

Week 14 Art Activity, Noh and Kabuki masks.

Japanese Noh theatre has been around for hundreds of years, it follows very strict traditional story lines and the performances are very long, originally it was only performed for the aristocracy. Masks are a fundamental part of Japanese Noh theatre. Noh masks are called *omote* in Japanese. They serve to characterize a certain role in a play. Noh plays seldom have more than 2-3 actors who change masks to change character.

There are around 50 types of omote, the main characters are:

- *otoko* - human male.
- *jo* - elders.
- *onna* - woman.
- *uba* - old woman.
- *chigo* - children.
- *jinki* - supernatural being.
- *kijin* - demons.
- different forms of animal masks.



Kabuki was started by a woman, Izumo no Okuni in Kyoto in 1603. It was very popular theatre involving dance, music and comedy for the masses. Women were banned from performing in Kabuki plays in 1629 because it was thought to disturb discipline. They were replaced by beautiful young men to play the female roles, but in 1652 they were banned for the same reasons as the women and only older men were allowed to perform. Kabuki uses striking face paint more than masks but the make up forms a kind of mask itself.

You will need: 1 or 2 paper plates, Masking tape, white, black and red paint, brushes, pencil, black pen or sharpie, scissors.

- 1) Cut slits around the rim of your paper plate approx. 5cms apart.
- 2) Overlap the sections slightly and stick with strips of masking tape, creating an oval face shape, flatten the tape as much as possible.
- 3) If you have chosen a mask with horns, ears or noses, draw and cut these pieces out of your second plate, try to use the curve of the rim to make your pieces more 3D. Stick them onto your mask shape with more masking tape, snip into the strips of tape to help mould them round the curves.



- 4) Sketch your design onto your mask, I went over mine with black sharpie so it would show through the base coat of white paint.
- 5) Pierce the eyes with a sharp pencil or ballpoint pen, then snip round with scissors to make the holes larger.
- 6) Paint the whole mask in a white base coat of white, (use red as a base coat if you are making the red demon) let it dry.
- 7) Hopefully you will still be able to see your lines through the white, paint on the red next, then finally the black.
- 8) If you want to wear it, when it is dry pierce 2 holes in the sides and thread wool or string through.



Have fun creating, I would love to see some of the results, Grace made a fox/rabbit mask. I'll see some of you in school soon.

Mrs Nichols x