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Tokoyo: A Story of Cultural Movement

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Reflective Essay

Research and Observation

Occasionally I hear a word that I recognize, it's comforting and confusing. As I look around I can't even read the characters to sound out the words on signs and billboards. We know the name of our hotel but have not yet figured out a means to get there. The bus schedules were unreadable from the internet in the States, leaving us with no other choice than to figure it out when we arrived! We make our way to an information counter. I can confirm that it is an information counter only by the pictures of buses on the pamphlets stacked against the wall. Luckily for us, one of the women, in airport uniform, was able to look at the characters we had printed from the hotel's website and direct us in the correct direction. Success: we know which bus to board and at which stop to get off. With smiles on our faces, we board the bus and at the fifth stop step out of the bus onto the streets of Tokyo. We are only three blocks from our destination but we don't know which direction we are facing. Getting from the bus to our room was only the first of many challenges we encountered and overcame. Standing in the unknown in Tokyo, Japan there was so much to learn.

All the research we had done had lead up to this moment, which began a new step in our creative journey. The idea that a picture is worth a thousand words and an experience is priceless has never manifested itself so clearly. The books I read stirred my intellect, the pictures and video clips I viewed opened my eyes, but standing on Japanese soil was unlike anything I had imagined. From research, to first-hand observation and experience, to creating a piece of

movement-based theatre has been challenging and rewarding as a person and as a theatre artist.

The level of detail that I noticed being in a place of unfamiliarity was amazing. My eyes were opened wider than they ever have been before. Each and every outing was a chance to observe the specificity of the culture. Every observation is important, whether it is a difference or a similarity between Japanese culture and American culture. We made the decision to observe people in work, leisure, spiritual, and familial settings. It is important to observe both what is consistent throughout and what varies in different environments. Each observed quality can be followed to a cultural root. It may not be proven to have come from one specific ritual or rule of etiquette, but there are strong, clear ties.

Our first journey of observation was at five o'clock, the morning after we arrived. We entered the subway station. The movement of the passengers seemed fairly slow. Movement was controlled, specific, and for a purpose. A change in position was only made if it was necessary, unlike our culture, where many people don't ever stop moving. There was a general feel of conserving energy, and focus. Once off the subway, people's movement continued to follow this pattern. Waiting at a crosswalk, the pedestrians did not swing their arms aimlessly as I may if my feet were stationary. The pedestrians waited calmly and quietly. From our first subway excursion we concluded that the slow and direct way of life was a result of using energy efficiently and a respect for others' space and tranquility. The silence is relaxing and the lack of extraneous movement keeps people from interrupting those around them. It is fascinating that not only

did we read in books that the people of Japanese culture generally think of the society as a whole but we could come to that conclusion through observation. People work for the well-being of the group, or the society, and this was made clear through our people-reading.

Our theory of respect for the community was tested when we ventured onto the subway at seven in the morning a few days later. As we descended into the subway station we noticed that the sea of business men in suits and ties was overwhelming. The people on the subway platform moved quickly and directly. The motion was completely forward and in straight lines suggesting that the people had a clear sense of efficiency and their intention. The majority of the people lead their body with their chest, head, and shoulders. In America, people generally lead with their pelvis or stomach. This energy forward was very different than that calm subway just two days before. When we got to the platform we waited in a large, quiet group as the subway slowed to a stop. Before we knew it, we were being pulled, pushed, squished, turned, and separated further and further from one another. I remember thinking, “How rude?” and having the urge to push back. I was taken aback. This was coming from a culture of people who hold their respect for others above everything. From where was this sudden burst of selfishness coming? We later asked a young Japanese woman who spoke English what this mayhem was about. She explained to us that this seemingly rude act is not that at all. People push so aggressively because if they do not make it onto that scheduled subway train, then they may be two or three minutes late for work. This would show a great disrespect for both their coworkers, boss,

and for their family for whom they are working. Through our western trained eyes, we saw selfishness. In reality, it is from a place of devotion and loyalty to family and colleagues.

The awareness of others and the surroundings also manifests itself in how the Japanese people treat the environment in which we all live. There was seldom a piece of trash in view. At many food establishments, there were receptacles for each and every kind of recycling. Nature is an essential part of eastern culture. Eastern art often addresses the spirit of nature, festivals are based around the sacred blooming of the cherry blossoms, and Zen Buddhism relates seasonal changes to the changes in humanity. Even before Buddhist nature worship, the native Japanese believed in an animistic religion. Nature was worshiped in thankfulness and appreciation (Ernst). Some Buddhists make no distinction between man and nature. By preserving the environment each individual is helping to preserve the spirituality of those around them. This interaction with nature is heavily represented in Japanese theatre, dance, and poetry. Upholding the environment will uphold that beautiful connection.

Day four, with my headphones on, I look across the theatre. Eyes are all focused on the curtain decorated with beautiful Japanese fans. Binoculars are being prepared and the program synopsis is ferociously being read. In just three minutes the musicians will begin playing the wood block: slowly at first and then accelerating until the curtain rises. I have read at least nine books about Kabuki theatre at this point and watched various clips narrated by English men, but this moment was unlike any other. I remember having the thought, "I am actually

watching a Kabuki show in Japan. I am so far from home and about to watch people perform. Watching people do what I am doing with my life, only on the other side of the world.” Excitement and nervousness run through my body, I am about to be a part of an ancient art form. The clappers begin to ring, first slowly and then more quickly, accelerating until one final clap as the curtain rises. These claps on the wood blocks create excitement in the theatre. I remember thinking at that moment that no matter what our show grew to be, it needed to start with a replica of the clappers building in speed and sound. It was an exciting effect that was too effective to ignore.

Kabuki is purposefully stylized and far from actuality. The movement does not try to duplicate reality. It is a specific designed ordering of the gesture observed in life. Kabuki scenes are often brought to a climax with a grand pose, or mie. This pose is heavy in its meaning. To the outsider it may look like a funny puppet, but to those aware of Japanese culture, that pose has a story and layers upon layers of meaning. Buddhism emphasizes the idea that one can only live in the present; the past has ceased and the future is unreal. This is from where the specific poses are derived, punctuating the single moment in time and in the story being told. This static moment is recognized by the Japanese Kabuki audience member. Kabuki actors train their mind and bodies for performance for the entirety of their lives. The mie is full of complexities and is highly respected when it is well-executed.

Kabuki and Noh theatre have been maintained and passed down from generation to generation. The poses and scripts are seldom transcribed; instead

they are passed orally from actor to actor. This oral tradition has kept Kabuki and Noh stories alive. Not only have performance styles been maintained, there are many aspects of Japanese culture that have also been maintained for centuries. The traditions of how to enter a house, how to greet an elder, how to eat, and how to make tea, are still uniquely Japanese. These detailed rituals were all extremely overwhelming and fascinating to observe and attempt to follow. We had our eyes opened as wide as physically possible to try to catch every detail. It seemed that my notebook never left my hand and I didn't allow myself to blink.

The aspect of observation that surprised me the most was the grand amount of western culture that we saw. In the center of Tokyo there was a museum with an exhibit completely devoted to Michael Jackson. Many stores displayed shirts with Mickey Mouse on them, a clear American icon. At night, in an area called Shinjuku, teenagers walked around with bleached blonde hair. Icons from our home popped up everywhere! School girls stared at our faces and many people asked for pictures with us. We are as interesting to the people of Japan as they are to us. This was a surprise that caught me off guard. We noted that we knew it would be important to include some of the western influence in our piece amongst the foreign traditional culture.

The first time we stepped into a temple I couldn't believe my eyes. I felt like I had to have been in Disney World standing in a replica. It just didn't seem possible that I was actually standing in an amazing structure of which I had seen so many pictures. It was a place of beauty and grace. The air was filled with energy and peace. As I stood there with my camera trying to capture its beauty, a

business man with a briefcase rushed past me to the coin box. He put down his briefcase and performed a series of bows and claps, throwing a coin in the box in the middle, and ringing a bell. He picked up his briefcase and rushed back to work. This seemingly busy man rushed here on what seemed to be his lunch break. I noticed many more people in business attire praying throughout the day at the temples around Tokyo. The business suit in the midst of the beautiful ancient shrine is the perfect image to describe the importance of both tradition and contemporary priorities. The series of bows and clapping varied slightly from person to person. Some people took their time to concentrate on their thoughts between bows, others rushed through the motions. Either way, the movement was done in complete devotion to the spirituality.

In June we arrived back in the United States with endless knowledge, opened eyes, and excitement to create something based on our findings. We tried to come up with a plan but we had no idea where to start. We didn't know how to present all the information nor the steps to creating and producing a piece of theatre. It felt as though we were back in Japan on day one: unknown territory.

Developing the Movement

The first struggle we encountered once we returned home was how to best present all the information we had gathered. We were so enthralled with everything we had learned; we wanted to share it all with our audience, every last detail. Unfortunately, this is impossible to do in a short theatrical piece. The discussion then morphed into finding the theatrical device that would most

accurately demonstrate the widest range of cultural movement. We wanted to include the rich ancient performance tradition as well as the contemporary rhythm of life in Tokyo that we had actually lived.

We talked to our advisor, Lauren Unbekant, who suggested we start by looking to find a story through which to educate our audience. We needed to focus on a story telling device or our piece would just be a lecture, dictating to our audience what we had learned. Story telling is what makes theatre, so we started the search for the perfect story. In our research we learned that Kabuki plays are often centered on common themes such as loyalty and honor. We wanted to find a story with themes reflecting those important in the Kabuki art form as well as modern day Japan. We looked through Japanese folk tales until we found a few that had compelling character relationships as well as relevant themes. Between those we chose the one that we thought would be most interesting and had the most opportunities to educate our audience about Japanese culture. We decided to tell the story of *Tokoyo*. The story highlights loyalty to family, loyalty to people of higher status and gave us opportunities to demonstrate rituals in many aspects of daily life.

We were satisfied with our choice of story; we found it exciting, moving, relevant, and easily accessible. We now had to choose a concept that would allow us to address everything we studied. This was a pivotal point in our process. This decision was going to shape our piece and set the rules for the next seven months of development and work. We sat with our ideas for a long time, unable to

brainstorm a device that seemed functional. After many suggestions, and dreadful ideas, we chose the direction that we would travel.

We set the story in modern day Tokyo including specific characters represented by traditional forms of performance: Kabuki and Noh. This allowed us to share our knowledge in a broad range of categories and address universal themes. *Tokoyo* is the story of a young Samurai's daughter named Tokoyo. Her father is banished from Japan by the emperor, who blames the Samurai for a curse set upon him. Tokoyo travels on a journey across to try to find her father and set him free. On her journey she meets many characters and in the end she is cast into the ocean where she battles an evil serpent to break the emperor's curse. Her father is allowed to return home and they are reunited. In our modern version, Tokoyo became a school girl, her Samurai father became a business man, the emperor became a CEO of a large corporation and we added a Buddha character to lead her on her journey in the various forms of a Tea Lady, a hobo, and a crab. From this outline we began to create movement phrases to tell the story.

At Syracuse University, the Drama Department puts great emphasis on movement. Movement, being a very general category, can cover anything from mask work, to body awareness, to using metaphors to tell stories, or to exploring cultures through gesture. In the specific case of our piece, *Tokoyo: A Story of Cultural Movement*, we wanted to use the specific movement patterns of Japanese performance and daily life to tell the story. The story, derived from a Japanese folk tale, highlights the important themes of Japanese culture and performance. As we developed the theatrical piece we always went back to our research and

observations of the culture. Every artistic question was also a question of research and authenticity.

Japanese traditional theatre is very movement heavy and we observed mainly the physical language of the culture while in Japan. For these reasons, we wanted our piece to be centered on the movement of the culture. We had to decide if we wanted to have the extra challenge of telling the story without text. Telling a story solely through movement is a very difficult task. If we used language, in order to remain in the world of the story, it would need to be in Japanese. Speaking in English would take the audience back to American culture. We decided against this because it would not add anything for the non-Japanese speaking audience and it would not add to our study of the movements that the culture uses to communicate. Furthermore, the lack of language makes the movement that much more important. It is a challenge to get the story across to an audience without oversimplifying and treating the audience like they lack intelligence.

Our choice to create a piece completely free of spoken words had creative, educational, and thematic reasons behind it. It calls for extreme specificity in planning and executing each individual movement. This would put greater emphasis on the movement and force the audience to observe movement without the added benefit of spoken words, just as we had to observe human behavior in Japan. It seemed as though a text-free story would be most compelling, most authentic, and most educational. Throughout the process, this restriction was extremely difficult with which to work. In hind sight, the decision may have been

one of the best decisions we made. It introduces the audience to the great impact that movement alone can have. Though Japanese culture is very far from our own, through foreign and seemingly odd movements we can convey emotion and tell a story. Movement is the universal language that spans across the entirety of the human race. Art and movement can be a communicator.

My previous work and experiences as an actress are what drew me to this project and helped me as I developed the different creative aspects of it. The development of specific characters, identifiable through specific movements and stances is essential in a piece where each actress plays multiple characters. This skill of creating a clear character is one that I developed in various drama classes. By looking at the story and the character's individual actions in the story, one can create the entire history of that character. The history, or backstory, of the character informs the movement choices and personality traits of that character in the performance.

The specific movement techniques that we use were taught to us in a class called Backstory, taught by Lauren Unbekant. For example, at the end of our piece Tokoyo, the young girl, travels back to where she started. We represent this quickly by a series of movements that were made on her initial journey. She does them in a movement phrase and in reverse order. This technique is called backwards mapping. The audience recognizes the actions and it acts as a rewind, placing Tokoyo back where the story began. The simple movement skills such as falling, swimming, and walking in place are used in many movement pieces and were taught to us in the backstory class as well. We explored the Kabuki and Noh

style movement through books, videos, pictures, observation in Japan, and instruction by a movement teacher named Felix Ivanov. Felix is a movement professor with knowledge of Kabuki movement. He helped us with the fight choreography and with some of the specific Kabuki- influenced moments in the piece. The creation of characters and movement patterns was difficult but something we were ready to decipher and conquer.

Our piece is filled with details important to Japanese culture that one may never notice while watching the piece. Some of these details were taught to us by people we met in Japan and many learned by observation and later reinforced with research. In the stylized prologue of the piece, we meet the father and his daughter, Tokoyo, as they go through their morning routine and interact with one another. Before they eat they wipe their hands with wet napkins. When Tokoyo tries to wipe her face, her father reminds her that it shows disrespect and she stops immediately. This is a detail in Japanese culture that we learned in our experiences abroad. When the Tea Lady character guides Tokoyo on a journey through the countryside, she shows her the intricacies in nature. We included this in our piece because the Japanese are so aware of the nature around them and take the time to observe and appreciate it. The father has a stylized walk with his top half bent sharply forward on a diagonal. This choice was taken directly from the observation of the business people in the subway. He is overall very angular, as are the walking patterns of the Japanese business people.

Another example of research greatly influencing our movement choices is in the tea ceremony. The tea ceremony is a great art form in Japan that has been

passed down for generations. The traditional steps to make a cup of tea are overwhelmingly intricate. We observed a ceremony in Japan and knew that its uniqueness made it imperative to include in our final piece. We were lucky enough to meet with a Japanese student at Syracuse University named Yui Matsumoto. Yui has studied the tea ceremony since she was nine years old in Japan. Of course she could not teach us everything she knew, but she taught us an outline of the ceremony and the importance and significance of many details. We were able to include this beautiful art in our piece which is unlike anything in American culture. The Tea Lady in our piece also teaches Tokoyo to take her shoes off before entering the house as well as the proper way to wear a kimono.

Throughout our piece we chose to strike versions of the poses studied and presented in Kabuki theatre. For example, when our CEO character discovers that the sword, the symbol of his company, is missing he strikes a pose that means ‘to weep.’ We struggled with the idea that we would not be recreating these poses perfectly. To the outsider it may look simple, but even each pinky must be at the proper angle and the actor’s eyes must be focused in a specific direction. When we first planned to go to Japan to learn about performance culture, we tried set up a meeting with a teacher of Kabuki or Noh while we were there. Each road led us to a dead end. The language barrier, as well as the inability to communicate through international websites, put us at a disadvantage. When we sat in the theatre watching the elite Kabuki actors striking the various mie poses, we wanted to include these movements in our piece. We ultimately decided that we would match the precision of the poses as well as we could through observation as well

as pictures displayed in books about Japanese theatre. The poses are powerful and are important to Kabuki and Noh theatre and to our piece.

Our piece starts with the sound of traditional wood blocks and we use practical music throughout the piece. We also use a soundscape run through a computer. The practical use of wood blocks, a drum, and bells emphasizes the mie poses we create in each scene as well as important movements made by certain characters. By using both a musician to accompany us and a pre-recorded soundtrack we can go between modern expression of culture and traditional expression through Kabuki and Noh stylized movement.

The contemporary music that we use is primarily composed by Japanese composers Joe Hisaishi and Ryuichi Sakamoto. Both composers are well known and highly respected in their craft. The music is breathtaking and extremely unique. The compositions do have influences from western culture but maintain an obvious Japanese style. They were a perfect choice for our piece which emphasizes the differences and similarities between Japanese and Western culture.

Producing the Show

Once we were in the final stages of developing the movement and characters of our piece we had to address the countless other aspects of developing and producing a piece of theatre. Words were being thrown around about, lights, projectors, designs, production assistants, house managers, media, and sets. Again, I felt like I was back in Japan, in a place of the unknown.

In my head, there were elaborate sound cues throughout the entire piece. A constant background of music sets the mood of the piece while sound effects help to trigger the audiences' imaginations. Both aspects of sound design are equally important. As we rehearsed we would simply call, "cat meow," or "car passing." In a standard rehearsal process, the sound designer would bring these sounds to rehearsal during tech week to layer them into the production with the help of the stage manager. This was an aspect of the production that we ignored for a large section of the process. When it came time to gather the effects, we had a difficult time accessing the clips we had planned to use. With the suggestions of sound designers we were able to find everything we desired. The sound cues support our movement just as the musicians support the dance of a Kabuki piece. The cueing of sound effects over music is not something that a simple program like iTunes is capable of doing. For more complicated effects we had to be taught by a design major to use a program called QLab. The program allows more complex sound layering and levels that made much of our vision possible.

When I have worked on shows in the past I have had one role. Sometimes I have acted as a character in the play, sometimes the choreographer, sometimes the director, and sometimes the assistant set designer. Never have I been responsible for every aspect of the production. Suddenly, on top of our duties as directors and actors we had to manage the rest of the production as well. The month of the performance was nearing and final decisions needed to be made. The list of desired projections and sound cues had to be finalized and arranged to be run during the show. We had to find costumes within our budget and add

details to make them specific to the given character. Props were made and found at various shops and craft stores as well as borrowing from others. As we designed our set we wanted to keep it minimal so that we could easily move from space to space. These aspects of the production were completely new to us but allowed us to shape our piece exactly how we saw it in our minds' eyes.

Luckily, being in the drama department, we were able to find other artists to help us and guide us in the processes with which we were less familiar. Jessica Noones came on board as our stage manager. When she joined the team she was able to help us address technical and logistical issues that we may not have acknowledged before. We were also lucky enough to have five freshman performance majors come on board to help us run our sound, light, and projection cues. The five production assistants were an essential part of the project. Assignment sheets were handed out to everyone on the team to make the pre-show set-up run smoothly. Cues were recorded in order to perfectly synch our movement to the changes of the sound and projections. As it got closer and closer to the performance, Chelsea and I were needed in multiple places at once and the extra hands and brains made everything possible.

The Performance

In typical rehearsal processes, the week prior to the performance is called the 'tech week.' During this week the actors are given a chance to make sure that the spacing on the actual stage makes sense, the costumes and props are all comfortable and safe to use, and that they are familiar with the added effects and lights. This is also the week that the stage crew practices their cues and jobs in

the performance space and backstage. Our situation was drastically different. We had to 'tech' our show in four hours. We only had the Red House space for one day and could only rehearse in the space for four hours prior to the show. We anticipated a busy and stressful day and prepared ahead of time as well as we could. One thing that we could not predict or prepare for was the snow. The snow delayed our rehearsal process by an hour. We did not let this setback frustrate us. Each of our production assistants had individual assignments as Chelsea and I re-spaced the show on the stage. We worked efficiently and were able to do a full run of the show with lights, projections, sound, props, and costumes before we opened the house to our audience at 7:45pm.

The production was a great success. We had almost a full house regardless of the snow covering the streets. Everything that we had worked out and had difficulties with in previous rehearsals went smoothly. The audience understood the story and responded well. In our talk back people asked specific, and well thought out questions. This proved to us that the audience was completely engaged and invested in our performance. They had been exposed to a new kind of movement and wanted to know more. That knowledge was very satisfying. We wanted to take the audience on an adventurous, imaginative journey with us as well as educate them about a beautiful foreign culture.

The Effects

What I hear, I forget.

What I see, I remember.

What I do, I understand.

- Kung Fu Tzu (Confucius)

These words have never rung so true. This is not to say that I discovered and understand the entirety of Japanese culture; that is an impossible achievement to claim. I started in a place of unknowing. I researched all I could about Kabuki theatre, Noh theatre, and Japan's modern culture and took in all of the information I could. When I arrive in Tokyo, I was immersed in the culture. By observing and following, I drew connections that I would have never noticed solely from reading. By developing a movement piece and putting myself in the world of the characters, my muscles began to teach me. All of the facts were roaming around my head and by 'doing' I began to understand where the research and observations intertwine. Experience is the ultimate teacher and this project has been that, a grand experience and the best teacher I have ever had.

Not only has this experience taught me about a different culture but it has also taught me about myself as a theatre artist. Our stage manager was unable to be with us until a week before the show. This meant that Chelsea and I had to be our own stage managers. We had to schedule our own rehearsals, find our own rehearsal spaces, make arrangements for props and costumes, and set goals for ourselves. We were also put in charge of directing each of our production assistants. We learned to produce a show and collaborate with each other. When we get to New York City and begin auditioning for acting jobs we may not be cast right away. We now have the knowledge to produce our own theatre. A great way to be seen by agents and casting directors in New York City is by creating

your own work. Chelsea and I know now that we are beyond capable of creating our own projects. We have learned how to think of the project's success as a whole and drop ideas when it is for the greater good of the piece. Collaboration is so important in the theatre and this has been the ultimate experience of collaboration. To have completed the project and made such an impression on our audiences makes me want to start another project and collaborate again.

The western audience attending our show about the relationship and journey of a Japanese father and daughter may not be effected by all the slight nuances of Japanese culture. Even if the audience is unaware of the significance of every movement, the themes and emotions are understood. The audience may not recognize that the Kabuki dance that Tokoyo learns from the Tea Lady means 'young woman of society.' They do understand though, that Tokoyo is learning and maturing on her journey. The audience has not been educated to recognize the pose that means 'to plead,' but the movement speaks for itself. Even a western audience, with no prior knowledge of Kabuki performance style can recognize and relate to the emotion that accompanies the pose. Every detail of the movement is influenced by specific rituals in Japanese culture but the piece as a whole can speak to anyone and everyone. A person from any given area of the world has been taught to move differently, but when put in a situation of ultimate loss will experience similar emotions. These emotions allow us to resonate with movement and relate to others as theatre artists and people of the community.

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Capstone Summary

Tokoyo: A Story of Cultural Movement is an exploration of Japanese culture told solely through physical expression. The presentation includes Kabuki and Noh movement styles, as well as contemporary gestural language. The gestural language of a culture refers to the way people relate to each other and communicate through their bodies. These movements are often derived from rituals and daily life. The most frequent and widely recognized example is the bow. Bowing in eastern Asian culture has a variety of meanings: one used in place of the American wave “hello.” The story of *Tokoyo* is an ancient Japanese folk tale through which we demonstrate this specific form of communication. To incorporate both modern and ancient traditions, the story is set in contemporary Tokyo with appearances by traditional characters informed by Kabuki and Noh performance styles.

The original story of *Tokoyo* is centered on a young girl whose father, a samurai, has just been banished from the kingdom by the emperor. The emperor is plagued by a curse and blames her father. Devastated, she sets out to find him. The journey is long and trying, but her loyalty to her father is too great to ignore. Tokoyo, a young and naive girl, climbs aboard a boat in the hopes that she will stumble upon her father. When she discovers it will not be that simple, she seeks guidance from other fishermen. The fishermen, focused on their work, are of no help, leaving Tokoyo alone in unfamiliar surroundings. Coincidentally, Tokoyo finds herself at a Buddhist temple where she prays for Buddha’s help in finding her father. Wrought by weariness, she falls asleep. Tokoyo is awoken by the

sound of a girl crying. The girl, about to be sacrificed, is being held over a cliff by a priest. Tokoyo, with no hope left inside her, offers to act as the sacrifice in place of the other girl. Tokoyo dives into the ocean, all the while praying to Buddha. Once on the ocean floor, Buddha guides her to a statue of the emperor hidden in a cave. Tokoyo puts the statue on her back and swims to the surface. She knows this statue is the key to saving her father. The priest and the girl carry her back to town where the emperor summons her. When Tokoyo pulled the statue from the sea, the emperor's curse was lifted. He thanks her for her good deeds and releases her father from banishment. Tokoyo and her father are reunited and his honor in society is reestablished.

The adapted piece begins with a prologue introducing Tokoyo and her father's relationship through a series of morning rituals. The two part ways as they begin their journeys to work and school. The scene changes to an introduction of the CEO, who is the equivalent of the emperor in our story and is informed by Noh movement. The Japanese currently view the business elite as they did the samurai in ancient times. The CEO is seen paying respect to the sword that represents the lineage of his family-built corporation. When he is out of sight, Buddha, in the form of a prankster, steals the sword. When Tokoyo's father arrives at work, excited to begin the day, he is greeted by an angry CEO. The CEO, having discovered that the sword is missing, blames the father, the only other key holder. The father is sent to jail, never to be with his daughter again.

Tokoyo, on her way home from school, visits her father at work. There she finds an empty office, a letter telling her what has happened, and her father's

key. She sets out to find her father. Parallel to the folk tale's journey on the sea, Tokoyo descends into the subway station, the main business travel medium. In the subway she is overwhelmed and finds no help. Tokoyo collapses and Buddha, in the form of a young woman in traditional dress, observes her distress and offers her assistance. The woman takes her to her home in the outskirts of the city where she performs an authentic tea ceremony. This character is informed by Kabuki style. The young woman teaches Tokoyo how to be a young woman of society and suggests that Tokoyo visits a temple to pray and seek guidance.

At the temple, Tokoyo prays in traditional fashion and falls asleep. Midst her slumber, the statue of Buddha comes alive and performs a dance indicating to the audience that he will guide Tokoyo for the rest of her journey. At the end of the dance he transforms into a homeless man. Tokoyo wakes up and hears the homeless man outside. He is attempting to steal her school bag and umbrella that she left outside while she was praying. In an attempt to regain possession of her belongings, Tokoyo engages in a Kabuki-style sword fight with the homeless man. The umbrella is used in place of a sword. The fight ends with the homeless man throwing Tokoyo into the water. As she falls to the water Buddha takes her hand and flies with her over the ocean. When they arrive over a designated spot, Buddha releases her into the sea. Once under the water Tokoyo is lead to a box which holds the sword of her father's corporation. She knows that this will save her father and carries it to the surface. She returns home where she presents the sword to the CEO and she is reunited with her father. Cherry blossoms bloom as Buddha watches over them and smiles.

This piece was developed through traditional research and observation. Before leaving for Japan last May, we researched the conventions of Kabuki and Noh theatre, Japanese theatre culture, and Japanese daily culture. We also researched cultural movement as a field of study. We investigated the origins of culture, how rituals are formed, and how they manifest themselves in performance. This was achieved through traditional research and a look at images and video clips. Once we arrived in Japan, our research became based on physical observation, museum exhibits, attending theatre, and immersing ourselves in the culture in every way possible. We attended Kabuki and Noh performances and made physical, vocal, and aesthetic observations. English guides helped us to understand the dramatic stories being told and the importance of the different aspects of the performances. Each day we observed human behavior in different areas of life. We recorded human interaction in business, leisure, educational, and familial settings. The physical distinctions between age, class, and status became clear. We attended a private tea ceremony to study the movement involved in the ancient tradition and travelled to many shrines and temples to observe the culture's emphasis on spirituality. Parades and festivals provided information regarding relationships and unity in Japan, while the morning rush hour demonstrated the individual's determination for efficiency. Even how people eat, walk, greet one another, and show affection are subtle but important aspects of behavior when studying a culture.

After returning from Japan, we continued traditional research to support our findings in the country. We also met with a Japanese student here at Syracuse

University to learn the tea ceremony and more about modern culture from someone of our generation. This research is what has shaped our creative piece and added many different layers of the intricate Japanese culture.

The creation of the piece was a difficult and lengthy process that was achieved through multiple drafts. We used techniques taught in our acting classes to develop the characters of our story. The movement that we developed is based on traditional movement, contemporary movement, stylized movement, and metaphor. The piece includes many storytelling techniques that we have worked with in our training in the Drama Department. These techniques include various movements and patterns of physical storytelling. For example when Tokoyo finds the sword she brings it back to where the story began. Instead of taking the audience on the entire journey back, we use a technique called backwards mapping. Tokoyo simply repeats recognized movements from the story in reverse order. This acts as a rewind for the audience and brings them back to the beginning quickly and artistically.

The presentation of this composition will educate our audience on a culture very far from our own. The differences and great similarities will become clear. It addresses essential themes of Japanese performance that are also extremely present in American performance. These themes include family and business loyalty. Though the country is physically very distant, the ideas presented are very close to home. Furthermore, the principle that movement is the universal language is very significant. The specific movements may seem odd or foreign, but the emotion conveyed still makes them relatable. Though each

culture's artistic expression is drastically different, each is developed from a universal humanity. We can convey stories simply through our bodies; art can be a communicator.

As drama majors, we are especially interested in human behavior and specifically how the body moves to communicate. Each individual culture looks at life differently. Based on climate, location, religion, and other cultures' influences, a culture develops stories, rituals, language, and gesture. As emerging artists, this piece was a wonderful and challenging experience. To have the opportunity to create a piece of theatre from our own research, observations, and brain power is thrilling. Devising a piece without speech that still tells a story is a great accomplishment. The amount that we learned in observing another culture has endlessly impacted our theatre training. Tokoyo's story is timeless and *Tokoyo: A Story of Cultural Movement* will educate our audience and continues to educate us.