

## **JENESYS2025 Online Japan-Visit Advanced Program for ASEAN Alumni Report (Theme: Japanese Culture “Noh”)**

### **1. Program Overview**

#### **【Objectives and Overview】**

This online program was conducted for JENESYS Program alumni living in the ASEAN region. The theme of the program was “Noh,” one of Japan’s most iconic traditional performing arts. Through a short lecture, a live demonstration, and a workshop, participants were given the opportunity to experience Noh firsthand. In the second half of the program, participants were split into groups to share their thoughts on the cultural activities and talk about their past experiences visiting Japan. The program helped deepen their interest in and understanding of Japan, while also encouraging ongoing exchange and collaboration among the alumni.

**【Participants】** Total: 42 alumni from ASEAN Member States (AMS)

(Breakdown) Brunei 3, Cambodia 1, Indonesia 3, Malaysia 6, Myanmar 5, the Philippines 13, Singapore 2, Thailand 1, Timor-Leste 6, Viet Nam 2

#### **【Schedule】**

■ Online Japan-Visit Advanced Program – February 12, 2026 (Thu)

1. Opening remarks
2. **【Japanese Culture Experience】** “Noh”  
Lecturer: Mr. Keisuke SHIOTSU, Noh Performer (Kita School)
3. Q&A session
4. Commemorative photo
5. **【Exchange among Participants】** Group discussions  
Themes : 1. Sharing Reflections and Insights from the Japanese Cultural Experience: Noh  
2. Sharing Experiences with Japanese Culture and Aspects of Japanese Culture of Interest
6. **【Alumni Presentations】**
7. Closing



### **3. Participants' Inquiries and Interests (excerpt)**

#### **◆ Regarding: [Cultural Experience] Noh**

- Are there any differences between kabuki and noh? In what ways are they distinct?
- Is the noh performance we are watching today the same style that has been passed down from the past?
- Has it remained unchanged since earlier times?
- Is it challenging to pass down noh traditions to younger generations?
- I felt that the movements in noh are very slow. Is there a particular meaning or intention behind this slow, deliberate style?

### **4. Voices from the Participants (excerpt)**

#### **◆ Undergraduate Student (Malaysia)**

The lecturer provides a lot of insight. Nowadays, it's not hard to get information about Japanese culture but having lecturers from local Japanese provide more tactical knowledge. The discussion is engaging too as it's not only about understanding Japanese culture but opinion about people from other nations.

#### **◆ Undergraduate Student (Brunei)**

I have never heard of Noh before, so this was a very valuable insight for me. It was fun and interesting to see the oldest major performing theatre come alive. I can also see the effort and passion of the lecturer to share the art of Noh.

#### **◆ Highschool Student (Myanmar)**

I gained more insights on Noh's emotions, which I found extremely thrilling and vast. Moreover, I learned more about Japanese culture and history at the same time, in a performance. This really made my interests in Japan spike, and I would want to learn more about Japanese culture.

### **5. Voices from the Receiving Parties (excerpt)**

#### **◆ Lecturer**

It was a great opportunity for us to see how interested in Japanese culture the participants from ASEAN were. I hope to one day see the participants again in Japan.

## 6. Disseminations by the Participants (excerpt), Articles, etc.



February 12, 2026 (Instagram)

Undergraduate Student (the Philippines)

Today, we watched a short snippet of the play, The Battle at Yashima, demonstrated by Shiozuke Keisuke and the Hayashi Musical Ensemble from the Kita Noh School, briefed with an introduction to the stage and performing roles. It is Japan's oldest major theater art that is recognized as a UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage. Noh performances often depict spiritual themes, such as stories about deities or spirits of deceased warriors, etc. It was originally performed for aristocratic classes. In contrast, Kabuki was developed for commoners. If an actor is wearing a mask, it is Noh. Noh performances are slow and highly stylized. The movements are minimal and symbolic. For example, an actor may slowly cross the stage to represent traveling a great distance. Because the stage is simple, it requires great skill to express emotions and setting through subtle movement. Over time, audiences and their perceptions have changed, however, Noh performances themselves have remained exactly the same as it was 600 years ago. Preserving this traditional art form is challenging, but efforts are being made through social media, workshops, and educational activities to keep it alive.

JENESYS2025 Online Japan-Visit Advanced Program for ASEAN Alumni (能, 能)

📅 12 February 2026 (Thursday)

👤 Lecturer: Mr. SHIOTSU Keisuke

Today, I had the chance to learn about Noh (能), one of Japan's oldest and most elegant performing arts, with a history of over 650 years.

Noh is a traditional Japanese musical drama that combines acting, dance, and chanting, accompanied by musical instruments in the background. What makes it especially unique is the use of masks, which give the performance a mysterious and deeply symbolic atmosphere.

The main actor, known as the shite, often plays roles such as ghosts, spirits, or deities. Meanwhile, the supporting actor, the waki, usually portrays living human characters.

A really interesting fun fact: these roles are often passed down through family lineages. If you are born into a shite family, you will play shite roles, and the same goes for waki families.

Noh performances take place on an open-style wooden stage inside a specialized theatre called a Nohgakudo. The stage is traditionally built entirely from cypress wood, featuring a painted pine tree backdrop and a bridge-like walkway called the hashigakari. Each pillar even has its own name, helping guide actors since masks restrict their vision.

It is such a delicate and highly disciplined art form. There is even strict etiquette when putting on the mask: you must only touch it by the ear strings and say, "Your face is going to be mine."

If you have never heard of Noh before, you might be more familiar with Kabuki since it appeared a bit later. Kabuki is often compared to Noh, but while Noh uses masks, Kabuki is known for its bold, heavy makeup.

As a Malaysian, I found it fascinating how Noh also shares similarities with some of our traditional performing arts, such as Mak Yong, Teater Bangsawan, Wayang Kulit, and even Dikir Barat. They are not exactly the same, but they all involve storytelling through acting, music, dance, and song.

Learning about Japanese culture while being able to relate it back to my own heritage made this session even more meaningful. 🇯🇵 🇲🇾 🇸🇬

#jenesys\_asean #jenesys2025 #jenesysalumni #jice\_exchange #noh



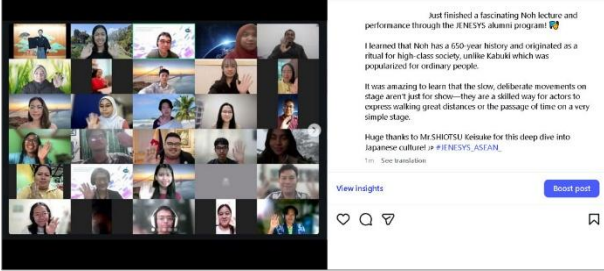
February 12, 2026 (Facebook)

Undergraduate Student (Malaysia)

Today, I had the chance to learn about Noh, one of Japan's oldest and most elegant performing arts with a history of over 650 years. Noh is a traditional Japanese musical drama in which acting, dance, chanting, and live musical accompaniment come together as a unified performance.

What makes it especially unique is the use of masks, which give the performance a mysterious and deeply symbolic atmosphere. The main actor, known as the Shite, often plays roles such as ghosts, spirits, or deities. Meanwhile, the supporting actor, the Waki, usually portrays living human characters. A really interesting fun fact, these roles are often passed down through family lineages. If you are born into the Shite family, you will play Shite roles, and the same goes for Waki families. Noh performances take place on an open-style wooden stage inside a specialized theater called the Nohgakudo. The stage is traditionally built entirely from cypress wood, featuring a painted pine tree backdrop and a bridged-like walkway called the Hashigakari. Each pillar even has its own name, helping guide actors, since masks restrict their vision. It is such a delicate and highly disciplined art form. There is even strict etiquette when putting on a mask. You must only touch it by the ear strings. If you have never heard of Noh before, you might be more familiar with Kabuki, since it appeared a bit later. Kabuki is often compared to Noh, but while Noh uses masks, Kabuki is known for its bold heavy makeup.

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	<p>February 12,2026 (Instagram)  Working Youth (Indonesia)  Just finished a fascinating Noh lecture and performance through the JENESYS Alumni program. I learned that Noh has a 650-year history and originated as a ritual for high-class society, unlike Kabuki which was popularized for ordinary people. It was amazing to learn that the slow, deliberate movements on stage aren't just for show—they are a skilled way for actors to express walking great distances or the passage of time on a very simple stage. Huge thanks to Mr. Shiotsu Keisuke for this deep dive into Japanese culture.</p>
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**7. Alumni Presentations**

Discussion Themes:

1. Sharing Reflections and Insights from the Japanese Cultural Experience: Noh
2. Sharing Experiences with Japanese Culture and Aspects of Japanese Culture of Interest

<p>Presenter (the Philippines):</p>
<p>In Discussion 1., I felt that Noh is an excellent example of traditional Japanese culture. Participating in this program made me want to continue engaging with other forms of traditional culture as well, not only Noh.</p> <p>In Discussion 2., I shared my experience of participating in the JENESYS program, during which I visited Gifu Prefecture and took part in a tea ceremony. I still remember how strikingly bitter the Koicha (thick tea) was. In Fukui Prefecture, I also had the valuable opportunity to experience sake brewing.</p>
<p>Presenter (Thailand):</p>
<p>Regarding Discussion 1., it was my first time watching Noh. I had assumed it was a form of traditional culture consisting only of dance, so I was surprised to see that it is accompanied by music. I watched the performance with great fascination.</p> <p>In Discussion 2., I shared that my first contact with Japanese culture was through manga and Doraemon. Although I minored in Japanese at university, I am not very fluent.</p> <p>I first visited Tokyo and Miyazaki in 2001. During that visit, I felt that Japan and Thailand share certain cultural similarities.</p>

Implementation Agency: Japan International Cooperation Center (JICE)