
Features of Japanese and Western Theater

Theater has been apart of history for many years and has had big influences. It is obvious that American and Japanese culture are very different. Where there are differences there are also some similarities that might be surprising. The one thing about theater that is so great is the diversity and bring something great to life. Two very different countries that have completely different views is exciting to learn about.

In earlier Japanese theater the actors would perform on temporary stages, temples, and many that took place outdoors. During the traditional years physical stages were almost never used. People had to carry around props and have portable stages that could be switched out for different plays. They mostly had to rely on the scenery that had the effects of the play. In that day and age it was completely different then what it is today. Today Japan doesn't only show traditional plays but also western plays as well, and make live plays out of popular TV series. It is really interesting that Japan makes anime into live shows such as Naruto, it was a good idea on their part and it is a much watched show. Anime is extremely popular not only in Japan but also in other countries, so it really is a good tourist attraction.

Costumes and makeup are very important in Japanese theater, which the actors apply themselves to help fit into their characters. They would apply white paint on the face for a dramatic effect and then colored or black lines drawn around the eyes and mouth. Makeup is different for men and women because the lines were drawn by certain facial muscles. Each color used had its own meaning for being sad or happy, such as blue was sadness and pink was happiness. Wigs were also worn to show age as well as social status of the characters. As for clothing it was pretty simple such as: odachi which is a broadsword, Osuo is clothing with many layers, Janome-gasa was a oiled paper umbrella with bamboo framework, hachimaki is a headband, wakizashi is a short sword, and kuroko are invisible stagehands dressed in black to assist actors. The makeup in Japanese theater is really basic and to some can seem unusual because it is something some have not seen before. It really seems like clown makeup in some ways with all of the colors but it draws the attention and is very striking. In some ways the makeup designs are also creative and artistic because they are symmetrical.

Western Theater has changed and evolved over the years to give us the best experience. Western traditional theater began in ancient Greece. The actual set design as we think of it now was minimal. For the most part, the actors' voices, music and dance carried the story. Over many years after the fact early stage sets began using portable – banners, structures built on wagons – but later props included sophisticated stage machines allowing ships to sail and sea-storms to sink them. In today's theater there are many different technologies that are used to

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make a great show. Lighting, sound systems, projectors, and backdrops all are very essential in today's entertainment. It has evolved so much over the years and will continue to grow and make much more new technology to use in the future. You know it is really exciting to see what else can be created to make a theater experience even more enjoyable.

Costume design has a very long history. The ancient Greek created specific costumes for actors to wear when performing tragedies. In the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, scenery and costumes became increasingly important elements of stage plays. In Shakespeare's time, people performed in contemporary dress. In his own company, Shakespeare's performers provided their own costumes. In the 16th century, some traveling theatrical troupes performed a style of theater called commedia dell'arte. It had costumes, such as the serving girl, the doctor, and the harlequin. In modern theater you can wear just about anything and everything. We have so many different styles of clothes now than we did back in the early days of theater. Through the years it will continuously change and people will even form new costumes and looks.

Makeup used to be very dangerous and toxic back in earlier years where they would use white lead paint. The amount of makeup used was also very excessive and seemed to be cake like. Over the years it has improved products safety on skin and some now a days are even edible. Depending on the role being played makeup is used in so many different ways. One including latex skin and liquid latex used for the more scary and bloody effect. With this sort of makeup we can make faces look like anything that we want. The improvement and constant changes in makeup is really extraordinary because it can transform a person into someone completely different.

This topic was very interesting because it gave a better understanding of what it was really like. It was chosen because Japanese theater was not explained enough and helped to learn more information on the history of what it was. The one thing that was great was the way the Japanese used their makeup colors to represent feelings and characters. Another great point was how makeup was toxic and not safe to use. Reading and researching the topic gave an understanding and appreciation for theater and made it more interesting. Both Japanese and western theater had many of the same tactics for set design and some different approaches with makeup. The Japanese use more traditional makeup and performances, whereas western is more modern and new. Either way both are entertaining and seem to be continuing to grow and change. Cannot wait to see what they come up with in the next generation of playwrights and actors.

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