

The Theatre Office Natori presents

*Double Nora: A modern Noh play based on A Doll's House*

*A Doll's House* was performed in Japan for the first time in 1911. This was also the first time a modern actress appeared on the Japanese stage. Before then, a woman's role had been played by a female impersonator. Nora's final decision of leaving both husband and children naturally caused pro and con discussions among intellectuals, and the emerging movement of feminism in Japan advanced to a great degree.

Since then, *A Doll's House* has been often performed in Japan, and each time the performance was intended to make the audience realize the family problem at the time. The Theatre Office Natori's production of the play in 2000 clearly showed that *A Doll's House* is still a great problem play of the relationship between husband and wife in well-developed welfare society. In this production the director Mitsuya Mori made a simple stage resemble a Noh stage without any decorations in order to depict the basic characteristic of the play.

This time, Kuniyoshi Ueda, a Noh expert, joins the staff as a co-director, and the performing style of the play will go further toward the Noh theatre. Professional actors of Noh and of the modern theatre, who usually do not appear on the same stage, will collaborate in the performance, so that symbolic and abstract Noh elements will be combined with the modern realism.

In this performance Nora will be played by a Noh actor, Reijiro Tsumura, and a modern actress, Yu Mizuno at the same time. The Noh Nora, called shite (the main character in Noh), appears with a woman's mask on the face, and the modern actress comes onto the stage as Nora's double behind the shite. Nora's husband, Torvald Helmer, is also played by a Noh actor, called waki (the side character), while both Krogstad and Dr. Rank are played by one and the same modern actor. The Noh chorus, consisting of four chanters, assists the shite by stating either the shite's own situations or thoughts.

Thus, Nora's double watches shite's behaviors and shite feels the existence of her double somewhere, though not completely aware of it. It is only the character Nora who shows this kind of complication, and the shite realizes in the course of the play that her double is in fact her true self.

Although most lines of the characters are taken from *A Doll's House*, the

words and expressions are simplified to signify the essential meaning. The script is about one third of the original play in length. The movement and chanting of Noh actors and chorus are very slow and stylized in contrast to the realistic way the modern actors move and speak.

This performance aims to show the meaning of each human being related to other human existence. We watch the separation of Nora and Torvald at the end. But we also see a future possibility, though very faint, of attaining “the greatest miracle of all” in the relationship of men and women.

This is a bold experiment for both the traditional Noh theatre and the modern theatre in Japan.