

People of the Bingo Region: Part 5  
Kita School Oshima Nohgaku Theater  
Kinue Oshima, Noh Performer; Fumie and Norie Oshima, Noh Instructors

Kinue Oshima, a fifth-generation Noh performer in Fukuyama, and her sisters Fumie and Norie, Noh instructors, give us a sense of an intimate connection with Japan's traditional performing arts. The three sisters are members of a family that has been performing Noh for more than 150 years.

Noh, which developed as a performing art of the warrior class, is a crystallization of the warrior spirit and aesthetics. For that reason, the *shite*, or lead actor, and other important roles are performed by men. Before the war, Noh was a man's world, and women were not even allowed to set foot on the stage. Kinue Oshima, the eldest of the sisters, was the first woman to become a professional performer in the Kita School of Noh. She and her sisters are now working to popularize Noh, each in her own way. In addition to regular performances at the theater in Fukuyama, which are given four times a year, other events, such as a New Year's performance at Nunakuma Shrine in Tomono Ura, are held.

For local children, the Oshima sisters explain the stories of Noh plays using picture-card shows, and sing and dance with them. For these small children, who have not yet mastered their native language, and for people who have had no experience with Noh, this provides an opportunity to make Noh, a traditional performing art that seems far removed from their lives, part of their own culture.

The three women, who have appeared on stage since they were very young, did not think of Noh as an occupation at first. Female professional Noh performers were uncommon, but as she underwent training Kinue began to feel she would like to make Noh her life's work. She enrolled at Tokyo University of the Arts, the only university where Noh skills can be studied. Norie, the youngest sister, went to the same university and majored in taiko in the Department of Traditional Japanese Music. Fumie attended Musashino Women's University, where she was active in the Noh Studies Club.

After a great deal of consideration, Kinue decided to return to Fukuyama after graduation in the hope that, even if she could not become a professional performer, another path would open to her if she kept at it. Believing in her potential, she began to perform under the tutelage of her grandfather and father, also professional performers.

Seeing their sister's professional activities, Fumie and Norie sensed that Japan's traditions were becoming less and less a part of everyday life and felt it would be difficult for their elder brother and sister alone to ensure Noh's survival. They then began working as Noh instructors in an effort to support their family and to convey the pleasures of Noh in a simple manner to young people so that they could watch and enjoy it. The sisters give classes and carry out other educational activities related to Noh, which they believe everyone can

enjoy. They now give classes at more than a dozen elementary, junior high and high schools in Hiroshima Prefecture.

This year marks the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the construction of a Noh theater in Fukuyama by their great-grandfather. The original theater was destroyed by fire in the war. The rebuilt theater has a seating capacity of 380. In honor of the theater's centennial, a special performance will be held in which the sisters' father and brother will perform grand plays.

Kinue, who often performs professionally overseas, said, "I'm often reminded of the fascination of Noh by people who are experiencing it for the first time." Noh is based on a distinctively Japanese perspective on life and nature. Yet Kinue said that in the course of a conversation with an American student she realized that the need for Noh lies in its universal ideas, which transcend religion and are necessary for young people living in the global age.

The sisters said they were a little anxious when they first started teaching Noh, but the children seem to have fun just singing. When they see children enjoying the feeling of Noh's "pleasant tension," they feel their work is rewarding. The local community and the world will surely be fascinated by the approachable, enjoyable Noh of the Oshima sisters, who are pursuing their own possibilities, beyond stereotypes and across borders.

今、会いたい街の顔

# 備後人

vol.5

## 喜多流 大島能楽堂

おおしまきぬえ 能楽師 大島衣恵さん    おおしまふみえ 能楽講師 大島文恵さん    おおしまのりえ 能楽講師 大島紀恵さん

### 150年以上続く 能楽家の三姉妹

伝統芸能をぐっと身近に感じさせてくれるのが、福山で五代続く喜多流の能楽師 大島衣恵さん、そして講師の文恵さん、紀恵さん。彼女たちは、150年以上の歴史がある能楽家の三姉妹。武家の「伝統芸能」として発展してきた能は、言わば武士の精神と美意識の結晶。ゆえに、シテと呼ばれる主役をはじめとする主要な役は、男性がメイン。戦前までは舞台上に女性が立つ事すら認められなかった男社会で、喜多流初の女性能楽師として認められたのが長女・衣恵さんだ。彼女を中心に今、三姉妹は独自のスタイルと積極的な活動で能の普及に努めている。福山市内で年4回行われる定期公演をはじめ、正月に鞆町の「沼名前神社」での催しなどを開催。地域の子どもには、演目のストーリーを紙芝居で分かりやすく説明したり、一緒に謡って舞を舞ったり。日本語もままならない小さな子どもや能楽に触れたことのない人にとって遠い存在である伝統芸能を、様々な角度から

自分たちの文化へと変えてくれるのだ。

### 自分たちの文化へと変えてくれるのだ。 できる事から見えた 自分たちの役割

幼少から舞台上に立っていた3人は、初めから能を「職業」として考えていたわけではないと言った。女性能楽師は「一般的でなかったが、稽古を重ねる中で「能を生涯の仕事にしたい」という想いが募った長女・衣恵さんは、日本で唯一実技が学べる東京芸術大学へ入学。三女の紀恵さんも、同じ大学の邦楽科で太鼓を専攻。また、二女文恵さんは、武蔵野女子大学へ進学し、能研究クラブで学んだ。衣恵さんは卒業時、悩んだ末に、「プロにはなれないかもしれないが、続けていけば道



鞆の浦にある「沼名前神社」で家族揃って能舞台上に立つのが十年以上続く年始の恒例行事。毎年楽しみに訪れるファンの方も多い。

は拓けるはず」と帰郷を決意。自身の可能性を信じて、師である祖父と父のもとでプロの道を歩み始めた。そんな姉の「能楽師」としての活動を見ていく中で、「日本の伝統が生活の中で希薄になりつつある現代、兄や姉たちだけで、この先、能を存続させてゆくことは難しい」と感じたという文恵さん、紀恵さん。「家族を支えたい」、「能を若い人に観てもらいたい、楽しんでもらえるように、その面白さを分かりやすく伝えたい」という信念のもと、「能楽講師」として誰もが楽しめる能の授業や啓蒙活動をスタートさせ、今では県内十数校の小中高へも赴くようになっている。

### 能楽の素晴らしさを 発信し続けたい

「曾祖父が福山に能楽堂を建設して今年で100年」。戦争で焼失後、再建された能楽堂は380人を収容できる大舞台だ。「100周年の記念公演では父や兄が大曲を披露予定。野村萬斎氏も招き、華やかな公演にしたい」と、姉妹揃って意欲を見せる。今や海外でのプロ活動も多い衣恵さんは語る。「初めて能に



長女の衣恵さんを囲むのは、時にマネージャーや広報としても活躍する文恵さんと、楽器や謡のレッスンに尽力している紀恵さん。

接する人から能の魅力を再認識させてもらうことも多い」。能は「生きること」や「自然に対する日本人特有の考え方が土台となっているもの」。宗教を越えた共通思想「心の拠り処は、グローバル時代を生きる若者にこそ必要で、能の必要性はそこにもあるはず」。それはアメリカ人生徒との会話から気づかされたことだそう。「最初は教えるのが不安でしたが、子どもは謡うだけでも面白いみたい。身体で能の心、心地よい緊張を楽しむ子どもの姿を見ると、やりがいを感じると話す3人。固定概念や国境を越えて自らの可能性を追求するチーム三姉妹の生み出す、親しみやすく楽しい能に、地元はもちろん世界中が魅了されるに違いない。



自分たちが受け取った文化を  
若い人や世界中の人に伝えたい



### Profile

能楽シテ方喜多流。明治維新後、福山藩お抱えの能楽師の家が途絶えたため、藩士・大島七太郎が師の跡を継ぎ、備後一円に能楽を普及させたのが興り。大島家は「職分」という、宗家以外では最高の職位にある。右から能楽講師・大島文恵さん(二女)、喜多流初の女性能楽師・衣恵さん(長女)、能楽講師・紀恵さん(三女)。

●喜多流 大島能楽堂

公式HP <http://www.noh-oshima.com/>