



## **US-Japan Contemporary Theatre Alliance: A Website**

### **Framework**

CULCON proposes a website comprised of listings of plays, playwrights, and producers/presenters/publishers, and universities from the United States and Japan that are interested in contemporary theatrical exchange. This exchange should include productions, concert readings, publications, and encouragement of teaching of plays at educational institutions. It should also include a list of bilingual (English and Japanese) translators in both nations who not only speak the language, but also have an aesthetic sensibility so that the language of the translations maintain as much of the integrity of the original work as possible.

### **Titling**

The website might be named “The US-Japan Contemporary Theatre Alliance.”

### **Categories**

Its categories should include the following:

- US theatres interested in productions and/or presenting concert readings of contemporary Japanese plays
- US institutions such as museums and cultural centers interested in productions and/or presenting concert readings of contemporary Japanese plays
- Japanese theatres interested in productions and/or presenting concert readings of contemporary US plays
- Japanese institutions such as museums and cultural centers interested in productions and/or presenting concert readings of contemporary US plays
- US playwrights interested in having their work produced, presented, or taught in Japan
- Japanese playwrights interested in having their work produced, presented, or taught in the US
- US publishers interested in publishing US-Japan-related plays
- Japanese publishers interested in publishing US-Japan-related plays

- US universities interested in productions and/or presenting concert readings of contemporary Japanese plays, in teaching the plays, and/or in having Japanese playwrights visit their campuses in conjunction with the teaching, production, or presentation of a play
- Japanese universities interested in productions and/or presenting concert readings of contemporary US plays, in teaching the plays, and/or in having US playwrights visit their campuses in conjunction with the teaching, production, or presentation of a play
- US- and Japan-based translators.

### Updates

The list should be updated annually with an email account being attached to the website to allow interested entities to list their information in a designated format, which can be easily added to the website. An individual will have to be assigned to conduct this once-a-year administrative task. It should be made clear on the website that the email address is not for inquiries, but for entities that wish to be listed on the Alliance website. We should not create an interactive website because of the administrative support demand. The website is an information source to compel activity between or among interested parties. Suggested format for information:

NAME OF ENTITY  
 PERSON TO CONTACT  
 MAILING ADDRESS  
 EMAIL ADDRESS  
 NATURE OF INTEREST

### Support

The website will require a hosting fee, which can be managed for approximately \$500 (US). The individual who initially inputs the information will require a fee. The individual who updates the site listings each year will require a fee. An organization will need to be designated to provide this administration. CULCON seems the most logical choice.

### Notes

Please refer to the essay, “Theatre’s Role in Sustaining a Collaborative US-Japan Framework for Future Generations,” for contextualization of the proposed website vis-à-vis the bilateral US-Japan relationship.\*

\* [Excerpt] **THEATRE’S ROLE IN SUSTAINING A COLLABORATIVE US-JAPAN FRAMEWORK FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS**

**Delivered June 12, 2009, at CULCON Session III Looking Forward by Velina Hasu Houston, Ph.D.; Associate Dean of Faculty, Professor of Theatre School of Theatre, University of Southern California**

Theatre arts can play an important role in sustaining a collaborative framework for future generations in the US-Japan relationship.

Today US and Japan theatre exchange focuses largely on traditional forms such as Japanese Kabuki and Noh, US musical theatre, or Western modern or historical drama such as Shakespeare, Brecht, Pinter, and Miller. Range is not only limited, but also collaboration with most interchange occurring solely in when a presenting company visits a foreign nation. The result is a narrow perspective on the nature of theatre in each others' countries. When Americans think of Japanese theatre, they think chiefly of Kabuki and Noh. Japanese understanding of Western theatre is Euro-centric, pre-1970s, and more European than US.

Collaboration has to embrace a more contemporary, broader, and deeper understanding of theatre as well as a more integrated type of participation, particularly in terms of the subjects explored in contemporary plays.

Both nations' perspectives need to be broadened to include theatre that investigates life in the US and Japan as it exists now and in the latter part of the 20th century, including plays by and about the lives of women, minority groups, and new immigrants and that embrace subjects that have a critical impact on the future of both nations, especially cross-cultural relations. An example is US playwright Naomi Iizuka's play, 36 Views. Both nations could benefit greatly from plays that are transnational, that investigate aspects of the human condition that are both US and Japan in perspective.

Without forward-thinking artistic creation that investigates the US-Japan in a contemporary, transnational vein, it is more challenging to compel US, Japanese, or transnational US-Japan artists to collaborate or even investigate individually issues of global import.

We need more plays that explore the nexus of the US-Japan relationship and we need to encourage exchanges that expose each nation's society to such work.