

Theatre of dreams, theatre of play— no and kyogen in Japan



This is the title of a major exhibition at the Art Gallery of New South Wales in Sydney this winter.

The *ko-omote* mask is probably one of the most highly recognisable objects from Japan's long history of traditional arts and crafts. It is certainly emblematic of the performing art that it is a part of, *nō* or *noh*.

The mask is one of 170 items in the upcoming AGNSW exhibition that will be on display from the collection of the **National Noh Theatre**, Tokyo and the **Agency of Cultural Affairs, Japan**. This is the first time such a comprehensive exhibition of *noh* and *kyogen* materials will be held in Australia. Masks, costumes, paintings, musical instruments and books will be among the objects on exhibit.

According to the AGNSW, *the beauty of the exhibits showcases Japan's unique aesthetic sensibility and the excellence of its traditional arts and crafts*.

Due to the fragile nature of many of the works, the exhibition will be divided into two parts to allow the works to be changed over. Tickets will be available to enable visitors to see both parts. Admission fees apply.

Part 1: 14 June – 27 July 2014

Part 2: 31 July – 14 September 2014

www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au



Ko-omote mask

This type of mask is used for young women roles.

Edo period, 17th century, pigment on Japanese cypress wood
National Noh Theatre

Japanese theatre to be HSC option in New South Wales

In the 2015-2017 drama syllabus, students will have the option of studying Japanese theatre, both contemporary and traditional performing theatre, including *noh*, *kabuki* and *bunraku*.

Details can be found on the Board of Studies website and the Japan Foundation Sydney is creating a list of resources which will be available later this year.

The Japan Foundation is also organising talk series (23 July-27 August) to coincide with the AGNSW *nogaku* exhibition.

Australian learners of Japanese on the up

According to the most recent survey of Japanese language education conducted by the **Japan Foundation**, internationally the numbers of learners, institutions offering the language and teachers all increased.

The same trend was true for **Australia**, which had the **fourth highest number of Japanese language learners of any country in 2012**. There were 296,672 learners, up from 275,710 in 2009. The number of institutions was 1,401 in 2012, up from 1,245 in 2009, and the number of teachers was 2,685 in 2012, up from 2,547 in 2009.

The largest number of Japanese language learners in 2012 was China with 1,046,490, followed by Indonesia with 872,411 and Korea with 840,187. These top three countries account for almost 70% of all learners worldwide.

The top three reasons or purposes for learning Japanese were an 'interest in Japanese language' (62.2%), 'communication in Japanese' (55.5%) and 'interest in *manga*, *anime*, J-Pop, etc' (54.0%). Japanese pop culture has now become very easy to access and in New South Wales has anecdotally been cited as a key reason even university students choose to study Japanese language.

The Japan Foundation survey is conducted to gain an understanding of the current status of Japanese-language education. As the survey excludes lessons or courses aimed at promoting international understanding and excludes learners studying Japanese under their own steam, the Japan Foundation surmises that the actual number of people studying Japanese must be *considerably greater* than the figures in the survey results.

See www.jpf.org.au/japanesestudies/index.html for a survey excerpt.