**Rakugo, Japanese humorous storytelling, performance and Suibokuga, Japanese Drawing, workshop by Kyoraku Sanyutei**

Sachiko Matsushita

Thanks to the Japan Foundation Center for Global Partnership, Japan-America Society of Tennessee, the University of Memphis, Ms. Igarashi at the White Station High School, Mr. Honma, Vice-principal of the Japanese Supplementary School, and people who supported the events, we held the events of Rakugo, Japanese humorous storytelling performances and workshops by Mr. Kyoraku Sanyutei. Many people who attended the events enjoyed them and got a better understanding of Japanese culture. We were very lucky to have these opportunities because Mr. Kyoraku wanted to come to Memphis on his way from New York to San Francisco. Dr. Kokubo, a retired Japanese professor in Boston, introduced us to him. We held his performances and workshops as follows:

1) Rakugo performance with PowerPoint (subtitles)
   5/11/09, 6:00-8:30 Fogelman Center at the University of Memphis
   Number of Attendees: 90

2) Suibokuga, Japanese drawing and Yosemoji, Calligraphy workshop
   5/13/09, 10:30-12:30 Memphis Botanic Garden
   Number of Attendees: 17

3) Suibokuga Workshop and Rakugo Performance at the White Station High School
   5/14/09, Workshop at 11:15-12:15 and 12:20-1:15
   Performance at 1:20-2:15 White Station High School
   Number of Attendees: 8, 10 and 35, respectively

4) Rakugo performance at the Japanese Supplementary School
   5/16/09
   Number of Attendees: 64

The success of the rakugo performance owed not only to his ability to perform showing the English subtitles on the screen behind him and his personality, but also the stories themselves. The traditional stories whose themes are warm human relationships in particular, are funny and touching. They attracted people who attended the rakugo performances. Almost all the people who saw him in Memphis wanted to see his performance again, and he promised us to come back in 2011.

**Coordinator’s Comment**

One student at the White Station High School wrote her impression. “It was completely fascinating to me how everything in the story mattered and how it is a part of daily lives. The message in the story touched my heart deeply.” I saw another student waiting for her turn to say thanks, but she left the classroom saying nothing when she realized Mr. Kyoraku was exhausted by his performance and was breathing hard. I understood her feeling and sympathized with her.

**Supervisor’s Comment**

Once again I was delighted to see the success of another Japanese cultural event due to the work ethics of Sachiko. She reached out to the community by organizing the event at a local high school, in addition to the University and the Japanese supplementary school. High school students were able to experience their first exposure to traditional Japanese culture. The students’ reactions were so emotional and touching. A few students were moved to tears by the emotions and humanity in the stories. This touching experience for both the students and myself was brought by Sachiko’s hard work.
Noh Theater 2009 Southern United States Tour

Sachiko Matsushita

Noh theater performances were held on 1/22 at Athens, 1/24 at Nashville and 1/26 at Memphis sponsored by Japan Foundation, the University of Georgia, Belmont University, the University of Memphis Student Event Allocation, Japan-America Society of Tennessee and Consulate-General of Japan in Nashville. We invited Mr. Yasuhiro Urata, one of Japan’s leading Noh theater actors and 6 performers from 1/21 to 1/28 2009 from Japan. Noh theater performance, the first ever to be seen in the Southern U.S. succeeded at the three cities, and the numbers of attendees for performances were 327 at Georgia, 340 at Nashville and 900 at Memphis. Furthermore, 63 people and 120 people attended the workshops at Georgia and at Memphis, respectively.

This project started a year and a half before the event, when I visited Dr. Susan Chrietzyberg’s Asian theater class to perform and explain Noh theater song. The students wanted to see more. They were interested in Noh theater performance. Hence, Susan, Dr. Yuki Matsuda and I worked together and planned to invite a Noh troop. Fortunately, we found the Noh performer who was looking for the sites in U.S.A. through Dr. Matsuda’s friend in Japan. We also approached Dr. Richmond at the University of Georgia, Japan-America Society of Tennessee and Consulate-General of Japan in Nashville. We held the meeting at Nashville on 10/5/2008, where two people from Belmont University, two from JAST and three from U of M attended and one from U of G attended through the phone. The Vice Council at Consulate-General attended the meeting and offered us to make a program and a poster for us. We agreed to share the all the fees association with the Noh performers.

Thanks to the grant from the Japan Foundation in Japan, and another grant from U of M Student Event Allocation, under Dr. Chrietzyberg with the students’ organizations, including Japan Culture Club, Anime 101, Asian Theater student Association and the Fred Mertz Association, we could manage the performers’ air fees and our share of the expenses. Furthermore, many people helped our event: Students who learned Japanese worked as interpreters at the two receptions. Theater students helped to make the stage, organized seats at the theater and took care of Noh performers. A board member of JAST offered the printing fee of the extra 400 sets of programs. The program manager of JAST willingly provided us her house to hold the welcome party for Noh performers. Thus, we prepared everything.

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Even though we prepared everything, we could not expect over 700 people wanted to reserve the seats. The capacity of the theater was 350. Dr. Chrietberg and the theater department people began to think about how to move the performance from Theater Building to the Rose Theater with a capacity at 900. We decided it on 1/22/09, 4 days before the performance. People continued to make reservations for seats.

### Schedule

1/25 5:00-7:00
**Welcome Party** held by West branch of JAST
1/26 2:00-3:30
**Workshop:** The Main stage in the Theatre and Communication Building at the University of Memphis 1/26 8:00-9:30
**Performance** (Takasago Mai-bayashi, Noh Music and Hagoromo Mai-bayashi)
**Reception**

Hagoromo performed by Urata Yasuhiro

West branch of JAST held the welcome party for the Consul General and his wife at 6:00-7:00 on 1/26. After the party, the guests and many attendees came to the theater to see Noh.

The Noh performance began with Dr. Chrietberg’s address of welcome, and then she explained the historical background of Noh Theater. After that I introduced the Noh performers and explained the stories of the Noh dramas and Noh music. Mr. Fukano danced Takasago Mai-bayashi powerfully and swiftly. The Noh music was followed. They created intricate fusion of sound. Lastly, Mr. Urata elegantly performed Hagoromo with the mask and costume.

### Coordinator’s Comment
I was surprised and pleased that many people were interested in Japanese classical theater and enjoyed it. People said to me: “Thank you for bringing Noh Theater.” “It was wonderful.” “I have never seen before, but I love it.” “It was beautiful.” “I saw you before at the Noh song performance.”

### Supervisor’s Comment
This event was significant because it marked the first Noh performance in the Southern States. Also the event involved many groups, such as students, professors, the Japanese Consular office, the Japan-America Society in two states, community people, and business communities that worked together and as a result, we created a legend. As a specialist in the field of classical literature of Japanese, Sachiko’s role as a coordinator was indispensable. She helped the Noh performers write the grants in order to hold the performance, organized the program, and with grace, humbly and gratefully introduced the first Noh performance in Memphis.
2008 Japanese Festival at Memphis Botanic Garden

Sachiko Matsushita

The Japanese Festival at the Memphis Botanic Garden was held 9/25-9/27, 2008. This event was planned by the Botanic Garden, Japan Outreach Initiative Coordinator at the University of Memphis, Memphis Bamboo Chapter of Ikebana International, and Japanese Traders and Manufacturers Association of Memphis. I was involved in the plan from the beginning. I was told by Dr. Matsuda, my supervisor that this event was a goal of my activities at Memphis, because it would unite many groups of Japanese and Americans who were interested in Japanese culture. I also thought that it was a good opportunity to introduce different types of Japanese culture through activities, presentations and exhibitions. The Botanic Garden applied for the Japan Foundation Grant, invited donations and sought volunteers. I helped their activities. Over 137 volunteers including over 30 Japanese and 50 students at the U of M supported many activities. Even though Japanese supplementary school’s field day fell on Saturday 9/27, many people joined after their event.

Opening Night Celebration 5:30-7:30 p.m., 9/25
Candyman, Ikebana Exhibit, Japanese Garden Tour
Noh Play Song, and Fushu Daiko, Japanese drum.
Attendance: 234

School Day 10:00a.m.-noon, 9/26
Candyman, Fushu Daiko, Tea Ceremony Demonstrations,
Kamishibai Storytelling, Japanese Game, and Hands on Activities (Koi Windsocks, Leaf Pounding, Calligraphy on a fan, Origami, Haiku Writing, Chopstick Challenge)
Attendance: 526

Festival Day 12:00-6:00 p.m. 9/27
Kimono Fashion Show, Fushu Daiko, Kendo Demonstration,
Tea Ceremony Demonstration, Kamishibai Storytelling,
Japanese Game, Japan Video, Shadow Box Art Exhibition,
Shiatsu Massage, Hands on Activities, and Bon Odori Dancing

Coordinator’s Comment
I enjoyed planning many cultural events. I was very happy that people whom I asked to do something at the festival willingly accepted. I think they also enjoyed their activities. A Japanese woman told me that she did not know that many Japanese lived in Memphis and she was delighted to share the pleasure with many people.

Supervisor’s Comment
This event was the first success of JOI in uniting the people of Memphis. Sachiko worked extremely hard and efficiently to coordinate people to make this event a success. For example, the students involved in the Japanese program at the University of Memphis had the opportunity to learn the Japanese bon-dance for a month under a Japanese dance instructor. The students were able to demonstrate and explain details behind the dance on the day of the festival. Some students were even able to teach calligraphy. With her dedicated touch and perseverance, Sachiko helped the people in the community come together and enjoy new experiences.
Japanese Tea Ceremony Lessons at the Botanical Gardens

Sachiko Matsushita

I held Japanese Tea Ceremony lessons every Saturday morning from the 16th of February to the 26th of April at the Botanical Gardens. The Eleven students (sometimes more than 11 because they brought their friends or relatives) practiced the tea ceremony from the basic movements to the series of making tea movements.

Tea Ceremony Lesson

Activities

The 1st Day (2/16/2008)
  (1) Drinking Green tea (Macha) and eating sweets, (2) Names of tea utensils, and (3) Sitting, bowing, and standing up

The 2nd Day (2/23/2008)
  (1) Folding fukusa, a silk cloth, (2) Purifying a tea container, a tea scoop, and (3) Making tea.

The 3rd Day (3/1/2008)
  (1) Washing linen cloth and folding it, (2) Purifying a tea whisk, Setting a tea bowl, and (3) purifying a tea bowl

The 4th Day (3/8/2008) and the 5th Day (3/15/2008)
  (1) Practicing the style of ryaku-bon-date.

The 6th Day (3/22/2008)
  (1) Handling a ladle, (2) the style of Usucha-hira-demae.

The 7th Day (3/29/2008), the 8th Day (4/12/2008) & 9th Day (4/19/2008)
  (1) Practicing the styles of ryaku-bon-date and the style of Usucha-hira-demae.

The final Day (4/26/2008)
  (1) Holding the Japanese tea gathering, giving certifications

Coordinator’s Comments

We had a great time not only to experience Japanese culture but also to know each other through the activities. I really appreciated the two volunteers, Dr. Kentaro Ohkuni, a researcher at St. Jude, and Ms. Kanae Okamoto who helped and assisted me. I also thanked students who generously lent me their utensils and even tatami mats. Without their help I would not have been able to do the lessons. I plan to hold Tea Ceremony Lessons again from August 2008, for many students want to continue to practice. I have also heard others want to join the class.

Supervisor’s Comment

Sachiko’s tea ceremony classes were very useful in introducing some fundamental aspects of Japanese culture to the community. They were also very effective in networking various groups within the community. The students consisted of local artists, college and high school students, teachers, housewives, and Japanese businessmen. Through learning this traditional Japanese art form, these students from different backgrounds became very close, which would not have happened if Sachiko’s course was not offered. We are very lucky to have a professional tea master like Sachiko in this community.
Cherry Blossom Viewing at the Botanic Garden

Sachiko Matsushita, University of Memphis

The Rice-Pounding Festival involved many people -- Mr. Ohba, the vice-principal of the Saturday school who lent me a mortar, a pounder, and a glutinous rice cooker; the University of Memphis Japanese teachers, who lent me many utensils; and Ms. Kamiya, Dr. Matsuda’s friend who volunteered to go shopping and cook glutinous rice with her friends. Members of the Japan Culture Club also helped me exhibit New Year’s traditional toys and explained them. Nagoya Gakuin University and Osaka Economic University exchange students wearing happi coats helped pound rice. More than 100 people gathered and enjoyed pounding and tasting rice cakes. After the successful New Year Rice-Pounding Festival on February 3, I planned a Cherry Blossom Viewing Party for March 30, 2008.

The Cherry Blossom Viewing Party was expected to be a joyful event. I asked Gina who was in charge of events at the Botanic Garden to provide me with a room. I also asked the Consulate General and Ms. Kamiya to lend us a full set of hina dolls, and a huge dairi-sama. They generously lent them to us. I wrote the flyer for volunteers who would work with me to prepare the event. Surprisingly, not only Japanese but also Americans, who were mainly tea ceremony students, volunteered their services. Moreover, Mr. Jimmy Ishii, the owner of a Japanese restaurant, told me he would prepare sushi.

Even though the weather was not so nice, actually it was a rainy day, over 80 people gathered to experience Japanese culture, to view cherry blossoms, to appreciate hina dolls, to taste sushi both rolled sushi (maki-zushi) offered by Ishii and unrolled sushi (chirashi-zushi) made by the volunteers, and to fold origami to make hina dolls.

Coordinator’s Comment: I received thanks as follows: “It was a delightful event I enjoyed very much. Thank you so much for the invitation.” “Congratulations on a beautiful afternoon. Even though the weather was not so nice, the spirit inside was full of joy and delight. The blossoms were lovely, the food delicious, the hina doll collection amazing! Thank you for all your work in organizing it, and cooking sushi. I enjoyed that very much and would like to learn to make it.” I am very happy when I think JOI has gradually permeated the Memphis area.

Supervisor’s Comment: The Memphis Botanical Garden has generously offered free space for any and all JOI events, so Sachiko could conduct successful outreach events like this one. Due to bad weather, we anticipated a low turnout so decided not to charge a material fee for the event. We were very wrong. More than 80 community showed up – high school students, families with small children, seniors, educators, and wives of US military officers who had lived in Memphis for more than 50 years. Since we did not charge anything, they voluntarily donated money, and we received more than what we had planned to receive from the material fee. The reason for this unexpected turn-out was that Sachiko circulated the JOI newsletter around the Memphis area; thus many people were looking forward to this event. This networking of various people in the community is something we really needed to have but did not have the capacity to do. We are so thankful for the JOI program and we pay tribute to the hardworking coordinator.
When I wrote letters to ask permission to observe classes in Memphis schools, Dr. Snyder, the principal at Southern Avenue Charter School, quickly replied to my letter. He invited me to observe classes and asked me to introduce Japanese culture and language to K-1 students at his school. Most of the students are African-American (99%). Two classes out of the six I observed seemed chaotic. Students chatted with friends and went to the bathroom one after another. I felt their energy. I taught Japanese language and culture K-1 students in 4 classes on 2/4, 2/11, 2/25, 3/4, and 3/10 in 2008. Each class was 30 minutes. I planned activities to adopt body movements. I sent my lesson plan to Cameron Smith, curriculum coordinator. The students welcomed me with friendly smiles, and gave me warm hugs. I was very pleased that Dr. Snyder decided to begin a series of Japanese lessons next semester.

**Activities**

2/4/08: (1) Greetings and a Bow, (2) The location of both America and Japan on the map, (3) Play ‘Jan ken pon’ with the song of ‘Ocharaka’, a children’s song, and (4) Say Sayo nara (Good bye) with a song.

2/11/08: (1) Greeting, (2) Learn the Japanese number words, (3) Skip across an elastic cord, counting 5 in Japanese.

2/25/08: (1) Greetings, (2) Fold origami to make a dog and a cat, and (3) draw faces of them.

3/3/08: (1) Greetings, (2) Review the Japanese number words, (3) Learn ‘kore wa nan desuka”, and names of parts of body, (4) Sing a song, atama, kata, hiza, ashi and play the game, Simon says.

3/10/08: (1) Greetings, and (2) Telling kamishibai story, ‘The One-Inch Boy’ and letting them draw pictures.

**Coordinator’s Comment**

Students participated in the lesson positively. I showed them the world map and asked them where America was on the map. Almost all children tried to answer it, even though they did not know the answer exactly. They knew America was a big country. I felt their enormous energy when I taught them Japanese children’s songs. They had a very good rhythmic sense and quickly learned Japanese rhythm and words. They sang and played ‘Ocharara’ in a way similar to Japanese children. In my last lesson I told Japanese folk tale, ‘The One-Inch Boy’, and asked them to draw the picture which impressed them most. They wonderfully drew pictures. They are going to be my treasure.

**Supervisor’s Comment**

I always wanted someone who is patient and kind like Sachiko to teach this K1 class at the Southern Avenue Charter School in Memphis. Many children in the Memphis area suffer from poverty and receive no encouragement to learn anything. I believe Sachiko’s presentations at this school made a strong impact on their lives. They not only enjoyed learning Japanese language and culture, but also learned to respect different people from different cultures. The students in the school seemed to particularly enjoy Sachiko’s “kamishibai”, storytelling with picture boards. The students later drew some pictures about the storytelling and gave their pictures to Sachiko. These drawings were very good and creative, and reflected their appreciation of Sachiko’s presentations.