Kabuki: Negotiating Historical, Geographical, and Cultural Borders Symposium

The symposium features noted speakers and a performance demonstration by faculty and students from the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa (UHM). Highlights of the event include an address by Dr. James Brandon titled *Eighty-Seven Years of English Language Kabuki at the University of Hawai‘i: 1924-2011*, and a performance demonstration by Dr. Julie Iezzi, who is preparing for the spring production of *Ise Ono Koi no Nebata* (The Vengeful Sword). For over a hundred years kabuki has been performed in Hawai‘i by early Japanese immigrants, professional kabuki actors, local community groups, and University students. How this traditional Japanese art form has moved within the borders of Japan and has been received and performed overseas stimulate questions and discussion on the transmission of cultural objects and their various meanings.

**November 13, 2010 (Saturday)**
**Art Auditorium 8:00 am - 5:30 pm**
**University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa (UHM)**
(This event is free and open to the public)
Symposium Schedule - Art Auditorium, UHM

8:00 am - Welcome Remarks
8:30 am - Panel 1: Kabuki: Negotiating Borders within Japan, moderated by Dr. Julie A. Iezzi, Associate Professor of Theatre and Dance, UHM.

Dr. Ryo Akama, Director of the Art Research Center and Professor of Graduate School of Letters at Ritsumeikan University. An Outline of Kabuki Borders within Japan.

Dr. Noriko Yasuda, Gifu Shotoku Gakuen University. On Jishibai, or Rural Kabuki.

Q&A

10:00 am - Break
10:15 am - Panel 1: Kabuki: Negotiating Borders within Japan (continued), moderated by Dr. Gay Satsuma, Associate Director, Center for Japanese Studies, UHM.


Dr. Bunkichi Yasuda, Nanzan University. Kabuki Research in a Japanese Culture Seminar Course in the Cultural Studies Department at Nanzan University.

Q&A

11:45 am - Lunch Break
1:00 pm - Ms. Toshimi Tanaka, Making Costumes and Wigs for College Student Kabuki in the USA.
1:20 pm - Practical Considerations in Preparing for The Vengeful Sword (Ise ondo koi no netaba), the 2011 Kabuki Production of the Department of Theatre and Dance and Music Department at UHM.

Dr. Julie A. Iezzi, Professor of Theatre, University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa; Onoe Kikunobu, Choreographer and lecturer at UHM; Onoe Kikunobukazu, Asst. Choreographer; and students of THEA 420C and THEA 428. The focus will be how linguistic, physical, and cultural kabuki “norms” are navigated in the process of preparing for an English-language kabuki.

Q&A

2:30 pm - Break
2:45 pm - Panel 2: Kabuki: Negotiating Borders outside of Japan, moderated by Dr. Kirstin Pauka, Professor of Theatre and Dance, UHM.

Dr. James Brandon, Emeritus Professor of Theatre and Dance at UHM. Eighty-Seven Years of English Language Kabuki at the University of Hawai‘i: 1924-2011.

Dr. Laurence Kominz, Professor of Japanese, Portland State University. Kabuki in Oregon Colleges: A Long and Winding Road.

Prof. David Furumoto, Associate Professor of Theatre and Drama, University of Wisconsin-Madison. The Narukami Connection: Honolulu to Madison.

Q&A

4:15 pm - Break
4:30 pm - Kabuki Roundtable

Presenters discuss kabuki in the 21st century.

5:30 pm - Concluding Remarks
An Outline of Kabuki Borders within Japan

Ryo Akama
Ritsumeikan University

Abstract forthcoming.

On Jishibai, or Rural Kabuki

Tokiko Yasuda
Gifu Shotoku Gakuen University

In addition to the large kabuki theatres (oshibai) of the three urban centers of Kyoto, Osaka and Edo, were mid-sized (chushibai) and small (koshibai) kabuki troupes which received 100-day licenses and operated on the grounds of shrines (miyashibai). Provinces such as Nagoya and Kanazawa, Ise and Miyajima also had 100-day theatres operating in their urban centers. Farmers, fisherman and rural villagers, forbidden from watching kabuki, incorporated offer- tory kabuki into their festivals for the deities (village kabuki, or murashibai). Stages built on shrine grounds for these village kabuki were used but once or twice a year; audiences sat in an open area before the stage and enjoyed the performance together with the deity.

Village kabuki was performed either by a traveling troupe (tabishibai) hired for the occasion, or by a “troupe” made up of local villagers (jishibai). In the latter case, villagers relied on an advisor/choreographer, who was either an actor or chanter from a traveling troupe. Play performed in the villages were those of the large theatres, but also included plays written especially for the local deity of the festival, plays about a particular region, or plays authored by traveling kabuki troupes. Most popular were the maruhonmono, or plays adapted from the puppet theatre. In the strict class system of the time, it was only through such plays that villagers could experience the “sparkle” of a world outside their everyday lives, donning gorgeous costumes and transforming into samurai or aristocrats. The appeal of these village kabuki performances was so strong that villages maintained the scripts, joruri texts, costumes, and wigs needed for the annual performances; and performance conventions have been passed down from elders to the young of the villages for more than 200 years.

The Meiji Era saw greater freedom, but it was still not easy for rural people to go to the city and see kabuki. Consequently, the period between 1870 and 1940 was the peak for both touring and rural kabuki. Records for both are extremely rare, and only fragmentary records can be constructed from the graffiti left in theatre dressing rooms, scripts and records kept by residents of the villages, and memories of the village elders. By about 1955, touring kabuki troupes (tabishibai) disappeared; their scripts and styles of performance remain only in rural kabuki (jishibai), who remain active and continue to maintain their various unique traditions.
Niwaka prints: a window into the relationship between publishers, patrons, courtesans and kabuki in Edo and Kyoto

Ryoko Matsuba
Ritsumeikan University

Niwaka (俄、仁和嘉), farcical plays performed by amateurs, were a popular form of entertainment from the early eighteenth century until quite recently. Performances of niwaka by courtesans became particularly popular in the pleasure quarters in the 18th century. Most of the niwaka roles the courtesans performed derived from current kabuki plays. Courtesans were adept at music and dancing and they were also familiar with the latest kabuki stage hits. It should be no surprise to us that niwaka performed in the pleasure quarters displayed a strong connection with the performances taking place in the larger kabuki theatres.

In Edo, the performance of niwaka by courtesans was a big annual event in the Yoshiwara pleasure quarter. Ukiyo-e artist such as Koryûsai and Utamaro depicted these Yoshiwara niwaka in print series. The names and ranks of the courtesans seen in these prints were listed in the dated annual guides to the courtesans of the Yoshiwara, the Yoshiwara saiken (吉原細見). The information provided by the Yoshiwara saiken makes it possible to determine the date of production of most of the Yoshiwara niwaka prints.

In Kyoto, at the time of the Gion festival, Gion courtesans took part in an annual procession that included skits resembling niwaka. These performances were called Gion nerimono (祇園ねりもの). Kyoto ukiyo-e artists designed prints illustrating the Gion nerimono. (These Kyoto prints were kappazuri, stencil prints.) Illustrated single-sheet programs (絵番付 ebandoke) published for the Gion nerimono list the names of the courtesans who participated in the performances. These programs allow us to date most of the Gion nerimono prints.

These niwaka were performed annually in both Edo and Kyoto through most of the Edo period. However, prints were not produced for each year in which the performances took place. This suggests that the production of niwaka prints depended upon sponsorship and that the publishers negotiated subsidies for their production from patrons who supported courtesans or from brothel owners who sought to advertise their women.

In this paper, I will focus on the prints of niwaka performed by courtesans in Edo and Kyoto. I will compare the niwaka with contemporary kabuki performances. The niwaka prints vividly demonstrate the close connection that existed between courtesans and the main kabuki theatres. This study also reveals something of the financial relationship between the print industry and the pleasure quarter in each city.
Kabuki Research in Yasuda Bunkichi’s Japanese Culture Seminar in the Cultural Studies Department at Nanzan University

Bunkichi Yasuka
Nanzan University

As part of their graduation thesis projects, all the students in my Japanese Culture Seminar take part in a performance of the “Mustering at Inase River” scene in the kabuki play *Aotozoshi hana no nishiki e*, commonly known as *Shiranami Gonin Otoko*. Fourth year students in the course complete a graduation thesis on a topic of their choice, and perform the main roles of the five thieves, while third year students play the minor roles. Everything from the shamisen, singing, and drums of the *geza*; to the *tsuke* and *hyoshigi* is done by the students. Now in its sixth year, this experimental seminar has yielded rather fine results. By actually performing kabuki, my aim is that students not only research kabuki, but also discover a new way of envisioning the study of Edo culture as well as modern and contemporary culture which stem from it.

Students begin by reading the entire play *Aotozoshi hana no nishiki e* aloud, from prologue to finale, looking up unfamiliar words and expressions; this is part of their research into Edo culture and literature. Also, whenever there is a kabuki production in Nagoya, I arrange a meeting for the seminar students with one of the actors and require each student to ask a question of the guest actor.

Additionally, every year during the summer vacation, students visit rural kabuki and puppet theatres throughout the country, examining the stages, investigating archives, conducting surveys and speaking with groups that perform in the various regions, researching how Edo period kabuki spread to various regions as well as the problems rural kabuki troupes face today.

Making Costumes and Wigs for College Student Kabuki in the USA

Toshimi Tanaka
Costume designer and dresser for college kabuki in Oregon

In addition to working as a kimono dresser in Portland, I have been dressing students in kimono for college workshop productions for over 22 years. I began experimenting as a wig maker in 2003, and this year teamed with a college professor of costume design to create kimono and wigs for “The Sardine Seller’s Net of Love.” None of these productions had a budget that would allow the purchase of authentic costumes and wigs, so we had to modify and use kimono and accessories that my husband and I have collected ourselves, and create wigs and costumes from scratch. My goal has always been to create the most authentic look possible, one that will please even the Japanese *buyō* teachers and dignitaries and their wives who always come to the shows.

What is wonderful about this approach is that the students themselves learn how to make kimono, how to make wigs, and how to dress in kimono. The wardrobe assistants leave the experience with more expertise at dressing people in kimono, haori, and hakama than most Japanese have. Everyone who wears a kimono learns how exacting the process is—not something ever to be taken lightly. Finally, having worn kimono properly, I assist my husband in teaching women how to move, sit, and stand gracefully while wearing them. The look of a beautiful kimono can be ruined by gawky, ungainly movements.
“Practical Considerations in Preparing for *The Vengeful Sword* (Ise ondo koi no netaba), the 2011 Kabuki Production of the Department of Theatre and Dance and Music Department at the University of Hawai‘i at Manoa”

Onoe Kikunobu, Choreographer, Onoe Kikunobukazu, Asst. Choreographer, Julie A. Iezzi, Associate Professor, UHM, Students of THEA 420C and THEA 428, University of Hawai‘i

The spring 2011 production of *Ise One Koi no Netaba*, titled *The Vengeful Sword* in English, will mark 87 years of English language kabuki at the University of Hawai‘i, referred to even by kabuki actors in Japan as “Hawai‘i Kabuki.” Thus established, this circumstance of this tradition underlies many of the decisions made in preparation for this production. In addition to developing an English-language performance script, obtaining the musical scores for the offstage music, securing costumes and wigs, and designing a set that will function well on the Kennedy Theatre stage, is the central task of vocal and movement training of the student actors who will perform all the roles in the play. This practical training and the culminating English-language performances of kabuki are at the core of the Asian Theatre Program curriculum in the Department of Theatre and Dance this academic year. A brief discussion of key choices made in translating and adapting the script and music in order to both meet expectations of the Hawai‘i audience and pedagogical aims of the program, will be followed by a practical demonstration given by the students, currently almost three months into their kabuki “basic training.” Vocal examples and brief excerpts from the upcoming play will be shown, in Japanese and English, to illustrate our process and demonstrate the varied and ongoing challenges we negotiate throughout the process.

**Eighty-Seventy Years of English Language Kabuki at the University of Hawai‘i: 1924 – 2011**

James R. Brandon
University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa

Students at the University of Hawai‘i have performed 39 full-length kabuki plays in English since 1924. Five generations of faculty have supervised these plays. Artistic aims and social circumstances have changed over the years. In the 1920s the Japanese Students Association was a sponsor. The Theatre Guild, established in 1930, staged each season a play representative of Japanese, Chinese, Hawaiian, and “haole” culture. One aim was to help students, especially of Asian and Hawaiian ancestry, improve their English speaking ability. Most Japanese plays in the 1930s, directed by Arthur “Doc” Wyman of the English Department, were *shin kabuki*, or new kabuki, written in the 20th century. “Directors of Japanese technique” from the local community provided costumes, wigs, and props. After WWII, Professor Earl Ernst directed three classic kabuki productions under a “color blind” casting policy: students of any race could play any role. Between 1970 and 2000 the author directed ten productions of classic kabuki plays, staged in “authentic” style, with artistic direction from faculty, local kabuki experts, and kabuki actors and musicians invited from Japan. Techniques of learning kabuki movement and voice were developed based on “replication.” Graduate students from around the world come to study kabuki in the Asian Theatre Program of the Department of Theatre and Dance. Professor Julie Iezzi continues into the 21st century this exceptional tradition of staging kabuki drama in English at the University of Hawai‘i.
Kabuki in Oregon Colleges: Different Goals, One Spirit

Laurence Kominz
Portland State University

Since 1993 I have taught kabuki performance at Portland State University. Initially workshops leading to “yukata kabuki” performances for a limited audience, we have gradually staged more elaborate productions for larger audiences. Most ambitious was a recent main-stage English language premiere of Mishima Yukio’s kabuki play, The Sardine Seller’s Net of Love, which ran for three weeks in two Oregon cities. Education and entertainment are mutually supportive goals in these endeavors. Students “learn kabuki by creating kabuki.” Students learn to move, speak, and sing in authentic kabuki style, and they also create costumes, wigs, and properties for the productions. Everyone learns how to apply their own kabuki make-up. We supplement doing kabuki with viewing videos and DVDs and a few lectures on kabuki history, especially the background of the play we are performing.

Most audience members are seeing kabuki for the first time, so once again education is crucial. Performances are accompanied by thick, informative programs, and I include a speech or kōjō in the show to teach viewers how to become a kabuki audience; to enjoy and do kakegoe, to be prepared to enjoy an interplay of meta-drama and stage fiction, to watch the play enfold all around them—on hanamichi and main stage. My goals are to introduce drama majors to an entirely different approach to preparing a role than they are accustomed to, to enable Japanese majors to create and not just study Japanese culture, and to turn my audience into kabuki addicts, clamoring for more college kabuki. The spirit that I hope my performers and audiences share, simply put, is the joy of experiencing live kabuki.

The Narukami Connection: Honolulu to Madison

David Furumoto
University of Wisconsin-Madison

In this presentation I will be discussing the influences of my time spent at the University of Hawaii Department of Theatre and Dance, earning my BA and MFA degrees in theatre, on the present work that I am doing at the University of Wisconsin-Madison Theatre Department. I will be using the productions of NARUKAMI THE THUNDERGOD (performed first at the University of Hawaii, 1972, directed by James Brandon and the production directed by me at the University of Wisconsin-Madison in March of 2010) to illustrate the importance of those influences and also some of the challenges involved in bringing a kabuki play to the mid-West.

As part of this discussion I will be looking at a variety of things such as: how to convince students that it is worth their time to study kabuki theatre techniques, how to achieve a hanamichi-like experience in a theatre that is not even a proper prosenium theatre; the growing importance of collaboration between universities to even be able to present a kabuki play; educating the public (as well as fellow faculty members) of the importance of kabuki theatre; the continued importance of input and guidance from teachers and senseis (this truly affected the way that I ended the play here in Madison); and a look at whether or not there is an advantage when studying kabuki to have grown up in a culture that encourages the use of slippers and bare feet.

To end I will also look at the future of kabuki studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and in the mainland United States