

Noh Charity Performance

Prayers from Kyoto for Reconstruction of Japan's Disaster-affected Regions

Thursday,
August 21
2025

Venue : ROHM Theatre Kyoto,
Southhall

13, Okazaki Saishoji-cho,
Sakyo-ku, Kyoto City



◆Part 1 at 10:30 am

Noh "Tsunemasa"
Kyogen "Tsukuzukushi"
Noh "Kanawa"

◆Part 2 at 6:30 pm

Noh "Yoro"
Kyogen "Yobikoe"
Noh "Yamamba"

"Kanawa"

Play synopses
will be
presented
in English.



Admission tickets are ¥2,000

each for Part 1 and Part 2 (※Open seating ; no refunds)

Kyoto Kanze Nohplay Theatre : Box office or telephone reservations 075-771-6114

ROHM Theatre Kyoto Ticket Counter : Box office or telephone reservations 075-746-3201

Kyoto Concert Hall Ticket Counter : Box office or telephone reservations 075-711-3231

Online purchase/reservation (WEB) <https://www.s2.e-get.jp/kyoto/pt>



Organized by : Kyoto-based volunteer Noh performers

Co-organized by : The City of Kyoto ,

ROHM Theatre Kyoto(Kyoto City Music Arts and Culture Promotion Foundation)

The Japan Foundation Kyoto Office

Collaboration : Showa Printing Co.,Ltd. Kyotobutaibijutsuseisakusyo Co.,Ltd.

<Part 1 Commentary and Storylines>

Noh play: Tsunemasa

This noh play, adapted from *The Tale of the Heike*, centers on two figures: warrior Taira no Tsunemasa and priest Gyokei. Tsunemasa was a late-tenth-century general who fell in the Battle of Ichinotani. He was also a renowned *biwa* (lute) player, entrusted with a prized instrument called Seizan (Green Hill). Before leaving Kyoto for war, he returned it to Ninna-ji Temple, its rightful home.

Gyokei, a priest of Ninna-ji Temple, places the *biwa* Seizan on the altar for the salvation of Tsunemasa's soul. Late that night, Tsunemasa's ghost appears—visible only as a dim silhouette in the faint lamplight.

Hearing the *biwa* tones and the pattering of falling pine leaves, Tsunemasa is overcome by nostalgia. He lifts the *biwa*, plays a melody, and dances. But as he revels, the torments of Warrior Hell assail him. Only then does his full, dreadful form emerge, revealing a spirit bound to endless suffering. Ashamed, he puts out the lamplight and vanishes into darkness. His fleeting silhouette embodies his longing for a night of unending music. In this noh performance, experience the world of the *Tsunemasa* drama, where a war general—despite his life on the battlefield—cherished music and poetry above all.

Kyogen play: Tsukuzukushi (Horsetails)

Two men stroll together through the spring fields. One spots horsetails and recites a waka poem—but blunders, prompting his friend to burst into derisive laughter. They patch things up and walk on. By a stream, they find a peony in bloom, and now the friend recites a poem—but he too makes a mistake and finds himself the laughingstock. When the horsetail poem comes up again, the first man flares up and challenges his friend to a sumo match. And so—what will become of the two?

Noh play: Kanawa (The Iron Crown)

An attendant at Kifune Shrine waits at midnight for a woman to deliver the shrine deity's oracle. When she arrives, he pronounces the oracle: "If she wishes to become a demon, she must don a scarlet kimono, paint her face in vermilion, set three blazing torches on the three legs of an iron tripod, and fill her heart with wrath." When the woman decides to make the oracle come true, her demeanor shifts instantly. She departs from Kifune with a grim mission: to teach her husband a lesson.

The woman's husband has recently been plagued by ominous dreams and seeks out the diviner Abe no Seimei. Seimei warns that the man's life may be at risk tonight and asks if he suspects any reason. The man confesses that he has left his first wife for another woman and asks Seimei to perform ritual prayers. At his request, Seimei has an altar brought in for the ritual and chants sacred invocations. Then, as the oracle has foretold, the woman's *ikiryo*—her living spirit—emerges, visibly deformed by fury. She advances on the altar, lamenting her resentment, longing, and unforgotten love, and seeks vengeance to take the man's life. She wraps the second wife's hair around her hand and lashes out, but the altar's guardian deities intercept her assault. Denied her prey, she falters, and her spirit dissolves into nothingness.

Although Kifune Myojin traditionally presides over harmonious unions, Kanawa—drawing on *The Tale of the Heike*—portrays the deity as one who, heeding a woman's resentment, tears lovers apart.

<Part 2 Commentary and Storylines>

Noh play: Yoro (Nourishing the Aged) - Suiha-no-den

Envoys from Emperor Yuryaku travel to Gifu Prefecture after hearing rumors of a wondrous spring. Upon arrival, they encounter a father and son who have discovered the miraculous water. They learn that drinking from the spring—whose clear flow pools at Yoro Falls—can restore strength even in the aged and mend both body and spirit. Overcome by the spring's hallowed power, the envoys are seized by profound emotion.

Once the father and son depart, ethereal music drifts down from the heavens, and blossoms cascade in a swirling dance—a sign of good fortune. Amid this wondrous omen, the reincarnation of the Willow Bodhisattva (Yoryu Kannon) appears, followed by the mountain deity, who dances with grace to herald peace and prosperity for the realm.

In today's staging, we present the latter half of the drama, beginning with the envoys' moment of revelation. This special *suiha-no-den* direction features the Willow Bodhisattva—normally absent from the standard program—and showcases the mountain deity's dance, whose rendering is vigorous yet graceful. We hope the spectacle brings blessings for the audience to enjoy.

Kyogen play: Yobikoe (Tricked by a Rhythm)

Taro Kaja, who habitually takes leave without permission, incurs his master's fury. Having had enough, the master marches to Taro Kaja's home with Jiro Kaja and orders Jiro Kaja to summon Taro Kaja. Thinking his master is angry, Taro Kaja pretends not to be home and, from behind the door, answers pretending to be a neighbor. The master himself then calls out Taro Kaja, altering his voice. When that fails, he breaks into *Heike-bushi* (the narrative chant of *The Tale of the Heike*), *kouta-bushi* (a tune from a popular song), and *odori-bushi* (a lively dance tune) to lure him. How will the story end? Sit back and find out as you enjoy this feast of medieval artistry.

Noh play: Yamamba (The Mountain Crone) - Hakuto

Hyakuma Yamamba—a Kyoto entertainer named after the legendary mountain crone—has earned renown through her *kuse-mai* (rhythmic song) about the crone's mountain pilgrimage. She and her retinue set out for Zenko-ji Temple, journeying along the Hokuroku Road before traversing the steep Agero Pass. As they press onward, dusk falls with unnerving swiftness, and the party grows weary and disoriented. Just then, a solitary woman emerges and offers them lodging for the night. She implores Yamamba to perform the *kuse-mai* that has made her famous in Kyoto. The woman then unveils her true identity as the real mountain crone herself.

In the dead of night, the mountain crone sheds her human guise, revealing her true form. Though fearful, Yamamba begins her *kuse-mai* about the mountain crone. The crone joins her and performs her own movements, narrating the solitude of her life in deep mountain gorges, imparting insights into Buddhist law, and enacting the true mountain pilgrimage in song—before vanishing into thin air.

Today's performance begins in the latter half of the noh drama—the scene where the woman reveals her true form and transforms into the mountain crone. The *hakuto* (white head) rendition employs stark contrasts of tempo and mood, is rich in variation, and offers a dynamic spectacle that immerses the audience in the mountain crone's realm.