

Japanese Noh Theater at Odawara Castle

"Aoi no Ue"
–The Tale of Genji –

Sep 13, 2020

(SUN) 8:00pm ~

Exclusive Online Event

Archived until Sep 16, 2020

Program:

1. Japanese Drum Performance—Hojo Daiko
2. Japanese Noh Theater at Odawara Castle
"Aoi no Ue" - The Tale of Genji -
3. FUMA NINJA Legend of ODAWARA



What is Noh?

Noh is a Japanese traditional performing art born in the 14th century. Since then, Noh has been performed continuously until today. It is Japan's oldest form of theatrical performance still in existence. The word "Noh" is derived from the Japanese word for "skill" or "talent".

The use of Noh masks convey human emotions and historical heroes and heroines. Noh plays typically last from 2-3 hours and an excerpt from these performances will be one display at Odawara Castle. Noh characters are traditionally played by men, even the female roles. Noh is described as simple and sophisticated with its set of musical instruments, chorus, stage equipment and production.

Zeami, Noh's genius, developed numerous artistic theories such as "Fūshikaden," which is also known as "The Flowering Spirit". These are read across the world today and their influence on this century's entertainment is still strong.

What is Kanze style of Noh Drama?

It is a traditional Noh performing group founded by Kannami (born in 1333). There are Noh performers including Zeami, the son of Kannami, who were outstanding in 14th and 15th centuries shaped the art of Noh as a scriptwriter, director, or performer for various works which are still performed today. This group has kept producing and performing the elegant Noh to this day. This form of Noh has been enjoyed by many historical figures even till this day. Under the powerful patronages of political and military leaders who have loved Noh, from Shogun Ashikaga, Toyotomi Hideyoshi to Shogun Tokugawa, the theatrical art grew in influence and patronage. The current leader of the Kanze style group is Kanze Kiyokazu, the 26th generation from Kannami. Kanze Tetsunojo and Kanze Yoshimasa, who will appear in the Noh performance at Odawara Castle, are also members of the Kanze style.

The Program and Highlights

The Tale of Genji is a classic work of Japanese literature dating back to the 11th century and is considered one of the first novels ever written. It was written by Murasaki Shikibu, a poet, novelist, and lady-in-waiting in the imperial court of Japan. During the Heian period women were discouraged from furthering their education, but Murasaki Shikibu showed great aptitude being raised in her father's household that had more of a progressive attitude towards the education of women.

The overall story of The Tale of Genji follows different storylines in the imperial Heian court. The themes of love, lust, friendship, loyalty, and family bonds are all examined in the novel. The basic story follows Genji, who is the son of the emperor and is left out of succession talks for political reasons. Genji is demoted to a commoner and pursues a career as a political officer. The Tale of Genji centers on the life and loves of the Emperor's son, Genji. The performed part of the story takes place after Genji carries on a number of affairs with court ladies and even his father's wife. Later his wife, Aoi, commits adultery forcing him to come to terms with his own actions of the past.

The program will feature a performance of the chapter, 'Aoi no Ue'. It is an old production performed since the beginning of Noh's establishment. The Genji story consists of 54 chapters and "Aoi no Ue" will be the one performed on stage. The story is based on the chapter 'Aoi' in the famous "Tale of Genji". The main character is "Lady Rokujo", Genji's mistress, and whose love for Hikaru-Genji results in numerous problems.

'Aoi' is the official wife of Hikaru-Genji. The two were married at a young age and she always suffered due to the philandering ways of her husband. She begins to suffer under the influence of unknown spirit. (It's represented on stage by a red robe instead of an act by a person.) When a shrine maiden calls the spirit with her magic, it takes the form of the living spirit of Genji's angry mistress lover, Lady Rokujo. In order to pay off an old grudge, she whips Aoi, who has been sick and makes her suffer even more. In addition, she reappears as Kijo (the ogress) and again whips her repeatedly. Later on, by the power of prayer, her rage and jealousy are released from her heart. Lady Rokujo's pride and jealousy are so strong that her spirit unconsciously kills other woman in Genji's life, including Aoi.

This is a popular program highlighting scenes such as: the presence of a lady suffering from her inner frustration and anger in the first half; and the soul of Lady Rokujo turning into an ogress by wearing the face of Hannya who confronts the goddess in the second half.

There have been many interpretations of this act, from a critique of the Heian system of polygamous marriage to the futile efforts of women fighting for the love of one man.





'FUMA NINJA Legend of ODAWARA' is a stage performance under the theme of Fuma Ninja who supported the Hojo Clan who once ruled a large part of Japan during the Warring States period of Japanese history. The era is famed for samurai battles, but the ninja also played an important role of espionage and sabotage from the shadows. The performance has no lines at all as it includes a fusion of Ninja performance with live music using shamisen, flute, and Japanese drums. Moreover, its acrobatic displays produce an absolutely powerful performance.

The Odawara Hojo Daiko is a group formed mainly by Odawara citizens. Through the practice of Japanese drums and lessons by a famous professional Taiko player, the group has performed at various events in Odawara for over 30 years.

The taiko is a traditional Japanese drum sometimes taking years to make. These drums have had various functions, including religious, military, and theatrical. The mythological origins of the Japanese taiko date back to the story of Amaterasu, the sun goddess, being lured out of there hiding by another god dancing on old sake barrels. The Odawara Hojo Daiko is one of about 1000 left in Japan.



Odawara Castle

THE HISTORY

Although the impressive, imposing building you see today is not the original castle, which was built in the 15th century, this Odawara city landmark is a faithful reconstruction of the center of the Hojo clans power. Because it is close to Tokyo and also because of its storied history this has become a popular place to visit to see, learn, and feel about the time of the samurai. The fortress has had to be rebuilt and renovated multiple times since the Edo period due to the earthquakes and changes in Japan's ruling system. One of Japan's most revered castles, Odawara Castle was once home to the powerful Hojo clan, which ruled a large part of central Japan, including the area now occupied by Tokyo. The castle was famed for the impressive defensive structures, but fell to a siege lead by Toyotomi Hideyoshi in 1590 during his conquest

of Japan. During the three month siege some of Japan's most famous historical figures spent time here; Toyotomi Hideyoshi, Tokugawa Ieyasu, Sen no Rikyu. When other Daimyo, regional warlords, learned of the fall of Odawara they soon surrendered to the will of Toyotomi Hideyoshi as he united Japan under one rule. Control of Odawara Castle was passed from allied clan to allied clan and many different improvements were made throughout the years. The grounds and architecture of the castle have been well preserved and is a wonderful visit to feel the time of the samurai.

THE HIGHLIGHTS OF ODAWARA CASTLE

Resist the urge to head straight up to the observatory deck at the top of the castle (save the 360-degree views over the city and Sagami Bay for last) and take time to explore the many artifacts, pieces of armor and traditional weapons on display inside the castle. To really get a feel for what it was like during the Sengoku era, you can try on samurai armor and kimono at the castle's Tokiwagi gate and have your photo taken. Stroll around

among the castle's well-preserved walls and gates to feel like you're truly in the samurai era. The grounds of Odawara Castle also have some of the most impressive cherry blossoms in the Kanto region and is a popular place to enjoy festival throughout the year.

THE APP

Download the Odawara Castle app for free from the App Store or Google Play and as you tour the exhibits inside the castle, it will provide detailed explanations and an audio guide.

URL : www.odawaracastle.com
6-1 Jonai, Odawara, Kanagawa Prefecture
(10-minute walk from Odawara Station)
T: 0465-22-3818 | W: odawaracastle.com |
Open: 9am-5pm (last entry 4:30pm)
Castle Tower Tickets: adults ¥510,
elementary and junior high school students
¥200



THE HISTORY OF ODAWARA

Bordered by the Pacific Ocean's Sagami Bay, Odawara is blessed with a scenic coastline that's been admired by travelers since the city served as a post town along the old Tokaido Road. The Tokaido Road was one of Japan's most famous and important roads, connecting the cultural and imperial capital of Kyoto with the economic and administrative center of Tokyo. Odawara prospered as a stop along this road for travelers looking to rest before they climbed the imposing Hakone mountains.

With a sandy coastline that attracts beachgoers in summer, and a bustling harbor that serves as the main port for fishermen in the area, there are plenty of activities here throughout the year. Odawara is classified as a city, but holds a certain small town charm because of the traditional shops and compact design of the city center that follows historical city plans. Odawara Fishing Port owes much of its success to the fact that Sagami Bay boasts one of Japan's three biggest deep gulfs and hence is home to an abundance of seasonal seafood, which is caught and brought to shore on a daily basis.



THE SEASONS IN JAPAN

There are several seasonal highlights to the area as well. In spring the flowering cherry blossoms and wisteria around Odawara Castle are a large draw as well as the Japanese Ume Plum orchards of Shimosoga. The ume plum orchards are especially beautiful in spring with a snow covered Mt. Fuji in the background. Summer is a time to enjoy the numerous festivals and beaches. Winter will give you a chance to visit some of the traditional crafts and shops, like sake, miso, and Kamaboko.



ODAWARA ACTIVITIES

Odawara is located between the mountains of Hakone and along the Pacific Ocean. You can go fishing, enjoy the beach, hike the mountains, and even soak in hot springs all in one afternoon. There are many cultural activities to take part in as well in this well preserved traditional castle town. You can find shops lining the streets that have histories going back hundreds of years. Odawara offers a number of unique cultural experiences including ninja training experience, chochin lantern making, and much more. Mt. Fuji is a short train ride away as well and can be seen from many parts of the city. By using Shinkansen bullet train, Odawara is a short train ride, 35 minutes, from Tokyo on the way to Kyoto. The city is easily explored on foot or bicycle. Get inspired to visit or see some of the activities on offer at Odawara Trip.



<https://www.odawaratrip.com>

