

BU Arts Initiative

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INTERNATIONAL PERFORMANCE COMPANY THEATRE NOHGAKU
IN RESIDENCY AT BOSTON UNIVERSITY MARCH 25-31, 2016

(Boston, MA)—We are pleased to announce that the Boston University Arts Initiative – Office of the Provost, the Women’s, Gender, & Sexuality Studies Program, the Center for the Study of Asia, and the CAS Department of English will welcome Theatre Nohgaku to the Boston University Charles River campus for an artist residency from Friday, March 25th through Thursday, March 31st, 2016. “Boston University has a tremendous international reputation and a large international student population. The Theatre Nohgaku residency is an opportunity to celebrate the global nature of BU and engage with a powerful non-western art form,” said Carrie Preston, Associate Professor, Director – Women’s, Gender, & Sexuality Studies Program, and residency partner.

Theatre Nohgaku is an international performance group devoted to sharing the beauty and power of the classical Japanese noh drama with English speaking audiences. Noh, one of the oldest continuing stage arts, combines highly stylized dance, chant, music, mask, and costume with intense inner concentration and physical discipline. Theatre Nohgaku performs traditional noh in Japanese and English translation and creates original works that combine noh’s performance techniques and modes of expression with twenty-first century concerns. Their work has been called a “triumph” and “nothing short of brilliant” by Liz Arratoon, of The State (London). “We are thrilled to be able to present international artists of this caliber” said Ty Furman, Managing Director of the BU Arts Initiative. “Not only will our community have the opportunity to encounter a centuries old performance tradition, but we will have the particular pleasure to see how the noh style powerfully supports the exploration of both contemporary and universal sentiments and conflicts.”

The residency will include class artist visits, workshops, demonstrations, and panel discussions and culminate with performances of two pieces: *Sumida River* – an English translation of a traditional noh piece, along with the **world premier** of the contemporary piece, *Zahdi Dates and Poppies*, written by Preston. There will also be a matinee performance for *Zahdi Dates and Poppies* for more than 400 area high school students. All programs, aside from the matinee, will be free and open to the public with RSVP. “This is a rare opportunity for the intellectually and artistically curious to see and learn about an art form that is not often accessible outside of Japan; made even more accessible because of the English translation and timely concerns of war, trauma, and suffering,” said Preston. Theatre Nohgaku founding company member and project Music Director, David Crandall noted, “I’ve had many opportunities to participate in noh-related performance projects as a writer, composer, performer and director. There’s nothing like the

thrill of being part of a fine team of artists dedicated to putting new and remarkable work onstage, and that's exactly what we have here thanks to the generous support of the Boston University Arts Initiative”

A full list of residency activities with event RSVP links and artist biographies is available at bu.edu/arts/theatre-nohgaku.

The Boston University Arts Initiative in the Office of the Provost was created in the fall of 2012 with a mission to ensure that the arts are a vital component of the student experience at Boston University, and to build community awareness of, and engagement in the arts at BU. Our programming reflects interdisciplinary, global, and urban nature of Boston University. Through signature events with artists Theatre Nohgaku, we provide opportunities for the BU and area community members to engage with national and international artists and scholars.

Zahdi Dates and Poppies (World Premier) is a contemporary, masked, lyric, dance piece written by Carrie Preston, scored by David Crandall, and directed by Jubilith Moore in the noh style. This moving work adapts the poetic, musical, and performance styles of the ancient Japanese noh theater to explore a timeless concern: the impact of war on those who do the killing and their families. The story centers on a US Marine fighter pilot who is haunted by an insurgent he killed on a bombing raid in Zaidon, Iraq—a raid that also saved the life of a fellow Marine marksman. The pilot's wife, despite her own deep antipathy to war, tries to support him as he struggles with the nightmares of combat trauma. Appearing in the pilot's dreams, the ghost of the Iraqi insurgent mourns the loss of his life and the companionship of his own wife before achieving the release of forgiveness. While based on noh performance techniques, *Zahdi Dates and Poppies* expands the traditional idiom with a flexible structure, newly commissioned mask, innovative costume and lighting design, and modified music and choreography that create a one-of-a-kind theatrical experience. “It is my responsibility to ‘take care’ of the audience while encouraging them to journey to some new, yet familiar, place. *Zahdi Dates and Poppies* does that, it embraces a heightened theatricality that I have striven to imbue with skilled performers, big ideas, lyrical forms of transmission, great care, poetry, and craft.” Said director Jubilith Moore.

Sumida River is an English-language translation and performance adaptation of *Sumidagawa*, one of the most popular and affecting pieces in the traditional noh repertory. Adapted and directed by Theatre Nohgaku's Artistic Director Richard Emmert, it explores the deep bond between mother and child and the tragedy of loss. A ferryman on the Sumida River is about to take a traveler across, but they decide to wait for a madwoman following close behind. The woman arrives and explains she is looking for her son who has been taken by slave traders. As they cross, they notice a crowd on the opposite bank conducting a Buddhist memorial service. The ferryman shares that a boy died a year earlier after having been left behind by slave traders. The woman realizes that the boy was her own son, and the ferryman takes her to the grave. When she begins to recite prayers, the boy's voice is heard from inside the grave. His ghost then appears to her but when she reaches out to touch him, he slips back into the grave and disappears, leaving only “sadness and sorrow.” This production features full noh costumes, with the main character masked, and closely follows traditional performance practice to provide English-speaking audiences with an accessible glimpse into the world of noh, a stage art that has been continuously performed for more than 650 years. “Richard Emmert's deft English

adaptation and direction of the traditional noh *Sumida River* will help audiences understand why noh has continued to be performed for nearly 700 years” said Crandall.

Performances will include both *Sumida River* and *Zahdi Dates and Poppies*. The first performance will be on Wednesday, March 30 at 6:30 p.m., followed by a post-performance panel discussion on trauma & the arts. The second performance will be held on Thursday, March 31 at 7:00 p.m. RSVP is required: Both performances will take place at the Tsai Performance Center, 685 Commonwealth Ave., Boston.

In addition to the public performances, the following residency programs with Theatre Nohgaku will be free and open to the public:

- Noh Music Performance/Discussion on Friday, 3/25 from 12-1 p.m. at the College of Fine Arts. Studio 167, 855 Commonwealth Ave., Boston
- Noh Movement Workshop on Friday, 3/25 from 4-6 p.m. at the College of Fine Arts, Studio 109, 855 Commonwealth Ave., Boston
- Lecture/Demo of Noh & Kyogen performance styles on Saturday, 3/26 from 2-3 p.m. at the College of Fine Arts, Concert Hall, 855 Commonwealth Ave., Boston
- Playwriting Workshop on Monday, 3/28 from 7-9 p.m. at the Boston Playwrights' Theatre, 949 Commonwealth Ave., Boston

More information on the Theatre Nohgaku residency at Boston University including links to RSVP for events and artist biographies is available at <http://www.bu.edu/arts/theatre-nohgaku/>.

Founded in 1839, Boston University is an internationally recognized institution of higher education and research. With more than 33,000 students, it is the fourth-largest independent university in the United States. BU consists of 17 schools and colleges, along with a number of multi-disciplinary centers and institutes integral to the University's research and teaching mission. In 2012, BU joined the Association of American Universities (AAU), a consortium of 62 leading research universities in the United States and Canada.

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