaku*, *noh/kyogen*, *bunraku*, *kabuki* and folk/festival ceremonies. Trends in contemporary art and dance in Japan will also be presented. Readings include some classical works in the history of the field such as Zeami's treatises on the *noh* play and some recent monographs concerning some contemporary trends. Historical, literary, aesthetic, as well as spatial patterns and circumstances of each form will be discussed.

This course is designed to help students understand the cultural aspects of a variety of performance traditions and the ways in which each have been informed by the society in which they developed (and persist). Focusing on both historical roots and contemporary representations, the course charts the development of Japanese culture through the stage.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

While there are no academic prerequisites associated with this course, most of the AV material we will view is only available in Japanese and, as such, international students need to be aware of this fact before signing up.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Over the course of the program, student will:

- Develop an understanding of Japanese Theatre.
- Be able differentiate between important styles and genres.
- Define the differences between Japanese theatre and American/European offerings.
- Recognize unique and borrowed techniques that are used in Japanese stage art.
- Appreciate performing arts and theatre as artistic and cultural properties.
- Understand the social purpose of performing arts.
- Be able to recognize theatre's functions in both common and elite cultural context.
- Trace styles to specific people and to specific cultural forces.

STUDY MATERIALS:

<Core Textbooks>

- Ortolani, Benito. The Japanese Theatre: From Shamanistic Ritual to Contemporary Pluralism. Preinceton University Press. 1995.
- Various: An Introduction to the Japanese Stage. Tokyo, Kodansha. 2002.

<Other Readings – where available from the library, no publication info is given>

- Pound, Ezra. The Classic Noh of Japan. (AIU Library)
- Leiter, Samuel. Historical Dictionary of Traditional Japanese Theatre. (AIU Library)
- Senda, Akihiko. The Voyage of Modern Japanese Theatre. (AIU Library)
- Lee, William James. Genroku Kabuki. (AIU Library)
- Hironaga, Shuzaburo. Bunraku. (AIU Library)

More works are available in the library OPAC system and readings of special interest will be assigned with appropriate lecture notes.

Assessment will be as follows:

- **Essay:** ONE, between 1,000 and 2,000 words in length, to be submitted no later than the end of week seven (unless approval is sought).
- **Midterm Examination:** ONE, to take place In Week Three Wednesday (Monday will be designated as free study time and an opportunity to ask any questions).
- **Seminar Assignments:** In the form of an essay/presentation (no more than 30 mins) on the subject at hand. Note that not everyone will be required to present each week those not presenting will be required to submit their own research work on the topic and participate in the discussion.

NOTE: Assignments and class discussions are an important part of the course, and will earn you a good percentage of your final mark. Therefore you must be ready to deal with this heavy workload and be willing communicate you views to the class in discussion.



Essay Questions:

Please come to see me by the end of session three to agree your essay question. It may follow one of the questions below, or may be based on independent research.

- 1: Discuss the history of *Kabuki* theatres of the three great cities (Edo, Osaka and Kyoto) and the Tokugawa governments' Morality Edicts of 1629. What impact did the banning of women from the stage have on *Kabuki*?
- 2: Discuss the history of the puppet in Japanese Folk Puppet theatre in the early Meiji Period – with particular reference to both the experiences of puppet performers and the views of the government.
- 3: Compare and contrast the *noh* works of masters Kan'ami and Zeami. To what extent does the conflict which existed between them reflect external influences on their art forms.
- 4: Discuss the ritual nature of early Japanese theatre forms – selecting either the animistic traditions of the *sangaku* branch or the Buddhist traditions of *heikyoku*. how much import can we assign to the religious component of Japanese theatre?
- 5: The Takarazuka has, at times, been described as ultra-feminist theatre and a parade of Japanese misogynistic nonsense. Why does this extravagant review company continue to draw huge crowds?
- 6: What is the significance of the *Miko* in *Miko-kagura* – what role does she play in the rituals of that tradition?
- 7: What roles did *Gigaku*, *Gagaku* and *Bugaku* play in the Imperial courts of the Nara and Heian periods?
- 8: Why did temples, shrines and military authorities begin encouraging performing arts in the early Kamakura period – what were they hoping to achieve?



POLICIES: *All assignments must be completed to receive a passing grade for this course. Acts of plagiarism or other forms academic dishonesty will be dealt with harshly. See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plagiarism> for more information. To this end, an electronic copy of the essay will also be collected to check using plagiarism software.*

- **COURSE FORMAT AND ACTIVITIES:** **FORMAT:** Each session will be divided into a Lecture, followed by a screening of an important work, or a presentation by the students.
- **NOTE:** *Films – where possible – will be in Japanese with subtitles in English. However in many cases it will only be possible to provide Japanese material. International students must be aware of this.*
- **NOTE:** *Attendance is compulsory. Failure to be at class – without approval – will result in course failure.*
- **NOTE:** *There will be a number of long week/weekend field trips (to theatres and places of theatrical interest) associated with the course. To compensate you for this, the Friday Sessions will not take place.*





SCHEDULE: Subject to Change – much like the weather and the mind.

<Week 0>

- *Discussion of course, field-trips, assessment and opportunity for questions.*

<Week 2 >

- **Theme:** *Early Forms: Pre-historical Speculation.*
- **Presentations:** None.
- **Lecture:** Examining the evidence which exists for ritual performance traditions in the earliest records and why these traditions became important to the Japanese.
- **Screening:** On Japanese Religion.

<Week 2:>

- **Theme:** *Early Forms: Court Rituals.*
- **Lecture:** Arguably the forms from which all the three grand traditional forms of Kabuki, Bunraku and Noh evolved. This session we will look at the forms and ritual significance of this family of arts and explore the ritual landscape of ancient Japan.
- **Screening:** Kagura and Court Gagaku.
- **Seminar Question:** ‘Ritual and entertainment’: can there be one without the other? Discuss the transition from the religious to the secular in performing arts.

<Week 3>

- **Theme:** *A Theatre of the people.*
- **Presentations:** ‘Ritual and entertainment’: can there be one without the other?
- **Lecture:** Examining the break away from religious centres and the development of the wandering traditions of, Sangaku, and Heikyoku. Following from the debate about the secularising of Japanese performing arts, this session deals with the powerful social pressures – both elite and plebeian – which helped shape performing arts in medieval period.
- **Screening:** *Sangaku* and other Folk Arts.

<Week 3 >

- **Theme:** *Diversification.*
- **Lecture:** Examining a variety of traditions which rose up in the middle ages, branching out from Heikyoku (such as Ennen).
- **Screening:** *Ennen.*

Seminar Question: Practical and beautiful: discuss the forces at work on itinerant artists and the effects that you feel that they had on artists and patrons.

<Week 3>

- **Theme:** Nogaku.
- **Presentations:** Practical and beautiful: discuss the forces at work on itinerant artists and the effects that you feel that they had on artists and patrons.
- **Lecture:** Examining the rise of the Noh and Kyougen in the Middle ages and its adoption by the military classes. Comparing the works of the Great Masters (such as Kan'ami, Zeami, On'ami and Zenchiku), this session focuses on the creation of the professional artist.

<Week 3>

- **Theme:** *The Noh.*
- **Lecture:** Screening of “Dai Han Nya” and “The Temple Bell”

<Week 4>

- Essay Advising Day

<Week 4>

- Mid-term exam

<Week 5>

- **Theme:** *Kabuki.*
- **Lecture:** From the licentious theatre of the Kawa River in Kyoto, to the Grand theatres of Edo, this session's lecture examines the cultural and political impact of a theatre form which became popular among all levels of urban Japanese society.
- **Seminar Question:** Discuss the Tokugawa morality edicts of 1629 and the effects which it had on Kabuki – both positive and negative.

<Week 5>

- **Theme:** *Kabuki.*
- **Lecture:** Screening of and “Karasu”
- **Seminar Question:** Discuss the Tokugawa morality edicts of 1629 and the effects which it had on Kabuki – both positive and negative.

<Week 6>

- **Theme:** *Ningyou Joururi*.
- **Presentations:** Discuss the Tokugawa morality edicts of 1629 and the effects which it had on Kabuki – both positive and negative.
- **Lecture:** From the earliest forms of ritual, to Bunraku, this session's lecture focuses on the puppet in Japanese theatre and the intrinsically ritual content of this art form.
- **Screening:** On the Music of *Ningyou Joururi*.

<Week 6>

- **Theme:** *Ningyou Joururi*.
- **Lecture:** Screening of “The Lover’s Exile” and “Keisei no Awa no Naruto”.
- **Seminar Question:** Discuss the *Joururi* and *Kimpira* techniques of puppet theatre. What can we say about their different approaches to reality?

<Week 7>

- **Theme:** *Contemporary Theatre: Shinpa, Shingeki and Musical Review*.
- **Presentations:** Discuss the *Joururi* and *Kimpira* techniques of puppet theatre. What can we say about their different approaches to reality?
- **Lecture:** Looking at the various directions in which the Japanese stage has gone since the Meiji period (From Shinpa to Takarazuka) and the ways in which modern day writers/directors are still turning to the rituals of the past – whether that be in order to support or refute them – when addressing the problems of the day.

<Week 7>

- Screening of “Rose of Versailles: Takarazuka”.

