MEDIA RELEASE

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The Japan Foundation, Sydney presents

An Introduction to Kabuki

@ *Noh to Now* lecture series, Art Gallery NSW

The Japan Foundation, Sydney proudly presents a talk on Kabuki theatre by academic **Dr Shun Ikeda**. Titled **'Song, Dance, Skill: An Introduction to Kabuki'**, it will be held at the Art Gallery NSW on August 13 from 6pm.

Kabuki is one of Japan's most visually recognisable dramatic arts, not least because many early Kabuki actors were immortalised in ukiyo-e woodblock prints that have gone on to appear in countless books and art exhibitions all over the world. In this talk, Kabuki enthusiast Shun Ikeda will share his love and knowledge of the genre to help local audiences discover the stories behind Kabuki's powerful imagery.

This is the third talk in a five-part lecture series titled **Noh to Now: Traditions and Counter-traditions in Japanese Performance**, programmed and presented by The Japan Foundation, Sydney in conjunction with the **Art Gallery NSW**'s *Theatre of dreams, theatre of play: nō and kyōgen in Japan* exhibition.

Says **Shun Ikeda**, "Just like Shakespearean drama in Elizabethan England, or even TV dramas like Game of Thrones today, Kabuki emerged in the 17th century as entertainment for the masses. As such, it's got the lot: high-stakes power play, romance, vengeance, humour, incredible sets and costumes… which all makes for great theatre. This talk will look at how Kabuki evolved, and what exactly makes it so thrilling."

Says Japan Foundation, Sydney director **Nao Endo**, "As shown by the introduction of a [Japanese Traditional and Contemporary Theatre elective](#) in this year's **HSC curriculum**, there is increasing recognition of the value of Japanese performing arts traditions in the Australian community. We are excited to work with the Art Gallery NSW to offer this timely series, which blends authoritative voices and perspectives from both Australia and Japan."

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Program

Jul 23	**Occupied Bodies: Re-thinking the Atomic Gaze in *Ankoku Butoh***	You Tube
	Dr. Adam Broinowski, Australian National University	
Aug 6	**Noh, and the Aesthetics of Restraint**	You Tube
	Professor Naohiko Umewaka (Noh Master), Shizuoka University of Arts and Culture	
Aug 13	**Song, Dance, Skill: Introduction to Kabuki**	You Tube
	Dr. Shun Ikeda, Australian National University	
Aug 20	**Presence & Composition: *Bunraku* Puppet Theatre and Virtual Diva Hatsune Miku**	You Tube
	Dr Yuji Sone, Macquarie University	
Aug 27	**The Allure of Gender-Bending Musical Theatre**	You Tube
	Dr. Leonie Stickland, Murdoch University	

Dates:	July 23 and August 6, 13, 20 & 27
Time:	6:00 – 7:00pm (Doors open 5.45pm)
Venue:	Centenary Auditorium
	Art Gallery NSW
	Art Gallery Rd, The Domain
	Sydney
Admission:	Free. No bookings required.
Enquiries:	reception@jpf.org.au / 02 8239 0055 (The Japan Foundation, Sydney)
Website:	**www.jpf.org.au**

YouTube Playlists available

Search 'Noh to Now' on YouTube to sample the genres in this program.

ABOUT KABUKI:

Kabuki—literally "*ka*" - songs, "*bu*" - dances, and "*ki*" – skills—is a performing art said to have emerged in early 17th-century Japan as a popular form of entertainment. Kabuki was originally performed by all-female casts; however, the ensembles soon became all-male following a ban on female performers by the government of the time. Today, Kabuki continues to be performed in Japan by all-male casts and is known for its spectacular costumes, distinctive make-up, daring staging and highly dramatic narratives—many of which are based on legendary figures from Japan's tumultuous history. Kabuki was designated as intangible cultural heritage by UNESCO in 2005.

ABOUT SHUN IKEDA:

Dr. Shun Ikeda was born in Tokyo and first came to Australia as a student at the Australian National University (ANU). He went on to complete postgraduate study and hold an academic teaching position in the US before returning again to ANU, where he is now Head of the Japan Centre. When not teaching Japanese studies and language, he can be found indulging in his other passion: directing performances by the ANU Kabuki club.

ABOUT THE 'NOH TO NOW' LECTURE SERIES:

Noh to Now: Traditions and Counter-traditions in Japanese Performance is a five-part lecture series featuring local and international experts introducing different genres of Japanese performance. Spanning the centuries from the emergence of **Noh theatre** in the middle ages to the present day, the series explores both canonised and marginal artforms and artists, including *Ankoku **Butoh*** ('Dance of Darkness'), **Kabuki**, virtual songstress **Hatsune Miku** (support act for Lady Gaga's recent US tour), and all-female musical theatre troupe **Takarazuka Revue**.

ABOUT THE EXHIBITION AT ART GALLERY NSW:

The Art Gallery NSW's **Theatre of dreams, theatre of play: nō and kyōgen in Japan** exhibition was organised in cooperation with the Agency for Cultural Affairs in Japan. It features a total of 165 works related to Noh theatre—many from the prestigious National Noh Theatre in Japan—including exquisitely carved masks, richly embroidered Noh robes, and paintings depicting this ancient performing arts tradition. The exhibition is now open and runs until September 14 (closed for conservation purposes July 28-30).

ABOUT THE JAPAN FOUNDATION, SYDNEY:

The Japan Foundation, Sydney is the Australian arm of the Japan Foundation, which was established by the Japanese government to promote cultural and intellectual exchange between Japan and other nations. It runs a diverse range of programs and events, including exhibitions, talk events, grant programs and Japanese language courses for all levels from beginner to advanced. The Japan Foundation was established in 1972 with a global network of 22 offices in 21 countries. The Australian office was founded in 1977.

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For more information please see www.jpf.org.au or contact:

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