

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

NOH as an independent and original art form—ultimately destined to supersede the earlier *Dengaku*, *Sarugaku* and other song-dances—incorporates the most significant elements of the former and especially of the *Kusemai* (tune dance). With it a new literary form may be said to have been created. The invention of Noh is attributed to Kwannami Kiyotsugu (1333–1384), a distinguished actor and writer of *Sarugaku* and to his son Zeami Motokiyo (1363–1443), who developed and refined the art under the patronage of Yoshimitsu, the third Ashikaga shogun. In addition to his dramatic activities, Zeami composed a number of works, the most important of which is called the *Kwadensho* (the Book of the Flower), or more properly, *Fūshi-kwadensho* (風姿花傳書) in which he explained the nature and æsthetic principles governing Noh plays, and gave detailed instructions concerning the manner of composition, acting, direction, and production of these dramas.

The term Noh used substantively to denote ‘accomplishment,’ ‘skill,’ ‘talent,’ derives from a verb signifying ‘to be able,’ ‘to have the power,’ ‘to accomplish something,’ and was early applied to actors and dancers. Zeami uses the term to designate that unique type of lyrical drama known as Noh which he subsequently defines as ‘elegant imitation.’ In the work mentioned above the author stresses that this form of art consists of two fundamental elements—dance and song. In composing a Noh play the poet should, therefore, be careful to select personages from the classics—mythical, legendary or historical—who can appropriately execute songs and dances. He also should always keep the lay-out of the stage in his mind’s eye and take care that the action develops naturally out of and expresses the mood created by the music, thus perfectly harmonizing music and acting, singing and dancing. In the light of the above, the Noh drama may, in effect, be described also as a lyrico-dramatic tone-poem in which the text has a function somewhat similar to that of the libretto in a Wagner or Debussy opera. The significance of the action, the beauty of the verse, and the excellence of the music and singing, according to Zeami, are purposely designed to ‘open the ear’ of the mind, while the miming (*monomane*) and dancing (*mai*) awaken the emotions of the spectator and ‘open his eyes’ to that supreme form of beauty denoted by the word *yūgen*, which is the ultimate goal and the essen-

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tial element of all æsthetic expression, be it dramatic or lyrical. The term *yūgen* has no exact equivalent in English ; literally it means ‘ obscure and dark,’ but, as used by Zeami, it carries the connotation of half-revealed or suggested beauty, at once elusive and meaningful, tinged with wistful sadness. Zeami and his successors applied *yūgen* as a critical yard-stick not only to works of art but also to the physical appearance and conduct of an individual. Even an old man should, it is said, be presented like a frowning crag with flowers in its crevices.

The accompanying plan, it is hoped, will help the reader the better to visualize the lay-out of the Noh stage and to understand the stage directions accompanying these translations. The stage proper, a square platform of plain white boards, evenly grained, 19 feet 5 inches square, is raised 2 feet 7 inches above the floor of the auditorium (*kenjo*) into which it juts out on three sides. Because of this peculiarity, three fronts are distinguished in the Noh stage : that facing the centre of the auditorium, *shōmen* (front), that facing right, *waki-jōmen* (waki front)—so called because the audience is facing the *waki* when he is sitting on his seat—and that facing left, *jiura* (back of the chorus). The stage is devoid of any decoration or colour except for a large wooden panel (*kagami-ita*) at the back of the stage on which a venerable twisted pine is painted, and a brilliantly coloured curtain screening the entrance to the ‘ mirror room ’ (*kagami-no-ma*) or green room on the extreme left, at the end of the long, covered bridgeway (*hashigakari*) along which the actors approach the stage. To the right of the back stage (*atoza*), in the side-wall between the flute-player’s pillar (*fue-bashira*) and the *kagami-ita*, is a small sliding door (*kirido-guchi*) only used by the chorus and stage-attendants. The stage is covered by a roof supported at each corner by four square pillars about 15 feet high. A brief flight of steps leads down from it on to a broad strip of shingle called ‘ white sand bar ’ which skirts the base of the stage and the length of the bridgeway. This strip is designed to give the necessary perspective effect to the action taking place on the stage. The bridgeway is flanked, on the auditorium side, by three sapling pines known as ‘ first ’ (nearest the stage), ‘ second ’ and ‘ third ’ pine respectively, each of which serves to mark the position to be taken up by the actors upon their entrance or exit or when the action actually takes place on the bridgeway itself. The chorus sits in an oblong recess on the right of the stage, while the orchestra is situated up-stage—the flute on the right, by the flute-player’s pillar, and the drums (large hand-drum, small hand-drum and horizontal drum) on his left. On the left of the stage, by the entrance to the bridgeway, is the *shite* pillar (*shite-bashira*) and the *shite* seat, so called because the *shite* or protagonist begins his dance from there.

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Behind this, at the back, is the stage-attendants' seat of whom one, called the *kōken* (looker-after), is not only in charge of the stage properties and responsible for seeing that they are laid out and ready for the actors as required, but is the *shite's* understudy and must be ready to play his part at a moment's notice. The attendants assist the players to change their costumes. Since these changes take place often at the back of the stage in full view of the audience, great quickness and deftness are required in executing them. The corresponding pillar on the right stage goes by the name of *waki* pillar (*waki-bashira*) because by it is the seat of the *waki* or deuteragonist. Opposite, on the left, is the 'eye-fixing pillar' (*metsuke-bashira*) which serves as a kind of landmark for the actors in taking up their position on the stage which otherwise would be difficult because of their masks. The action proper usually begins and terminates at the *shite* pillar where the protagonist stamps his feet twice to show the play is ended. From the above the importance of the stage lay-out and of its different parts in relation to the action becomes self-evident, no less than its function as the framework for the dance-drama, each phase of which is carefully planned in relation to the fixed stage-positions already mentioned. Hanging under the floor of the stage and the bridgeway are several reverberating jars of earthenware which, acting like a sound-board, serve the purpose of intensifying the stamp of the actor's feet. The position of the jars is indicated in the plan by dotted circles.

The principal actor is called *shite* (performer) who may have one or more attendants (*tsure*), and is supported by the *waki* (bystander) and his one or more attendants (*waki-zure*). Additionally there may be a boy's role (*kokata*) and a walk-on (*tomo*). In typical Noh plays (e.g. *Takasago*, *Tamura*, *Tōboku*), the *shite* is, in reality, the only performer, since he alone mimes and dances, the *waki* in the earlier plays being little more than a foil, although in the later ones he becomes the deuteragonist. It will be noticed that in the list of *dramatis personae* the protagonist (*shite*) appears in different guises in the first and the second part. During the interlude (*ai*)¹ designed not only to allow the actor time to change costume but to relieve the tension—the latter purpose presents some interesting analogies with Shakespearean practices—a local worthy, played by the *kyōgen* or comic actor, carries on a semi-humorous dialogue in prose in which he explains the story of the play.

The chorus, while superficially bearing some resemblance to that of Greek tragedy, takes no actual part in the drama itself and wears ordinary costume.

¹ This interlude which forms an integral part of the drama should not be confused with satirical farces in prose of the same name, constructed in imitation of the Noh drama.

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Its primary role is that of singing the words that accompany the dances executed by the *shite*, but it also comments impersonally upon the events taking place and carries on a dialogue with the *shite* and the *waki*. It consists ordinarily of from eight to ten persons including the leader. As regards the orchestra, it should be noted that the percussion instruments mark the rhythm while the flute provides the melodic theme of the songs and dances. In the present translation the Japanese technical terms for the different types of declamation and singing to be used by the actors or the chorus are given on the left-hand margin of the text. It will be seen that the sung parts alternate with recitatives, or passages spoken in a declamatory tone. The entrance of the principal actors is generally, though not invariably, preceded by special music which has different names and varies in character according to the kind of singing that follows.

Following the entrance music (*shidai*), the play generally opens with a *shidai* sung by the *waki* alone or in unison with his attendants (*waki-zure*) accompanied by a few notes of the flute and drum taps, subsequently repeated (*jidori*) by the chorus. It is followed by the *michi-yuki* (travel song) also executed by the *waki*. The entrance music of the *shite*, called *issei*, is usually followed by a song of the same name executed by the *shite*. The *sashi* somewhat resembles a recitativ and precedes the songs proper (*uta*) or takes the form of a dialogue as in *Takasago*, I, 4 where it links the *kuri*, a lively piece with varying rhythms, and the *kuse* executed by the chorus except for one verse sung by the *shite*. Yet another form of song is the *rongi* (debate), roughly corresponding to the Greek 'stichomythia,' alternately intoned rather than sung by the chorus and the *shite*. The *machi-utai* (waiting song) chanted by the *waki* and the *waki-zure* to a musical accompaniment, is so called because it announces the appearance of the *shite* in the second part. The *uta* mentioned above are sung by the *shite*, the chorus or the *waki*, and are divided into *age-uta* (high-pitched singing) and *sage-uta* (low-pitched singing). The use of these forms is dictated not only by the text, but by their place in the general musical and rhythmic pattern of the play. To these should be added the *kiri* (finale) sung by the chorus at the end of the play. The spoken portions (*kotoba*) written in prose are classified into *nanori* (name-introducing) delivered by the *waki*, *mondō* (dialogue), and *katari* (narration) delivered in a somewhat monotonous rhythm (*Sanemori*, II, 4).

Dance, mime and rhythm, as already remarked, are distinguishing characteristics of the Noh drama, the ultimate purpose of which is 'significant form' expressing the aristocratic beauty considered indispensable to 'elegant imitation.' The *mai* (dance), as distinct from the popular *odori*, is a slow dance-

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sequence that weaves a continuous intricate pattern, the rhythmic movements of which are highly stylized and accompanied by gestures and postures which preserve measure and sobriety even when the tempo becomes livelier and faster, while in the latter which varies so as to express suitably the character and mood of the personage, no attempt is made at realism. The *mai* are of two types : *kakeri* (rush-dance) (*Tamura*, II, 4) and *hataraki* (war-dance) (*Funa-Benkei*, II, 5), which represent battle scenes and in which the dancer mimes rhythmically the narrative sung by the chorus, accompanying it, in the case of *hataraki*, by startling leaps and violent movements, and the *mai* proper which, as a rule, are not sung but concentrate upon beauty of form. To the latter belong the very slow and stately *kami-mai* (god-dance) as in *Takasago*, II, 2 and the *jo-no-mai*, a slow and elegant dance generally assigned to female spirits, such as that performed by Lady Izumi in *Tōboku*, II, 4. The *mai* are in three or five movements, each of which has its particular gestures, steps and postures. The dancer always carries a large fan brilliantly painted and decorated.

In his treatises, Zeami lays particular stress on the vital function of miming in the Noh drama, setting down detailed instructions as to its technique which he illustrates by rough drawings. In these each successive movement and posture of the actor is analyzed and worked out in relation to the character of the personage and to the æsthetic effect to be produced. As conceived by Zeami, the mime might perhaps be compared to a continuous, ever-changing series of rhythmic colour patterns woven by the actor with the aid of gorgeous costumes and masks, the ultimate purpose of which is less to please the eye than to serve as a means of creating the *yūgen* mood which is the very essence of the Noh drama.

While in earlier periods it seemed likely that the costumes tended to follow current fashions, from the Momoyama (1582–1600) to the Genroku period (1688–1703), beauty of colour, line and material rather than historical accuracy were the determining criteria, thus leading to the establishment of very elaborate æsthetic conventions still observed to-day which alone would require a separate treatise. It has been thought desirable and necessary, however, for a better appreciation of the following plays, to include in the stage directions the names and a summary description of the costumes as well as of the wigs and head-gear worn by each person.

As is well known the mask is a distinctive feature of the Noh drama. Unlike classical drama and the *commedia dell'arte*, the Noh as a rule limits the use of the mask to the principal actor and to female characters and aged people. Experts distinguish over one hundred different masks which have been divided into a

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number of categories, according to whether they represent divinities or supernatural beings of various kinds, animals, monsters, and men and women old or young, mad persons and so forth. They are worn with costumes of an appropriate style and colour. The masks are painted and many of them were designed and carved by famous artists. Thus in Part Two of *Takasago* the deity of Sumiyoshi wears a 'man of *Kantan*' mask created by Tokuwaka (fourteenth century) for the purpose of portraying a typical noble youth of the Heike clan, and subsequently used for youthful deities performing dances. In Part One of *Tamura*, the *shite* wears a 'boy' mask and in Part Two, a *Heida* mask representing a vigorous man in his prime, while Kiyotsune, in the play bearing his name, wears a 'chūjō' (lieutenant-general) mask, also attributed to the same artist.

As appears from the individual introductions, Noh plays have been classified into: (1) *Waki* Noh or *Kami* Noh (god plays) because the hero is either a god or goddess; (2) *Shura-mono* (Asura plays) whose hero is a famous mediaeval warrior; (3) *Kazura-mono* (female-wig plays)—essentially lyrical in character—in which the protagonist is a woman, whence the name; (4) Fourth Group plays, of various types not included either in the preceding or the following classes, with several important subdivisions such as *Kyōjo-mono* (mad woman pieces), and *Genzai-mono* (living person pieces); and (5) *Kiri* Noh (programme-concluding plays), auspicious plays having, as a rule, supernatural beings for their protagonists. As the name indicates, plays to be performed as the last item are chosen from this group. Each programme, in accordance with prescribed dramatic principles, should consist of: introduction (*jo*), chosen from among the *Waki* Noh group, development (*ha*), consisting of three plays one from each of Groups 2, 3 and 4, and climax (*kyū*), invariably a *Kiri* Noh, irrespective of whether three instead of the customary five plays are to be performed. The *jo-ha-kyū* principle, as it is called, is also required to be applied to each individual play and affects the style of the acting as well as the dancing and production. When, for the sake of variety, it happens that the producer deviates from the above standard pattern and chooses a *Kiri* Noh instead of a *Waki* Noh as the first piece on a programme, it is required that the tempo and production of the former should follow the principle laid down for a *jo* play. Strict adherence to these conventions, while leading to standardization, when skilfully used, gives the programme artistic unity and produces the desired *yūgen*. The Noh drama, as will be seen in the plays here translated, is constructed in accordance with the pattern which, notwithstanding certain minor variations later introduced, was laid down by Zeami in his treatise entitled *Nōsakusho*. It is divided into two parts; the first,

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serving as a prelude, sets the stage for the drama that will be enacted in the second. Each of these is again divided into scenes that might, in some measure, be compared to the movements of a classical sonata. Unlike what is the case in traditional Western dramatic compositions the scenes are not primarily determined by the entrance or exit of the *dramatis personae*.

The plots of Noh plays are drawn from a variety of Japanese and foreign sources, mythical or legendary, fantastic, historical or contemporary, from the earliest times down to the Muromachi period (1392–1572); or inspired by Japanese and Chinese classical poems from the numerous early anthologies. Principal among the former sources are the *Ise Monogatari* (ninth century) and the *Yamato Monogatari* (tenth century), the *Genji Monogatari* (eleventh century), the *Heike Monogatari* (thirteenth century: used for the civil wars between the Heike and Genji clans), the *Kojiki* and the *Nihon Shoki* (both eighth century: used mostly in the *Waki Noh*), and the collection of Indian as well as Chinese and Japanese tales and legends known as the *Konjaku Monogatari* (twelfth century). Apart from its artistic and dramatic significance, the Noh drama, it will be readily appreciated, is of paramount historical interest inasmuch as it reflects, as no other Japanese work does, "the feelings, thoughts, beliefs, superstitions and aspirations and the moral and intellectual life" of the Japanese people during one of the stormiest periods of its history.

The style and language of the Noh drama present considerable linguistic difficulties to anyone not acquainted with classical usage, Buddhist terminology, and the immense body of ancient Chinese and Japanese verse well-known to the highly cultured society of the time, to which frequent allusion is made. In some cases these are quoted in the sung parts, and without such knowledge the significance, and even the meaning, of many passages is inevitably lost. In addition to the literary style full of stylistic affectations in which Zeami required they should be composed, a further difficulty is presented by the *makura-kotoba* (pillow-words), the *kake-kotoba* (pivot-words, i.e. words with a double meaning), the allusive use of certain words, and other conceits which defy the ingenuity of the reader and are the despair of the translator.

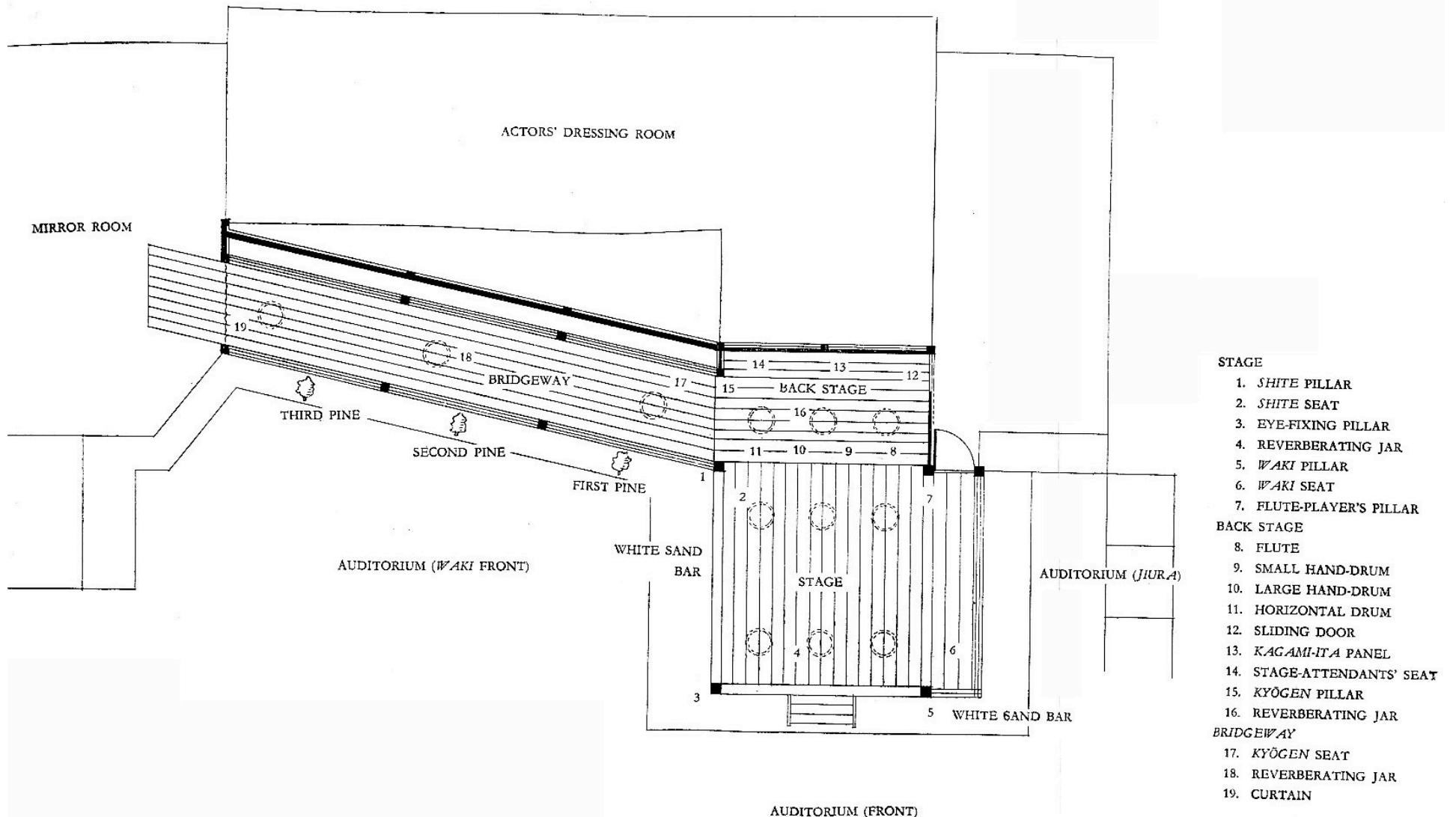
The repertories of the principal Noh schools (Kwanze, Komparu, Hōshō, Kongō and Kita) list about 250 plays still being performed, some of which present slight textual variants. The production of the plays also varies to a greater or lesser extent according to the different schools. In the present volume and in those to follow, the text of the Kwanze school is generally followed. Noh play texts known as *utai-bon* (books for *utai*) are published separately or in volumes

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containing five pieces each but omitting stage-directions and interludes. Interlinear notes referring to the sung parts provide the user with a rough kind of musical notation, and sometimes small line drawings indicate the positions of the actors in the more important scenes.

In preparing the present translation, the first of a series of volumes, each containing ten plays, the Committee has adopted the method previously followed in the *Manyōshū*: after establishing a Japanese text based upon the most recent linguistic studies, it proceeded to make a rough English translation which was then submitted for detailed discussion and revision to a joint committee of Japanese and English scholars. No attempt has been made, however, to reproduce the complex metrical scheme of the original or to do more than present, it is hoped, a faithful yet readable translation, while at the same time preserving as far as possible something of the flavour of the original.

PLAN OF A NOH THEATRE



STAGE

1. SHITE PILLAR
 2. SHITE SEAT
 3. EYE-FIXING PILLAR
 4. REVERBERATING JAR
 5. WAKI PILLAR
 6. WAKI SEAT
 7. FLUTE-PLAYER'S PILLAR
- BACK STAGE
8. FLUTE
 9. SMALL HAND-DRUM
 10. LARGE HAND-DRUM
 11. HORIZONTAL DRUM
 12. SLIDING DOOR
 13. KAGAMI-ITA PANEL
 14. STAGE-ATTENDANTS' SEAT
 15. KYÔGEN PILLAR
 16. REVERBERATING JAR
- BRIDGEWAY
17. KYÔGEN SEAT
 18. REVERBERATING JAR
 19. CURTAIN