

Noh drama masks assignment

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When you think of Japanese theater, many people will think first of the Noh drama. The Noh drama has been performed for over 1000 years, is one of the world's oldest continually performed types of theater and is the oldest of Japan's traditional performing arts [1]. Even after such a long time the spirit of the Noh drama has never been extinguished, it is still around us in our modern lives. In this research paper I will talk about the Noh drama masks, as the masks are the soul of the Noh drama. Without the masks, most people wouldn't realize that this is the Noh drama; the masks are very important as a symbol for the Noh drama.

Besides being symbolic of the Noh drama, the masks also include much history and skill. The four topics I am going to talk about in this research paper are the history of the masks, how they were made, the different types of masks, and the changing of the expressions on the mask. The histories of the masks have come long and far; the model of the present masks was first created at around 1392~1573[2]. Exactly when the noh mask came into being is not entirely clear however it is believed that masks, and their names still used today, were developed from the mid to latter part of the Muromachi period (1392-1573).

Previous to that time, the mask conventions were not entirely set and masks themselves had stronger religious connotations. It was during the Muromachi period that the religious significance of the masks began to wane and they took on more human characteristics. It is thought that as performers started to think more about the use of?? yugen??(mysterious beauty) and profundity, they felt they needed to hide the unattractive aspects of their own faces and concentrate on making the beauty of noh stronger.

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Between the end of the Muromachi period and the modern age the art of making noh masks was established as a hereditary art with a long lineage. Two examples are the Deme family from Echizen (present day Fukui prefecture) and the Iseki family from Ohmi (present day Shiga prefecture). Following the establishment of noh mask making families, the stylization of noh masks significantly advanced. Even today there are many independent mask makers. While some nohgaku performers still make their own masks, the performance world and the mask-making world are essentially independent of each other.

Noh is one of the world's oldest continually-performed types of theater and the oldest of Japan's traditional performing arts. It has its roots in mime, acrobatics and sarugaku (literally "monkey music"), a form of dance-drama associated with agriculture, from the early Heian Period (794-1185) and has had some links to China. In the early days, performers came from the lower classes and served as both entertainers and as performers of religious ceremonies. [pic] Noh was performed at Kofukuji Temple in Nara in A. D. 869 during Buddhist Shunie ceremonies to pray for national prosperity.

Ishun Moriya, a senior priest at the temple, told the Daily Yomiuri, "The performance contained many mystical elements in the earliest days because they were performed by Buddhist priests to thank Buddha for warding off evil... Gradually the spectrum broadened to include more entertaining elements. Noh plays featuring Buddhist rituals came to be performed by professionals, and the spectacle's reputation spread among nobles and others... These performers received handsome benefits from the elite

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administrators because their enrichment of the temple's rituals was highly valued. "?? [pic]?? Noh was traditionally performed at Buddhist temples.

The use of masks and the frequent appearance of ghosts is based in the fact that Noh originated in a time of war and upheaval when many people were preoccupied with death and the afterlife. [pic]?? Noh settled into its present form around the 14th century. In the mid 14th century noh was dominated by humorous and entertaining plays known as?? sarugaku?? or?? sangaku. The pioneers of the Noh form were the playwright Kanami (1333-1384) and his son, Zeami (1363-1443). The first Noh performances was when 12-year-old Zeami and Kanami danced sarugaku in front of the 18-year-old shogun Ashikaga Yoshimitsu in 1374 in Kyoto.

Under the patronage of Yoshimitsu, Zeami and Kanami developed Noh by incorporating elements of their performing arts, poetry and classical and current topic into the dance. [pic]?? Noh became the official art form of the samurai class and enjoyed by famous Japanese historical figures such as Oda Nobunaga and Toyotomi Hideyoshi. In the Edo Period (1603-1868), a single Noh performance could take up an entire day and themes were often things close to samurai's heart, such as honor, duty and revenge and Zen austerity. pic]?? Five schools of Noh are still in existence. The humorous forms of sarugaku survived as an independent art form that came to be known as kyogen, which has traditionally been performed in the intervals between Noh plays (See Other Kinds of Theater). Works Cited: [1] " Noh Theater". Facts and Details. 5/25/2011 <http://factsanddetails.com/japan.php?itemid=716&catid=20&catid=131> [2] " Origin of the Noh mask". Introducing the

world of Noh. 5/25/2011 <http://www.the-noh.com/en/world/mask.html> [3]
[4] [5] [6]