

## 『能・リア王』第二回公演への考察

*Noh: King Lear*Thoughts on the Noh/Shakespeare Connection,  
and Background Leading up to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Performance

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**Abstract:** 上田邦義氏 作・演出『能・リア王』が2008年5月10日東京で再演された。シェークスピアの創造した美しい女性コーディーリアを、現役最長老の観世流女流能楽師、足立禮子師が演じた。上田邦義氏とシェークスピアとの出会いは1950年代の氏の学生時代に遡る。大学時代に演じた英語劇のハムレットと、その後学び始めた能（観世流）が、東西文化融合の一角を担う氏のシェークスピア創作能の淵源となる。上田氏は英語版のシェークスピア創作能を1980年代から始め現在も公演を続けている。日本語による氏の創作能は専門の能楽師によって世界各地で公演され喝采を浴びている。『能：オセロ』（1992）、『能：トマス・ベケット』（1997）、『能：クレオパトラ』（2000）、『能：ハムレット』（2004）、『能：ふたりのノーラ』（2005）、そして今回は『能・リア王』（2007）を足立禮子師という天啓のような配役を得ての作・演出となった。現在83歳の彼女は、とても柔らかく、優しく、淑やかな声を持ち、コーディーリアはかくあったであろうと思わせる美しい声を聴かせてくれる。本稿には 上田邦義氏が探求したシェークスピアと能の融合についての考察、『能・リア王』の関連情報及び概要、さらに公演への講評を含む。

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**Keywords:** Noh, Shakespeare, Kuniyoshi Munakata UEDA, Reiko ADACHI, *Noh: King Lear*, *Noh: Hamlet*, Cordelia, English Noh, Cerulean Tower Noh Theater

能、シェイクスピア、上田（宗方）邦義、足立禮子、『能・リア王』、『能・ハムレット』コーディーリア、英語能、セルリアンタワー能楽堂

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Kuniyoshi Ueda (born Munakata) has dedicated his life to transposing western tragedies into the Japanese traditional form of Noh masked dramas. A confident and calm man the Professor Emeritus of Shizuoka University and the former Secretary General of the International Zeami Society recently retired from Nihon Daigaku and is whole-heartedly pursuing his passion. Examining his connection between Noh performance style and William Shakespeare's plays leading up to the May 10, 2008 second performance of *Noh: King Lear* in Japanese will show a successful fusion of the Japanese and British theatre genres.

Answering the acclamation at the premiere in October last year, *Noh: King Lear* in Japanese by Ueda repeated at the 250 seats Cerulean Tower Noh Theater, Shibuya, Tokyo on May 10 at 1:00 pm. This was a professional performance by the Kanze School. In a bold move by a male-dominated art form, the *shite* or main actor was Reiko Adachi, 83, the oldest female Noh performer of Japan, as Lear's loving daughter Cordelia, with the *tsure* or companion Yoshihisa Endo as King Lear.

For Ueda the road connecting Noh and Shakespeare was straightforward. Ueda's first recollections of Shakespearian verse were in high school textbooks, and as a university student in 1958; he was cast as Hamlet in an English production. Searching for an authentic portrayal, he studied the delivery of great Shakespearean actors Sir John Gielgud and Sir Laurence Olivier as well as reading Granville Barker.

Around this time his interest in Noh also evolved. "As a hobby, I studied Noh from the Kanze School, even though I was not born into such a family." Most people discouraged Ueda, but while taking Shakespeare and poetry classes with Prof. R.H. Blyth he was inspired to continue.

Considered Noh's founder, Zeami (1363-1443) used the concept of *yugen* or hidden beauty to describe the subtlety of this symbolic style of art. As P.G. O'Neill analyzes in *A Guide to Noh*:

"The main aim of Noh is not to unfold a story scene by scene in as vivid a way as possible, but rather to capture the mood of a moment and to

represent it in an aesthetically satisfying way.”

While thought of as a grandiose high art with its archaic language and symbolic movements, its stories are concerned with basic human emotions. The greatest commonality Noh has with Shakespeare is their connection between those worldly emotional situations and the effects that are manifested in the spirit world.

At this point of intersection, the fusion of Shakespeare and Noh happened for Ueda. “While watching a Japanese performance of Shakespeare I thought, ‘I can do Shakespeare in English in the style of noh.’” Since then Ueda has committed himself to molding western plays into Noh’s masked composite art of song, dance and drama.

Soon after Ueda was awarded a Fulbright Scholarship. At Harvard University in the mid-70s, Prof. John Ward asked that he lecture to music students about Noh. Ueda chose Hamlet’s first soliloquy (‘O that this too too sullied flesh...’). He spoke the original English verses while dancing, as he had not yet found a method to transcribe the English iambic pentameter to Noh chanting rhythms. All were amazed with this new view of the Bard, and Harvard colleagues advised him to finish the whole play. “From then, I devoted myself to making Noh plays in English based on Shakespeare’s work.”

A full production of *Noh: Hamlet*, in just over four hours, premiered in 1982 at the Daigoso Noh stage in Shizuoka. Professional musicians were paired with student and amateur chorus members and actors while Ueda played Hamlet. The London Shakespeare Group led by John Fraser witnessed that. The following year in Tokyo, they repeated it at Yurai Noh Theater and NHK news, many weeklies and newspapers reported on this extraordinary event.

*Noh: Hamlet* in English, revised into a shorted version, has gone on to have over 100 performances throughout the world including Australia, Canada, China, Denmark, Sweden, Vietnam, the UK, and about twenty cities in the US. With this successful wave, Ueda tackled the remaining three great tragedies of Shakespeare: *Othello*, *Macbeth*, and *King Lear*.

From the 1990s Ueda also made performances of *Antony and Cleopatra* (as *Noh: Cleopatra*), T. S. Eliot’s *Murder in the Cathedral* (as *Noh: Thomas*

*Becket*), and Ibsen's *A Doll's House* (as *Noh: Double Nora*). The latter toured to Norway, Sweden, UK, Finland and Iceland in 2005-6.

Ueda's *Noh: King Lear* script follows the original written in the early 1600s, but there are great differences. Ueda, unbelievable but very commonplace with *Noh* plays, eliminated from his production Act I where Lear, now 80, decides to hand his English kingdom to his three daughters. The older two married daughters (whom Ueda also omitted) are treacherous and flatter their father into thinking that they are concerned in his best interests. The youngest, Cordelia truly loves her father and will not deceive him, hence declaring that though she will one day marry and love her husband, she loves Lear as a daughter should. Unable to control his anger, Lear divides Cordelia's share between her sisters, and banishes her. However the King of France recognizes Cordelia's virtues and marries the dowerless daughter.

Ueda cut most scenes of Acts II-IV when Lear abdicates his throne and arguments and ill treatment ensue. Ueda changed Lear's state of madness on a stormy night into an *Ai-Kyogen* soliloquy where the Fool recounts Lear's dilemma and how he curses all the world's evils. Paralleling the style of ancient Greek scripts where complicated to stage, but vital plot development is relayed to the audience through a messenger style speech. Ueda also fittingly has the Fool foresee the finale.

Upon news of her father's predicament, Cordelia returns to Britain with the French army. Here starts Ueda's *Noh: King Lear*. The opening speech is Cordelia's:

All blessed secrets,  
All you unpublished virtues of the earth,  
Spring with my tears! (IV. iv)

According to Ueda, Cordelia is the most beautiful and mystical woman Shakespeare created. The weakened Lear and lovingly devoted Cordelia are briefly reunited, but the French lose the battle and both are imprisoned.

Here Ueda adds *Noh*'s comic counterpart, *Ai-Kyogen*. The Fool appears, singing "There are two worlds: appearance and truth." He narrates

the legend of *King Lear* in monotoned words. Lastly he sings, “If Lear is to be saved, these two realms need to be aligned”. Hiroyoshi Endo, a Yamamoto family Kyogen actor, presented this.

Ueda’s finale is a unique and moving end to this tragedy. Lear holds Cordelia’s limp body represented by a folded *karaori*-kimono. He cries that he now knows what life and death are. As he expires, he notices Cordelia is calling him from the spirit world.

In true Noh style, Ueda has written a beautiful scene where the ghost of Cordelia appears, and the finale fits as though it was Lear’s unwritten ending. Here Ueda has extended Shakespeare’s original with a harmonious and heartfelt dance between father and child. The actors’ understanding of and sensitivity toward their roles made for a completely magical transition into the afterlife. The fluidity of the symmetrical movements where both circled the stage with their arms outstretched and were reunited in death was breathtaking. Their kimonos in similar white fabrics with shimmering gold threads reflected light onto Lear’s masks, so that the sadness was gone and his full regal strength returned.

Though the 83-year-old Adachi needed assistance to stand from seated positions on the floor, once her dancing began the determination and certainty with which she is able to dance are enviable. In spite of her age, Ueda also praises Adachi and says she is perfect for the part. Adachi has just as Shakespeare’s script describes Lear’s youngest daughter’s voice: “ever soft, gentle and low.”

Unlike the aged and fallen Lear, Ueda is still looking forward to a bright future. “I have been talking with the Kanze School to do a professional version of the English *Hamlet* within the next two years.”

Demonstrating his limitless energy, enthusiasm and scope during the pre-performance talk, Ueda suggested addition challenges for himself and the world of Noh. “In commemoration of next year’s anniversary of the Austria and Japan friendship treaty, I’d like to write a *Noh: Magic Flute*.”

Ueda, unlike Lear, is poised to continue his mission. He has successfully fused the centuries old theatre forms created by Zeami and William Shakespeare. With the finale of *Noh: King Lear* he has not only

highlighted Adachi's talents as the oldest female Noh performer in Japan, but also demonstrated a viable connection between our worldly causes and other worldly effects.