

THE PINE TREE BACKDROP



An old pine is the only subject allowed for the Noh drama stage. It is believed that under an old pine one can have access to spirits in the nether world. It is the pine which sanctifies the stage, and makes it possible to portray acts of life, death, and redemption.

Noh stages are built as shrines. They traditionally have as part of the structure, pine trees painted on cedar panels. Within the Kano school Yamato-e tradition which is favored for Noh stages, I have found the possibilities for *Old Pine* backgrounds almost endless.

I have developed a new type of hanging scroll in order to suit the requirements of contemporary theaters, and easy transportability. This painting is in the more austere colors and style of some of the earliest Noh paintings. I imagined the pine as if it were a sentient being at an important turning point, steeling itself at the edge of a metaphoric abyss, and yet stretching, seeking beyond the confines of its frame.

Allan West
Designer



Above: Allan West at work Below: Noh performance with backdrop by Allan West