

Kansha

An Exploration of Cultural Appreciation Through Dramatic Process

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The Inspiration

In 2015, The Japan Times released an article titled: “Of Kimono and Cultural Appropriation” by Shaun O’Dwyer. The article caught my eye immediately as it discusses the importance of the kimono in Japanese culture and how Japanese people want to share their culture. Often when the topic of cultural appropriation comes up in conversation, the tone becomes tense and aggressive. I wanted to approach a theatrical project the viewpoint of appreciation. Since clothing is an important indicator of culture, the kimono became the lens to look at Japan’s cultural history and its connection with Western culture. The idea to turn this article into a performance began in February 2018.

Building the Team

I brought together a diverse group from within the University of Victoria Theatre Department and members of the Victoria community in collaboration with the Victoria Nikkei Cultural Society and Uminari Taiko. When creating the team, I was looking for individuals who were curious, creative, and passionate about the subject matter.



Image 1. (1)

The Creative Process

Kansha is a devised performance, meaning that the cast, crew and facilitator (me) worked together to create the script from scratch. The ideas mainly stemmed from the Shaun O’Dwyer article, as well as other academic articles, videos, and some of my own personal family history, which includes the use of family names. It was important to have a personal element in the performance as it was dedicated to my late grandmother, Mieko Kawano, who passed away in September 2018, right as we began to create the performance. The script was created over a two month period.



Image 1. (2)



Image 2. (2)

Performances

Kansha was initially performed at Intrepid Theatre on November 2 and 3, 2018 as a part of Intrepid Theatre’s YOU Show series, which is focused on giving opportunities to new theatre artists. After the initial run, *Kansha* had a remount performance at the University Club on November 29, 2018 and at the University of Victoria in the Barbara McIntyre Studio on December 5, 2018. In total, *Kansha* had six performances. The play focused on the journey of Mariko Kawano as she learns to appreciate her culture with the help from a group of spirits from different periods in Japanese history.



Image 1. (3)



Image 4. (1)

Why is Kansha important in Victoria?

Kansha is the Japanese word for appreciation. I wanted to create this play to connect with Victoria’s Japanese community and give them representation that they are not typically given in Victoria’s theatre community. I brought my love for my own culture and for the theatre together, which I hope to do more in the future.

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- More credits provided in the program

References/Acknowledgements

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