



THEATRE NOHGAKU WITH KUNOICHI PRODUCTIONS
AND THEATRE OF YUGEN
PRESENT THE SAN FRANCISCO PREMIERE OF

In a Memory Palace

by Edith Reisner Newton

Approximately 70 minutes without an intermission

choreographed & directed by Jubilith Moore composed by David Crandall and Kevin Salfen

CAST (in order of appearance)

Kristin Jackson Nursing assistant
Gulshirin Dubash Woman
Mika Oskarson-Kindstrand Old woman
Lluís Valls Man
Mika Oskarson-Kindstrand Spirit of Hedwig Müller

CHORUS

Nick Ishimaru
Valerie Jeannin
Alexandra Jerinic
Marisa Martinez Mejia
Lizeth Razo Robledo
Kevin Salfen
Andrew Tucker
Dazhir Walker

INSTRUMENTALISTS

Brett Carson *Keyboard*
David Crandall *Taiko*
Umeya Kisaburo *Otsuzumi*
Kayu Omura *Kotsuzumi*
Laura Salfen *Nohkan / Piccolo*
Monica Scott *Cello*

STAGE ATTENDANTS

Sheila Devitt*
Ryan Marchand

CREATIVE TEAM

<i>Scenic & Installation Design</i>	Mikiko Uesugi ⁺
<i>Costume Design</i>	Margaret Mitchell
<i>Mask Design</i>	Hideta Kitazawa
<i>Wig Design</i>	Melissa Kallstrom, and Wigs by Tips
<i>Sound Design</i>	Andrew Bergmann
<i>Media Design</i>	Ryan Yu
<i>Lighting Design</i>	Allan Willner
<i>Technical Director Production Manager</i>	Colm McNally
<i>Stage Manager</i>	Annika Raether
<i>Stage Technician</i>	Dan Hall
<i>Website Design</i>	Rozlynn Olivas
<i>A Memory Palace Phone App Design and Implementation</i>	Wael Ahmad & Nick Fite
<i>Pre-production photography and principal graphic design</i>	David Surtasky

* Appears courtesy of Actor's Equity Association

⁺ The Scenic Designer is a member of United Scenic Artists, Local USA 829, IATSE

In a Memory Palace wishes to thank

Orit Eylon for singing it first. Choo Choo Hu for killing it at the keys. Tido Janssen and Ara Koh for every beautiful note. Kevin's music colleagues at UIW for creating a department where dreams thrive. Wystan for letting us perform the work-in-progress on his 10th birthday. Takako Kawauchi and Matt Dubroff for every kakegoe. Elizabeth Dowd for being right there with us through every FC meeting and application – stars in her crown! Ellen Brooks for helping us to hear Hedwig. Judy Halebsky for intercultural introductions, Beth Hersh for entrusting us with her bilingual, mixologist student who we couldn't have made it to opening night without! Kiyo Kamisawa for her translation, Wendy Redding for her sweet honey and hospitality, Jennifer Schofield for her melodious tones, cicadas and cheese, Douglas Endsley for his gracious hospitality and unwavering support, Zachary Endsley for his shining light that lingers long after he has left the room, Lourdes Yesenia Tafur de Grancharoff, cutter draper for Hedwig, for sewing the mock-up right the first time. Rebecca Novick for saying, "no," Paul Drescher for thoughtfully following up when asked for musician recommendations – and changing the landscape of who is on stage right now! Sue Lopez for her incomparable easy hospitality, steadfastness, and for her bread. Edith Reisner Newton for introducing us to a cow! Suki O'Kane for being a connector of musicians to music, Jeanette Oliver for her unflappable hospitality! Paula Swiatowski for her steadfast support. Edward Schocker for his thoughtful referrals and networking, Christine Joly de Lotbiniere as the printer of fabric. All-Stitch owner / operator Valerie Gruner who cut, draped and stitched for the Woman. Ifigeneia Gianne for taking the wrinkles out of so much green screen! Jennifer Lown for meaning it when she says, "happy to help." Jared Goldstein for being a generous gatekeeper. Dávid Bánóczy-Ruof for his flexible invoicing! Amanda Lifvendahl for her fitting prowess! Josh McDermott for his hashiban! Leena Lamm for her admirable commitment to progress. Nathan Buck for saying, "Let me film that!" Raena Bishop is "the" extra stitcher; Cecilia Tomel for being a firsthand; John Maurer for his patience. Marc Schreibman for the giving of the light! Dr. Stacy D. Fahrenthold for quickly passing the ball and her buoyant enthusiasm for the project. Callie Floor for her casual competence, it fits her! Z Space / Word for Word for the use of their touring cases, without which the pilot installation would not have gotten off the ground! Chiori Miyagawa for her words! Francine Austin, who can do that! Nicholas Moore and Evan Feist for their assistance with the tech, Astrid Ortega for her designs, Lopita Nath and Tanja Stampfl for their vision; Claudia Cruz Hidrogo for saying, "yes." Adam Mulder for tying knots just right. Every community member, now friend, who shared a story or picture with us – the memory palace exists because of you.

THEATRE NOHGAU'S

MISSION STATEMENT

An international performance ensemble whose members share a passion for noh and a conviction that it has profound power for audiences today.

Together we...

Create new noh and noh-influenced work in English

Perform original and traditional works in Japanese and English in collaboration with Japanese master performers

Educate audiences, students, and the general public about the arts of noh and provide training in its techniques

Theatre Nohgaku (TN) performs contemporary work that reaches across boundaries of culture and language to tell stories that reflect our shared humanity.

HISTORY

Theatre Nohgaku is a U.S. based non-profit theatre company with satellite groups in Japan and the UK. Our members commit to long-term training in traditional nohgaku forms (noh and kyogen) and use it to create original performances in languages other than classical Japanese.

For more than twenty-five years, we have enjoyed critical acclaim in partnership with artists and institutions in Japan, North America, UK/Europe, And Australia.

We also conduct several annual training programs under the umbrella of our Noh Training Project in the UK, U.S. and Japan.

FROM THE LIBRETTIST

To me...

the most important line in *In a Memory Palace* is:

“A story, once told, opens a gate for the one who tells it and the one who listens.”

This idea, that listening to a story liberates the teller and elevates the listener, has guided my spiritual life for more than fifty years.

As a student of medieval literature at university, I was powerfully moved by the story of Perceval/Parsifal, whose failure to ask what ails the Fisher King has devastating consequences for the kingdom.

Eventually I found my literary home in noh theater, where in many plays, a pilgrim encounters a stranger obsessed with one indelible memory and effectively liberates the stranger by listening to his or her story.

Throughout my adult life, the listening journey has had its impediments. Cognitive changes, as well as social, cultural, and language barriers, can make it difficult to communicate clearly.

In the context of ***In a Memory Palace***, Auntie's identity has become unstable, conflated in her mind with her sister-in-law and various other selves. She also shares her generation's notions of decorum:

"You know little of what I sacrificed and why.

Little wonder, because we thought silence was best.

Then, one never yelped out in pain before a crowd.

Then, those grieving most often suffered in private,
every day cradling the past in their arms..."

Even so, a devout commitment to listening can overcome obstacles and offer the storyteller some relief.

But what of an individual who cannot share experiences for fear of persecution?

"Best to speak little, but one needs friends to help."

When I wrote the climactic lines in which Hedwig reveals her secret, I expected them to strike a chord in certain audience members because of family histories or academic interests.

But now, more than ten years later, I know many will feel reverberations close to home:

"Many innocent people are accused of crimes. Some have been taken for permanent questioning."

Ultimately, I hope audience members will take from ***In a Memory Palace*** a plea to listen, especially to those who, for whatever reason, are the most difficult to understand.

-Edith Reisner Newton

FROM THE COMPOSERS

FROM THE COMPOSERS

In the summer of 2017, members of Theatre Nohgaku met in Bloomsburg, Pennsylvania, where we had gathered for over 20 summers for the Noh Training Project. As was our custom, we spent one evening reading through new work. That was my first encounter with Edith Reisner Newton's libretto for ***In a Memory Palace***.

Edith's evocation of Hedwig Müller's beloved Vienna, lost to her because of the Anschluss, revealed to me what it might mean to miss the city of Mahler and Strauss, to long to tread the streets that Beethoven and Haydn had walked, to sit in the cafés where their voices were heard.

As a composer and musicologist, I had studied (and loved) that music often enough. Perhaps I was also reminded of being brought to tears while living in Japan by the slow movement of Bruckner's Second Symphony—another adopted Viennese!—because I longed so desperately to have that music surround me and be my truth, even if only for a while.

Somehow David Crandall, who had led the writers' workshop through which Edith wrote ***In a Memory Palace***, must have understood my special sensitivity to the work.

"Maybe you should compose this, Kevin," he said. I responded, "Only if I can compose it with you."

A journey began that night, a migration of sorts, across geographical and musical borders, that led us to something bracingly new with deep and ancient roots. It is the story of exile, a quest for home, in which restlessness is our lodestone – never to settle, always to search.

- Dr. Kevin Salfen

I saw my first noh performance in Tokyo in 1975.

I was immediately struck by the beauty and power of its stillness—the silent glide of actors' feet across the floorboards; the intensity of the guttural chanting; the choreographed movements coiling and releasing tension with only slight shifts in position; and the subtle play of shadow and angle that brought the stunning masks to life.

But my deepest impression came from the music, which felt otherworldly and imbued the silence between sounds with as much weight as the sounds themselves.

Since then, I've spent much of my creative life learning about noh's stillness and searching for new ways to embody it.

This isn't because I feel traditional noh is inadequate. It's because as an artist, I feel compelled to create, crafting new crystal vessels into which noh's essence might be poured.

Some of my pieces follow traditional forms; others introduce outside elements such as Western instruments and harmony.

I've composed pieces that don't use noh's musical idioms at all, trying to discover if the stillness can be generated by other means.

But ***In a Memory Palace*** is the most radical experiment I've worked on yet, largely because I co-composed it with Kevin Salfen. I've never shared the same creative space with another composer before, and I'm grateful for his patience and deep gifts, which pushed us to places I could never have reached alone.

-David Crandall

FROM THE DIRECTOR

Legend has it the mnemonic technique we call a "memory palace" was discovered following the collapse of a banquet hall in ancient Greece. All those inside were crushed beyond recognition, but they could be identified by Simonides of Ceos when he realized that by recalling the seating arrangement he could remember the dead, and so enable their proper burial.

A Noh Stage Functions In A Similar Way—It Acts As A Sacred Space Where Memories Are Shared, Secrets And Hidden Truths Revealed, And Sometimes, Resurrected.

The secondary figure and the audience witness a painful struggle—the central figure is fighting to be their true self, to let go of their anger or remorse. I liken it to the pain of (re)birth. Once they "arrive," their spirit can finally rest.

Our production is an exercise in collaborative storytelling at a time when a "might is right" vision of power is becoming the driving force in the world. Though cast in the noh idiom, it is not the type of English noh that Theatre Nohgaku usually presents.

Inspired by Newton's libretto and shaped by the realities of the pandemic and other social conditions, it is an accumulation of many ideas cultivated over the course of nearly a decade. It explores our present and future as direct extensions of our past.

The play is not just about Hedwig but about the context that gave birth to her story, a context that resonates all too clearly today. What we have created cannot be untangled from what we've been through and what we fear.

As such, ***In a Memory Palace*** has become a personal statement about the power, futility, and necessity of art. Living in this time of AI, historic climate migration, and the planet's loss of biodiversity and human culture—it can feel as if we have turned our backs on ourselves. And yet this project carries with it a legacy of immense generosity.

I am indebted to our production team who, in their commitment to see ***In a Memory Palace*** through, have accepted this century's dare: to make sure that whatever it is you care about—i.e., live performance—it will still be there on the other side!

-Jubilith Moore