

Theatre

Japan's own Hohsho Noh

by Sandy Stiff

Edmonton audiences will have a rare opportunity Friday night to experience a form of Japanese theatre that dates back to the 14th century. The Hohsho Noh Troupe will appear in SUB Theatre Friday night.

Noh theatre contrasts greatly with theatre in the Western tradition, as the story is told in a manner in which straight dialogue does not play a large role. Rather, the action of the play revolves around the precise use of music, song and dance which are used to convey a particular emotion relevant to the plot of the play. For instance, sadness may be expressed by a series of subtle movements that do not immediately suggest sorrow; however, in the context of the play, the actor's sadness is conveyed to the audience. During a workshop Wednesday afternoon, Mr. Fusataka Honma and other members of the troupe demonstrated and explained some of the conventions of Noh theatre. These conventions, put into writing about 600 years ago by Noh Master Zeami, ensured that the performance of the surviving Noh plays would remain relatively consistent over the centuries, and serve as a guide to the precise movements and text.

Expression is not limited to movement and text, however. The music also conveys meaning important to the story, and even the manner in which the curtain is raised may be symbolic of the play's tone. As well, each of the 200 plays in the modern Noh repertoire has distinctive, colorful costumes, and masks that are hundreds of years old. The fans used in the plays have scenes painted on them which are pertinent to the plays' themes.

Just as much care is taken in the staging of the professional Noh actor also exact and precise. Training begins as early as three years of age, and the basics of both the song and dance components of Noh are learned thoroughly by the child. One result of such

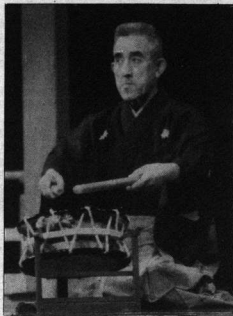


PHOTO: BRUCE GARDNER

Kobuki theatre group to perform at SUB Theatre, February 18 and 19

extensive training is that each member of the Hohsho Noh troupe has the designation of Intangible, Important Cultural Property in Japan, a distinction held by approximately 150 others.

Currently in Japan there are about 5000 professional and semi-professional Noh actors, and Mr. Honma says that Noh is more popular in Japan right now than ever before. As well, professional Noh troupes tour to other parts of the world, sometimes — as in this instance — with the financial aid of the Japanese Foreign Ministry.

There are two plays on the bill Friday night: the Noh play *Hagoromo*, or *Feathered Cloak*, and the Kyogen play *Kakiyamabushi*, or *Pessimism Thief*. A Kyogen play features a humorous and exaggerated style. Friday's performance of the Hohsho Noh Troupe takes place in conjunction with the Winter Cities Festival.

Film

Hopkins rages as *The Good Father*

The Good Father
Princess Theatre
Feb. 19 - 22

review by Jaie Laplante

"So give a stage/ Where this bull can rage." — Robert de Niro as Jake La Motta, quoting poetry in *Raging Bull*.

The Good Father may not be the most exciting movie you see this year, but it's an excellent character piece: an emotionally-charged portrayal of a man tormented by his general hatred of life and everyone around him.

Anthony Hopkins stars as Bill Hooper, a successful marketing executive whose recent divorce has turned him into an emotional "raging bull", as one U.S. critic described Hopkins' creation. This remark correctly draws a parallel to Robert de Niro's Oscar-winning portrayal of boxer Jake La Motta in the 1980 film, *Raging Bull*.

Hooper is a brutish, furiously short-tempered man: angry at women in general because he can't relate to them, angry at children (at his son Christopher in particular, whom he blames for "sapping all my love") and most of all, angry at himself for being the way he is — although he has trouble admitting it.

He definitely rejects his bourgeois, middle-class lifestyle for a scungy rat-hole of a home, a leather jacket and a motorcycle which he drives around with James Dean-like intensity. Pleasantries from others, including old friends, are usually met with obscenities or bitter put-downs. This, in short, is a man in need of a means in which to channel his violent anti-social feelings.

Jake La Motta had boxing; Hooper's salvation comes in the form of the sheepish Roger (Jim Broadbent), whom he discovers whimpering at a party. Roger has a lot in common with Hooper; his wife has left him too, only she's planning to pack up with her lesbian

lover and take their son away to Australia. Hooper immediately feels the bond, and goads Roger into fighting for his rights instead of just rolling over with such hang-doggish defeat: "Are you going to let her do that?" he demands, incredulous.

So, caught up in a fight that he clearly sees as a personal revenge against women everywhere, Hooper takes up Roger's cause. He even goes so far as to hire an expensive, coolly manipulative lawyer (Simon Callow, the vicar in *A Room With a View*, in a superb, all-too-brief comic turn), paying the expenses himself.

It does wonders for Hooper: relieved of the pressures of hating everybody all of the time, he's able to rejoin normal social circles. He even gets a new girlfriend, although the first time he is with her alone, he trembles all over — he's scared of tenderness, scared of the thought of someone actually loving him.

Later, the legal proceedings turn ugly, and Hooper realizes his own emotional victory has a hollow ring to it. "Feelings always did get in the way," he tells his wife, in a tentative, touching reconciliation scene near the end of the film.

As Hooper, Anthony Hopkins has rarely been better. His "raging bull" is intensely, brilliantly realized. His performance explodes across the screen, catching us in his internal emotional crossfire from his first furious moment.

And he's given a taut, sharp framework by screenwriter Christopher Hampton, who delves memorably into an exploration of the broken family unit of the '80's — similar in effect to Alan Parker's shattering *Shoot the Moon*, and Roger Donaldson's *Smash Palace*, both of which came out in 1982.

Director Mike Newell, who did the over-the-top *Dance With a Stranger*, here wisely tones down his previous devotion to stylish effects and intentionally cold, distanced storytelling. All combine to make *The Good Father* an absorbing, stunningly acute stage on which this bull of a man can rage.



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Nomination Packages are Available from the Receptionist in 256 SUB. Completed Nomination Packages are to be Turned In to the Chief Returning Officer, Craig Cooper, 234 SUB.

CANDIDATES MEETING:

March 1, 1988 1700 HRS.

ALL CANDIDATES FORUM:

MARCH 16, 1988 NOON IN SUB THEATRE

Any Interested Parties Who Would Like to Represent Either the "Yes" Side or the "No" Side Should Contact the Chief Returning Officer in 234 SUB.

For More Information, Contact the Chief Returning Officer, Craig Cooper in 234 SUB, 432-2231.