

Kyogen with Mansaku no Kai

2026.4.24 Fri. 19:30

2026.4.25 Sat. 14:30, 19:30

2026.4.26 Sun. 14:30

Weiwuying Playhouse

Duration is approximately 130 minutes with a 20-minute intermission.
Performed in Japanese with both Mandarin and English surtitles.



National Kaohsiung
CENTER FOR THE ARTS

WEI WUYING

衛武營 國家藝術文化中心
國家表演藝術中心 National Performing Arts Center

Introduction: The Heritage of Kyogen Art

Written by SHEN Liang-hui (Translator for *Kyogen Cyborg*, Theatre Practitioner)

Kyogen is a traditional Japanese performing art that, together with Noh, is collectively known as “Nogaku.” Both originated from the “Sarugaku” of the Heian period, which primarily featured comedic mimicry and slapstick. During the Muromachi period, the legendary performers Kan'ami and his son Zeami gained the favor of the Ashikaga shogunate, elevating the status of sarugaku and gradually splitting it into two distinct branches. While Noh integrated chanting and dance into a refined, symbolic masked drama of abstract tragedy, Kyogen inherited the comedic roots of sarugaku, evolving into a realistic comedy that blends colloquial dialogue with physical action. Despite sharing a common foundation, the two developed into arts with starkly different creative directions.

Both Kyogen and Noh performances are built upon “kata” (prescribed forms), meaning every movement—from standing and walking to speech and emotional expression—follows a fixed template. Consequently, disciples undergo rigorous training based on the continuous imitation of their masters. Kyogen is composed of three core elements: “kotoba” (dialogue), “utai” (chanting), and “mai” (dance). Performers rarely wear masks, donning them only for specific works. The cast is divided into the “shite” (protagonist) and the “ado” (supporting actor), with characters drawn primarily from everyday life. Recurring roles include “Taro Kaja” (servant), the “daimyo” (lord), the “yamabushi” (mountain ascetic), women, and demons. Through witty language and humorous movement, they present the full spectrum of human nature.

Two schools of Kyogen exist today: the Okura-ryu and the Izumi-ryu. The NOMURA family of the Izumi school is perhaps the most renowned lineage in the art. Training in the NOMURA household is said to “begin with the monkey and end with the fox”—starting with a debut in *Utsubo-zaru* at age three and culminating in the mastery of *Sanbaso* and *Tsuri-gitsune* around age twenty. Instruction is primarily a one-on-one process passed from father to son; in this tradition, the master-disciple bond always takes precedence over familial ties.

At the heart of the NOMURA family is Mansaku NOMURA, now 95 years old. Kyogen faced a decline during the Meiji period, and in the years of reconstruction following World War II, Mansaku NOMURA and his brother Man NOMURA boldly broke with tradition. They pioneered cross-genre collaborations and the creation of “New Kyogen,” sparking

a “Kyogen boom” and promoting the art through numerous international tours. The 2025 film *Six Faces: Kyogen, a Life on Stage*, directed by Isshin INUDO, documents Mansaku NOMURA’s lifelong artistic journey.

This adventurous spirit was inherited by his son, Mansai NOMURA, who shattered traditional frameworks to deliver refreshing performances across film, television, and the stage. He has collaborated with visionary artists such as director Yukio NINAGAWA, Robert LEPAGE, Ryuichi SAKAMOTO, Shiro TAKATANI, Daito MANABE, and Olympic gold medalist Yuzuru HANYU. He has also directed “2.5-Dimensional” productions of *Demon Slayer and Emperor of the Land of the Rising Sun*, pushing the boundaries of Kyogen through modern media.

The third generation, Yuki NOMURA, has inherited the techniques and spirit of the art from his grandfather and father. He pursues his own path with an ambition as high as the moon, combining his family’s daring spirit with his university expertise in political science to plan his own “IDEA Kyogen.” With significant momentum building, his future holds great promise for the evolution of the craft.

Program

One Hakama for Two

Duration: 20 minutes

Bridegroom (Shite): Yuki NOMURA

Father-in-law (Ado): Hiroharu FUKATA

Servant (Koado): Shuichi NAKAMURA

Father (Koado): Mansai NOMURA

Stagehand (Koken): Go IIDA

Today is the day of the Mukoiri—the groom’s first formal visit to his in-laws. At the bride’s home, the father-in-law has made meticulous preparations, eagerly awaiting the newcomer. Meanwhile, the groom is so overcome with nerves about going alone that he begs his father to escort him to the gate. After helping his son dress in formal nagahakama (long trailing trousers), the father intends to wait outside. However, he is spotted by the servant, Taro Kaja, and is forced to enter and pay his respects.

The problem? There is only one pair of formal trousers between them. This classic Mukokyogen (Son-in-law play) is a celebratory piece filled with warmth. The audience is invited to enjoy the delightful comedy that ensues as the simple-minded groom and his flustered father navigate this awkward encounter.

The Moon-Viewing Blindman

Duration: 30 minutes

Blindman (Shite): Mansaku NOMURA

Gentleman from the Capital (Ado): Ren NAITO

Stagehand (Koken): Shuichi NAKAMURA

On the night of the mid-autumn harvest moon, a blind lute priest (Zato) wanders alone into the countryside. As he loses himself in the rhythmic chirping of autumn insects, a young man from Kyoto arrives to view the moon and strikes up a conversation. Bonding over poetry, the two find themselves in perfect harmony. The young man shares his sake, and they begin a simple yet elegant banquet under the stars. Eventually, they part ways in high spirits—but the story takes an unexpected turn.

Originally an exclusive play of the Okura school, this version was revitalized by the Izumi school's Manzo VI and Mansaku NOMURA, and is now carried on by Mansai NOMURA. The play begins with a gentle, refined atmosphere, only to shift abruptly into a thought-provoking finale. It is a masterpiece that uses minimalist techniques to expose the absurdity and irrationality of human nature.

----- · Intermission · -----

MANSAI Boléro

Duration: 20 minutes

Music: M. RAVEL

Choreographer & Performer: Mansai NOMURA

Created by Mansai NOMURA, this work was inspired by the Great East Japan Earthquake of March 2011. It premiered as a solo dance in December of that same year during *Kyogen Theater: Part VII* at the Setagaya Public Theatre.

Mansai drew a parallel between RAVEL's *Boléro* and the traditional Kyogen piece *Sanbaso*—both utilize repetitive rhythms that spiral upward in intensity. The choreography begins with "Motionless Stillness" (symbolizing death), then transitions through "Resurrection" and "Rebirth." It represents the journey of a single day, starting from dawn, the cycle of the four seasons, and the progression of an entire lifetime, all condensed into a powerful 15-minute performance.

Since its premiere, the work has been reimagined through prestigious collaborations, including performances with full orchestras at Suntory Hall and Tokyo Bunka Kaikan in 2012, and at the Osaka Festival Hall in 2013. Most recently, it featured a high-profile collaboration with figure skater Yuzuru HANYU in March 2025. The piece continues to evolve and be performed in various forms today.

Team Introduction

The Mansaku-no-Kai Kyogen Company



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The Mansaku-no-Kai Kyogen Company was founded by Mansaku NOMURA II, and is now led by Mansaku and his son, Mansai II, members of a distinguished familial theatrical line that boasts a 250-year history. Since the company's first tour abroad to the Paris International Theater Festival in 1957, Mansaku has been a pioneer in sharing the art of Kyogen with international audiences, giving performances and lectures throughout the world. Continuing his father's mission, Mansai performs Kyogen extensively and is committed to exploring its possibilities as contemporary art. Mansaku NOMURA is titled as Living National Treasure of Japan, and Mansai NOMURA and Yukio ISHIDA have been designated as holders of Intangible Cultural Heritage.

Artists Introduction

Mansaku NOMURA



Mansaku NOMURA is a Living National Treasure of Japan. Born in 1931, as the second son of the late Manzo NOMURA VI, also a Living National Treasure, Mansaku studied Kyogen under his grandfather, Mansai NOMURA I, and his father, Manzo. At the age of three, he debuted in the role of Little Monkey in *Utsubo-zaru*.

He studied Japanese literature at Waseda University. Since graduation, Mansaku has been an outstanding leader in the Kyogen world, bringing new ideas to the art form. Along with important traditional Kyogen pieces such as *Tsuri-gitsune*, his representative works include *Pierrot Lunaire*, *Shigosen no Matsuri (The Rite of Meridian)* by Junji KINOSHITA, and *Shukoh* with ZHANG Ji-qing. His directing credits include *The Braggart Samurai*, based on SHAKESPEARE's *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, which toured Hong Kong and Adelaide. He has led Kyogen workshops worldwide since 1957. Workshops at the University of Washington, the University of California at Berkeley, and the University of Hawaii as a visiting professor.

Mansaku NOMURA has garnered numerous awards, including the Asahi Prize, Grand Prix of Art Festival run by the Agency for Cultural Affairs of Japan, Tsubouchi Shoyo Prize, Kinokuniya Theatre Award, and awards from the Japanese government, including the Purple Ribbon Medal and the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold Rays with Rosette.

Mansai NOMURA



Born in 1966, Mansai NOMURA studied under his father, Mansaku NOMURA II, and his late grandfather, Manzo NOMURA VI. He is a holder of an Important Intangible Cultural Property (Nohgaku) in Japan. He made his stage debut at the age of three. He currently serves as the director of Kyogen Gozaru-no-za.

Mansai has been actively participating in diverse performances around Japan and internationally, ranging from traditional Noh and Kyogen performances to contemporary theatre, movies, and television series; his wide-ranging directing and leading acting works, including *Atsushi*, *Kuni-nusu-bito*, and *Requiem on the Great Meridian*, sophisticatedly integrate classical theatrical techniques. He has devoted himself to a wide range of performing arts, aiming to widen the visibility of Kyogen as much as possible. Being a Kyogen artist of modern times, he explores the nature of Kyogen through multiple activities and performances.

He is currently the Artistic Director of Ishikawa Ongakudo and the Director of The Association of Public Theaters and Halls in Japan.

Yuki NOMURA



Born in 1999, Yuki NOMURA is the eldest son of Mansai NOMURA and was trained by his grandfather, Mansaku NOMURA and his father. He graduated from Keio University's Law School and is a member of the Nohgaku Performers' Association. He has served as the Director of IDEA Kyogen since 2025.

He made his stage debut at the age of three in *Utsubo-zaru*. He has made formal appearances in major Kyogen works such as *Sanbaso*, *Nasu no Yoichi Monogatari*, and *Tsurigitsune*, and has also appeared in new productions, including the Noh-Kyogen adaptation *Demon Slayer*.

In 2021, he made his television acting debut in WOWOW's 30th-anniversary drama *The Solomon's Perjury* and voiced the lead character Izou in the Netflix animated film *Bright: Samurai Soul*. In March 2023, he took on the role of *Hamlet* in his first modern theater performance in the play *Hamlet*, directed by Mansai NOMURA, at the Setagaya Public Theatre.

Hiroharu FUKATA



Born in 1967, Hiroharu FUKATA learned Kyogen from Mansaku NOMURA. He graduated from the 4th Nohgaku Sanyaku workshop at the National Noh Theatre and is recognized as preserve of Intangible Cultural Heritage. Under the Mansaku-no-kai Kyogen Company, he performs Kyogen and Noh in Japan and abroad while spreading Kyogen through courses at Asahi Culture Center as well as lectures and workshops across Japan.

Shuichi NAKAMURA



Born in 1989, Shuichi NAKAMURA studied under Mansaku NOMURA and graduated from Keio University Law School. He is a member of the Nohgaku Performers' Association. He began studying Kyogen at the age of nine and has appeared on stage since childhood, having made formal debut performances in *Sanbaso*, *Nasu no Yoichi Monogatari*, and *Tsuri-gitsune*. He also serves as an instructor for Kyogen workshops throughout Japan.

Ren NAITO



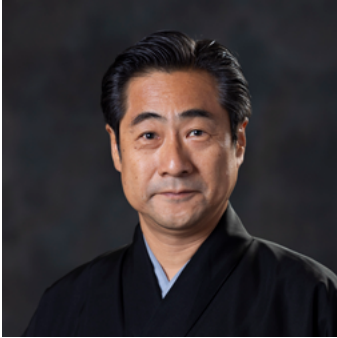
Born in 1986, Ren NAITO studied Kyogen under the tutelage of Mansaku NOMURA. He graduated from Seijo University, where he was a member of the Kyogen Society. He completed the 8th Nohgaku Sanyaku workshop at the National Noh Theatre and is now a member of the Nohgaku Performers' Association. He has made formal debut performances in *Sanbaso*, *Nasu no Yoichi Monogatari*, and *Tsuri-gitsune*. He also serves as an instructor for Kyogen workshops throughout Japan.

Go IIDA



Go IIDA was born in 1989. A graduate of Nihon University College of Art, he studied under Mansaku NOMURA. He is a member of the Nohgaku Performers' Association. He has made formal debut performances in *Nasu no Yoichi Monogatari* and *Sanbaso*. He serves as an instructor for Kyogen workshops throughout Japan.

Shigeo FUKUTA



Born in 1962, he studied Kyogen under the tutelage of Mansaku NOMURA. While studying at Waseda University, he participated in the Kyogen club. He continuously progresses through his frequent tasks on the extras, understudy and supporting characters.

Creative and Production Team

Performers | Mansaku NOMURA, Mansai NOMURA, Yuki NOMURA, Hiroharu FUKATA,
Shuichi NAKAMURA, Ren NAITO, Go IIDA, Shigeo FUKUTA

Producer | Tomomi OYAMADA

Company Manager | Kaoru SHIMIZU

Technical Director & Stage Manager | Yasutaka KATSU

Stage Staff | Naoto OGURI, Mitsuki ABIKO

Head of Lighting | Kohsuke SUGIMOTO

Lighting Staff | Takehiko MARUYAMA, Maki UYEYAMA

Head of Audio | Yasumasa OGASAWARA

Audio Staff | Hideyuki KAWANO, Yasuyuki AOTANI

Translator for Mandarin Surtitles | SHEN Liang-hui

Translator for English Surtitles | Shoichiro KAWAI

Translator for House Program | SHEN Liang-hui, Hegel TSAI