

Japanese theatre and performance: traditions, modernity, globality

2023 Semester 1

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This course investigates theatre and performance in Japan. It introduces students to the classical performance genres of *nō*, *kyōgen*, *kabuki*, and *bunraku*, and considers their aesthetic formation and social contexts. We will further consider Japan's encounter with modernity in the early 20th century when Japanese theatre aesthetics developed in the context of European avant-gardism. It will further consider how Japanese theatre responded to modernity by exploring the development of contemporary theatre in the 1960s through the present day. Radical theatre and performance during the 1960s will be discussed in relation to the rise of student protest and we will consider how contemporary theatre and performance in Japan coopts and resists experience of globalization. The course will study plays, documentation of performances, and the historical and contemporary contexts for notable performance groups. As such, a selection of plays will be examined in English alongside the work of theatre directors and performance makers including artists working to develop interdisciplinary and intercultural forms of expression. A focus of the course will be the consideration of theatre and performance as connected to contexts of nationhood, modernity, culture, politics and globalization. Hence, we will consider a diverse range of theatre and performance events that show contestatory connections with political and cultural histories while also paying attention to the everyday lives of people wherein performance is a means of documenting and transforming personal experiences. Students can expect to study a range of pioneers who have influenced Japanese performance practices including playwrights and directors such as Abe Kobo, Yukio Mishima, Kishida Rio, Kawamura Takeshi, and Hirata Oriza. We will also study contemporary performance practitioners such as the butoh pioneer Hijikata Tatsumi and groups such as Chelfitsch, and Dumb Type.

Recommended Books for Overviews and Contexts:

Kevin Jortner, Keiko McDonald and Kevin J. Wetmore, (eds) *Modern Japanese Theatre and Performance*. (Lexington Books, 2006).

Benito Otorlani, *The Japanese Theatre*. (Princeton University Press, 1990).

Peter Eckersall, *Theorizing the Angura Space Avant-Garde Performance and Politics in Japan 1960-2000*. (Brill 2006).

J. Thomas Rimer, Mitsuya Mori and M. Cody Poulton (eds.) *The Columbia Anthology of Japanese Drama*. (Columbia University Press 2014).

Jonah Salz (ed.), *A History of Japanese Theatre*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016.

Tadashi Uchino, *Crucible Bodies: Postwar Japanese Performance from Brecht to the New Millennium*. (Seagull Books, 2009).

Course requirements and Assessment:

1. Periodic homework assignments that will be available through Blackboard.
2. A mid-term examination
3. A final examination

4. A final project: The students may choose any topic related to Japanese theatre for their final project. Before writing the final paper, they will present their work to their classmates for critical feedback and suggestions for twenty minutes. After having received insights and suggestions, they will write a ten-page paper on the chosen topic. Please see below for a detailed description.

Please note: All written work should be double-spaced, use 12-point type, and conform to the *Chicago Manual of Style*. (<http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/home.html>)

Student evaluation:

Homework:	25%
Research project	25%
Midterm	25%
Final Examination.	25%

Writing Guide

For your final essay, you may write about ANY aspect of *Japanese Theatre and Performance* that stimulates and excites you. Of great importance, however, is that these essays are to be exercises in critical thinking. As such, it is obligatory that you tell your reader why you wish to discuss your chosen topic, what significance it has for understanding Japanese culture, what approach you shall take in your analysis, why you have chosen this approach, and what you hope to contribute to the understanding of *Japanese Theatre and Performance* with this topic. You are to create a cogent, coherent argument that reflects your engagement with critical thought. The essay must have an intellectual gravity that demonstrates your abilities as a creative, articulate thinker with insights deeper than, ‘Dude, that was, like, majorly awesome!’

General comments on essay writing:

The most important part of essay writing is to answer the question that you have created. If you have chosen to discuss the aesthetics of gender fluidity in glam rock, what is it that you want to say and why? What is your question? Consider your question carefully. What does it ask you to do? Keep this in mind as you research the issue, as you plan your essay, and as you write it. Refer to the question again as you edit your essay. And when you are reading your draft, keep asking yourself: have I answered the question (or have I instead gone off on a tangent that was interesting, on which I could easily find information, or which I was dragged into by one of the authors I read, and would I rather be answering this question rather than the one I initially chose?)?

Researching and writing essays is a central part of all Humanities and Social Sciences courses. For some of you this will be a relatively new type of assessment, and you are encouraged to consult with me throughout your research and the writing process should you need advice. For this course, you are required to write essays that are analytical as well as descriptive. This requires serious engagement with your source material. There are numerous guides to essay writing and referencing, and if you are not already an experienced essay writer you should consider acquiring such a guide. Some basic guidelines follow.

- **Research:** this involves the selection and collection of relevant materials. Take notes that include the important elements of what you are reading: concepts, ideas, details of events and other descriptive information, as well as quotations or paraphrased summaries, which relate

to your topic. You need to be very familiar with the library and its databases to find relevant material. You also need to be very careful when taking notes to clearly mark what is your summary and what is copied word for word from the source itself (this is to avoid plagiarism).

- Planning your essay: your sources and relevant information must be organized. Draw up a one or two page plan of the essay using headings and sub-headings.
- Writing the essay: remember that you are analysing, evaluating, criticizing and arguing, not just summarizing and describing. You are not only trying to answer the question in a structured fashion, but to engage critically with the question and with your sources. Make sure that you substantiate your analysis throughout the essay. Generalizations need to be supported with specific information and examples. It is useful to start with an introduction, which devotes a paragraph or two to:
 - a) noting what question you are answering
 - b) explaining how you intend to answer it, and
 - c) very generally pointing to the direction of your answer

The essay should also have a conclusion: this is a final paragraph that brings together the various themes or elements of the essay.

Footnotes and bibliography:

Footnotes and bibliographies must be in Chicago style. (You can use the following link: <http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/home.html>) Essays with inadequate footnoting will not be accepted, and will have to be resubmitted.

The following points are important:

- Footnotes must be at the bottom of each page, NOT at the end of the essay (these are called ‘endnotes’, not footnotes). Note that there are several different styles of footnoting, and that different disciplines use different styles (historians, sociologists, linguists, literature scholars etc, all use different styles to conform to international conventions in their field). It is important that you conform to the style of your field.
- Footnotes should be used to indicate the source of all direct quotations, and the source of ideas and arguments you are advancing. The convention is that you quote directly from primary sources predominantly. In the case of secondary sources, it is more usual to use the footnote to indicate the source of idea or arguments that you will have summarised (although it is possible to quote from secondary sources as well).
- You should also use footnotes for all information and ideas not your own, or not widely known, or if the interpretation or information is contentious in some fashion. If all the information and ideas in a particular paragraph are from the same source, then one footnote at the end of the paragraph is sufficient. *Ordinarily, almost every paragraph in your essay will have at least one footnote – except for the introduction and conclusion and any paragraphs that are primarily based on your own observations.*
- you must include a **bibliography** at the end of your essay which lists, in alphabetical order of author or editor’s surname, all works which you have substantially used in your essay. The bibliography will include all works cited in the footnotes, and may also include other items on which you have drawn in the research for your essay.

Note: essays without footnotes or with limited footnotes are unlikely to pass. Essays missing bibliographies will be sent back.

Writing standards:

Your essay must be written in clear, error-free English. You may lose marks if it is not, and essays with a great amount of spelling or grammatical mistakes will be returned for resubmission. If you need help with essay writing, please come and talk to me.

Non-discriminatory language:

You must use non-discriminatory language in all your work. Discriminatory language is that which refers in abusive terms to gender, race, age, sexual orientation, citizenship or nationality, ethnic or language background, physical or mental ability, or political or religious views, or which stereotypes groups in an adverse manner that is not supported by evidence. This is not meant to preclude or inhibit legitimate academic debate on any issue; however, the language used in such debate should be non-discriminatory and sensitive to these matters.

Extensions:

The papers are to be submitted the week they are due (refer to the syllabus for the dates), either in class or through e-mail. Extensions for written work will only be granted in special circumstances. Unless an extension has been granted, late essays will be penalized at the rate of 5% for the first day and 2% off the mark per day after that.

Plagiarism:

Plagiarism is the act of presenting somebody else's words as your own. Not providing adequate footnoting, not putting quotes in quotation marks, and paraphrasing another author's words constitute plagiarism. Be warned that instances of plagiarism are easily recognizable, and that scholars and academic institutions take a very dim view of it. You have also signed the "Terms of Participation Form" and should also be aware of Columbia University's code of Academic Conduct to which you are all expected to adhere.

If you have any doubts on the subject, consult with me.

Summary: what is a good essay/document exercise?

Written assessments generally get high marks if:

1. they answer the question (with originality and reflexivity is even better)
2. they are based on the best and most wide-ranging research
3. the arguments are supported throughout with good evidence
4. the footnotes and the bibliography are complete and in good order
5. they are well presented (grammar, spelling, punctuation are perfect!)

Final Presentation/Paper Guide

The purpose of the presentation/paper is to allow you to explore areas of Japanese theatre and performance that stimulate and interest you, to delve into areas that have not been covered in class. You are allowed to explore anything and everything that excites your interest. The only requirement is that the research topic be on Japanese theatre/performance.

There are two distinct aspects to this project: the presentation and the ensuing paper. The presentation is to be an informal exposé in which you present your findings to the class as a whole. The duration of the presentation will follow academic conference standards, and is to be twenty minutes per person followed by ten-minute questions and answers period. Think of the

presentation as a lecture, a performance, a moment for you to speak directly to your colleagues about your work. Expect discussion. You may either read your paper, or refer to notes, or handouts. You are also welcome to use Powerpoint slides and the audio-visual facilities available in the classrooms to illustrate points made in the paper. Should you have materials you wish to distribute to the class, please provide me with a copy the previous class session so that I may make copies.

The paper is separate from the presentation and is to be a formal written exercise with citations, footnotes, and bibliography. Please follow the Chicago Manual of Style for formatting. The length should be approximately 12 pages double-spaced, which is roughly 3000 words in 12-point Times New Roman font.

In your presentation/paper, you are to identify and discuss an issue that interests you about the music you have selected. If, for example, you have decided to examine Japanese *enka*, you must have something to say beyond, “it’s cheesy!” or “those dresses Kobayashi Sachiko wears for the *Kōhaku uta gassen* are so cool!” There are any number of different, simultaneously occurring aspects of *enka* that can be used to make this music relevant and interesting to even those, such as myself, who find it trying at best. What is being promoted through *enka*? Why do the majority of performers wear *kimono*? Why do so many *enka* texts dwell on the concept of *furusato* or drinking alone in shabby bars? If you should decide on *rakugo*, or *manzai*, a similar list of stimulating issues exists: for example, *rakugo* has undeniably influenced *manzai*. Is this good? Is this bad? Why is it important? Is *manzai* thus derivative? Or is it a form of humour distinct that conforms to a different aesthetic than *rakugo*? There is no limit to what you can explore in your project. Draw upon your experience in other classes to enrich your work.

You are encouraged and expected to turn to secondary sources for guidance and background information. You may not base your argument on the work of others. If you agree with another scholar’s opinion, by all means say so, and there is nothing wrong per se, but how does your work further the earlier scholar’s work? As mentioned above, any references or citations must be properly included in the body of the work following the Chicago Manual of Style guidelines. This is also true of on-line sources, which must be cited in your bibliography. Please be aware that not all on-line sources are reliable or exemplary scholarship.

The date of the presentations is indicated in the syllabus. The papers are due on the day of the final examination.

Schedule

Please note: this is subject to change.

All readings and assignments should be completed by the date under which they appear.

Part 1: Introduction

Lesson 1

Topic: Course Introduction!

Lesson 2

Topic: Course introduction

Read: Salz, “Preface”, and Ortolani, “Chapter One”.

Part 2: Early Japanese Performance Traditions

Lesson 3

Topic: Religion and Performance: *kagura*

Read: Salz, “Chapter 1: Ancient and Early Medieval Performing Arts”, Ortolani, “Chapter II: *kagura*”, Varley, “The Emergence of Japanese Civilisation”, *Kojiki*, “Chapter 17”. Flavin, “Ancient Song and Dance in Japan” (handout).

View: *Kume-mai* and *Ajime no sahō*. Be sure to read the accompanying explanatory notes.

Lesson 4

Topic: Religion and Performance: *gigaku*

Read. Varley, “Chapter 2: The Introduction of Buddhism”, Ortolani, “Chapter III: *gigaku*

View: *Gigaku* 伎楽 (Youtube link)

Lesson 5

Topic: Religion and Performance: *bugaku* 舞楽 右方の舞

Read. Varley ‘Chapter 3: The Court at its Zenith’: Ortolani, ‘Chapter IV: *bugaku*’; 2 reference handouts.

View: *Taiheiraku*

Lesson 6

Topic: Religion and Performance: *bugaku* 舞楽 左方の舞 and hybridity

Read: Varley ‘Chapter 3: The Court at its Zenith’: Ortolani, ‘Chapter IV: *bugaku*’; 2 reference handouts.

View: *Engiraku* 延喜楽 and *Batō* 抜頭

Part 3: Medieval Theatre

Lesson 7

Topic: *heikyoku* and the beginning of epic narrative

Read: Varley, ‘Chapter 4: The Advent of the New Age’; Shirane, *Warrior Tales (gunki-mono)*; McCollough, ‘Introduction’; Butler, ‘The Textual Evolution of the *Heike-monogatari*’

View: *Waga mi no eiga* 我身の栄華 “Kiyomori’s Flowering Fortunes”

Lesson 8

Topic: *heikyoku* and the beginning of epic narrative continued.

Read: Komoda, ‘The Musical Narrative of the Tale of the Heike’; ‘Nasu no Yoichi’, ‘Nasu no Yoichi (Japanese)’, ‘Kiyomori’s Flowering Fortunes’.

Lesson 9

Topic: *nō* 能

Read: Kagaya and Miura, ‘Noh and Muromachi Culture’; Rimer, ‘The Background of Zeami’s Treatises’ and Yamazaki, ‘The Aesthetics of Ambiguity: The Artistic Theories of Zeami’

Lesson 10

Topic: *nō* 能 continued.

Read: Konparu, ‘The Music of Noh: *utai* and *hayashi*’; Konparu, ‘The Performers’; ‘The Basics of *nō* (handout); *Yūya* (handout).

Lesson 11

Topic: *nō* 能 continued.

View: View: *Momiji-gari*

Lesson 12

Topic: *kyōgen* 狂言.

Read: Salz, ‘*Kyōgen*: Classical Comedy’; Tora’aki, *The Making of the Comic*; Wells, ‘Chapter 3: Early Japanese Ideas of Humour’.

Lesson 13

Topic: *kyōgen* 狂言 continued.

View: *Kamabara* and *Busu*

Lesson 14

Topic: Review for mid-term examination.

Lesson 15

Topic: Midterm!

Part 3: The Edo Period and Popular Theatre

Lesson 16

Topic: *Bunraku* 文楽 Puppet Theatre

Read: Ortolani, ‘Chapter VIII: Puppet Theatre’; Gotō, ‘Bunraku: puppet theatre’; Gerstle, ‘Circles of Fantasy: Chapter 1: Introduction’.

Lesson 17

Topic: *Bunraku* 文楽 Puppet Theatre continued: Who’s the actor? The *tayū* and his importance.

Read: *Mt. Imo* and *Mt. Se*.

View: *Imoseyama no dan*

Lesson 18

Topic: *Bunraku* 文楽 Puppet Theatre continued: *jidaimono*, heroes, and historical spectacle.

Read: Accompanying materials for *Kokusen’ya*

View: *Kokusen'ya*.

Lesson 19

Topic: *Bunraku* 文楽 Puppet Theatre continued: *sewamono*, commoners and the spectacle of the emotions

Read: *Meido no hikyaku*.

View: *Meido no hikyaku*

Lesson 20

Topic: *kabuki* 歌舞伎

Read: Shively, “The Social Environment of Tokugawa *kabuki*”; Malm, “Music in the *kabuki* theatre”; Flavin handout, “歌舞伎”

Lesson 21

Topic: *kabuki* 歌舞伎 continued: the construction of spectacle.

View: *Shibaraku* and *Uiro-uri*

Lesson 22

Topic: *kabuki* 歌舞伎 continued: the construction of femininity.

Read: *Musume Dōjōji*

View:

Lesson 23

Topic: *kabuki* 歌舞伎 continued: the construction of masculinity.

Read: *Kanjinchō*

Lesson 24

Topic: to be determined

Read:

Lesson 25

Topic: to be determined

Read:

Lesson 26

Topic: to be determined

Read:

Part 5: Final Presentations

Lesson 27

Topic: Final Presentations

Lesson 28

Topic: Final Presentations

Lesson 29

Topic: Final Presentations

Lesson 30

Topic: Final Presentations