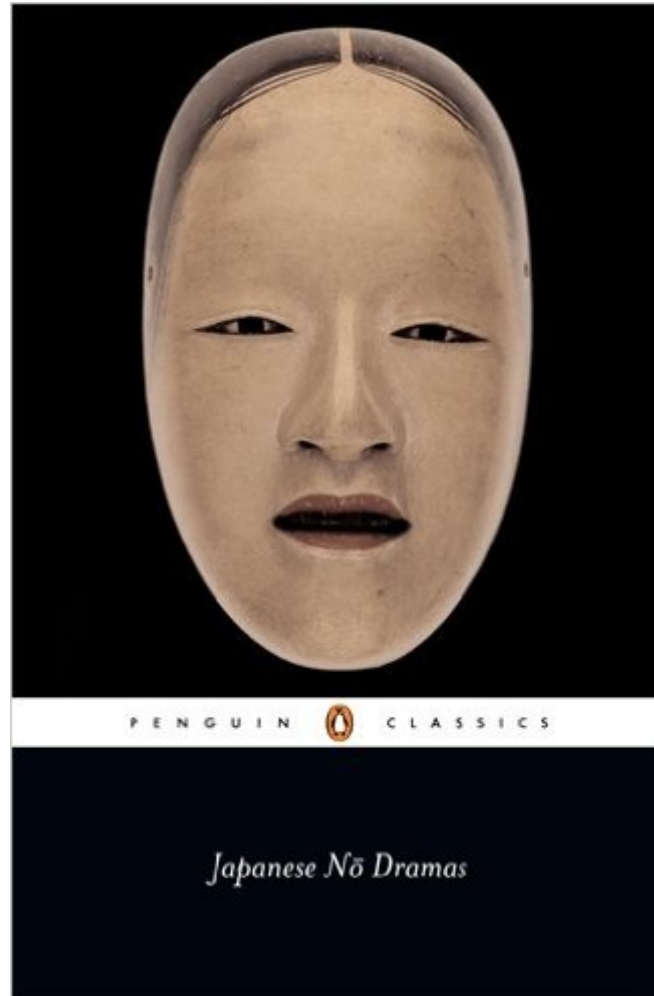


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Japanese No Dramas (Penguin Classics)



Synopsis

Japanese noh theatre or the drama of "perfected art" flourished in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries largely through the genius of the dramatist Zeami. An intricate fusion of music, dance, mask, costume and language, the dramas address many subjects, but the idea of "form" is more central than 'meaning' and their structure is always ritualized. Selected for their literary merit, the twenty-four plays in this volume dramatize such ideas as the relationship between men and the gods, brother and sister, parent and child, lover and beloved, and the power of greed and desire. Revered in Japan as a cultural treasure, the spiritual and sensuous beauty of these works has been a profound influence for English-speaking artists including W. B. Yeats, Ezra Pound and Benjamin Britten. For more than seventy years, Penguin has been the leading publisher of classic literature in the English-speaking world. With more than 1,700 titles, Penguin Classics represents a global bookshelf of the best works throughout history and across genres and disciplines. Readers trust the series to provide authoritative texts enhanced by introductions and notes by distinguished scholars and contemporary authors, as well as up-to-date translations by award-winning translators.

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Customer Reviews

The significance and effect of Noh drama is roughly equivalent to that of the plays of the great tragedians of ancient Greece. Noh combines the spiritual influences of the Buddhist and Shinto

religions and the Japanese flair for densely woven, yet elegantly simple, verse in haunting allegories of enlightenment. Every detail, from set construction to the ritual motions of the actors on stage, heightens the poignancy of the plots. While the text of many of the plays are only a few pages long; a performance of a Noh play can last several hours. These plays are not only touching and intensely spiritual, but also provide a valuable resource for westerners who want to understand the roots of Japanese culture.

Tyler is known as an authority on Japanese Literature and this volume serves an excellent introduction to No drama which is quite philosophical and religious in background. Tyler includes several plays which are interesting from both an academic and aesthetic viewpoint. I would like to make the suggestion to readers to look up some of Tyler's academic papers in titles such as "The Noh play Matsukaze as a transformation of Genji Monogatari" in Monumenta Nipponica. You can search in Jstor.com at your university library for his articles by author. His work in academic journals is top-notch.

I appreciate that no plays are supposed to be seen in performance rather than read, and I've never had the opportunity to see one. Still, I enjoyed this book and found it really useful to my understanding of Japanese art. Each play is short and easy to take in, and Tyler's translation is very readable. The explanatory notes provided context and understanding without overwhelming the reader with detail, and the performance directions went some way towards conveying what each play would be like on stage. Some line drawings of typical costumes would have been helpful, as with Tyler's translation of the Tale of Genji, but this is a very minor point. Four stars because I lack the specialist knowledge to make a truly informed judgement here.

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