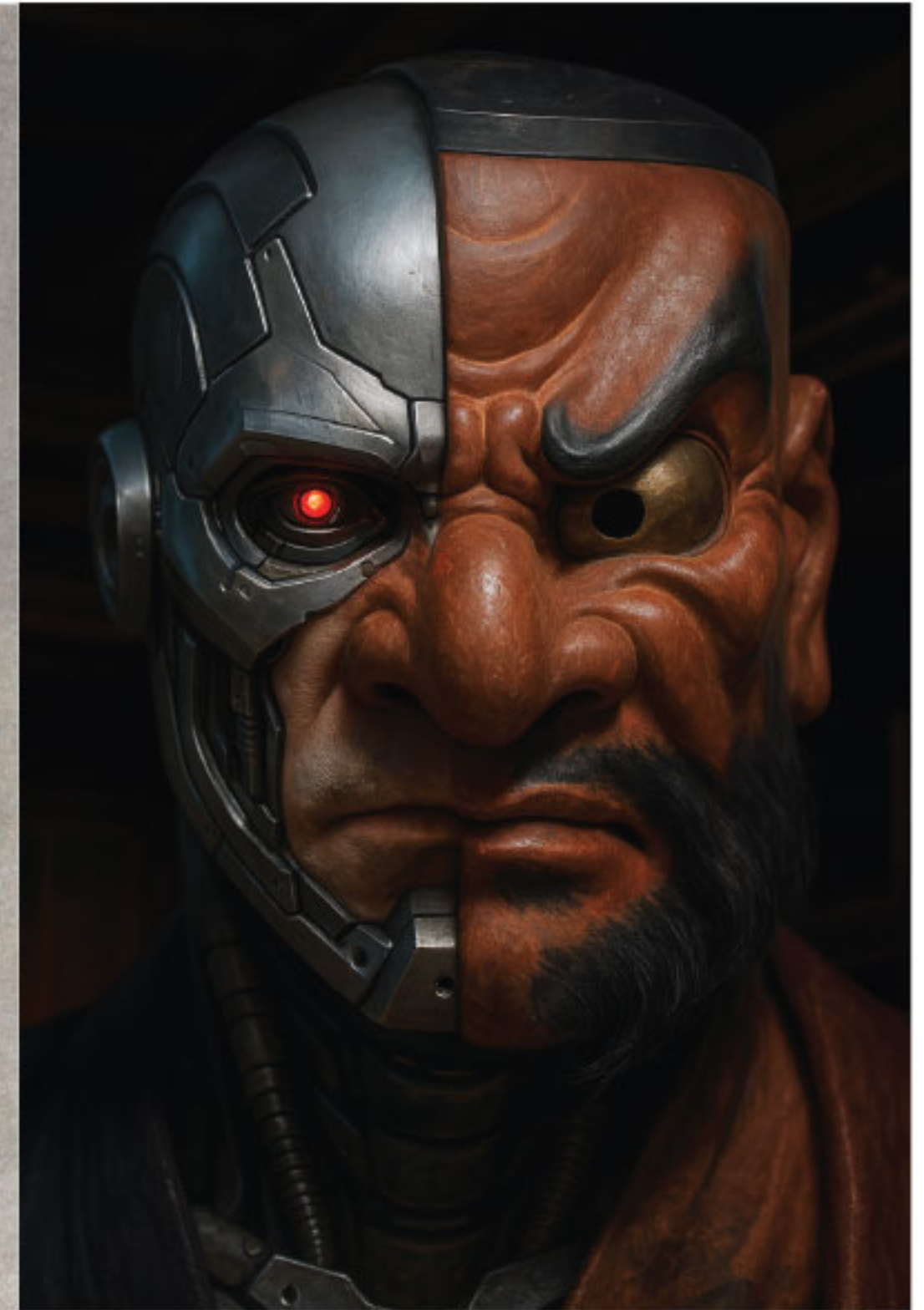


THE BODY HISTORY OF NŌ

From Demons to Cyborgs



Mansai Nomura, Japan's most acclaimed contemporary performer of *nōgaku* (*nō* and *kyōgen*), calls himself a "**kyōgen cyborg**." This provocative term captures how 20th-century *nōgaku* forged the performer's body into an autonomous system of technique. This cyborg body stands in stark contrast to *nō*'s origins. Before Zeami, the fundamental art was becoming a demon (鬼 *oni/mono*), centered on the dance *hataraki*. The masked performer loosened subjective control to become a conduit for *mono*: not simply a supernatural power, but what can be understood today as an assemblage of non-human agencies within the performance environment. Zeami revolutionized this by humanizing the demon and taming the ecstatic body. His project initiated a centuries-long effort to discipline *nō* embodiment, paradoxically culminating in today's cyborg performer. This genealogy offers a new framework for understanding the body in Japanese performance and its relevance to contemporary debates on embodiment, agency, and posthumanism.

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Monday, 17 November 2025, 5:00PM

Kent Hall, Room 403, COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

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Preregistration is required for this event. Visit www.keenecenter.org

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