RIVISTA DI STUDI
antropologia e teatro

ARTICOLO

Intercultural encounter with *nō* master Udaka Michishige

di Monica Alcantar

Abstract – ITA

In questa sede, intendo esplorare il processo ed i risultati relativi all'esperienza di training tramite il Programma Estivo Intensivo dall'International Noh Institute (INI) condotto dal maestro Udaka Michishige della scuola Kongō nell'agosto del 2016. Durante quel periodo ho potuto apprezzare da un punto di vista pragmatico i molteplici aspetti relativi alla prassi e all'allenamento dell'attore *shite*. Grazie a questa opportunità ho potuto interagire direttamente con il processo creativo che caratterizza il dispositivo teatrale *nō*, nonché esperire il metodo specifico che Udaka-sensei aveva sviluppato durante più di trent'anni concedendo in questo modo a studenti internazionali un'esperienza significativa e rara nell'ambito tradizionale *nō*. Questo contributo vuole essere *in memoriam* ad Udaka-sensei, figura rilevante in ambito *nō* ed al contempo mostrare la mia più profonda gratitudine per quella preziosa opportunità.

Abstract – ENG

In this paper, I aim to explore the process and results of my personal experience at the Summer Intensive Program of the International Noh Institute (INI) led by Kongō school master Udaka Michishige in Kyoto, 2016. During that period of time I had the opportunity to appreciate the various intricacies of *nō* practice, focusing mostly on *shite*'s training, practicing *utai*, basic *kata*, and learning a couple of *shimai* or short choreographic sequences. Through this opportunity, I was able to interact directly with the creative process that characterizes the *nō* theatre device in its traditional setting. Under a unique approach that Udaka-sensei had developed for more than thirty years to facilitate international students a meaningful interaction with *nō* theatre tradition.

ANTROPOLOGIA E TEATRO – RIVISTA DI STUDI | N. 12 (2020)

ISSN: 2039-2281 | **CC** BY 3.0 | **DOI** 10.6092/issn.2039-2281/11661
Iscrizione al tribunale di Bologna n. 8185 del 1/10/2010

Direttore responsabile: Giuseppe Liotta
Direttore scientifico: Matteo Casari

ALMA MATER STUDIORUM
UNIVERSITÀ DI BOLOGNA

RIVISTA DI STUDI
antropologia e teatro
N. 12 (2020)

ARTICOLO

Intercultural encounter with *nō* master Udaka Michishige

di Monica Alcantar

Premise

During the course of my doctoral research it became imperious to enhance my methodological approach throughout an experience within the traditional *nō* training paradigm, in order to reach a broader understanding of the cognitive implications that integrated the actor's work and its different loci of interpretation. I was able to explore this prospective through my interaction at the Summer Intensive Program in 2016, at that time, I came to recognize how the *katatsuke*'s text is in a profound sense bonded to the actor's work and becomes aggregative to his skills. My experience with Udaka-sensei made me realize the relevance of the interaction of verbal and non-verbal forms of communication involved within the creative process of the *nō* actor.

In April 2016, I sent an application to follow the Summer Intensive Program for two weeks at the International Noh Institute (INI) in Kyoto. A few days later, I received an acceptance confirmation for the course that consisted of a two-week intensive training period conducted by Kōngo school master Udaka Michishige at his *okeikoba*, located in Kyoto, including four days in Matsuyama, on Shikoku Island. My experience culminated at the Kongō Nō Theatre in Kyoto presenting the results of the intensive training process I had undertaken, joining the *Kei'un-kai* recital with Udaka's international and Japanese students on August 21st.

This experience allowed me to acknowledge more deeply the excruciating tasks involved in *nō* practice, in its traditional habitat: the master-disciple transmission (See Casari 2008; Coldiron 2004). By means of this intensive period despite being of short duration, amplified my engagement with the scholarly research I was developing. It was highly gratifying both from a physical and intellectual point of view, while it also contributed to emancipate from an exclusively theoretical or rather logocentric approach, that despite not necessarily translating directly into my dissertation regarding the analysis of the *katatsuke* written interface, it modified significantly the understanding I had of my object of study.

Consequently, by sharing the empirical premises I had acquired during that intense summer in 2016, I intend to sum a voice in recognition of Udaka-sensei's endeavor regarding knowledge dissemination, that endures the immediacy of his recent passing. During my interaction with him, I was able to discover that the past truly is another culture, and that its remoteness can only occasionally appear as familiar as we seem to ourselves, whom we understand so imperfectly.

ISSN: 2039-2281 | CC BY 3.0 | DOI 10.6092/issn.2039-2281/11661
Iscrizione al tribunale di Bologna n. 8185 del 1/10/2010

RIVISTA DI STUDI
antropologia e teatro
N. 12 (2020)

First shimai training experience with Udaka-sensei

Gathered at a *combini* store near the INI premises in Sakyo-ku, I get to meet the three other students of the course: Gabriel, Lisa and Regina[1]. Unlike everyone else who arrived at least a few days earlier, I feel intensely the symptoms of a serious jet-lag condition derived from a long flight across different time zones the previous day. We then arrive all together at the *okeikoba*, while the morning feels already warm and quite humid. The building, a mainly wooden structure, neither inconspicuous nor small, exhibits a wide bamboo *sudare* on the façade. As we enter, we leave our shoes at the *genkan* area where, quickly but unequivocally I spot a golf club bag, a sign of Udaka-sensei golfer's personality.

We are handed our respective practice *ōgi* and *tabi*, that fit a bit too big, except for mine, which I had acquired and used in my previous fieldwork trip to Japan. Udaka-sensei appears then in traditional attire, *kimono* and *hakama*. As he greets us and continues with a brief introduction of the program that consists in learning a couple of *shimai* and their respective *utai* excerpts, I realize he is fluent in English and seems extremely easy-going and affable. He immediately instructs us on perhaps the most basic feature of the practice, a meditation session. "Udaka's training in Tendai Buddhism, his use of meditation in both mask carving and performance, and his interest in the mystical aspects of noh, set him apart from many of his contemporaries" (Coldiron 2017: 134). We are first advised to sit leg-crossed in half lotto or for whom it is possible, full lotto or zazen. Through his voice, he conducts our attention to our own breathing and awareness of our body. We learn to make this, the first gesture of every single day of practice. Most of the time Udaka-sensei would guide the entire meditation, but sporadically we also meditate by our own initiative. Eventually, he will set in context the meditation practice under the reference to the concept of *mu*[2] which unequivocally brings to mind Zeami's recontextualization for the concept of nothingness. (See Rimer & Yamazaki 1984: 115-116). But for now, the very first time, our aim is set towards accepting the never ceasing change in reality, realizing the present moment as it is, as a strategy dealing with the things of this world, that enables us to be ready to respond to the present. For the untrained mind, meditation can be a difficult thing to approach for the first time. In my case, I had experienced vipassana and other different styles of mindfulness meditations. Udaka's meditation settles focus not only on our breath - which for some, the simplicity of such instruction can feel futile - instead we would try to perceive our present, without searching to disassociate ourselves from our circumstance, bodily sensations nor train of thought.

[1] All graduate students from different Universities who reached Udaka's course by specific reference from their own academic entourages (University of Montréal, University of Essex, Unitec).

[2] 無

ISSN: 2039-2281 | CC BY 3.0 | DOI 10.6092/issn.2039-2281/11661
Iscrizione al tribunale di Bologna n. 8185 del 1/10/2010

Although, my ability to reach the meditative state at that point, was not necessarily efficient to stop my mind from its usual whirring ways, trapped in a cognitive cycle of shame and blame with intermittent need for reassurance, a pretty standard neurotic trait for an individual with a Judeo-Christian background as myself, I could still notice its restoring properties. Probably, the most distinguishable feature from Udaka-sensei meditation input was its absolute lack of pretension. He would later instruct us to take it in consideration as an instrument to 'clean the mind' of the actor and from there, approach the stage practice. As any instrument or technical device, meditation demonstrated then, to be a medium just as effective as one is capable to render it so. Not to be confused with a vehicle that would inexorably conduct towards equanimity or guide us onto the beauty of simplicity that has become something of a romanticized Japanese cultural attribute.

Nevertheless, the dimension of the present moment is an issue that pervades the oral and written interface of *nō*, although meditation is not prescribed explicitly, is evidently interrelated to it, not merely as a philosophical side to consider but based on a deeper involvement with the practice, a particular way of dealing with the action movement.

> To practice Zen, especially during zazen meditation, one has to relinquish the world, the body and thought -everything- until there remains only the bare essential -nothing. The notion that everything emerges from nothing, from silence, from the void, underlies the idea that less is more, and has become one of the most important pillars of all Japanese aesthetics. In Nō, movement is likewise generated from nothing. To the actor who embraces this metaphysical concept, the difficulty lies in transforming the static energy inwardly generated through zazen into practical movement in the world outside. Yet, the scope of this movement may be very small -how can so little be made to convey so much? (Umewaka 1994, 33).

We then transfer to the stage, a wooden platform in a wide room with a mirrored wall. Udaka-sensei takes the center and the four of us distribute in the space slightly behind him. While he executes the choreographic sequence from *Oimatsu shimai*, we follow his movement, slightly delayed, attempting to be his shadow, trying to perceive and reproduce every movement. He starts in *kamae*, that I could describe as a ground zero standing posture, with knees bent in a moderated plié, holding the torso in one piece slightly inclined forward giving the most possible length to the back, elbows delicately detached from the torso and slightly bent closing hands in a very specific grip that in a later stage Udaka-sensei would associate with *kapittha* mudra. This detail displays eloquently the intercultural approach that Udaka-sensei offered to his pupils, in accordance to Van Binsbergen's standard procedure in such kind of knowledge production "the dependence of intercultural knowledge on personal relations between the subject seeking knowledge and the community whose, or about which,

ISSN: 2039-2281 | CC BY 3.0 | DOI 10.6092/issn.2039-2281/11661
Iscrizione al tribunale di Bologna n. 8185 del 1/10/2010

knowledge is being sought, and the way in which knowledge production is intimately related to the personal history and psyche of the producer" (2003: 16).

It was clear from that early start that Udaka-sensei considered intercultural notions in his teachings. Although, the standardization of *nō* practice during the early Edo period is overwhelmingly discussed by scholars as mostly stressing its proximity to warrior discipline, in accordance to a well-documented historical process. "Komparu Zempō, grandson of Zenchiku advised his pupils to hold the dancing fan exactly as warriors grip the sword when preparing for a fight and describing a basic body posture similar to that of a fighting warrior" (Scholz-Cionca 2000: 297). Udaka's approach was characteristically intercultural, he interacted with the other's identity by finding ways of negotiating one's own identity in a jointly constructed new situation for which neither of the two identities take a hegemonic instance. In this setting, there is no easy solution available, but to reformulate the problem, negotiating between the various inputs and building them into a new, usually ephemeral, cultural circumstance.

He proceeds again to demonstrate the whole sequence of *kata* for *Oimatsu shimai*, describing verbally the movement only when we seem unable to replicate it closely enough. In a second repetition, he vocalizes the *kata* while executing most of them. We are then left to practice on our own. He observes for a while, corrects individually or calls our attention if the problem experienced by a single student seems pertinent to all. Observes for some time, repeats again the choreographic sequence while we replicate by his side, again makes observations, and soon after leaves. We continue to practice but without the reference of Udaka's reflection on the mirror, I get easily lost and can hardly repeat the sequence soon after, little by little I feel my movements to become inexact or rather incomplete. I am clearly losing the precision that catalyzes the progression of the sequence. The other three students seem to have memorized the choreography already, but I have serious difficulties trying to scrap some precision from my memory. I try to remember the sequence vocalizing the *kata*, which only adds to my frustration. By the end of the day I feel my memory fails me completely, hardly remembering the entire sequence. I found myself in the middle of a participatory field research, with a localized learning focus trying to encompass different continuities in space and time, that will eventually prove useful for my dissertation but at that moment, trying to address the difficulties of reproduction of a choreographic sequence, navigating the different layers of conceptual and analytical sources, seemed only to accentuate my struggle. At that first session, I suddenly seemed to lack any pragmatic competence regarding short-term memory, movement dexterity or accurate consciousness of the stage and felt absolutely demoralized. The first few days demonstrated to be highly demanding of my cognitive capabilities, I discovered immediately my inability to become detached from certain expectations I had built.

ISSN: 2039-2281 | CC BY 3.0 | DOI 10.6092/issn.2039-2281/11661
Iscrizione al tribunale di Bologna n. 8185 del 1/10/2010

In earlier and shorter experiences, developed mostly in academic contexts[3], the rigorous attainment of *nō* practice was limited to a series of demonstrations by professionals and moderate space for practice of the basic postures (*hakobi* and *kamae*) and discrete units of motion (*shosa*). I was unable to recognize that imposing a priori the analytical approach was not appropriate in the context of the program conducted by Udaka-sensei. In fact, I was overwhelming myself pretending that a total immersion, which requires extreme adaptation skills as rationale for effective mediation, would allow me to emulate in an adequate mode, the learning structure proposed, achieving the proper technical methodology to eventually reach an analytical representation of what constitutes the formal aspect of this specific epistemic transmission. Hopefully with minimal distortions, free form projections, transferences, involuntary impositions or omissions on my behalf. But in this situation such prerogative was unnecessary. I was simply an international student interested in *nō* practice, not a representative or anthropological fieldworker. The intercultural mediator in this case was in fact, Udaka-sensei. On the latter part of the session, Udaka-sensei's first born, Udaka Tatsushige joins the session. He shows up wearing sporting clothing, and *tabi*, probably for us to appreciate more clearly his footwork. He demonstrates the entire *shimai* while singing over it. We are advised to record it with our cellphone devices, the recording is intended to serve pedagogical purposes[4]. We then take some time to continue the *shimai* practice. After a few minutes, we proceed to individually observe every student's practice, following observations by Udaka Tatsushige. He verbalizes his thoughts in some cases he mostly listens to each student's comments. This seems an adapted teaching strategy from a Western workshop setting, makes me wonder if this is the approach of a younger practitioner to international students. Udaka Michishige's approach, on the other hand was consistent with the practice described earlier: directly observing him in situ, the student follows the teacher's movement sequence, mirroring every detail at her best capacity, followed by a repetition series.

Before we left the *okeikoba* we are handed printed materials of the *shimai* we will be working on (*Oimatsu*, *Shōjō* and *Yuya*). These materials include a graphic description of the movement sequence, the corresponding *fushi* notation of the *utai* with its translation in English. According to Rebecca Teele Ogamo (2020):

> The materials were created in 1984 for the first TTT program when it was necessary for Michishige-sensei to prepare to teach *utai* and *shimai* to a large group of students over a limited period for the first time.

[3] University of Bologna 4-10.11.2011 workshop conducted by Umewaka Naohiko at CIMES, University of Bologna, Nihon koten geijutsu Seminar at Shizuoka University of Arts and Culture 30.09.2015 – 4.4.2016, Japan Culture Center in Rome 17-18.5.2016 workshop conducted by Kanze Yoshimasa.

[4] Both sons of Udaka Tatsushige and Norishige had follow him in the profession of *shite* and her daughter as mask carver. They are all active in social media platforms such as Youtube or Instagram disseminating facts about *nō* practice in a ludic manner.

ISSN: 2039-2281 | CC BY 3.0 | DOI 10.6092/issn.2039-2281/11661
Iscrizione al tribunale di Bologna n. 8185 del 1/10/2010

> Michishigue-sensei decided on the texts to be used for *su-utai* and *shimai* while I created the texts given to the students, copying and pasting the lines from the original Kongō *utaibon* and *shimaikatazuke*, adding romanization and a direct word for word translation. Before the TTT program students studied with Udaka-sensei individually in an open-ended framework in the traditional style.

The given materials created ex professor of the course, facilitated some content of the teachings that otherwise would have caused students an extra significant investment probably having to buy the *utaibon* for every play, the *shimaikatazuke*, sold only by the whole volume, and retrieve a translation, not to mention a *hentaigana* dictionary. Interestingly enough there was a graphic part, that differed from regular written sources, trying to render explicit illustration of the choreographic sequence. In such diagrams, the performing space appears divided in nine parts[5], signaling the entrance from the *hashigakari*, and the *kizahashi*.

It is probably pertinent to mention, that in a standard *shimaikatazuke*, graphic codification is extremely rare. Instead, along the text stream, directions are given in reference of the different *bashira* (*fue*, *shite*, *sumi*, *waki*, *kyogen*). These constitute the main space reference for the *nō* trained actor, denoting exactly how to manage on stage. The content of the given materials during the course is significantly simplified if compared to a standard *shimaikatazuke*, but possibly share the same purpose, to help the memorization of the *kata* and *utai* sequence derived from the actual pedagogical experience with Udaka-sensei at the *okeiko* environment. The purpose of such materials is to provide a written support to the students in training at the intensive track program who might have a background in Western performing disciplines and approach *nō* for the first time.

Centered around the presence and spoken word of the master, the formative process in the *okeikoba* constitutes an existential interaction with the disciple. Through the verbal formulation of the kata, its visual presentation and repetition of the sequence, a dynamic intellectual process unravels around body and mind. It will be important, in what follows to bear in mind that the Japanese word used for professional master, *kurōto*[6] refers to the person who has epistemic profoundness, distinguishable by darkness. This connotation implies the dissemination of knowledge involved in the teaching practice that the master shares with the amateur or *shiroto*[7], who in this dialectical situation is meant to absorb the master's teachings, as new uncolored silk tissue

[5] For similar diagrams see Yamanaka 2013, p. 1081 and Bethe 1982

[6] 玄人

[7] 素人

ISSN: 2039-2281 | CC BY 3.0 | DOI 10.6092/issn.2039-2281/11661
Iscrizione al tribunale di Bologna n. 8185 del 1/10/2010

is about to be impregnated with color[8]. This constituted the environment where I was able to benefit from, such epistemic exchange interaction stimulated spontaneous perceptions along the disciplined path and was a consistent feature through my learning experience with Udaka-sensei.

Written materials seldom have relevance among actors in such early stages of training, to who the main mediator is the master. In any case, the use of written materials such as a *shimaikatazuke* or a family owned *katazuke* are built to support the relationship that identifies both writer and reader with the shite actor. In a handwritten, family owned *katazuke*, part of the content is virtually assumed from a previously established dialectic, within a specific universe of discourse which is both pragmatic and intellectual. As a result, its text is not explicit to the untrained eye, its technical directiveness is based upon an intimate cognitive association to the text (See Alcantar 2020: 3-4).

As stated by Udaka-sensei the written interface of the *katazuke* cannot substitute the master in the relationship with the actor in training, as the insufficiently trained actor could get lost in the intricacies of the training process. According to the Udaka-sensei's early experience as a *uchi-deshi* or live-in apprentice, at Kongō Iwao II's home, the head of the Kongō School at that time:

> I had learned that there was something called a *katazuke*, a book in which dance movements were written. […] I had asked the Iemoto many times for a lesson; but it was just three days before the performance that I finally arranged to be taught. From the start, the Iemoto, who had just had a bath, was in a bad mood. Without much confidence, I went through the movements I had been lucky enough to find and had learned vaguely. The book had said the dance started with a *shikake-hiraki* (a combination of movements involving stepping forward, pointing with a fan, stepping back while spreading the arms to return to the original position), so I began with these movements. I was shocked to see the Iemoto, who before had only been in a bad mood, fly into a fiery rage and go abruptly upstairs. The faint hum of a fluorescent light sounded hollowly on the jet-black stage where I continued to stand, a solitary figure holding an open fan. The *katazuke* had been wrong. Two days later I was able to have another lesson, but on the day of the performance I was under quite a strain on stage. I finished the dance but made a mistake at some point; just as I went through the *kirido* the Iemoto slapped my left cheek. For the first time, I realized that a professional's training meant intently watching the

[8] It is interesting to notice in the term *yūgen* 幽玄 – that in Zeami's treatises we find as a relevant element in mediation also with the spectator – we find an archaic version of 玄 framed twice in radical (see https://dic.nicovideo.jp/t/a/幺 Accessed on 19th July 2020). While, its semantic connotation can be traced to the "unity of the three teachings" that include Shinto, Buddhism and the secular ideas of Confucius and the Lao-Tzu. On medieval Japanese syncretism with Chinese thought, see Mathews, 2013.

ISSN: 2039-2281 | CC BY 3.0 | DOI 10.6092/issn.2039-2281/11661
Iscrizione al tribunale di Bologna n. 8185 del 1/10/2010

> Iemoto first of all, then the other professionals on stage, and listening with careful attention to the *utai* and the musicians. […] I made it a special point to spend more time on the stage (Udaka 1989).

This might also explain why such a vital source material as the *katazuke* is unavailable to outsiders and is handed down through *nō* families and *deshike* with extreme secrecy from one generation to the next. In the case of the Kongō school is worth mentioning that before his death, *iemoto* Kongō Ukyō Ujiyasu (1872-1936) – who was also known for having hand-copied the school's entire Kongō Ryū Utai Bon – having declared no successor, "commanded that his entire library of secret writings be thrown onto his funeral pyre. […] Ukyō's command was intended not only to obliterate a precious treasury of documents but to end the Kongō school" (Rath 2006: 243). Interestingly enough, Kongō Ukyō's mask collection passed to other hands being sold out, this fact is also eloquent of the different semantic layers involved in both the *katazuke* and the *nōmen*, both precious tangible sources in the *nō* world. It was only through the intercession of the rest of the schools *iemoto* – Hoshō, Kanze, Kita, Komparu – that the Kongo *ryū* survived. Then, Kongō Iwao I was designated *iemoto* in 1937, and his successor, Kongō Iwao II was Udaka-sensei's teacher.

In the case of the written materials given to us during the course, the *utai* excerpts were particularly helpful while practicing *hari-ogi*[9] the following week. For the second day, I reached the *okeikoba* cycling from Demachiyanagi area where I had found a four-tatami room available, cycling in the morning before practice improved my metabolism, but I was able to surpass the jetlag only during the second week of training.

In medias res. Training in Matsuyama

From 8-11 August we continued our training in Matsuyama where Udaka-sensei would usually teach once a month. For those four days and three nights, the setting became a full immersion experience since we were all invited to sleep and share meals at his *okeikoba*. On our way there, commuting in his car for several hours, we had the opportunity to learn also from multiple anecdotes of Udaka's journey in life. Our trip to Matsuyama enhanced the bonding experience that allowed us to realize how consistent his modus operandi was and the extreme dedication that as a teacher he devoted to all his disciplines. In this setting, we had the opportunity to observe the interaction with his regular students who ages spanned from a twelve-year-old girl to a man in his fifties. Udaka was very proud of his clan's origin and reputation preserving *nō* tradition during its difficult

[9] 張扇

ISSN: 2039-2281 | CC BY 3.0 | DOI 10.6092/issn.2039-2281/11661
Iscrizione al tribunale di Bologna n. 8185 del 1/10/2010

transition at the beginning of Meiji period. In accordance with his family's origins he would continue to teach according to the legacy of the Matsuyama clan.

> The saviors of Nō in Matsuyama were not Nō performers but samurais who were Nō devotees. They attempted a Kanjin Nō performance (a fund-raising Nō play held in a temple or shrine) by charging admission fees. To earn money from Nō performances was unthinkable in the old shogunate system but is common in modern Nō performance. This practice began in Matsuyama. […] plays were performed in 1872 traditional theatre venues […] Nō lovers from Matsuyama, whose advocacy started with saving the Matsuyama feudal clan's Nō and its costumes brought the show to a success (Fukuda 2018, 41-42).

Grounded on the influential role of the spectator, Udaka's investment cultivating an audience derived from his genuine interest to preserve the *nō* tradition, throughout his disciple's entourage (Pellecchia 2017) he had built an activity routine for teaching children from a very early age, meditation and basic *kata*. An early initiation in *nō* discipline surely represented a cultural capital resource for the children, while at the same time allowed him to sustain the development of new audiences, with the adequate sensibility and awareness of the aesthetic criteria to decode and enjoy the *nō* performance and its dense cultural imagery.

Witnessing his initiative of teaching young children, helped me identify a specific *locus* of interpretation related to the child actor or *kokata*, as a notion of childhood undetermined by biological age but by cultural attributes instead. This distinctive ontological status, derived from Premodern Japan (Porath 2017; Guth 1987) gives children various embodiment possibilities of distinct symbolic quality, capable to represent adulthood on stage, as a very emblematic samurai figure such as Minamoto Yoshitsune in *Ataka* or a usually aniconic personality, the Tenmu Emperor in *Kuzu* or even a phantasmagoric version of a lost child *Sumidagawa*. The *utai* and *shimai* curricula intends, still today to train in difficulty of progression the different intellectual and kinesthetic abilities of the child, his speech and dialogue delivery as well as working on singing proficiency. The *kokata* lives within a propaedeutic circumstance that for children born into *nō* families follow an even stricter development since their *kokata* excursus would be over, transitioning to *shite* role training as early as reaching the age of six or seven years old. This suggests that the condition of *kokata* exists outside the normative social progression in order to preserve a performative function.

During our last day of practice in Matsuyama, Udaka-sensei granted us the privilege to execute the *Yuya shimai* we were working on wearing a *ko-omote* mask carved by himself, this was a rare privilege. Wearing a mask is usually reserved for the *kagami no ma*, where the *shite* dresses and prepares right before his stage entrance

ISSN: 2039-2281 | CC BY 3.0 | DOI 10.6092/issn.2039-2281/11661
Iscrizione al tribunale di Bologna n. 8185 del 1/10/2010

and is not common, not even during *mōshiawase*, a partial rehearsal preceding a couple of days of the actual performance. For a student, wearing a mask comes as a great achievement that implies several years of training. During these four extremely intense days, we were taught how to decode *utai* notation, and practiced while Udaka-sensei used the *hari-ogi* – an artifact made out either of leather or cloth to wrap a folded *nō* fan, to hit against the *hari-ban*[10], a wooden block.

Udaka-sensei mask carving group and my hatsubutai experience.

Coming back to Kyoto on August 18th I was allowed to join for a session Udaka's mask carving group, founded in 1978 where he also admitted foreign students. In this context he talked about one of the three *shinsakunō* plays he had written: *Heiwa no Inori-Genshigumo*, a prayer for the victims of the atomic bombings in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. For its performance he had used several masks carved in his workshop, initially by students and finished later by himself to be worn by the members of the chorus, who represented the victims.

Shinsakunō plays represent a sporadic yet strong conviction for the renewal of the traditional dramaturgic and performing device. Although, during the latter part of Edo period, *shinsaku* plays were written and performed profusely (Tanaka 1980, in Brandon 1997: 21) this creative trend became rather modest after the dissolution of the feudal system that followed the Meiji Restoration in 1868 when the *nō* theater entered the modern era, acknowledging the need for renewal with reluctance. The traditional repertoire nowadays is fixed around 250 plays, and highly influences the *nō* world. Being decided by the *iemoto* from all schools, it is normative of many aspects of the tradition. Thus, *shinsakunō* plays are performed exclusively by skilled *nō* masters (Beichman 1986: 233-260) able to give a legitimate answer to the questions formulated by their own creative impulse. Fighting the risk of stagnation is not necessarily among the intentions when producing a new *nō* play. Instead, it is possibly the result of different tensions with contingent influences from the present, stressed by different intersections across disciplinary, intellectual and cultural boundaries that challenge consuetudinary creative approaches, that is when expanding its horizons between *nō*'s current performance and its other.

Udaka-sensei had given us a final lesson on August 19 when we saw him as *kōken* in *Aoi no Ue* with Kongō Iemoto as *shite*. Playing stage assistant for the *Iemoto* was evidence of his undeniable expertise as *shite* but also implied the unequivocal recognition of his talent and place among the Kongō School.

Finally, on August 21st we gathered at the Kongo Theatre in Kyoto early in the morning to celebrate Udaka-sensei extensive career. After a chorus overture featuring Okina's *kami-utai* followed our turn as his most recent

[10] 張盤

ISSN: 2039-2281 | CC BY 3.0 | DOI 10.6092/issn.2039-2281/11661
Iscrizione al tribunale di Bologna n. 8185 del 1/10/2010

students, I performed the *kiri* from *Midare Shojo*'s version. We performed in beautiful delicate *kimono* and *hakama* that Udaka-sensei had rendered available to us. I was able to watch both of my colleagues perform from the internal room by the *kiridoguchi* or sliding door located on the left side of the stage. At last came my turn, I slid through the *kirido* and positioned myself on the start position *onmyō no ōgi*. I started singing '*yo-mo-tsu-ki-ji*' then came the first *kata* of the sequence, *tachi kata*, and felt as being lifted by Udaka's warm powerful voice together with the rest of the *utai* singing from the back. I can clearly recall the feeling "forever inexhaustible" of this moment, I felt as his voice guided me along the entire sequence. My memory now blurs up to the point when we, all smiles, met him off stage, before he retreated to prepare for his *bangaishimai*. As the program continued, I transferred to the *kensho* area where I enjoyed the rest of the recital. The program included different *shimai* and *bangaishimai* performed also by Udaka's sons and himself, two *maibayashi* from his disciples and two full plays, an entire day of celebration the 70th birthday of Kongō school master *shite* Udaka Michishige.

He was beloved and respected by the entire *nō* community due to his involvement in development of *nō* and the important contribution disseminating knowledge according to the traditional setting among international students. This fact led him to obtain the Saika Prize, conferred to by the Nogaku Research Center of Hosei University in 2019.

I cherish every moment we spent in his company, every instant we enjoyed his sharp, witty sense of humor. I am truly grateful to him and all members of INI who facilitated the program that summer in 2016 for that meaningful and valuable opportunity. I know I am one among so many generations of students who reached his *okeikoba* and benefited from his extremely intellectual generosity.

ISSN: 2039-2281 | CC BY 3.0 | DOI 10.6092/issn.2039-2281/11661
Iscrizione al tribunale di Bologna n. 8185 del 1/10/2010

RIVISTA DI STUDI
antropologia e teatro
N. 12 (2020)

1. Udaka-sensei practice studio or okeikoba in Matsuyama. 8-11/August/2016. Photo: Author's personal archive.

2. Udaka's youngest pupils practicing meditation. 11/August/2016. Photo: Author's personal archive.

ISSN: 2039-2281 | CC BY 3.0 | DOI 10.6092/issn.2039-2281/11661
Iscrizione al tribunale di Bologna n. 8185 del 1/10/2010

3. Udaka's observations during Yuya shimai practice wearing ko-omote. 11/August/2016. Photo: Author's personal archive.

ISSN: 2039-2281 | CC BY 3.0 | DOI 10.6092/issn.2039-2281/11661
Iscrizione al tribunale di Bologna n. 8185 del 1/10/2010

RIVISTA DI STUDI
antropologia e teatro
N. 12 (2020)

4. Monica Alcantar Shōjō shimai. 21/August/2016. Kongō Nō Theatre, Kyoto. Photo: Fabio Massimo Fioravanti.

ISSN: 2039-2281 | CC BY 3.0 | DOI 10.6092/issn.2039-2281/11661
Iscrizione al tribunale di Bologna n. 8185 del 1/10/2010

RIVISTA DI STUDI
antropologia e teatro
N. 12 (2020)

5. Udaka-sensei in Kumasaka bangaishimai. 21/August/2016. Kongō Nō Theatre, Kyoto. Photo: Fabio Massimo Fioravanti.

ISSN: 2039-2281 | CC BY 3.0 | DOI 10.6092/issn.2039-2281/11661
Iscrizione al tribunale di Bologna n. 8185 del 1/10/2010

References

ALCANTAR, MONICA

2017 *The Representation of Yoshitsune in the Umewaka katatsuke*, dissertation thesis, University of Bologna, Unpublished.

2020 *Nōgaku taidan dai rokusan-kai katatsuke wo chūshin ni kari Umewaka Minoru*, Nōgaku Shōrin, Tokyo, pp. 2-3.

BEICHMAN, JANINE

1986 *Drifting Fires: An American Nō*, «Asian Theatre Journal», n. 2, Vol. 3, Autumn, pp. 233-260.

BETHE, M. – BRAZELL, K.

1982 *Dance in the Noh Theater*. *Volume 1: Dance Analysis*, Cornell University East Asia Program.

BRANDON, JAMES R.

1997 *Nō and Kyōgen in the Contemporary world*. Honolulu, Univesity of Hawai'I Press.

CASARI, MATTEO

2001 *La verità dello specchio cento giorni di teatro nō con il maestro Umewaka Makio*, Pozzuolo del Friuli, Il principe costante.

COLDIRON, MARGARET

2004 *Trance and transformation of the actor in Japanese Noh and Balinese mask dance-drama*, Lewinston, Edwin Mellen Press.

2017 *Foreign female interventions in traditional Asian Arts: Rebecca Teele and Cristina Formaggia*, in MADHAVAN, A. (Edited by) *Women in Asian Performance, Aesthetics and Politics*, London, Routledge, pp. 124-141.

DE MARINIS, MARCO

1987 *Dramaturgy of the spectator*, «The Drama Review XXXI», n. 2, pp. 100-114.

FUKUDA, YASUNORI

2018 *The Nō Renaissance in Meiji Period (1868-1912) Japan*, in UMALI, A.– UMEWAKA, N.– CASARI, M. (Edited by), *Arti della Performance: orizzonti e culture*, n. 11, pp. 41-46.

FUKUNAGA, MITSUJI

1969 *"No-mind"* in Chuang-tzu and Ch'an Buddhism, Zimbun 12, 9-45 (trad eng. L. Hurvitz in 1985, Livia Knaul, *The Habit of perfection: A Summary of Fukunaga's Studies on the "Chuang-tzu" Tradition*, Cahiers d'Extrême-Asie n. 1, pp. 71-85.

ISSN: 2039-2281 | CC BY 3.0 | DOI 10.6092/issn.2039-2281/11661
Iscrizione al tribunale di Bologna n. 8185 del 1/10/2010

GUTH, CHRISTINE M.E.
1987 *The Divine Boy in Japanese Art*, in «Monumenta Nipponica», 42, n.1, Spring, pp. 1-23.

MATHEWS, GARY
2013 *Zeami's Confucian Theatre*, «Asian Theatre Journal», n.1, Vol. 30, Spring, p. 32.

PELLECCHIA, DIEGO
2017 *Noh Creativity? The Role of Amateurs in Japanese Noh Theatre*, «Contemporary Theatre Review», n.1, Vol. 27, pp. 34-45.

PORATH, OR
2017 *Nasty Boys or Obedient Children? Childhood and Relative Autonomy in Medieval Japanese Monasteries* in FRÜHSTÜCK, S. – WALTHALL, A. *Child's Play. Multi-Sensory Histories of Children and Childhood in Japan*, University of California Press, pp. 17-40.

RATH, ERIC
2004 *The Ethos of Noh: Actors and their Art*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Asia Center.

SCHOLZ-CIONCA, STANCA
2000 *No within Walls and Beyond: Theatre as Cultural Capital in Edo Japan* in (Edited by) GVOZDEVA, K. – KORNEEVA, T. – OSPOVAT, K. *Dramatic Experience. The Poetics of Drama and the Early Modern Public Sphere*, Leiden, Brill.

TEELE, REBECCA
2020 INI Summer Intensive Course info request [e-mail sent to Monica Alcantar] May 27.

TOLLINI, ALDO
2015 *An Ancient Writing System for Modern Japan*, in (Edited by) CALVETTI, P. – MARIOTTI, M., *Contemporary Japan. Challenges for a World Economic Power in Transition*, Venezia, Ca' Foscari – Digital Publishing.

UDAKA, MICHISHIGE
1989, *The Rigors of Training in Behind the Mask. A collection of reminiscences and observations*, Accessed on 17th July 2020, https://kyotojournal.org/culture-arts/behind-the-mask/

UMEWAKA, NAOHIKO
1994 *The influence of Ritual and Metaphysics in the Nō Theatre*, «Contemporary Theater Review», 1:2, pp. 29-38.

ISSN: 2039-2281 | CC BY 3.0 | DOI 10.6092/issn.2039-2281/11661
Iscrizione al tribunale di Bologna n. 8185 del 1/10/2010

VAN BINSBERGEN, WIM M.J.
2003 *Intercultural encounters. African and anthropological lessons towards a philosophy of interculturality*, Berlin, Lit Verlag.

MASAKI, O. – TAKESHI, S. – YAMANAKA, R. et al.
2013 *Easy-to-use authoring system for Noh (Japanese traditional) dance animation and its evaluation*, Vis Comput 29, pp. 1077-1090.

ISSN: 2039-2281 | CC BY 3.0 | DOI 10.6092/issn.2039-2281/11661
Iscrizione al tribunale di Bologna n. 8185 del 1/10/2010

MONICA ALCANTAR

Monica Alcantar ha conseguito il Dottorato di Ricerca nel 2017 presso l'Università di Bologna. È stata Visiting Professor presso Archive & Legacy Unit dell'ICC a L'Aia. Nel 2020 ha pubblicato su Nōgaku Shorin un'intervista a Minoru IV Umewaka Gensho. Nel 2019 ha tenuto una lezione relativa alle strategie di adattamento della tradizione *nō* in chiave contemporanea presso l'Università Keio. All'inizio dello stesso anno è stata coordinatrice al seminario *Shakespeare on the Intercultural Edge* in collaborazione con l'ESRA. Ha ricevuto una borsa di studio dal CONACyT-Fonca (2012/2017) e una borsa Erasmus per svolgere un periodo di studio presso l'Università di Gand. Ha conseguito la Laurea triennale in Arte presso l'Università Nazionale Autonoma del Messico.

MONICA ALCANTAR

Monica Alcantar Ph.D. 2017 University of Bologna. Visiting Professional at the Archive & Legacy Unit of the ICC in The Hague. In 2020 she published by Nōgaku Shorin an interview to Minoru IV Umewaka Gensho. In 2019 she gave a keynote on adaptation and hybrid strategies in nō at the Int' Center in Keio University. Earlier that year she participated as leading convener of the Seminar: Shakespeare on the Intercultural Edge at ESRA Conference. She has been the recipient of a CONACyT-Fonca (2012/2017) fellowship and Erasmus scholarship while a graduate student at Ghent University. She obtained her Bachelor of Arts degree from the National Autonomous University of Mexico.

ISSN: 2039-2281 | CC BY 3.0 | DOI 10.6092/issn.2039-2281/11661
Iscrizione al tribunale di Bologna n. 8185 del 1/10/2010