Zeami Motokiyo (1363?–1443?), actor, playwright, and theorist of the noh theatre, is widely acclaimed today as one of the most innovative thinkers in the history of the stage. He has long enjoyed recognition as a seminal playwright of noh, an art that depicts the life of the emotions in a synthesis of dramatic, musical, and choreographed elements. Along with this activity as a playwright, he produced twenty-one critical writings over four decades that record his efforts to discern what worked best with audiences. These treatises contain a nuanced and comprehensive phenomenology of the stage informed by a lifetime of artistic practice. Intended as instructions for his successors on how to get ahead in the competitive business of performing, they reflect a growing awareness on his part of the greater efficacy of a multisensory and open theatrical form for engaging the interest of audiences.

Unlike his plays, which have been performed continuously since his own lifetime, his critical corpus began to be published and made available to the general public only in 1908 and 1909. In the last century, his treatises have taken on a new life as fruitful objects of inquiry for scholars and practitioners of theatre and performance around the world. As Gerould has noted, “Like all the most enduring theories, Zeami’s treatises exist both within their own historical period and also independently of the theatre practice that gave
Gerould also rightly cautions that one must tread carefully when ascribing universal appeal across time and cultural context, and it is not the intent of this volume to take such a facile approach. At the same time, Zeami’s treatises continue to offer a wealth of insights to audiences beyond the specific concerns of one theatrical tradition, on issues ranging from the nature of dramatic illusion and audience interest, to tactics for composing successful plays, to issues of somaticity and bodily training.

This book is an interpretive study of Zeami’s treatises that addresses all of these areas as it traces the development of his ideas on how best to cultivate attunement between performer and audience. I have titled it *Developing Zeami* because it takes the position that an understanding of his ideas is best gained by reconstructing their development as a process. For example, one of Zeami’s accomplishments as a playwright that is often mentioned is the honing of a certain dramatic prototype, referred to today as *mugen* (dream) noh. This type of play was designed to foster the engagement of the audience in co-creation of the story, or so I will argue. While the importance of *mugen* noh as “product” should not be underestimated, for its full import to be understood it needs to be situated in the larger context of what kind of performance Zeami wanted to promote. How did *mugen* noh contribute to the larger aim of a successful performance? What Huxley and Witts state in their reader on modern performance is no less true in the case of Zeami’s dramaturgy: “Performance means process as well as final artefact, and an engagement with process is essential to any full understanding of the form.” Indeed, for Zeami the prototypical form that a drama should take was the by-product of the process that he wished to promote onstage. For these reasons, this volume will situate Zeami’s precepts on composing in the larger context of his theories about dramatic representation and the elicitation of audience interest.

Needless to say, tracking the development of Zeami’s ideas means that they must first be examined within the particular ecology of *sarugaku* (the earlier name for noh) in Muromachi Japan (1336–1573), where they emerged in response to a nexus of local variables. Many concepts that are key to understanding Zeami’s drama theory, among them the aesthetic ideal of *yûgen* (mystery and depth/grace) and that of *hana* (the flower), are referred to throughout his critical corpus, but their meaning, too, changes over time. Any clear understanding of his mature theory of the stage depends on examining the kinds of performance variables and tensions that these core ideas were intended to address as Zeami struggled to reinvent
his art. That is, to understand the underlying rationales for his theory of how to engage audiences, it is crucial to also examine how it changed and why. In so doing, we become better able to explore how certain aspects of his ideas about performance may speak to us today.

Zeami’s Developing “Flower”

Zeami’s own term for successful attunement between performers and audience is *hana* (flower). One further way to characterize the aim of this volume is as the pursuit of Zeami’s deepening understanding of the variables that allow this flower to bloom. In its most fundamental sense, it may be defined as “simply that which [creates a sense of] novelty in the mind the of the spectator.” He holds to this conception throughout his critical writings. He is certainly not the first to employ the metaphor of the flower to underscore the link between beauty and mutability. However, in his critical treatises there is an added dimension to this image because he uses it to allude to all manner of stage effects/affects as experienced by the spectator. Therefore, the flower is not a thing intrinsic to any particular object or aspect of a performance. Rather, it is a total effect created by whatever happens to work for particular audiences in particular performances. A seemingly simple metaphor, it turns out to be enormously complex, for it signals his commitment to negotiating all the variables that may affect what the spectator perceives and feels.

Those variables may be outside of the performers’ direct control, such as the season, the time of day, the weather, the physical setting (outdoors/indoors; town/country), as well as the social mix of the audience. They include the age and physical appeal of the performers as well as how effectively they perform. Moreover, the flower is premised not only on the playwright’s creation or the performer’s proficiency in the execution of requisite techniques such as chanting, dancing, and the representation of characters, but on the combined effect of these various layers as they are synthesized in the mind of the spectator. Zeami also uses the flower as a metaphor for the art of the actor. An actor who possesses the flower is one who has cultivated both the sensibility and the technical versatility to read his audience and to adjust his performance accordingly. Certainly one important concern motivating all of his pedagogical writings is developing the capacity in his disciples to thus read their audiences.

In the quotation from *Kaden* (Transmission of the flower) above, Zeami
states that the impression of novelty in the mind of the spectator implies the presence of the flower. Novelty does not refer to bizarre or aberrant subject matter in a play or its performance, but on the manner in which one performs: "When [two people are] executing the same vocal music or acting, the skilled one will have special interest. The unskilled one will [simply execute techniques] the way he has learned [them], so there will be no sense of novelty." What is more, the difference arises from the skilled actor’s ability to invest his techniques with the nuances of his feeling. The techniques themselves may be routine enough, but his ability to exploit them to create interest and this sense of novelty will make him stand out.

The flower, a sensation of interest aroused in the audience, and this sense of novelty are both aspects of the same “mind” (kokoro), Zeami observes. Moreover, such effects depend on cultivating the capacity to avoid slipping into the rut of habit. “Know first of all that the flower consists in not dwelling [in one style]. When you avoid dwelling [in one style], and you shift [freely] into other styles, this will [create a sense of] novelty.” It is because flowers fade that their blossoming arouses a sense of novelty. So it goes with styles of performance, he adds. If the actor slips into habitual repetition of only one style, he will become too predictable to inspire a sense of novelty.

As Zeami’s ideas and observations about performance mature, he develops further insights into how the playwright and the performer can foster the optimal conditions for creating the effects of the flower. Over time, his treatises provide an increasingly philosophical slant on the concept as his understanding of the nature of attunement deepens. In a treatise titled \textit{Kakyô} (Mirror of the flower; 1424), he likens the relation between the character the actor plays and the underlying state of mind of the actor to that between a marionette and its strings. The marionette seems to have a life of its own while all its strings are intact and working properly. However, when a string breaks, then the fictionality of the puppet is revealed. The dramatic illusion is destroyed as we are reminded that the puppet had depended for its effects on the manipulator working the strings. Similarly in \textit{sarugaku}, techniques of imitation are fabrications made possible by the mind (kokoro) of the actor. Zeami cautions that just as in the case of the strings of a puppet, the workings of the actor’s mind must remain invisible to the audience in order to be effective. In his theory of the stage, he thus comes increasingly to attribute the locus of stage effects to the ground rather
than the figure—that is, to the actor’s underlying capacity to manipulate material as he senses and reacts to audiences rather than to any intrinsic appeal of the content of that material in isolation from its use.

A performer who has internalized techniques to the extent that he can consciously apply them in order to create moving effects may be called skillful, but ultimately the most moving effects depend on the actor going beyond the acquisition and conscious application of techniques. Zeami states that ultimate effects with audiences are possible only after there is no conscious willing on the part of the actor. Extrapolating on his puppet metaphor above, the superbly accomplished manipulator must himself forget that the marionette has strings. Once the striving for effects is something that is not part of the actor’s conscious orientation, then optimal attunement with an audience becomes possible. Although Zeami makes a distinction between the mind and the techniques of the actor and holds that the highest grade of the flower emanates from the mind of the actor, this is a cultivated mind that grows in concord with the acquisition of bodily techniques.

Building the Foundation: Nikyoku santai
(The “Two Modes and Three Styles”)

The primary stages of such training of the actor should follow guidelines in abidance with a particular configuration of performance that Zeami refers to as nikyoku santai (the “two modes and three styles”; hereafter referred to as nikyoku santai). Another way to characterize this volume is as tracking Zeami’s development of this concept of performance and its ramifications for his deepening philosophy of attunement. In a nutshell, nikyoku santai was originally the outgrowth of his efforts to reorient the relationship of the elements of song and dance with techniques of imitation. Nikyoku, which has also been translated variously as the “two arts,” “two elements,” or “two media,” refers to the activities of dancing and chanting. A more liberal and telling gloss for “dance and chant” might be “movement and vocalization.” Nikyoku also forms part of another term that is important in Zeami’s critical theory, buga nikyoku (two modes of expression, dance, and chant). He expected the actor in training to internalize these two modes prior to acquiring skills more specific to the playing of roles. In this way, techniques of representation were applied to the actor’s preexisting foundation, composed
of musical and choreographic techniques. I have translated nikyoku as “two modes” to emphasize Zeami’s idea that all stage action should unfold via these two forms of expression.

The “three styles” refer to three types of representation, translated here as the “venerable style” (rōtai), “feminine style” (nyotai), and “martial style” (guntai). Whereas early in his career Zeami delineates nine types of characters that are suitable as subjects for imitation, the three styles are a later refinement more suggestive of human prototypes. As their labels imply, the venerable style holds for elderly characters, the feminine style for female ones, and the martial style for warriors. Zeami comes to treat all other possible roles as derivatives of these three styles. As noted above, he considered the two modes to be the prerequisites for training in the techniques of representation embodied in the three styles. The novice actor should first internalize basic techniques of dancing and chanting, and only then should he train in the three styles. That is, representational techniques should be executed via the primary media, dance and chant.

Indexing the Flower in Three Parts

This volume examines nikyoku santai as an index of the flower as it develops in three domains, and each domain is the focus of one of its parts. Part 1 concentrates on Zeami’s formulation of nikyoku santai in conjunction with a rethinking of what kind of representational style was most effective for eliciting audience empathy. It is at the heart of what I consider to be his shift from a style of representation informed by the action to a kind of poiesis, or poetically based representation. I argue that the shift was prompted by his deepening insights into patterns of human reception on two fronts. First, he came increasingly to recognize that the best way to captivate an audience was to leave space for their active involvement in signifying practices. The surest way to create such space was to abandon a representational style based on verisimilitude and to instead construct a multisensory flow of images for each spectator to synthesize on the basis of his own receptivity and imaginative engagement. This is the first sense in which I intend the term “poiesis” here. That is, I mean it in the broader sense of creation by an audience in response to what is happening onstage.

The second sense in which I apply the term has to do with this increased reliance on language in engaging the audience. Part 2 explores Zeami’s dramaturgy, in which nikyoku santai becomes a kind of organizing principle
of the dramatic action. The configuration evolved in tandem with the increased importance of texts that rely on poetic tropes and narrative to create a style of play that fosters a kind of echo chamber of allusions. I will argue that *nikyoku santai*, in this domain as well, was central to the fostering of a multimedia stage event effective in eliciting the imaginative engagement of audiences—key to invoking the flower.

Part 3 will examine the ramifications of installing *nikyoku santai* at the heart of the actor’s training program as Zeami depicts it in his mature treatises on training. In *Kyûi* (Nine levels), an undated treatise believed to have been written late in his career, Zeami discusses nine levels of artistry that are intended as developmental guidelines for the actor to follow as he strives to develop the capacity to consistently elict interest and a sense of novelty despite the vicissitudes of performance. The aforementioned style of acting, in which the actor’s intentions are hidden even from himself, would correspond to the uppermost of the nine levels. The two modes and three styles are positioned at the entry levels of training. One thing that becomes clear from this paradigm is that Zeami considered the process of acquiring this bodily training in *nikyoku santai* as conducive to cultivating the capacity to achieve attunement with audiences. This final segment of the volume will thus explore the idea that inculcation of *nikyoku santai* in training was not only important for the creation of the role, but also for the creation of the actor. In the following I will discuss in a bit more detail some of the major issues addressed in each of the three parts.

**Part 1: A Shift in Representational Styles**

Part 1 begins by examining the cultural backdrop of Zeami’s troupe’s performances in order to reconstruct his rationale for creating the *nikyoku santai* configuration. I argue that the initial impetus may well have been tactical, growing out of a concern that his own style of *sarugaku*, based in the Yamato region of what is today Nara Prefecture, was not keeping up with the competition from the troupes based in the Ômi area, north of the capital of Kyoto. The Ômi troupes were recognized as having a high *yûgen* quotient in their art, which met with the approval of potential patrons of the Kyoto establishment such as the third Muromachi shogun, Ashikaga Yoshimitsu (1358–1408).

*yûgen* (variously translated as “mystery and depth” or “grace”) will be familiar to students of medieval Japan as a much precedented critical term...
at the heart of various discourses on Japanese poetry, such as the thirty-one-syllable \textit{waka} and the linked verse form known as \textit{renga}. It was also to become central to Zeami’s treatises, as well as to those of the major theorist and playwright of \textit{sarugaku} in the succeeding generation, Konparu Zenchiku (1405–1470?), in the domain of \textit{sarugaku}. I argue that the first step in this process was the necessity that Zeami felt to increase the prevalence of musical elements such as singing and dancing (aka the \textit{yugen} elements) in his style of \textit{sarugaku} in order to keep up with the competition and maximize possibilities for powerful patrons.

In his earliest characterizations of the quality as embodied in the competition, Zeami speaks of the prevalence of singing and dancing that characterizes the rival Ômi style as having \textit{yugen}. The Yamato style, on the other hand, was better known for its mimetic scenes, as well as for its excellence in the performance of demonic roles. The \textit{sarugaku} style that Zeami inherited from his father seems to have placed greater weight on mimetic techniques aspiring to lifelike semblance than on less directly representational elements such as singing and dancing. Such mimetic moves were often performed in scenes that aspired to credible semblances of “real life” for audience consumption. Moreover, the Yamato style was known for its excellence in the performance of demonic roles, which, within the framework of a representational style that claimed to imitate real life, could aspire to the \textit{yugen} elements of dancing and singing only at the expense of dramatic credibility.

Song and dance had been part of \textit{sarugaku} traditions prior to Zeami’s generation, but evidence suggests that they coexisted rather loosely with mimetic elements in the infrastructure of a play. There are records of song-and-dance routines performed with little vestige of a dramatic framework. Rather, such routines seem to have been based on the more direct appeal of their sensuousness and pageantry. Within the frame of dramatic representation, song and dance seem to have functioned primarily as musical highlights in the plot action—that is, as performances within performances. Those elements were inserted into the plot action as developments in the story. This is how Zeami describes their function in plays of his father’s generation, at least.

Both Zeami’s plays and his critical writings indicate that he deliberately worked to shift this balance. In his later years he moves the emphasis away from this mimetic stance in favor of a performing art that is organized around these elements of the chanted line and dance. Virtually no attempt
is made to persuade us that what is happening onstage approximates “real life.” On the contrary, he comes to use dance and chant in ways that served to undermine all claims to realistic imitation and to defuse all semblances of the kind of closure that plot-driven action tends to foster. I argue that he did this by redefining the relations of a play’s parts. Whereas mimetic elements and musical or choreographic ones had been only loosely aligned in older plays, by means of the *nikyoku santai* configuration, Zeami fused those elements into necessarily coexisting ones in the very exposition of a play.

That is, he resituated dance and song at the heart of a performance such that they figured not only in the dramatic fiction, but were two inextricable modes in the dramatic diction. He thereby greatly enhanced the importance of the musical and choreographic elements both in performance and in the overall infrastructure of a play. Moreover, these innovations offered him a basis on which to shift to a representational style keyed to the portrayal of the inner life of a character. The enhanced presence of dancing and singing sufficed to reframe the nature of the dramatic illusion in his style of *sarugaku*. Two of the staple characters in his style of *sarugaku*, warriors and demons, could now dance and sing without fear of violating the dramatic illusion since the very presence of the two modes sufficed to undermine any claim to realistic imitation. In Zeami’s mature style of performance, no attempt is made to disguise the sign system as such.

**Yūgen as an Emergent Property: Some Hints from the Poets**

In part 1, the case is made that Zeami’s quest to intensify the *yūgen* elements in *Yamato sarugaku* was a catalyst for thus assigning chanted poetry and dance more central roles in the dramatic action. What is more, I make the case that Zeami gleaned some important hints on how to invoke such emotional qualities on the basis of precepts set down by a prominent poet of the period, Nijō Yoshimoto (1320–1388), in his pedagogical writings on composing *renga*. When Zeami and his father, Kan’ami Kiyotsugu (1333–1384), were able to secure the patronage of Yoshimitsu, it enabled Zeami to become acquainted with the leading members of the intelligentsia of the day. Yoshimoto tutored the shogun in poetic composition and served as an influential arbiter of taste in the shogunal circle. It is likely that he would have inculcated his aesthetic preferences in Yoshimitsu, and it is equally likely that Yoshimitsu’s aesthetic preferences would not have been lost on Kan’ami and Zeami. We also know that Zeami was in contact with Yoshimoto
and participated at least twice in renga composing sessions with him. Moreover, Yoshimoto’s lavish praise of the boy Zeami’s abilities as a versifier is preserved in a letter written by Yoshimoto in 1376.8

Yoshimoto was a seminal figure in the formation of a theory of the renga. He considered evocation of the yūgen quality as the ultimate accomplishment in renga composition. In his treatises he associates yūgen with aristocratic grace and polish, a beauty of form that reflected a cultivation of the poetic sensibility. I argue that Zeami may have taken his cue for how to implement yūgen qualities from Yoshimoto’s precepts concerning kakari effects in renga, sonorous overtones that emerge in the flow of the recited lines. Drawing on some of the points first set down by Fujiwara no Shunzei and his son Teika in their critical writings on waka composition, Yoshimoto points out that the impression the poetic line creates has much to do with the context of its delivery. In this regard the temporal consideration of promoting a sense of polished linguistic flow across the linked verses of a renga composition is more central to the creation of an impression that the material has yūgen than is the propositional content of the material distinct from the context of the poetic composition.

I argue that Zeami set about implementing the kakari dynamic in the three-dimensional contexts of the sarugaku stage. His major means of replicating a polished flow onstage was the intensification of chanted and danced elements. These elements in turn contributed to the tenor of the representation, making it possible for the impression created by ostensibly non-yūgen subjects such as demons to be mellowed by the modes of delivery. As Zeami continued to strive for an intensification of these elements in his quest for heightened yūgen effects, and with reference points from poetic traditions, he arrived at a new understanding of the nature of how to move audiences. Whereas his early writings reflect a search for yūgen effects on the basis of the content of the characters and materials used in plays, gradually his focus shifts to the aural and visual modalities through which a play is performed. And in his mature theory, he comes to locate the ultimate source of yūgen effects in the underlying sensibility of the actor himself, the informing, embodied intelligence that mediates all stage techniques.

In part 1 I conclude that Zeami’s first motivation for integrating yūgen elements into his art may well have been motivated by the pressure to cultivate patrons, but that in his efforts to effect that integration he came to reevaluate some of the basic premises of his style of sarugaku. He moved away from the traditional emphasis on lifelike semblances as he came to
realize, through his stage practice, that how material is rendered has everything to do with how it is perceived by an audience. In his thinking, yûgen came to be less a noematic content than a property that emerges in the process of a perceived performance. With this realization came an intensified awareness of the integral role of elements such as poetry, dance, and music in establishing a mood that serves as an envelope for actual techniques of representation.

Part 2: The Literary Turn

Part 1 explores nikyoku santai as the logical outcome of this evolving understanding that the creation or co-creation of meaning onstage is less referential than it is constitutive. Part 2 argues that the shift that occurs in Zeami’s understanding of the nature of dramatic representation in turn becomes a catalyst for the development of his style of dramaturgy. He developed a dramatic prototype that assumed the ultimate interpretive act to be that of each spectator as he experienced the multiple media of text, song, dance, and representation unfolding onstage. Meaning then was an emergent property that did not reside in any one element of a prototype, or of a performance, but ultimately in the act of reception itself. As Gadamer has observed, “The text brings an object into language, but that it achieves this is ultimately the work of the interpreter. Both have a share in it.”

I believe that as Zeami’s ideas on representation evolve, he comes to a similar realization.

Over time, Zeami’s critical writings suggest a deepening understanding that the nonverbal and the verbal do not enjoy transferability. Language is not a simulacrum of reality, and a representation that struck an audience as “real” did not depend on somehow mirroring reality. Gradually he abandons concern for reproducing physical resemblances, similar to what Diamond in another tradition has called the “conventional iconicity” by which “theatre laminates body to character.” I will attempt to show that the increased centrality that Zeami assigned to narrative exposition freed him from the constraints of trying to make objects (and events) seem real onstage by virtue of their literal duplication. It allowed him to organize a performance more in congruence with the figurative language of a literary text, which formed the context for interpreting what was happening onstage.

This part of the volume will explore how his deepening understanding of the expressive potential of language to reconstitute what we perceive as
“reality” seems to have been a primary motivating factor in the shift in Zeami’s ideas on representation. His texts exploit the power of the word to create imaginary worlds beyond the constraints of the realistic representation of scenes. An increased use of the narrative voice was one corollary to the increased presence of chanted language and dance as the modes of the exposition. While employing dialogue and monologue as framing devices for establishing the dramatic setting and orienting us to events in the dramatic present, he added substantial narrative passages that retold a story at the heart of the drama. I hope to demonstrate that in his plays we do not watch characters enact events so much as we watch them collaborate in enacting a textual narrative. As White has written, “language is never a set of empty forms waiting to be filled... or attached to preexistent referents in the world.” Rather, it is already “freighted with figurative, tropological, and generic contents before it is actualized in any given utterance.” We will track the growth of a similar sense of the freighted nature of language and its integral role in the creation of Zeami’s poetic of the stage.

Of Zeami’s twenty-one critical writings, one is devoted entirely to this aspect of his art. Titled Sandō (lit. “The three paths”; trans. here as The three techniques; 1423), it sets down the steps that the playwright should take to write plays that are commensurate with the configuration of the nkyoku santai. Sandō describes composition as a threefold process. First, the playwright must choose a protagonist whose image lends itself to poetic modes of expression, including song and dance. Second, he must structure the play in such a way that there are two climactic points in the development of the action, the first bringing the linguistic and sonic appeal of the chant to the fore, the second highlighting danced expression. The third step is the actual composition of the lines, which includes a range of prosodic concerns as well as the apt choice of poetic allusions. Language should also be chosen for its sonic possibilities.

Along with an analysis of Zeami’s ideas on playwriting in general, which is the central concern of part 2, an updated, annotated translation of the Sandō text is attached as appendix 1. Recently there has been a major development in Sandō scholarship in Japan, the discovery of a traced reproduction of a no longer extant transcription of the Sandō manuscript. The transcription was part of a collection of Zeami’s critical treatises that had been housed in the Matsunoya Bunko (Matsunoya Library) in Tokyo, a collection belonging to a Tokyo banker, Yasuda Zenjirō (1838–1921). The
These manuscripts, which had been held in high repute as the best manuscripts available, burned at the time of the Great Kantō Earthquake of 1923. The historiographer Yoshida Tōgo (1864–1918) published his own edited copy of the Matsunoya Bunko bon in a print edition in 1909 titled Nōgaku koten Zeami jūrokubu shū (The Nōgaku classics: Zeami’s collection of sixteen [writings]). These edited manuscripts are known as the Yoshida bon, and it is the Yoshida recension of the Sandō manuscript that has served as the primary textual basis for subsequent exegeses of the treatise.

The traced reproduction of the Matsunoya Bunko manuscript of Sandō has been recently discovered in the Yoshida family holdings (Yoshida Bunko) and has been examined by Takemoto Mikio, scholar and expert on the textual traditions of noh, who writes that certain of its passages differ from the Yoshida recension and offer fresh perspectives on the Sandō text and on the process of textual interpretation of Zeami’s treatises more generally. In my notes to the English translation of Sandō I have tried to point out where the traced reproduction of the Matsunoya Bunko bon differs significantly from the manuscript on which my own English translation of Sandō is based, the Yoshida bon.

Turning to the content of the treatise, Sandō sets down the ground rules for a dramatic model that has come to be labeled in modern times as mugen nō (dream noh/phantasmal noh). Plays that follow the mugen format typically feature a protagonist (shite) who is a supernatural being and who appears initially in the first act with his or her true identity disguised. He or she will begin to tell a story to a listener, the supporting actor (waki), from an ostensibly detached stance. However, as the story unfolds that distance begins to dissolve. The waki’s curiosity begins to be redirected from the contents of the narrative to the identity of the narrator. In a two-act play, the shite will exit between acts and then return in his or her true identity. In the second act the shite participates unreservedly in reenacting the salient points of the story. Some plays in this group have the shite of the second act appear in the waki’s dream, which is one justification for this modern classification of “dream” noh. The classification has in turn influenced how many modern scholars of noh have chosen to organize their ideas.

In his study of mugen noh, Tashiro comments on how the narrative voice works to frame experience in this type of drama: “The story told by the shite
of a mugen play frequently touches on events that occurred after the shite’s
death, and the teller goes back and forth freely between first and third per-
son perspective.”
He goes on to qualify this by commenting that writing
the lines in this way suggests an underlying assumption that “the shite
is essentially a narrator.” The point of view of the shite is thus extremely
fluid. The shite, as well as the chorus, an important presence in all noh
plays, and, sometimes, the waki, may weave back and forth between mul-
tiple perspectives. The shite may speak as his mortal self or as the retro-
spective interpreter of the events leading up to or following his own death,
or he may weave back and forth between these stances. This weaving is
especially complex when the shite plays the role of ghost. Noh ghosts are
about memory, situated beyond, or after, the actual events. More important
than the events themselves in such plays is the lingering emotional residues
of the ghost’s story.

As Yasuda has pointed out, a noh performance creates an “aura of mental
and emotional echoes,” and this is especially the case when the play fol-
lows the organization principles of a mugen noh. It may be likened to an
echo chamber of allusions in which a familiar story is reenacted with refer-
ence to earlier versions of the tale or by drawing on thematically related
material from the poetic traditions. In Sandō, Zeami refers to one exemplary
play that was seminal in the development of the mugen format. Its title,
Takasago, is a place-name, a reference to the setting for the first act of the
play, Takasago Bay in Harima Province. (The title was Aioi, Wedded pines,
in Zeami’s time.) The play tells the legend of two pine trees as depicted in
the first imperial anthology of waka poems, Kokin waka shû (Collection of
waka poems, ancient and modern), while drawing extensively as well on a
medieval interpretive commentary about that canonical work titled Kokin
waka shû jo kikigaki (Sanryûshô) (Lecture notes on the “Preface” to the
Kokin shû [Selected comments by the three schools]). Takasago belongs to
the classification of plays about Shinto deities (kami), known as kami nō.
Such plays fill the obligatory function of establishing the appropriate cele-
bratory atmosphere early in a day’s program. Part 2 will offer an analysis of
Takasago to discover whether Zeami practices his own precepts as set down
in Sandō. We will explore an “echo chamber” in a celebratory key. A trans-
lation of Takasago is provided in appendix 2 to this volume.

In a tradition far removed from Zeami’s, but surely where there are some
affinities, William James complained to his brother Henry in a 1907 letter
about the latter’s obstinate indirectness. Whereas William likes to “say a
thing in one sentence as straight and explicit as it can be,” he is critical of Henry’s style, which he characterizes thus.

To avoid naming it straight, but by dint of breathing and sighing all round and round it, to arouse in the reader . . . the illusion of a solid object, made (like the “ghost” at the Polytechnic) wholly out of impalpable materials, air, and the prismatic interferences of light, ingeniously focused by mirrors upon empty space.\textsuperscript{20}

According to one commentator, what troubled William about his brother was that he “had no respect for objects as they might be claimed to exist independently of the act of the mind that summoned them to appear.”\textsuperscript{21} At the risk of conflating two very different worlds, it seems to me that Zeami’s choice to move away from mimesis toward poiesis reflects a similar understanding of the power of performed language to create worlds that are felt as real.

As noted above, the term “\textit{mugen noh}” is a latter-day coinage, not a classification that is problematized as such by Zeami, so one must be careful to avoid an anachronistic treatment.\textsuperscript{22} That is, it is safe to say that Zeami did not set out to create \textit{mugen noh} as we know it. Instead, I want to make the case that the \textit{mugen} play (subsequently named as such) was the outgrowth of his efforts to organize performances in ways that would best serve to articulate the \textit{nikyoku santai} configuration as a process of performance. \textit{Nikyoku santai}, in turn, grew out of his intuitions on how to invoke the flower in performance. The \textit{mugen} style is open-ended, keyed to tapping the power of memory to fill in what is not actually represented onstage. I want to make the case that Zeami seems to have developed his style guided by an intuition that the more such interpretive faculties in the audience are solicited and engaged in a performance, the higher the likelihood that they will be moved by it.

\textbf{Part 3: \textit{Nikyoku santai} and the Training of the Actor}

The third and final part of this volume traces the ramifications that the \textit{nikyoku santai} configuration had on Zeami’s deepening understanding of the optimal training of the actor. \textit{Nikyoku santai} comes to be situated at the entry levels of Zeami’s orthodox training program, a program designed to refine and attune the actor’s sensibilities vis-à-vis audiences. In his most mature
works on this subject, the configuration becomes the starting point in an incremental training program for the body and the mind. The approach I take in part 3 diverges from that in the earlier parts in one important sense. Prior to the third part, the focus is on Zeami's efforts to open the stage event up to poiesis to better foster opportunities for imaginative engagement on the part of spectators. However, in part 3, I make the case that Zeami's training program assumed certain underlying principles of performance that were of universal validity and that assumed certain patterns of reception common to all audience members. That is, he developed a set of ideas about the nurturing of the flower that assumed underlying principles of perception and attunement. By cultivating mastery of these principles, the actor could come to sustain a high level of interest despite the inevitable existence of many unpredictable variables and individual tastes. Taking nikyoku santai as its starting point, this section looks at some of these principles in a selection of Zeami's mature writings on training. It begins with principles for cultivating the ability to perform with optimal timing and pacing, and then principles ensuring that a certain progression from auditory to visual media is implemented in performance. Nikyoku santai assures a certain ordering of the elements of performance, but it is the performer who must implement these elements based on his intuitions. The emphasis in this section will be how the actor should apply such intuitions.

Finally, the focus will shift to the efficacy of nikyoku santai as a set of guidelines formative of the optimal state of mind of the performer. As noted above, in his later work Zeami takes the position that the actor will experience his deepest attunement with audiences in those moments when he is detached from self-conscious striving for effects. He refers to the ideal state of mind in which this occurs as mushin (no-mind), which he further describes as a condition in which the actors' intentions are hidden even from themselves. Mushin is one of a number of terms from Buddhist and Taoist discourses that Zeami alludes to with increasing frequency later in life to frame his discussions about the phenomenon of performing. No study of his mature theory of the stage can afford to overlook the parallels that he deliberately draws with some basic tenets in those discourses concerning human somaticity and attunement.

His later treatises such as Yûgaku shudôfu ken (Views on modes of training in the arts of entertainment; undated), Kyüi, and Shûgyoku tokuka (Gathering gems, achieving the flower; 1428) suggest that Zeami saw the ideal mental readiness of a master actor to consist in the kind of non-dual,
non-differentiated wisdom on the basis of which one realizes that distinctions between subjective ego and objective things are merely illusions produced by the discriminatory faculties of ego-consciousness. The ideal state of mind of the actor is like the enlightened Buddhist mind—the mirror that reflects everything without discriminatory thinking or subjective judgment. The actor, too, should train to achieve this mirror-like state, because it helps him to be free of subjective thinking that stands to obstruct his ability to react spontaneously with his surroundings. With these points in mind, chapter 7 reviews some very basic precepts of Buddhism and Taoism to which Zeami seems to turn for models within which to thus frame his own thinking about training.

Finally, I make the case that Zeami’s nikiyoku santai offered the actor a path of assiduous practice to follow in order to cultivate such attunement. The idea that such cultivation of the body in training is transformative—conducive of a new mode of being that is removed from everyday ego consciousness—is also fundamental to Buddhist meditational practices. Philosopher Yuasa Yasuo has noticed Zeami’s emphasis on making the body shape the mind. He points out that Zeami seems to have reversed the quotidian notion that the body should adhere to conceptual or intellectual understanding. Rather, the flower can be achieved only when one has acquired “the correct bodily mode, for only then can the correct mental mode be opened up.”23 Zeami’s flower takes on such ontological grounding in his mature theory. He seems to have shared a view common to Buddhist meditation-based pedagogies—that self-cultivation of the body can lead to a higher epistemological perspective and that such a perspective, in turn, is “correlative with the ontological status of reality.”24 Although this is a rather sweeping statement, such a worldview on Zeami’s part would account for the sanguine stance he takes in his critical writings on the existence of universals of human experience.

Once he had developed nikiyoku santai and put it in place as the heart of the actor’s training program, I believe Zeami began to see that configuration as a basis for fostering a new somatic awareness in the actor. He posed nikiyoku santai as a set of incremental steps that could, through the bodily training they impose, work to induce in him the kind of transformation in ego-consciousness needed to achieve optimal oneness with audiences. The final chapter of this volume examines this hypothesis with reference to some of Zeami’s mature critical writings on training. To my knowledge, no one has yet explored the possible significance that nikiyoku santai played in
Zeami’s theory of somatic transformation and in his late views of the cultivation of the flower. I want to make the case that when he established nikioku santai as a set of norms for the actor to embody, it also became possible for Zeami to develop a theory of the flower that went beyond those same norms. The volume ends with a discussion of the seasoned actor who has outgrown the formative stages dictated by nikioku santai and has achieved ultimate freedom as an artist.

Back in the Yūgen Again

It is my hope that this book will be of interest both to general readers and specialists with interests in a range of areas, from theatre and performance studies, to Japanese studies, to somatic and religious studies. This is ambitious, but so is tracking Zeami’s flower; the trail winds through all of this terrain. When it comes to the latter two domains, somatics and religious studies, a disclaimer is in order. I come to these fields as an amateur and tread with trepidation. Buddhologists will find little that is new about Buddhism here, for instance, but I hope that my discussion of Zeami’s use of Buddhist frameworks in his elucidations of performance and training will offer points of interest.

Thanks to the work of Mark J. Nearman, J. Thomas Rimer and Yamazaki Masakazu, and others, a large portion of Zeami’s treatises is now available in English. Given this fact, and given the scale of Zeami’s contributions, it is a bit surprising that few book-length studies in English have been produced on the subject of what his critical theories have to offer. I believe that a study of such length is most efficacious for situating key concepts in Zeami’s theory in the context of their use and that doing so is important for a comprehensive understanding of his thought.

One example of a key concept that profits from a contextualized analysis would be yūgen. Much fruitful research has already been done in English scholarship over the past fifty years on the question of what yūgen signifies in Zeami’s writings. Here I will mention only a few of the many contributions. Ueda argued in 1967 that it was a beauty “not merely of appearance but of spirit; it is the beauty manifesting itself outwards.” Shortly thereafter, Tsubaki also provided a balanced overview of the concept in medieval aesthetics in which he argues for yūgen as a “beauty of gentle gracefulness,” which unified elements from aristocratic and warrior cultures. Nearman has discussed the quality in relation to acting: “In Zeami’s treatises, it would
appear to refer to the effect created when an actor holds his audience by sustaining his vigor (stage energy) through his concentration while displaying an outer restraint and gracefulfulness in execution.”

28 Goff has written of yūgen similarly as a composite effect of restraint and intensity, only in the realm of Zeami’s views on representation styles. She notes that he considered aristocratic women commendable subjects because the quality of yūgen was ensured in them, and when yūgen was “combined with their intense emotional suffering, [it] provided the perfect sort of dramatic, or aesthetic tension.”

29 Scholars in religious studies also have commented on yūgen. For LaFleur, “Yūgen moves beyond the text to reveal, through the tranquility it captures, the presence of nirvana in the midst of samsara . . . in the concrete actions of the characters on stage.”

30 Thornhill maintains that Zeami’s notion of yūgen is quite different from the concept in medieval waka in that it “becomes a specific style of performance,” rather than representing “the phenomenon of inner depth.”

31 Most recently, Brown has argued for a micropolitical reading of Zeami’s yūgen as symbolic capital in the complex game of attracting patrons.

All of these insights, though not necessarily congruent with each other, aid our understanding of what yūgen meant in Zeami’s art. So one must ask how this one concept can inspire such multiple readings. I think that tracing the development of these many ideas in context helps to answer this question, and I hope to do so. I argue that initially Zeami’s reasons for touting the yūgen quality indeed seem to have been politically motivated. Then as he sets about implementing yūgen in sarugaku, his interest becomes focused on importing subject matter (court ladies) assumed to be endowed with the quality. He ascribes the yūgen quality to some objects and not to others on the basis of their perceived referential content. He looks upon gentle and strong subjects as incompatible, the former enjoying the yūgen cachet, the latter not. Then his focus shifted from the what of such content to the how of its representation. By adroit use of chanted and danced elements, the impression created by the representation of even a strong character may be “softened,” that is, “yūgen-ized.” This performance-based realization much in mind, Zeami proceeds to hone the nikyoku santai configuration, which functions as a type of insurance making the presence of yūgen mandatory in all representation of characters, even demonic ones.

In his later thought, Zeami’s interest in yūgen effects seems to shift away from issues of representation to training. He sets nikyoku santai at the foundation of a training program. Again nikyoku santai functions as a kind of
insurance, this time making the embodiment of yūgen elements mandatory in the development of the actor. Rather, he shifts the locus of yūgen effects to the cultivated mindfulness of the actor and away from specific roles or specific elements of performance. By his late treatises, such as Kyūi, he makes fewer references to the quality of yūgen, and it no longer seems to be a topic that he singles out for the reader’s attention. Far from suggesting that he places less importance on yūgen at this stage, I will argue that cultivation of yūgen is so ensured by his established training regimen that there is no longer a need to problematize it in his treatises. If the novice actor follows the training program, then, when he brings sufficient innate ability to the task, he will come to embody the quality naturally. In such fashion, the meaning of yūgen changes according to its use. This is true for other key concepts as well.

Reconstructing Zeami’s ideas from a developmental perspective has one further advantage that I have tried to pursue. As in the case above concerning the evolution of his thinking on yūgen, a number of Zeami’s insights seem to have been prompted or instilled by his experience of the stage. They are things he gleaned on the basis of emergent properties of performance and training rather than from starting as abstract concepts to be applied to those domains. To get at the emergent quality of his thinking on performance, it is important to watch it develop.

I recall many years ago reading the following statement by Keene in reference to one of Zeami’s most challenging treatises, Kyūi: “Zeami’s descriptions are elusive but there can be no doubt that he knew exactly what he meant.”33 With the hubris of a fledgling graduate student, I thought, “Now, that’s a truism.” At this point, I have struggled with these texts long enough to appreciate the truth (and the elegance) of that remark. Anyone who has read Zeami’s treatises knows that there is one insurmountable problem for modern readers—they assume a readership steeped in medieval sarugaku performance. We are not supposed to be reading these documents at all. Zeami intended them exclusively for his own disciples. They are often cryptic. He concocts vocabulary whenever it suits him, and in his late works he makes liberal allusions to Buddhist and Confucian texts that pose their own challenges. As a reader, one must confront the unsettling likelihood that there’s a whole lot of poiesis going on. One can never be sure exactly what these texts “mean.” Of course, this is true for any text, since we know that each act of reading is an act of interpretation—but especially for these texts.
Such heightened indeterminacy is amply reflected in the glosses provided by the annotators of the Japanese language editions, as well as in the English translations available. Interpretations differ on a routine basis. In *Developing Zeami*, my tack has been to try to convey some part of this polyvalence by sharing the differing interpretations in the notes whenever possible.