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Heaven Has a Face; So Does Hell

The Art of the Noh Mask

Stephen E. Marvin

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- Explores the beauty and history of the masks of the Noh theater of Japan

A remarkable combination of superb artistry, sophisticated design, and a lengthy history of continuous usage sets the masks of the Noh theater of Japan apart from all others. That so little is known outside of Japan about their great beauty and brilliant craftsmanship prompted the author to undertake the two decades of study, research, and writing that has culminated in this work. The result is nearly 800 pages of text and images published in a two-volume boxed edition limited to 1200 copies. Volume 1 consists of an extended treatise on the history of Noh and the evolution of its masks, including mask forms and functions, types and roles, nomenclature and taxonomy, mask carvers and their lineages, signatures, and other markings. It includes plot and character synopses of the plays most often staged as well as others rarely performed, with particulars about the masks used by various troupes for the principal roles. Volume 2 is an album showcasing in full color over 140 of the finest masks of Noh, both ancient and more recent, with detailed information on their creation, character, and significance, as well as photos of their backs showing inscriptions and artists' signatures. An extensive bibliography, glossary, and index round out this presentation of an exquisite, centuries-old art form. No existing publication on the subject, in either English or in Japanese, remotely compares in scope and depth to the present work.

Stephen E. Marvin is a graduate of Stanford University in Asian Studies who has lived in the Far East continuously since 1982 and is fluent in both Japanese and Korean. In the course of his research he examined firsthand nearly 1000 Noh masks, including those held by traditional Noh troupes and in the collections of the finest museums; he benefited from the tutelage of several of the leading Japanese authorities on Noh masks and was privileged to interview the Grand Masters of the Kongpo and Umekawa troupes on numerous occasions.

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