

# Transnational Adaptations of Japanese Noh: Three Case Studies

**Date:** Tuesday, 13 August 2013

**Time:** 3:30pm – 5:00pm

**Venue:** JS Meeting Room (AS4-03-28)

**Speaker:** Associate Professor Ayako Kano, University of Pennsylvania

## Abstract

The Japanese performance form of noh traces its origins to medieval times and has survived for many centuries, making it a fascinating genre for considering change and continuity. My presentation will focus on a series of European artists who were inspired by noh in the twentieth century. The poet William Butler Yeats wrote “plays for dancers” in the 1910s as part of his effort to create an Irish national theater, the German playwright Bertolt Brecht collaborated on a series of political “Lehrstücke” or didactic pieces in the 1920s and 1930s, and the British composer Benjamin Britten created “parables for church performance” in the 1960s, forging a new operatic language. Examining these cases of adaptation and comparing them against each other, I will show how they provide insight into aspects of the original that might otherwise remain obscured. These include the sexuality lurking beneath the surface of this all-male genre, as well as the citationality of language, physical movement, and gender.

## About Speaker

Ayako Kano is Associate Professor in the Department of East Asian Languages and Civilizations at the University of Pennsylvania, where she is also affiliated with the Programs in Comparative Literature and Literary Theory, as well as Gender, Sexuality and Women's Studies. She earned her B.A. from Keio University, Japan, and her M.A. and Ph.D. from Cornell University. Her earlier research on actresses in modern Japanese theater was published as *Acting Like a Woman in Modern Japan: Theater, Gender, and Nationalism* (Palgrave, 2001). More recently she has been researching the history of gender policies and feminist debates in Japan. She co-organized the conference “Rethinking Modern Japanese Feminisms” held in April 2013 at Emory University, and is collaborating with Julia Bullock and James Welker on an edited volume of essays.

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