

TEACHING TUESDAY

TAKIGI NOH

JUNE 21, 2016

Takigi Noh (薪能), or “firelight Noh”, is a type of Japanese ancient musical theatre that is presented outdoors at night, illuminated only by the light of bonfires and torches. Originating in 869, from Kofukuji Temple in Nara, this style of Noh is traditionally performed during the summer months in a variety of regions throughout Japan.

Noh is characterized by actors wearing lacquer-coated wooden masks and dressed in gorgeous costumes, accompanied by flutes and drums. Takigi Noh typically features traditional comedic dramas, using spoken lines and comical movements to make the audience laugh. It also features a unique stage, constructed from large boards placed over a lawn, bamboo poles set up and bound with rope, and strategically placed torches and bonfires to heighten the drama of the performance.

Originally, Takigi Noh performances were carried out when sacred takigi (firewood) was delivered to the temple. Now, they are organized as summer activities by cities and shrines as a way of enjoying the summer months and preserving this unique tradition. The wooden masks, colorful costumes, and traditional music, all illuminated with blazing torches, creates a unique, magical atmosphere for a Noh performance.