

Contemporary Tradition – Japanese Performance Genre Today

13 – 15 October 2016

National University of Singapore

Session Two

The Right to Know: Ethical Issues in the Intercultural Transmission of Noh Practice

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Noh theatre's practice (training and performance) is ethical insofar as it incorporates the performer's everyday life. As practice informs life and life informs practice, the ethics of noh inform its aesthetics. In Japanese traditional practices (*geidō*) such as noh, these ethics are often assumed to be part of the education shared by a relatively uniform cohort of practitioners. Deference towards seniors, emphasis on the group rather than on the individual, rule conservatism, focus on method rather than on target – these are only some key features characterizing the noh ethos.

What are the issues arising when noh is transmitted to individuals who do not comply to such ethics, either because they do not share them, or because they intentionally resist them? To what extent is it possible to adapt transmission methods in order to meet the needs of a culturally diverse group of practitioners?

Based on extensive first-hand experience as member of the INI – International Noh Institute, a group of non-Japanese Noh practitioners based in Kyoto, in this paper the author discusses points of friction as well as productive encounters of traditional noh practice with elements disrupting the traditional flow of noh knowledge.