

7/30/07

FINAL REPORT

To: Marcia White
Director of Program Development
Associated Colleges of the South
1975 Century Boulevard, Suite 10
Atlanta, GA 30345

Professor Dan Backlund and Professor Harold Goldberg want to thank you again for your generous grant allowing us to visit Japan this summer. Thanks to your support, we were able to visit several interesting historical and theatre sites, including Nagasaki (A-bomb peace park and site of the martyrdom of converts in the sixteenth century), a museum devoted to the Heike War between the Taira and Minamoto clans, two of the oldest kabuki theatres in the country (where we were able to visit backstage and view the machinery below the stage), and a bunraku performance in Osaka.

As we indicated in our grant proposal, we are in the process of creating a team-taught course on traditional Japanese history/theatre, and our in-person visit to these sites contributed to our understanding of the interaction between history and theatre and assisted our planning for the future. We always understood how complicated the relationship between history and theatre was in Japanese culture, but since our return and in our conversations about our experiences, we have come to appreciate even more the intricate relationship between history and theatre, especially in Japan. It is impossible to appreciate the development of Kabuki, Bunraku, and Noh without placing these art forms in the historical place and time that allowed them to develop. At the same time, the study of Japanese history without a discussion of the unique culture of Japan omits a crucial dimension of what makes Japanese art special and difficult for the westerner to grasp.

We want the class that we promised you to live up to your (and our) expectations. We are unwilling to rush this course and present less than a fully integrated and carefully planned class. We will be taking students to Japan in the summer of 2009. This preparation time will allow us to organize our class with the depth we feel necessary to assure a first-rate experience for our students. In addition, we are still developing the contacts with various theatre troupes in different parts of the country. This is not an easy enterprise in Japan, a society that often shelters its artistic traditions from foreigners. Finally, we want to choose carefully the historical sites essential to our visit and to the pedagogical concept we are developing.

In short, we want to fulfill our promise to you with the best class we can devise, and in order to do that we plan to use the time to develop our contacts, to make sure we choose carefully the theatre and historical sites we plan to visit, and to spend extensive time putting our history and theatre presentations together to create a seamless whole. We are sure that you will agree that this will be time well spent, as we look more closely at the historical sites in Tokyo, Kyoto, Nara, Osaka etc., and also use this time to assure the integration of those locales with the theatrical forms we want our students to understand and appreciate (Kabuki, Bunraku, etc.). We are looking forward to our experience with our students in the summer of 2009, and we expect a very positive report to you after the successful completion of that innovative course.

Once again, we want to thank you for your support. Our visit to Japan was extremely helpful toward our goal of an integrated history/theatre presentation. We look forward to taking our students to Japan. We hope to attain a level of integrated content that will make this class one of the most interesting and fulfilling our students have ever experienced. At the same time, we want to make sure that your money and faith in us has exceeded all expectations.

Thank you again for your support of this exciting new concept.

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Harold J. Goldberg
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CC: Dan Backlund