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Japanese drama form relies on indirectness

By Martin Johncox
 Emerald Contributor

The Noh play, a form of Japanese drama dating back to the 14th century, is a symbolic theater form relying on indirectness, suggestion, simplicity and restraint. Through muffled word and stylized movement, the Noh play suggests unspoken, indefinable realities and the intersections of life and fate, love and death.

Until recently, the Noh had become almost exclusively a court entertainment, an esoteric, rarefied ritual understandable only to the initiated. But in the 1950s, renowned writer Yukio Mishima revived the Noh with modern, urban settings. Mishima preserved the eerie, haunting mood of the classical Noh while his characters and situations maintain the directness of an encounter on the city street.

University Theatre's Second Season will open with two of Mishima's more accessible Noh dramas, "Sotoba Komachi" and "The Damask Drum," on May 24 in Villard Hall's Arena Theatre.

"Mishima has adapted the form and structure of traditional Noh plays and placed them in contemporary situations, thus updating them for modern audiences," said director John Schmor, a master's degree candidate in theater arts.

Original Noh plays were rigidly stylized and produced with elaborate costumes, masks, dances and music. The actors themselves did not speak, and an accompanying

chorus provided the dialogue. Every movement carried intense meaning and was often accompanied by a sustained rest. A hand slowly lifted to the face denoted weeping; a stamp of the foot might mean a ghost had disappeared.

Such restrained dialogue and abstract movements were intended to suggest the indefinable, limitless world beyond them. But an audience unfamiliar with the form could have a difficult time understanding the subtle techniques in an original Noh drama.

Both Mishima and Schmor seek to maintain the uncanny, symbolic quality of the original Noh, but wish to present the plays so that even the uninitiated can feel their powerful emotional overtones.

"Mishima's intention was to bring the philosophical heart of the Noh to a modern audience through what we call realism," Schmor said. "His characters, for example, are immediately recognizable, and they don't speak in poetic meter. In keeping with this, I don't want to move our production toward overt theatricalism such as masks, gymnastics, loud colors and loud noises. We do, however, want to isolate and intensify key images and themes of the Noh in our production — themes that correspond to the Japanese and Noh aesthetic. "The governing metaphor of our production will be 'intersection' — when two things become one and then pass on," Schmor said. "Both plays are

Turn to Noh, Page 10

Annual concert will present wide variety of dance styles

Students in the University's dance department will present a wide variety of dance styles in the annual Spring Student Dance Concert tonight at 8 p.m. in Dougherty Dance Theatre, located in Gerlinger Annex.

"The concert covers the whole spectrum of dance, ranging from abstract, post-modern conceptual dances to jazz, contemporary popular and more traditional styles such as ballet," said Catherine Arnold, publicity director for the event and a performer in the concert.

The entire concert is produced, directed, choreographed and performed by students with the assistance of

Dance Oregon, a student dance organization.

The production involves 60 students, including about 35 performers. Among the choreographers are four graduating seniors: Lisa Oxman, Wendy Ruble, Maria Basile and Sarah Hauss.

Additional performances of the concert are scheduled for 8 p.m. May 20 and 7:30 p.m. May 21. Tickets are \$2 for students and seniors and \$3.50 for the general public, and are available at the door.

Free parking for the concert is available in the PLC lot at E. 14th Avenue and Kincaid Street, or behind the library.



Michael Trager's "Villa Almerico Capra" is one photograph in his current exhibit at the Photography at Oregon Gallery in the University Museum of Art.

'Cabaret' continues this weekend

MUSIC THEATER/DANCE

Friday, May 19
Leningrad Dixieland Jazz Band — 8:30 p.m., EMU Ballroom. Tickets \$3 students, \$6 general, available at Hult Center box office, Cat's

Calendar

Meow and Light's for Music. A public reception with the musicians will be held at 7:30 p.m.

Crazy 8s — ska-flavored funk rock, 9 p.m., J. Cole's Brew Pub, 1045 Willamette St. Admission \$6 students, \$7 general at the door. 21 and over only, please.

Sunday, May 21
An International Tour of Band Music — with the University Symphonic Band and Campus Band, 4 p.m., Beall Concert Hall. Free admission.

Festival of Trumpets — with 20 student performers, 8 p.m., Beall Concert Hall. Free admission.

Wednesday, May 24
University Symphony — performing works by Ravel and Mozart, 8 p.m., Beall Concert Hall. Tickets \$1 students/seniors, \$3 general, available at the door.

Nuclear Free Jam — featuring Steve Smith, Agrosoul and others, 9 p.m., The Butte Tavern, 211 Washington St. Admission \$3 to \$5 at the door; 21 and over only, please.

Thursday, May 25
University Singers — featuring student compositions and conductors, 8 p.m., Beall Concert Hall. Tickets \$1 students/seniors, \$3 general, available at the door.

Friday, May 19
Cabaret — University Theatre's production of the acclaimed musical, 8 p.m., Villard Hall's Robinson Theatre. Tickets \$5 students/seniors, \$7 general, available at box office Monday through Saturday from 12:30 to 4 p.m. and from 6:30 to 8:15 p.m. performance nights. Additional performances will be held May 20, 26 and 27.

VISUAL ARTS

Monday, May 22
Random Reflections — an exhibit of computer and video art by Saba Oskoui, Lawrence Hall's Gallery 141. Hours 9 a.m. to 4:45 p.m. Monday through Friday. An opening reception will be held Tuesday, May 23 at 7 p.m.

Continuing
Undergraduate Art Show — EMU Art Gallery during normal building hours.

Continuing
Master of Fine Arts Graduate Exhibition — University Museum of Art. Call 686-3027 for hours.

MISCELLANEOUS

Tuesday, May 23
Time Stands Still — a film about troubled adolescents in early 1960s Budapest, 7 p.m., IMC Studio A. Hungarian with subtitles.

Wednesday, May 24
Sharon Olds — a reading by the creative writing program director at New York University, 8 p.m., EMU Gumwood Room. Free admission.

Gainer helps gospel garner fans, respect

By Sigrid Wright
 Emerald Contributor

When John Gainer started teaching at the University six years ago, it took almost a month to recruit 21 students to fill his unofficial Gospel Ensemble. Besides that, Gainer struggled for funding and practice rooms.

But, as the old spirituals assure, "trouble don't last always."

At the ensemble's winter term concert in March, the University's 550-seat Beall Concert

Gainer agrees.

"American music is now a valid form of study," he said. Gainer points to a new twist in the Gospel Workshop of America, an annual national meeting of performers, choir directors, ministers and recording artists. Lately, the group's leaders have been encouraging members to document their music.

Gainer, like most of the musicians who attend the workshop, learned gospel music simply by singing what he heard. He didn't even come from a musical family, and gos-

'Students tell me they look forward to my class even when they are down.'
 —John Gainer

Hall was filled and then some, with the audience spilling into the foyer. Gainer's biggest problem this year has been turning away more than 100 students who would like to sing with him in his now-accredited class.

It could be a sign of growing interest in gospel music, the soft-spoken minister said in characteristic understatement.

Unlike many smaller West Coast universities, the University is leaning more toward American music studies. Gainer's ensemble is part of the new emphasis. And this spring, in an effort to provide background on the origins of gospel music, he has added an upper-division survey course called "The Total Gospel Experience."

Until recently, adding such programs wasn't so easy. Edwin Coleman, director of the Folklore and Ethnic Studies Program and a jazz and blues musician who lectures statewide about spirituals and the blues, attributes some of the change to new music school leadership — especially a new dean, Bernard Dobroski, who took over in the fall of 1986.

"We can't limit ourselves to romantic images of European classical music," Dobroski said. "We have to emphasize good music. Gospel is one thread in the fabric of a music school."

pel had no place in formal education.

Now, however, a new kind of gospel musician is emerging — shaped by the classroom. Formal teaching gives gospel a new kind of status, but that has its down side, too.

"Some people can deal with gospel music academically," Gainer said. "But I tell my students to remember that gospel music is spontaneous. It becomes whitewashed when it's interpreted by standards."

Gainer helps his students to perform with feeling by insisting they learn by listening to tapes rather than by reading music. The effect, Dobroski said, is that more people majoring in areas other than music are involved in the gospel program.

"We have men and women in the ensemble who can't read a note of music. Until now, we would have excluded them from music performance."

Not only do ensemble members learn something of music without having to read it, they learn about black culture, Gainer said. When the choir is more than 90 percent white, that's an unexpected extra.

But no matter who the singers are, gospel is just plain fun.

"Just singing it is sort of therapy," Gainer says. "Students tell me they look forward to my class even when they are down."

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