

GETTING TO NOH

A Lecture | Demonstration with Theatre Nohgaku & Special Guest Artists

as part of

TO NOH AND BEYOND

an *In a Memory Palace* workshop and performance series

Co-Sponsored by Theatre of Yugen

A live introduction to noh chant, dance and musical instruments with performance of excerpts from both traditional and new noh in Japanese and English.

Tuesday July 28, 2026, 7:00 – 8:00pm

At NOHSpace 2840 Mariposa Street, San Francisco, CA 94110

Program

1. *Tama no Dan (Jewel Section)* from the *Noh Ama (The Diver)* (in English)

Dancer: Jubilith Moore

Chorus: David Crandall, Kevin Salfen, Lluís Valls

2. Narrative Dance from the English-Language Noh *In a Memory Palace*

Dancer: Mika Oskarson-Kindstrand

Chorus: Kevin Salfen, David Crandall, Nick Ishimaru, Jubilith Moore

3. *Chū-no-mai* Instrumental Piece

Nohkan flute: Laura Salfen

Kotsuzumi shoulder drum: Kayu Ōmura

Ōtsuzumi hip drum: Kisaburō Umeya

4. Final Dance from the Noh *Hagoromo (The Feathered Robe)* (in Japanese)

Dancer: Gulshirin Dubash

Chorus: Kevin Salfen, Lluís Valls, Nick Ishimaru, Mika Oskarson-Kindstrand

Kotsuzumi shoulder drum: Kayu Ōmura

Ōtsuzumi hip drum: Kisaburō Umeya

Taiko stick drum: David Crandall

Theatre Nohgaku is an international performance ensemble whose members share a passion for noh and a conviction that it has profound power for audiences today. We perform traditional and contemporary work that reaches across boundaries of culture and language to tell stories that reflect our shared humanity.

Performers

David Crandall is a composer, playwright, and performer who studied noh chant and dance with noh master Hajime Sano and has worked professionally at the Hosho Noh Theatre in Tokyo. He is a founding member of Theatre Nohgaku and co-composer of *In a Memory Palace*.

Gulshirin Dubash is an actor and director from Bombay, India. She has worked between the United States and India working with non-profits and groups like Clowns without Borders. She currently serves as theatre faculty at Interlochen Arts Academy. She started studying Noh in 2001 under the guidance of Richard Emmert and Mitsuo Kama and joined Theatre Nohgaku in 2008.

Nick Ishimaru

Nick Ishimaru (he/him) is a company member of Theatre Nohgaku and student of Kita School Noh performer Oshima Teruhisa, as well as a director, producer, actor, and casting director. Ishimaru is a casting director with The Casting Collective, as well as with Marin Shakespeare Company, an artist in residence at Ruth Asawa School of the Arts, and a producer and co-founder of Kunoichi Productions. He served as Artistic Director of Theatre of Yugen from 2016 to 2020 and remains a member of their performing ensemble.

Umeya Kisaburō graduated from the Department of Traditional Japanese Music, Faculty of Music, Tokyo University of the Arts. He studied Nagauta instrumental music under the late Umeya Fukusaburo III, and noh performance and Kō-style kotsuzumi shoulder drum under Sowa Masahiro. In addition to extensive performance experience with NHK, the National Theatre, and other prestigious organizations in Japan, he has participated in several international tours in the United States, Europe, and Asia.

Jubilith Moore is a performer, director, writer, teaching artist, and producer, who has studied noh and kyogen extensively with master teachers. She was Artistic Director of Theatre of Yugen from 2001-14 and is a founding member of Theatre Nohgaku.

Kayu Ōmura is a kotsuzumi shoulder drum player of the Kō School. Daughter of Kita School shite actor Sadamu Omura, she was exposed to noh at a young age and began taking kotsuzumi lessons in high school. She graduated from the noh division of Tokyo University of Arts in 2009. In addition to her busy noh performance schedule, Ōmura teaches drumming in the Tokyo area and has appeared internationally in many fusion works.

Mika Oskarson-Kindstrand is an actor and assistant director from Sweden. Exposed to a blend of Asian and Western theatrical traditions from an early age through the World

Theatre Project spanning Sweden, India, Mozambique, and China, Mika's journey in performance commenced at the age of 5. Since then, she has performed many roles across a spectrum of theatrical productions in Sweden and around the world.

Kevin Salfen is a musicologist, composer, filmmaker, and producer. He has been a member of Theatre Nohgaku since 2011. His compositions have been performed in Europe, Asia, and throughout the United States, and two of his intercultural projects with TN – the film *Phoenix Fire* and the performance/installation *In a Memory Palace* – have received awards from the National Endowment for the Arts. He curates and writes for the blog *Sound Trove*.

Laura Salfen is a flutist and fundraising professional based in the San Antonio area. Originally from Gahanna, Ohio, Laura holds degrees in flute performance from the Ohio State University and the University of North Texas. Winner of the 2005 Flute Society of Kentucky Collegiate Artist Competition, Laura is a champion of new music and chamber music and has partnered with the Composers Alliance of San Antonio to premiere new works for flute and clarinet.

Lluís Valls acts, directs, and writes for the theatre. He has studied Kyogen with Yuriko Doi, Yukio Ishida, and Go Iida (Izumi School), Noh with Richard Emmert, Akira Matsui, and Kinue Oshima (Kita School), and kotsuzumi shoulder drum with Mitsuo Kama (Kō School). As a principal performer for Theatre of Yugen since 1995, he has been instrumental in creating over a dozen new works.

Summaries, Text, and Translations:

Tama no Dan (Jewel Section) from the Noh Ama (The Diver)

Attributed to Komparu Gonnokami

Translated and adapted by David Crandall

The ghost of a rustic diver recounts the agreement she made with her lover, a court noble, to retrieve a jewel that was stolen by the Dragon King and locked away in a tower under the sea. In exchange for the jewel, the noble agrees to confer an aristocratic title on their son despite his common heritage. Through chant and dance, this excerpt recounts the diver's harrowing underwater quest.

Text:

Woman

"Hold the rope—I'll shake it when I have the jewel. Promise me you'll pull me up with all your strength." Thus assured, I drew a single, sharpened blade—

Chorus

And plunged into the water toward the cold abyss
Thrusting forward, through the pluming waves and mist
Far out in the offing where ocean touches sky
Boundless, the surge gave way then closed behind me

I looked down, but found no sign of bottom or edge
Utterly alone, I felt the void encompass me
This was a quest beyond the reach of flesh and bone
Only a miracle could make the jewel mine

Diving deep, I came at last to the Dragon Gate,
Peered inside the courtyard crowned by a great tower
Soaring sixty fathoms high, glittering with gems
Flowers and incense were placed in offering
Wreathed around the gleaming spire that held the jewel I sought
Eight dragon kings arrayed themselves in ranks
Cruel sharks and other deadly creatures of the sea
Kept ceaseless watch; I knew I'd never leave alive
My heart ached with tender longing
My thoughts fled in blank despair to my beloved home
Far beyond the waves that now encircled me
There my son awaited me
And his father, the noble minister of state
Sweet faces I would never see again
Our final parting left my soul in tatters
Holding back my tears, I stood with grim resolve
And joined my hands together in humble supplication:
"Hear me, Bodhisattva Kannon of Shidoji!
Grant me your holy strength to do the task that I must do."
Reverently, I touched the sacred sword of mercy to my brow
And burst into the Dragon Palace in swift attack
The guardians scattered in alarm, giving me my chance
Rushing in, I stole the jewel and quickly fled
The dragon kings raged after me in furious pursuit
But I had devised a desperate plan
I reversed my grip and turned the blade upon myself
Gashed the flesh beneath my breast and pushed the jewel in
I cast the sword aside and lay as still as death
I knew no palace denizen could tolerate a corpse
No glaring sea beast dared approach my stricken body
Darkness seeped into my eyes as I shook the rope
Sending a furtive signal to those awaiting me above
With hope and joy they kept their word and drew me up
In a crimson flash of foam, the jewel's fate unknown...

Narrative Dance from the English-Language Noh *In a Memory Palace*

By Edith Reisner Newton

Music by David Crandall and Kevin Salfen

In a Memory Palace is a meditation on displacement: both the physical displacement of refugees, immigrants, and others who make new lives far from their original homes, and the temporal displacement of fragmented memories. Playwright Edith Reisner Newton draws on her own family history to tell the story of Hedwig Müller, a couturier who catered to Viennese high society in the interwar period and who, with Hitler's rise, fled to the United States with her Jewish husband. Comprising two acts and an interlude, the work is set in interwar Vienna and a nursing home in the present-day US. It draws heavily on the literary form and otherworldly quality of *noh*, where characters can simultaneously exist in a real place and time and, sometimes even more intensely, in the phantom world of memory. This excerpt describes Hedwig's elegant life in Vienna and the deepening shadow of war.

Hedwig

Austrian as Edelweiss, Dürnstein, or the Donau,

Chorus

Viennese as Schnitzel or a midnight waltz,
Georg and I were childless, but he had his work,
and until the painter came, I had my Art.
Later we told everyone that I had been a nurse
and a "concert pianist" bound by a vow—true,
but then many women had such accomplishments.

What treasure was too precious to let them glimpse?

My great gift was this: to make others beautiful.

For a time I felt that was what I loved most.

To my dress shop came every woman of culture

To be draped in the latest silks, laces, or linens,

wanting to be seen in town, on the Ringstrasse

or at the Opera house, in their finery.

Feathery Papagenas, jeweled Aidas,

so many Queens of the Night, wealthy and vain.

Little Rudi watched from the corner, Georg's sister's son.

Who knew, then, that a Gernreich would make such a name?

Hedwig

But not in Vienna, where the crowds squealed like sirens

and maenad girls threw roses at the mad painter.

Chorus

Now a Jewish man married to an Aryan woman

by law wears the yellow badge. Many innocent people

are accused of crimes. Some have been taken

for permanent questioning. Georg's sisters have vanished

with Rudi—to America, we hope. Best to speak little,

but one needs friends to help with visas, with passage.

There are some who scoff at me. "If Georg loves you,

he must let you cast him aside." Sipping their coffee,

adjusting their picture hats: "You were so much more like us

when we were at school." I am sorry, I tell them.

The mad painter has taught me who I really am.

***Chū-no-mai* Instrumental Piece**

Traditional

Instrumental pieces are an important component of many noh. The *chū-no-mai* (literally, “middle dance”), with its moderate tempo, is one of the most commonly performed dances in the noh repertory. It has two arrangements: one with the taiko stick drum, and one without. Its length also changes slightly depending on which of the five main actor schools is performing. Tonight we present a *chū-no-mai* without taiko as performed in the Kita School style.

Final Section of the Noh *Hagoromo* (*The Feathered Robe*) (in Japanese)

Author unknown

(Traditional, in Japanese)

The simple yet profound noh *Hagoromo* has delighted audiences for centuries since its first recorded performance in 1524. An angel of the moon has left her robe on a pine branch to bathe in Suruga Bay. It's discovered by a fisherman who, recognizing it as a great heirloom, claims it for his own. The angel tries to convince him to return it to her, but he stubbornly refuses until she reveals that without it she'll be unable to return to her home in heaven and doomed to decay and die. Finally relenting, the fisherman demands that she dance for him in return for the robe. With the robe recovered, the angel dances in celebration of the beauty of the bay and rises above Mount Fuji, disappearing into the springtime haze. In tonight's performance, we present the final section as a dance, accompanied by the full drum ensemble.

Text:

(Translated by David Crandall)

The graceful Eastern dances, countless in number
The graceful Eastern dances, countless in number
She dances for mortal kind, the moon-palace maiden
Shining in the midnight sky, holy orb of light
Lambent with incarnate truth, fulfilling all vows
Bestowing in full measure her bounty upon the land
The seven sacred treasures shining among myriad jewels
Fall like rain upon the land, a divine gift of plenty
As wonders unfold, time passes away
Fleeting as a feathered robe
That in the sea wind furls and flutters, furls and flutters
Above the pine strand of Mio, through the clouds of Ukishima
Soaring past Ashitaka and Fuji's lofty peak
Growing faint, her figure fades into the blue of heaven
Mingling with the mists of spring,
She vanishes away