

Happy One, July 2012 edition
Profile Series: Once-in-a-Lifetime Encounters

Kinue Oshima
Kita School Noh Performer

By the Editorial Staff

Kinue Oshima's direct gaze, firm mouth and the dignified air she exudes as she moves slowly, make you automatically sit up straighter.

Ms. Oshima, who began studying Noh at the age of 2, was the first woman in the Kita School of Noh to become a professional performer. She appears on stage as a *shitekata*, the lead actor who performs dances and chants.

Noh, an element of traditional Japanese culture, originated in the Muromachi Period (1336-1573) and was developed by the warrior and merchant classes. Ms. Oshima comes from a family of performers in the Kita School, which is characterized by its simple yet grand dances and its powerful chant.

We asked Ms. Oshima to describe her feelings about Noh and her enthusiasm for future endeavors.

Along with her father, Masanobu, also a professional Noh performer, and her brother and sisters, Ms. Oshima is engaged in theatrical activities and works to popularize Noh and raise awareness of it. "Now I'm involved in Noh, which I love, but there was a difficult period too," she said.

Tough physical training is said to be the foundation of practice in the Kita School. As the eldest daughter in a family of four children, Ms. Oshima devoted herself to her lessons, but the Kita School, which is characterized by its masculine style, did not permit women to become *shitekata*. This presented a major obstacle to the continuation of Ms. Oshima's training.

"Both boys and girls are allowed to appear as *kokata* (child performers) through elementary school, but once they enter junior high school girls can no longer appear on stage. And a training program for proceeding to the next step was only arranged for my younger brother. In the Kita School, in order to become a professional performer you have to train as a boarding pupil, but I wasn't able to do that either."

During her junior high and high school days Ms. Oshima keenly felt the disparity between men and women in Noh. At college, seeking a way to continue pursuing a career in the field she loved, she met female performers from other schools of Noh and became determined to overcome the barriers she faced.

Subsequently, officials of the Kita School told Ms. Oshima she would be

allowed to perform on the condition that she do so under her father's supervision. With characteristic patience she gradually expanded the scope of her activities.

We asked Ms. Oshima why she was determined to continue performing Noh. "Simply because I love it," she said. "I love practicing and appearing on stage. I was born into a family of Kita School performers, and I saw my grandfather and father struggle, so I knew it would be hard. Plus I'm a woman. But as a woman herself my mother offered her support."

When we asked about the appeal of Noh, Ms. Oshima warmed to the subject. "It's the unique atmosphere," she said. "Unlike theater, Noh performers wear masks. When you wear a mask, you can only see part of the stage through small holes. The audience can see you, but you can't see your surroundings. In order to overcome that feeling of anxiety, you have to focus your concentration and confront your own mental weakness. The performer's inner conflict creates the dignified atmosphere."

Ms. Oshima performs overseas as well as in Japan and has been highly acclaimed. "Traditional arts like tea ceremony, flower arrangement and Noh have their origins in a ceremony of prayer, and people's prayers have come down to us in these forms," she said. "I would like to continue to enjoy Noh and tea ceremony while conveying the prayers of the Japanese people that they embody."

Ms. Oshima's effort to convey the prayerful spirit of Japan to the world and into the future goes on.

Kinue Oshima

Resident of Hiroshima Prefecture. Member of the Nohgaku Performers' Association. Based at the Kita-ryu Oshima Nohgaku Theater in Fukuyama. Visiting professor at Hijiya University. Part-time lecturer on Nohgaku at Elizabeth University of Music, Hiroshima University, etc. Performs and offers instruction in Noh both at home and abroad.

About Noh

Noh has a 700-year history and consists of five schools, including the Kanze School. Popular with the warrior class, the Kita School was promoted by many feudal lords. The performers include *shitekata* (lead actors), *wakikata* (supporting actors), *kyogenkata* (actors in *kyogen* comedies), and *hayashikata* (musicians). The Oshima family belongs to a school of *shitekata*.

Kita-ryu Oshima Nohgaku Theater

In addition to regular performances of Noh four or five times a year, the Kita-ryu Oshima Nohgaku Theater serves as a hub for the promotion of culture in the community and is used for a wide variety of programs including tours, workshops, seminars for businesses and clubs and arts performances.



舞を披露して下さる大島さん。舞台上上がると表情が一変し、キリリとした強い眼差しに圧倒されそうになります。

抑制の効いた静かな動きの中に溢れる、力強さと存在感。



定期公演でシテ方を演じる大島さん。(2002年3月)

人間の喜怒哀楽を表現するとされる能面

それにしても「なぜ能を続けよう」と尋ねますと「とにかく好きなのです。稽古も、舞台に出るのも大好きです。喜多流の家に生まれ、祖父や父が苦労する姿を見ていましたから、大変だとはわかっていました。しかも私は女性です。でも母が、同じ女性として応援してくれたのです。」そんな大島さんに、能の魅力を伺い

ますと「能独特の雰囲気です。能は演劇と違い、面をかけます。面をかける、小さな穴から舞台の一部しか見えませんが、観客からは観られますが、自分には周囲が見えない。その不安感に勝つために、集中力を高め、自分の弱い心と対峙しながら演じます。役者の精神的な葛藤が、凛とした雰囲気を作り出すのです」と、言葉に熱が入ります。



楚々とした立ち居振る舞いで、和服を美しく着こなす大島さん。姿を消した話し振りの中にも、柔らかな笑顔が印象的。



現在、能楽師である父親の政允氏や兄弟と共に、舞台活動や能の普及啓蒙活動に取り組み大島さん。「今はこうして大好きな能に携わっていますが、苦しい時期もありました」と語られます。喜多流の稽古は体にたたき込むのが基本。厳しさに耐え、四人兄弟の長女として精進の日々が続いたそうですが、男性的な芸風が特徴の喜多流は女性の

シテ方を認めず、修行の継続に大きなハードルが立ちふさがりました。「小学生迄は男女とも子方(子役)として舞台上がられますが、中学生になると女性は上げられません。しかも、次のステップへ進む修行のプログラムも、弟にしか準備されていませんでした。喜多流でプロになるには内弟子修業が必要ですが、私はそれも叶いませんでした。」



金地に御所車の仕舞扇。工芸品のような輝きを放つ扇は、舞台には欠かせない道具。

【能の豆知識】●七百年の歴史を持つ能は、観世流など四座一流が知られ、中でも喜多流は、武士のたしなみとして多くの大名に奨励されてきた流派です。●能の役者にはシテ方(主役)、ワキ方、狂言方、囃子方などがあり、大島家はシテ方の流派です。



伝えて行くのは
日本人の
祈りのこころ。

シリーズ 一期一会 ~素敵な笑顔に会いたい~

能楽シテ方喜多流 能楽師

● 大島衣恵さん kinue oshima ●

文・写真=ハッピーワン編集部

● profile ●

大島衣恵さん
広島県在住。社団法人能楽協会会員。福山市の喜多流大島能楽堂を拠点に活動。比治山大学客員教授。エリザベト音楽大学、広島大学などで、能楽非常勤講師を務め、国内はもとより、海外での公演や能楽指導などを行う。

まつすぐな眼差しに引き締まった口元。ゆつくりとした動きながら、全身から漂う凛とした空気に、思わず背筋が伸びるようです。
二歳から能を始めたという大島衣恵さんは、能の一派、喜多流で初めて誕生した女性能楽師。シテ方と呼ばれる「舞と謡」の演じ手として活躍中です。
室町時代に生まれ、武士や町人によって育まれてきた日本の伝統文化である能楽。その中で、簡素で雄大な舞と、力強い謡を特徴とする喜多流の血統を引き継ぐ大島さん。
能に寄せる思いと、今後の活動への意気込みなどを伺います。

大好きな能で、男女差を痛感した中学・高校時代。その後、能を続ける道を模索して進んだ大学で、ほかの流派の女性能楽師と出会い、壁を乗り越える強い気持ちを持てたといいます。
その後、流派から「父親の元でな」という条件つきで活動を認められた大島さん。持ち前の忍耐力で活躍の場を徐々に広げていきました。

海外公演などにも積極的に取り組む、高い評価を得る大島さん。「伝統文化の茶道や華道、能などは祈りの儀式が始まりで、人々の祈りが形として伝えられたものです。能や茶道に親しみながら、そこに込められた日本人の祈りの心を、今後も伝えたいと思います。」日本の祈りの心を世界へ、そして未来に。大島さんの挑戦は続きます。

喜多流 大島能楽堂

年に4.5回の定期公演の他、能楽堂見学、体験学習、企業やサークルの研修会、芸術鑑賞会など、地域の文化振興の拠点として幅広く活用されています。

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