

## Introducing Professor Richard Emmert

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Please refer to the biography of Prof. Emmert and the summary of his main theatrical works and publications I have included in the Award pamphlet (Japanese pp. 9 - 11, English pp.12 - 15).

It was in 1975 that I first met Prof. Emmert. Called Rick-san by his colleagues (“san” is a Japanese suffix showing friendship), he skillfully spoke Japanese and was able to make one joke after another. We worked together on the first event of the Asian Traditional Performing Arts (ATPA) program, organized by the Japan Foundation and still remembered as a legendary occasion. As a competent speaker in English and Japanese, he played an important role in the production. Afterwards he collaborated with us, the supervisors of the ATPA, in editing a report on the first event.

One day during this period, I attended a concert organized by the late *syakuhati* (*shakuhachi*) maestro YAMAGUTI Gorô at which Rick-san played a traditional *syakuhati* piece. I was impressed by his high performing ability. Thereafter he began to study *nôgaku* and submitted his master’s thesis on *nôgaku*. In 1978 I went to a *noh* (*nô*) theatre in Tokyo to see his performance. He played the title role of 《Kumasaka Tyôhan》. I admired his *noh* performing skills.

The late professor YOKOMITI Mario (1916-2012), one of Rick-san’s advisers at Tokyo University of the Arts, also had marvelous performing skill. He composed a new *noh* piece just after World War II and performed not only *noh* but also the traditional dance of Ryûkyû. His main research, however, was to clarify the structure of *noh* and other performing arts of Japan according to his original analytical methods.

Rick-san took a separate path from his mentor. He created the new field of English *noh*. At first some Japanese felt discomfort at the performance of *noh* in English. In that regard, I would like to reflect on the history of opera. After its birth in Italy around 1600, opera was soon transmitted to other Western countries, which produced operas in their own languages. In the twentieth century, operas in Mongolian, Korean and other Asian languages were produced. In Japan, new operas as well as Western operas were performed in the Japanese language. The Japanese people do

not feel discomfort with the use of Japanese language in opera. Reflecting on this situation, I believe that the antipathy toward English *noh* among some Japanese derives from their narrow-minded nationalism and ignorance of the use of Japanese language in opera.

Prof. Emmert has already performed many English *noh* pieces in various countries. He has created effective teaching methods and built competent organizations with the aim of establishing English *noh* outside Japan. I am glad to mention here that a doctoral dissertation dealing with his English *noh* has already been submitted.

Although I have not discussed the concept of tradition with Prof. Emmert, I firmly believe that he shares the concept of tradition with traditional Japanese performers. In Western societies, especially among Western ethnomusicologists, there is the tendency to consider that tradition is something fixed in the past. In Japan, however, it is generally felt that tradition changes and can be transformed. According to this view of tradition, for a performing art to be transmitted as a living tradition, it is thought essential that performing classical works and creating new works mutually reinforce.

Sharing the idea that “within tradition lies the future,” we, supervisors of the ATPA—Kozumi Fumio, YAMAGUTI Osamu, and myself endeavored to revitalize the performing arts of Japan and other Asian countries. *Nôgaku*, having overcome adversities after the Meiji Restoration and World War II, is now transmitted as a living tradition. In my opinion, it was the combination of new interpretations of classical works and the creation of new works that has secured the *nôgaku* tradition.

Prof. Emmert has been positively cultivating the future of *nôgaku* by creating English *noh*. He has succeeded in composing and producing many English *noh* works, gaining the cooperation of performers and playwrights from Japan and foreign countries. The list printed in the pamphlet (Japanese p.11, and English p.15) provides his representative works. Although they are in English or other European languages, traditional elements such as masks, *hayasi* (*hayashi*, instruments), and *zi-utai* (*ji-utai*, chorus) are present as their indispensable components. It was Prof. Emmert’s *noh* expertise that enabled him to accomplish this.

Although I used to call Prof. Emmert “young Rick-san”, he celebrated his seventieth birthday in 2019. For that occasion, a book was published:

Cheong, Jannette (ed.) *Getting to noh: A tribute to Richard Emmert- a man with constant vision* London: LDP (London Digital Print), 2020. I circulate a copy of this book among you. All the contributions to this book show how deeply Rick-san is respected and loved by those who have worked with him.

I would like to point out that by his creation of English *noh*, Prof. Richard Emmert has shown that *noh* possesses the potentiality to generate new works crossing cultural and linguistic boundaries. It should be also mentioned that his English *noh* has given strong stimulus to other performing arts around the world.

After World War II, there was the strong opinion among Western arts lovers in Japan that for Japan to qualify as a state with a developed culture or to become a “culture state,” it must have opera theatres. Taking this into consideration, the government opened the national opera theatre in 1997. *Noh* lovers can equally claim the right to maintain to foreign countries that every culture state should possess *noh* theatres. When the movement to establishing *noh* theatres in foreign countries begins, people will remember that the English *noh* of Professor Richard Emmert was its origin.

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