

# Kongo School Noh Performance in Russia

## Top young talent in the traditional performing arts to assemble for *Raku: The Cosmos in a Tea Bowl* exhibition in Moscow



Scene from the Noh play *Hagoromo*



Hisanori Kongo

The Japan Foundation has organized a performance of Noh drama of the Kongo School at the Moscow Theater Center “Vishneviy Sad” in Russia, in conjunction with the opening of the ceramics exhibition *Raku: The Cosmos in a Tea Bowl* at the Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts. A lecture and demonstration given by the Urasenke School of tea ceremony will also be held, and participants will have the opportunity to learn about the philosophy, thought, traditional craftsmanship, and arts that have been handed down for centuries in Japan in a comprehensive way.

Noh has a history stretching back 650 years. Of its five schools, four are based in Tokyo, and the only one that is located in Kyoto is the Kongo School. For this event the classic Noh play *Hagoromo* (The Feather Robe) will be staged at the Moscow Theater Center “Vishneviy Sad,” directed by Hisanori Kongo, the 26th-generation Grand Master of the Kongo School, and starring his son, 27th-generation Master Tatsunori Kongo. Anticipation is already mounting for this performance played by actors with a mean age of 31 years, who are extraordinarily young in the world of Noh. At the opening event, which will take place prior to the play at the Pushkin Museum, there will be a Noh chant and *kotsuzumi* (shoulder drum) performance by Hisanori Kongo. After the play at “Vishneviy Sad” young Russians, who study Japanese language and culture or engaged in the theatrical arts, will interact with young Noh performers to deepen their understanding of traditional Japanese performing arts.

An earlier Noh performance at the State Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg, which was held as an opening event for the *Raku: The Cosmos in a Tea Bowl* exhibition won great accolades. For this event, some of the greatest young talent from Kyoto, representing the future of the Noh genre, will appear on one stage in Moscow. Please contact us regarding the details of this event or to obtain press materials.

**[Dates]:** Tuesday, September 22– Wednesday, September 23, 2015  
7:00 p.m.–8:30 p.m.

**[Venue]:** Moscow Theater Center “Vishneviy Sad”

**[Organized by]:** The Japan Foundation, The Raku Museum, The Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts, Japan-Russia Youth Exchange Center

**[In cooperation with]:** Embassy of Japan in Russia

**[Assisted by]:** Fukujuen Co., Ltd., Komatsu CIS, LLC., Mitsubishi Electric (Russia) LLC

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## Program

### 1. Subayashi: “Shishi” (Lions), from *Shakkyo* (Stone Bridge)

#### Summary

Lions, servants of the deity of wisdom Monju, perform a wondrous dance and then return to their designated seat in this piece from the Noh story *Shakkyo* (Stone Bridge). This is one of the classic tales in Japanese performing arts, with a story that has inspired a body of related works in Kabuki as well. Here, the tension, power, and celebratory energy of the piece are highlighted in this condensed Subayashi (music only) version.

#### Performers

Musicians: Yosuke Arai (*fue* [flute]), Ikio Sowa (*kotsuzumi* [shoulder drum]), Yuichiro Kawamura (*otsuzumi* [hip drum]), Kazuha Nakata (*taiko* [stick drum])

### 2. Lecture: The Enduring Appeal of Noh

Speaker: Tatsushige Udaka

### 3. Noh play: Hagoromo (The Feather Robe)

#### Summary

This is among the most popular Noh plays, based on an ancient legend and frequently performed since the 16th century.

Zeami, a seminal figure in the formation of Noh, wrote that this dance of an angelic female figure was in a special category, and this piece went on to influence the style of Noh dance significantly. The white sand of the beach, the green of the pines, and Mt. Fuji towering in the distance are an elegant backdrop for this performance, overflowing with power and grace, by Tatsunori Kongo.

#### Performers

Actors: Tatsunori Kongo (*shite* [leading role] Heavenly being), Jotaro Mori (*waki* [supporting role] Hakuryu the fisherman)

Musicians: Yosuke Akai (*fue*), Ikio Sowa (*kotsuzumi*), Yuichiro Kawamura (*otsuzumi*), Kazuha Nakata (*taiko*)

Chorus: Hisanori Kongo (*jigashira* [leader]), Tatsushige Udaka, Natsuki Yamada, Tadasuke Somyo Norishige Udaka (*koken* [stage attendant])

\*On Monday, September 21 at 7:00 p.m., a performance of Noh chant and *kotsuzumi* (shoulder drum) will be held at a specially built stage at the Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts.

\*On Wednesday, September 23, a Japan-Russia youth exchange event will be planned after the performance at Moscow Theater Center “Vishneviy Sad.”

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