

The new Kabukiza theater integrates a Japanese-style structure with a high-rise building. How would the theater turn out? Would its traditional dignity be spoiled? I imagine people who were secretly worried about these things have been impressed by the building's charm. The straight vertical lines reaching up to the sky and the gentle horizontal curves of the tiled roof blend together beautifully.

Kengo Kuma, the architect who designed the structure, said, "I dislike pretentious architecture." The building silently envelops the space and the people inside without asserting itself. Precisely because the art of kabuki is so dazzling, it heightens the presence of the structure that serves as its "container." Erected in the heart of Tokyo by a large corporation at tremendous cost, the building has become a new landmark. I hope it will draw people from around the world with its powerful attraction.

Nohgaku, another classical performing art, has a hidden landmark in the city of Fukuyama in Hiroshima Prefecture: the Oshima Nohgaku Theater built by the Oshima family of the Kita School. With barely enough money and land, they got seats from a movie theater that had gone out of business, built the dressing room over the stairway and evidently had many difficulties. The building looks like a typical house in a residential area, but stepping inside you find a splendid stage.

A steady stream of people comes to this simple building, where there are not only performances of Noh but also lessons for adults and classes for children. Many overseas visitors also come to see the facility. Masanobu Oshima, the family's fourth-generation performer, said, "Keeping the building up is a chore." But he seems to enjoy safeguarding this cultural hub. In this town it's very easy to enter the world of Noh. Perhaps that is the influence of the building, which is the polar opposite of "pretentious architecture."

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新しい歌舞伎座は和風の建物と高層ビルを一体化した造りである。どんな風に仕上がるか。伝統の品格が損なわれないか。ひそかに心配していた方も建築の妙味に感心したのではないかと空に伸びる縦の直線と、瓦屋根のなだらかな横の曲線が、美しく溶けあっている。

▼設計した建築家の隈研吾さんが「いばった建築は嫌い」と話していた。建物は自己主張せず、内にある空間と人を黙って包み込む。歌舞伎という芸が輝いてこそ、その容器である建築物の存在感も高まるに違いない。大企業が巨費を投じて東京の中心に築いた新名所である。強い磁力で世界中から人を引き寄せてほしい。

▼もう一つの古典芸能、能楽の隠れた名所が広島県の福山市にある。喜多流シテ方の大島家が個人で建てた大島能楽堂だ。予算も敷地もぎりぎりなので、廃業した映画館から客席を譲り受けたり、階段の上に楽屋を設けたり、苦労が多かったそうだ。住宅街の普通の一軒家に見えるが、玄関をくぐると中に立派な舞台がある。

▼その質素な建物に次々と人が訪れてくる。能の公演だけでなく、大人向けの稽古や子供の教室もある。海外から見学も多い。四代目の大島政允さんは「維持するのが大変」と言うが、文化の拠点を守るのが楽しそうだ。この町では能楽への敷居がずいぶん低い。「いばった建築」の対極にあるような建物の力かもしれない。