

## **Kushibiki: Suien no Noh**

**NOTE: This is companion content to a museum exhibit placard. The content will be accessed by scanning a QR code on the exhibit.**

Suien no Noh (torchlight noh on the water) is a unique kind of noh performed on a stage specially constructed over water and lit by freestanding torches. It was created to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the establishment of the town of Kushibiki in 1984, and is now performed annually on the first Saturday of August, serving as a major local summer celebration.

Kushibiki's special noh performance is a celebration of the area's agriculture and culture as well as people's relationship with water, seen as the source of life, and fire, seen as the source of culture.

Another kind of noh performed in the local area is Takigi Noh (torchlight noh), which is several hundred years old and traces its origins to Kofukuji Temple in Nara Prefecture. Takigi Noh began in the Muromachi period (1336–1573) and continued through the Meiji era (1868–1912) as a religious event welcoming the advent of spring.

Kurokawa Noh generally refers to the indoor performances at Kasuga Jinja Shrine, held as an official celebration for the deities enshrined there. Participation was initially limited to the shrine priests and parishioners who lived nearby, as travel to Kasuga Jinja Shrine was difficult due to a lack of transportation.

Today, Kurokawa Noh is performed outdoors as well as indoors. It is presented as a prayer for the health and prosperity of the town. Leading poet and literary critic Baba Akiko (1928– ) says, “Kurokawa Noh's charm is in prayer: it is a performance offered to the deities. The greatest Noh is not presented for human eyes but performed in one's own heart.”