

Noh Unmasked

Noh Reimagined is a two-day exploration of the classical Japanese theatre tradition and its power to inspire contemporary artists and composers. Curator **Akiko Yanagisama** explains all.



'It will be like a "Noh Unwrapped" in two days!' says Akiko Yanagisama, curator of the Noh Festival coming to Kings Place in May. Based in London (see Kings Place Local) she's long been an ambassador for Japanese culture: 'We know that composers such as Britten and Stockhausen were influenced by Japanese music and the Noh tradition – in works like *Curlew River* – but they had taken Japanese sonorities and used them in Western musical forms. In the 21st century, it's time for the Japanese tradition to play a bigger role.' She has collaborated with Sound and Music to find young composers who were interested in working with the Noh concept. The work of these composers will be heard in the context of classical Noh performances: *Takasago*, which embodies grace and elegance, and *Dojoji* involving dynamic movement. Noh music consists of chant and song, the Nohkan flute and three drums. The drums create tempo variation and Noh's distinctive sense of *ma*, or space. The Nohkan flute is used to convey atmosphere and emotional intensity. 'It's a radically different approach' explains Akiko. 'Masks are worn by supernatural beings

such as ghosts and demons, and contemporary artists have responded to this in fascinating ways.'

The weekend will start with a rare opportunity to see the highlights from the classical Noh plays including *Tenko* and *Toru* performed by Japanese master instrumentalists and Yoshimasa Kanze, a Noh *Shite* dancer-actor. Then comes a unique collaboration between legendary saxophonist Evan Parker and Japanese flautist Yukihiro Isso, followed by workshops on dance and music and exploration of Noh in contemporary arts. Simon Starling's film *Project for a Masquerade* (Hiroshima) will be screened and Ignacio Jarquin will present excerpts from his *Madam Butterfly Returns*. Last, but not least, the festival will welcome two vibrant remix artists, Mariam Rezaei and Shiva Feshareski to present a grand finale of time-travelling Noh.

FRI 13 - SAT 14 MAY
Noh Reimagined
See listings for details

MON 9 MAY

Savina Yannatou: Songs of Thessaloniki

Hall Two 8pm
Online Rates £12.50 | Savers £9.50

Singer Savina Yannatou plays music from her fourth ECM album, a dazzling evocation of her band's hometown, plunging deep into its rich and complex history. Her band Primavera en Salonico are a delight, one of the most resourceful bands in any idiom, as they negotiate the inspired – and very varied – arrangements of Kostas Vomvolos. With Kostas Vomvolos (qanun, accordion), Yannis Alexandris (oud, guitar), Kyriakos Gouventas (violin), Harris Lambrakis (nay), Michalis Siganidis (double bass) and Kostas Theodorou (percussion).

Savina Yannatou (9 May)



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Evan Parker meets Noh Music

Hall Two 9.45pm
Online Rates £16.50 | Savers £9.50

An intercultural collaboration between one of jazz's foremost instrumentalists, saxophonist Evan Parker, and leading Noh flautist Yukihiro Isso who, as well as being a master of classical Noh repertoire, is also a gifted improviser. In their first meeting they will explore improvisation, creating dialogues between the cultures of contrasting rhythms, colours and sounds.

13 – 14 MAY

NOH REIMAGINED

The contemporary art of classical Japanese theatre

Noh is a total art form comprising drama, music and dance. Originating in Japan in the 14th century, it is one of the oldest unbroken performance traditions in the world. This two-day festival explores the art of Noh, in particular its aesthetic concepts and unique musical rhythms and tempos, which continue to inspire artists across diverse art forms. Some of the finest Noh performers from Japan will present selections from classical Noh masterpieces such as *Takasago* and *Toru*. Master *Shite* actor-performer, Yoshimasa Kanze, will dance to Noh percussion instruments punctuated by the space, voice and haunting pitches of the *nohkan* (flute) played by Yukihiro Isso. The festival will transform Kings Place into another world.

Generously supported by Yakult, Daiwa, Great Britain Sasakawa Foundation, Arts Council Tokyo and Embassy of Japan, London.

FRI 13 MAY

NOH REIMAGINED

Noh in Focus 1 Knowing Noh

Pre-concert talk

Hall One 6pm
FREE event, but a ticket is required. Please contact the Box Office to reserve your seat.

What is Noh? Richard Emmert, Tokyo-based American Noh practitioner and founder of Theatre Nohgaku, talks about the history, aesthetic concepts, stories and performance traditions of Noh, and gives an insight into the works being performed during the festival.

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Yugen

The mysterious elegance of classical Noh

Hall One 7.30pm
Online Rates £14.50 – £24.50 | Savers £9.50

Yoshimasa Kanze, Noh main dancer-actor, and Noh musicians Yukihiro Isso (*nohkan* – flute), Mitsuhiro Kakiwara (*o-tsuzumi* – hip drum), Tatsushi Narita (*ko-tsuzumi* – shoulder drum), Yoshitani Kiyoshi (*taiko* – stick drum) perform highlights from the classical Noh plays *Tenko* and *Toru*, by the foremost Noh playwright and performer Zeami (c. 1363 – c. 1443). *Tenko* refers to

SAT 14 MAY

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Noh in Focus 2 Movement in Noh

The Dynamism of Stillness – A Workshop

Hall Two 11.30am
Online Rates £9.50

The master actor-performer Yoshimasa Kanze, supported by Richard Emmert,



Yukihiro Isso (13 May)

will teach the highly stylised movements of Noh for actors, dancers and anyone else interested in the delicate intensity of movement expression. Participants will learn *kata*, basic movement patterns, *kamae*, basic posture, *hakobi*, sliding-foot manner of walking, and subtle means of expressing emotion in simplicity and abstraction.

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Noh in Focus 3

The music of Noh

Workshop

St Pancras Room 1.30pm
Online rates £6.50

This workshop led by Richard Emmert will offer participants an opportunity to learn about the basic features of the music of Noh, and to try out the fundamental styles of Noh chant. Noh instrumentalists will join in the workshop, demonstrating aspects of the four instruments of a Noh ensemble.

Noh Inspired 1

Masking and Unmasking:

Noh Theatre as a Strategy in Contemporary Art and Performance

Hall Two 3.30pm
Online rates £6.50

A screening of Simon Starling's *Project for a Masquerade (Hiroshima)*, which connects the making of contemporary Noh masks with Cold War politics, nuclear development and art, will be followed by performances from three collaborations and a panel discussion: Ignacio Jarquin presents excerpts from his piece *Madam Butterfly Returns*, incorporating Noh elements, music by Michael Finnissy and a libretto by Andrew G Marshall. Ami Skånberg Dahlstedt and Palle Dahlstedt look at the role of hero and victim in Noh through movement and sound fragments. David Toop and Wiebke Leister explore the psychological and aesthetic significance of voice and face masking in Noh through sound and photography.

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Noh Inspired 2

Cross-cultural collaboration and contemporary music

St Pancras Room 6pm

Join UK composers including Sound and Music Portfolio composers Andrew Thomas and Nicholas Morrish Rarity, whose Noh-inspired pieces premiere later this evening, as they discuss their own journeys into cross-cultural collaboration and its relevance to new music today. The panel is chaired by Richard Whitelaw, Director of Programmes at Sound and Music, and the discussion will be followed by a Q&A.

NOH REIMAGINED

Johakyu

From Classical to Contemporary

Hall One 7.30pm
Online rates £14.50 – £24.50 | Savers £9.50

Discover highlights from two classical Noh masterpieces and premieres of

Noh-inspired works by Andrew Thomas and Nicholas Morrish Rarity. *Dojoji* is a famous story of a woman scorned and transformed into a serpent-demoness. *Takasago*, by Zeami, celebrates the longevity and harmony in marriage, and features the powerful dance of a young god. Yukihiro Issa's original composition *Bibyon*, using Noh musical forms, bridges the ancient and modern aspects of the programme.

NOH REIMAGINED

Women remixing Noh

Hall Two 9.45pm
Online rates £14.50

The finale of the festival will feature multi-award-winning British female remix artists Mariam Rezaei and Shiva Feshareki. Both will use their diverse experience of imaginative experimentation to bring the sound of Noh to the contemporary ears of Kings Place audiences.

Noh Festival (13–14 May)

