



Zeami: Performance Notes (Translations from the Asian Classics)

By Motoyiko Zeami

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Zeami (1363-1443), Japan's most celebrated actor and playwright, composed more than thirty of the finest plays of no drama. He also wrote a variety of texts on theater and performance that have, until now, been only partially available in English.

Zeami: Performance Notes presents the full range of Zeami's critical thought on this subject, which focused on the aesthetic values of no and its antecedents, the techniques of playwriting, the place of allusion, the training of actors, the importance of patronage, and the relationship between performance and broader intellectual and critical concerns. Spanning over four decades, the texts reflect the essence of Zeami's instruction under his famous father, the actor Kannami, and the value of his long and challenging career in medieval Japanese theater.

Tom Hare, who has conducted extensive studies of no academically and on stage, begins with a comprehensive introduction that discusses Zeami's critical importance in Japanese culture. He then incorporates essays on the performance of no in medieval Japan and the remarkable story of the transmission and reproduction of Zeami's manuscripts over the past six centuries. His eloquent translation is fully annotated and includes Zeami's diverse and exquisite anthology of dramatic songs, *Five Sorts of Singing*, presented both in English and in the original Japanese.

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Editorial Review

Review

Thomas Hare is a highly gifted, graceful, and imaginative translator. Building on his previous masterful work in *Zeami's Style: The Noh Plays of Zeami Motokiyo*, he has brought Zeami's notes to life in English with great immediacy and verve. Zeami's 'performance notes' became public only in the twentieth century, having been written for his closest associates and artistic heirs and then kept as the tightly guarded property of successor performance lineages. The texts can, most obviously, be read as a window into Zeami's own thoughts, as his legacy and strategic guide for his immediate followers. They make it possible to reimagine a remarkable amount about performance practice in Zeami's day, and they are also of great interest as a window into the matter of writing itself in Zeami's time. The texts vary in the degree to which Zeami uses a consciously elevated style, writing in a sort of pseudo-Chinese. His use of terminology borrowed, adapted, expanded, or distorted from other discourses of his time, notably the discourses of poetry and of Buddhism, is fascinating as a study in its own right. (Susan Matisoff, emerita professor of East Asian languages and cultures, University of California, Berkeley)

[Hare's] detailed, thorough, scholarly volume will no doubt serve as the choice for those seeking an in-depth understanding of Zeami... Highly recommended. (*CHOICE*)

The translations are clear and straightforward. (Joni Koehn *Asian Theatre Journal*)

this volume will have a great impact on noh scholarship and allow for a better understanding of Zeami's place in medieval culture. (Eric C. Rath *Monumenta Nipponica*)

About the Author

Tom Hare is William Sauter LaPorte '28 Professor of Regional Studies in the Department of Comparative Literature at Princeton University. His most recent books are *Zeami's Style: The Noh Plays of Zeami Motokiyo* and *ReMembering Osiris: Number, Gender, and the Word in Ancient Egyptian Representational Systems*.

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