

**DRUMMING FOR THE MOUSE: *KUMIDAIKO* AND THE EXHIBITION OF “JAPAN”
AT WALT DISNEY WORLD**

by

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Performing at Walt Disney World as often as six times a day, seven days a week, the *kumidaiko* group Maturiza has the unique opportunity to expose thousands of people per day to the world of Japanese taiko. Simultaneously, the group serves as an ambassador of sorts for Japan, representing the country within a section of the Epcot theme park known as World Showcase. Their performance space is the Japan pavilion, part of a modern day World's Fair that seeks to introduce tourists to various cultures from around the world.

Maturiza's participation in Disney's World's Fair is not without its consequences, however. The group must grapple with issues of commoditization, authenticity, and representation in Walt Disney World that have long caught the eyes of scholars. At the same time, the group must deal with the expectations of the tourists that have come to Epcot, expectations that are fueled in part by the atmosphere created by the Walt Disney Company.

Due to this confluence of issues, *kumidaiko* at Walt Disney World as performed by Maturiza is a reified art form, static and unchanging. Taiko is discussed by group members using a discourse that adheres to the sense of Japan created within the pavilion, and repertoire and performance practice are modified so as to not disrupt the atmosphere that has been created. Even as *kumidaiko* continues to grow and evolve outside of Epcot's borders, within the theme park it is simply another exhibit on display for the paying tourist in the museum of culture that is World Showcase.

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PREFACE

Included with this thesis is a video file of the performance described in the ethnography. All timing marks within the thesis are from the beginning of the video.

All Japanese names are written in Western order; that is, Personal Name followed by Family Name.

All pictures contained within were taken by me unless otherwise noted.

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1.0 ENTERING THE WORLD

The deep sound of drums resonated from across the lagoon, standing out even amongst the chatter of the people that surrounded me. As I walked down the path that ran alongside the water, the sound gradually got louder. Eventually, I saw the large *torii* gate that sat at the edge of the lagoon, standing watch over the area. Nearby, the top of a multi-storied building peeked out from above the tall trees; as more of the structure was revealed, I recognized it as a pagoda. Each of its five levels had its own roof; a pole sat on the top roof, its bottom half surrounded by metal rings and the top by a tree-like structure. The blue tile of the roofs stood out against the evergreen of the surrounding trees.

A group of people was gathered in front of a series of steps that led to the first level of the pagoda; as I joined them, I finally saw the source of the drum sounds. There, on the first level of the structure, two performers were playing a drum resting on a tall stand. The skin heads on each side of the drum was partially painted red, combining with the white color of the skin to form a teardrop-like pattern. The drum, also painted red, contrasted with the brown wood in front of which it is set.

Each performer held drumsticks that were nearly as long and as thick as their arms. They drew the sticks back behind their heads before whipping them forward to strike the drum. Each stroke seemed to require enormous effort, yet the players' motions got faster and faster still. When they stopped, the sound of the drum continued to reverberate in the small area

encompassed by wooden structures that I found myself in. After a few seconds, I began to applaud along with the rest of the people gathered to watch this performance. The drummers turned to face the audience, bowed, then walked out of sight around the side of the pagoda.

I took a moment to observe my surroundings. A waterfall flowed down into a small pond, where a number of people were gathered. Joining them, I saw a number of large fish – *koi* – lazily swimming around in the water. A woman beside me was idly snacking on pieces of chicken teriyaki skewered on a stick.

The above scene would not be out of place at any number of shrines or temples in Japan, where drumming often is a major part of festivals (*matsuri*). The *torii* gate often marks off the sacred space in which these festivals take place, while the pagoda is a staple of Buddhist architecture. Food is often a vital part of the festival experience as well; rare is the *matsuri* that does not play host to a variety of food booths. However, the scene just described takes place not in Japan but in the United States; more specifically, it occurs just outside Orlando, Florida, in an area once covered by swamplands. The pagoda and other structures are buildings reproduced in the Japanese style, designed by American architects. Even the lagoon in which the *torii* has been placed is man-made.

This is the Epcot theme park, part of the Walt Disney World resort. Here, Japanese taiko drumming is performed as often as six times a day, seven days a week, for tourists who pay as up to \$75 to enter the theme park. The performances, put on by a group named Maturiza, take place at the Japan pavilion, part of a section of the theme park known as World Showcase. Within World Showcase, park guests (as the Walt Disney Company calls tourists within the resort) are invited to “take a miniaturized trip around the world in three hours” (Beard 1982:134). Modeled after the World’s Fairs of the early 20th Century, it is a space that, in the words of Disney

employees, “presents the people, places, and cultures that make our world special” (Wright 2006:75).

In order to convey the feeling to park guests that they are indeed visiting these places, the Walt Disney Company must present a convincing recreation of the eleven countries that make up World Showcase. This is accomplished through a variety of means, beginning with the architecture used within each pavilion that is chosen in part for its familiarity to tourists. A recreation of the Eiffel Tower looms behind the France pavilion, while the main structure in the Mexico pavilion is a recreated Aztec pyramid. The environment is then enhanced through the staffing of each pavilion with employees from the represented country; often, these employees are college students working in the United States for a year. Shops and restaurants help to add to the overall atmosphere, offering recognizable food and consumer goods for tourists to purchase.

A component that is often ignored by tourists and scholars alike, but is just as important in the creation of a sense of place in World Showcase, is music. Music is always playing in the Disney theme parks; Charles Carson divides it into three separate categories:

“1) ‘‘piped in’’ background music (in the form of themed ‘area’ music, but also the theme music for individual rides and attractions); 2) live music (including music performed by roving musicians, as well as certain live music performances on stage); and 3) pre-recorded performances which may or may not include a live element (such as parades, character-based shows, filmed attractions or ‘special effect’ shows)” (Carson 2004:229)

All three are present in the World Showcase. Music can be heard being projected from speakers both hidden and in plain sight almost everywhere in the area, reflecting the area that tourists find themselves in. Mariachi music can be heard in the Mexico pavilion, polkas in the Germany pavilion, the sound of the bamboo flute and *koto* in the Japan pavilion. Speakers are placed in such a manner that the music rarely overlaps; in that way, the musical settings remain

distinct. Most pavilions have live performers as well, supplementing the background music. Additionally, the rides or attractions in the pavilions – with movies being the dominant type – often have an accompanying soundtrack. When Laudan Nooshin commented in her article on the popular ride “It’s a Small World” (found in the Magic Kingdom theme park) that “the Disney experience... is saturated with music,” she was not exaggerating (Nooshin 2004:243).

Amongst the performing groups in World Showcase, Maturiza consistently draw one of the largest crowds. Beyond the difference in crowd size, however, the taiko drumming at the Japan pavilion stands out for a number of reasons. It is one of the few performing arts in World Showcase that can be seen without actually entering a pavilion. The pagoda where Maturiza performs sits alongside the walkway surrounding the World Showcase lagoon; you must pass it in order to go to one of the pavilions adjacent to the Japan pavilion. Other performances, such as ones by a performer playing the *zheng* in the China pavilion and a polka band in the Germany pavilion, require visitors to enter a building in the pavilion if they wish to watch the show. By being visible to anyone who passes by the Japan pavilion, Maturiza serves as a vehicle used to draw people into the pavilion while also introducing tourists to an aspect of Japanese culture.

Furthermore, Maturiza attempts to educate tourists about taiko. Other groups, such as those in the United Kingdom and Germany pavilions, do not have the educational role that Maturiza fulfills, and exist as simple entertainment. During each performance a member of Maturiza speaks to the audience, telling them about the type of music they are performing and the role it plays within Japanese culture.

Indeed, the purpose of having taiko in the Japan pavilion is more than just serving as mere entertainment. For Disney, the experience of watching Maturiza is as crucial as architecture or dining to reinforcing the atmosphere it has created. World Showcase is designed

as a place where tourists can interact with people from other countries; musical performances offer park visitors one of the only chances to see park employees performing an art native to their country.

However, the performances by Maturiza have not been without consequence. In this thesis, I shall demonstrate how the venue in which Maturiza performs has created a particular mode of audience expectation, one that has in turn influenced the performance practices of the group. Following a survey of the history of Walt Disney World – specifically, Epcot and World Showcase – and scholastic response to its development, I will examine the space in which Maturiza performs. A description of a typical performance by the group will then be provided. Finally, I will examine how the space in which the group performs, along with modes of audience expectations built up by this space, has affected its performances.

The taiko drumming performed at Epcot has become a reified performance art. Performing the same music in the same way day after day, even as the group seeks to broaden the definition of taiko in performances outside the theme park, Maturiza has become little more than another cultural artifact put on display in World Showcase

1.1 METHODOLOGY

This thesis draws upon ethnographic research conducted during a series of trips to Walt Disney World in December 2007 and May 2008. Twelve performances were documented using audio and video recordings during one day in December and two days in May.¹ I reached out to

¹ A list of performance days and times is available in Appendix A.

both Maturiza and the Walt Disney Company during the writing of this thesis but received no response. As a result, this thesis is based solely upon my own observations and conclusions, with no input from the performers or from those responsible for the creation and maintenance of the Epcot theme park.

No single source or approach has guided the theoretical framework utilized in my research; rather, I have drawn upon a wide variety of writings on Walt Disney World, taiko, and on a broader level museum exhibition. Sources from the fields of ethnomusicology, anthropology, sociology, and performance studies have all contributed to the arguments I set forth in this work. In this manner, this thesis will contribute to the academic discourse related to repeated performances at events such as World's Fairs and cultural festivals. It also contributes to the greater discourse concerning the relationship between music and tourism.

Despite the continuing scholastic interest in Walt Disney World, however, the use of music within the parks has generally not been studied. A 2004 issue of *Ethnomusicology Forum* contained two articles on music within the parks (Carson 2004, Nooshin 2004), but that was the first and last time that such studies been published. Thus, this study shall contribute to the greater academic discourse surrounding the Disney theme parks, illuminating the manner in which music is used in the parks while also highlighting the effect that performing in such a venue has on the performance practices of an art form such as Japanese taiko drumming.

2.0 SURVEYING THE WORLD: EPCOT AND WORLD SHOWCASE

The origins of Epcot lay in the final project of Walt Disney. In the 1960s, he sought new land to develop a theme park more ambitious than his Disneyland, eventually settling on a large tract of swamps and woodlands outside Orlando, Florida. However, he was looking to do more than just build another Disneyland. The heart of what Disney would create in Florida, at what he referred to at the time as ‘the Florida Project,’ was a model city for the future, a place where the Walt Disney Company and partner companies would join together to create “a showcase for the world of the ingenuity and imagination of American free enterprise” (Beard 1982:13). This showcase would be called EPCOT, an acronym for Experimental Prototype Community Of Tomorrow. Here, said Disney, people would live, work, and play in a state-of-the-art city that would be constantly evolving, always testing new technologies and ideas while simultaneously demonstrating them to the tourists who would come to visit this innovative realm.

When Disney died in 1966, however, the Walt Disney Company was left without a driving vision to direct the development of its new venture. Nevertheless, it continued with the Florida Project, naming it Walt Disney World. Construction began with what amounted to an improved copy of Disneyland, christened the Magic Kingdom. When the resort opened in 1971, The Magic Kingdom – along with a number of Disney-owned and operated hotels – would be the only thing present on the nearly 27,000 acres purchased by the company.

Walt Disney World quickly became the most popular tourist attraction in the world, drawing as many as 13.1 million visitors per year to the Magic Kingdom (Koenig 2007:177). Still, the EPCOT project loomed over the company. David Koenig writes that “in interview after interview, press conference, after press conference, Disney executives continued to be hounded by the question, ‘But what about EPCOT?’” (Koenig 2007:157). In 1974, executives decided to proceed with the venture, although in a much different fashion than what Walt Disney had envisioned. Another theme park was constructed, one that somewhat embodied the ideals Disney had espoused for his community of tomorrow. EPCOT Center, as the new park was called, was described as:

“...a permanent world’s fair of imagination, discovery, education, and exploration that combines the Disney entertainment and communications skills with the knowledge and predictions for the future of authorities from industry, the academic world, and the professions.” (Beard 1982:28)

It was divided into two sections: Future World, where corporation-sponsored pavilions would educate visitors about various themes – from the power of imagination to the practical application of solar power – and World Showcase, described as “the establishment of a true community of nations at Epcot Center” (Beard 1982:135).

When the park opened in 1982, there were nine countries participating in World Showcase: Mexico, China, Germany, Italy, Japan, France, the United Kingdom, Canada, and the United States. Eventually, Norway and Morocco would join the group. The governments of the countries have been to varying degrees involved in the pavilions’ construction and maintenance. The King of Morocco sent craftsmen to “work on site with the Imagineers to generate the hundreds of thousands of square feet of carved stone and tile work required to give the place the appropriate finish” (Wright 2006:108). However, this degree of involvement is the exception

rather than the norm; indeed, as the years have passed governments have taken less of a role in the activities of the pavilions.²

The 11 pavilions are built around a man-made lagoon in the center of World Showcase, directly opposite of Future World. (Figure 1).

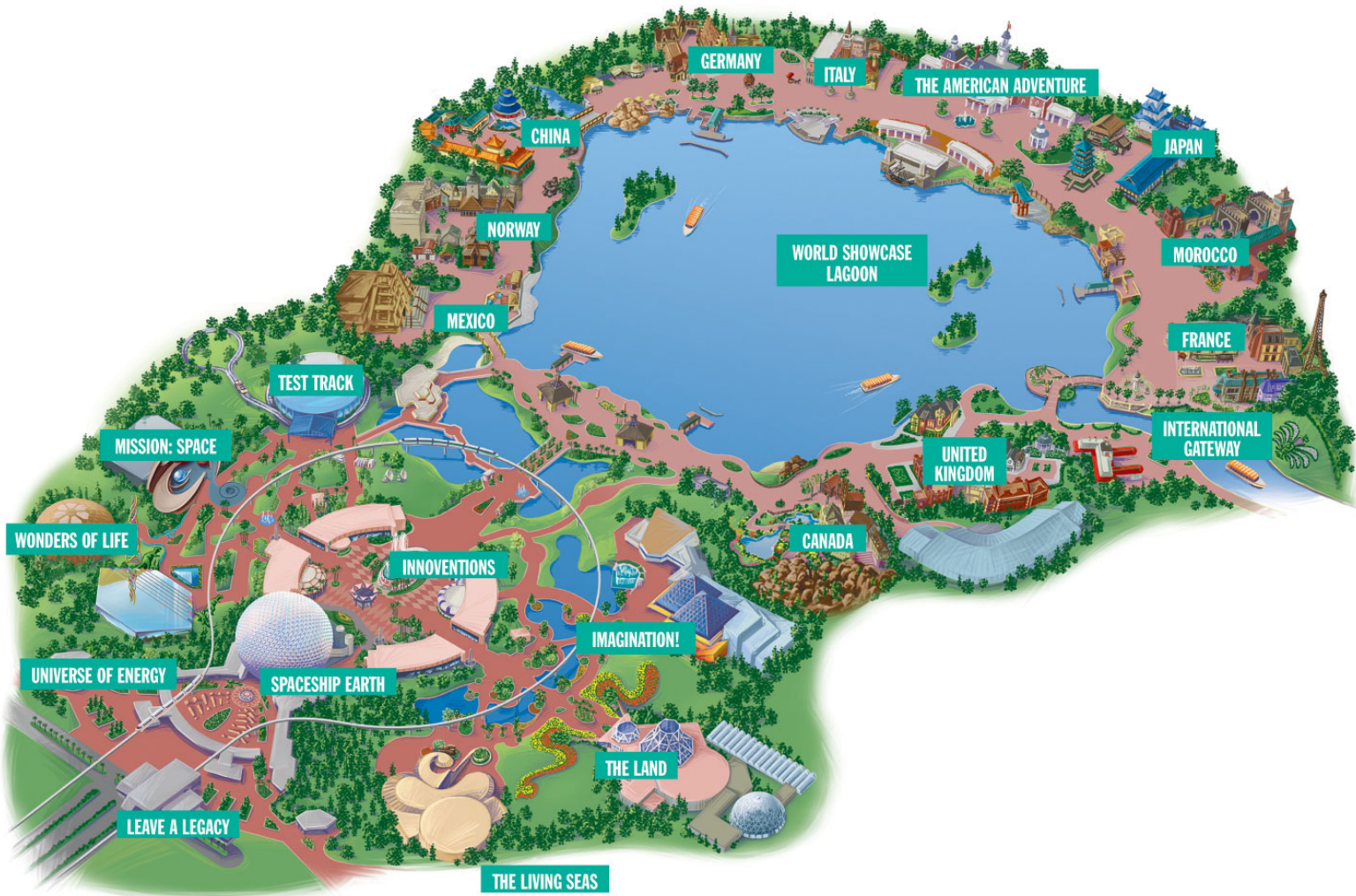


Figure 1. Epcot map (©The Walt Disney Company)

² In the case of the Norway pavilion, Norwegian investors in the pavilion sold their stake to Disney in 1992. Official involvement continued for several years, with the Norwegian government making annual contributions, but these stopped in 2002. <http://www.norway.org/News/archive/2004/200404epcot.htm> (accessed March 29, 2009)

Disney employees describe the design process of the pavilions as such:

“...the exterior architecture uses a very specific stylistic attitude as a unifying factor. Besides choosing iconic landmarks that are instantly recognizable in the ‘long shot,’ we also limit ourselves to national vernacular building facades in the accompanying streetscapes” (Wright 2006:77).

The goal, they describe, is to evoke “the emotion and the sense one gets from a place rather than building exact replicas”(Wright 2006:77).

Buildings within the pavilions house shops and restaurants. The Mexico and Norway pavilions also have rides which highlight the countries’ histories and cultures, similar in design to those found in Future World and the other theme parks at Walt Disney World. Other pavilions have movies, covering similar topics as the rides, shown within large theaters. Not all pavilions have attractions such as these, however; the Japan pavilion is one of several lacking such a draw.

According to the Imagineers, the Walt Disney Company’s corps of designers who are responsible for designing its theme parks, “World Showcase was planned as a place where nations and people from around the world would gather to interact with each other, to learn about one another, and to build a common language of experiences” (Wright 2006:76). Tourists interact with street performers and employees from the represented countries signs explaining the history and cultural significance of each building are planted through the pavilions, and the rides and movies are designed to teach visitors about an aspect of the represented countries that they may not have been aware of prior to visiting to Epcot.

However, this educational perspective has at times caused a small identity crisis for the park. Visitors are encouraged to have fun and learn something at the same time, but the two concepts do not always coexist easily. Park guests have at times disdained the educational approach taken in Epcot; quite often, their disapproval has taken the form of a lack of attendance

in certain venues. This crowd reaction to a “lack of fun” forced Disney to make changes. Little by little, the educational outlook of the park has been downplayed in favor of entertainment, particularly in Future World. In Future World, old rides and movies – even entire pavilions – have been modified or outright replaced to be more entertaining and less didactic. The new pavilions contain thrill rides similar to what can be found in other parks; they still center on a particular theme, such as space exploration, but the educational value has been lessened.

World Showcase, however, has not received the same treatment. The last pavilion was installed in 1988; since then, any changes to the area have been mostly cosmetic. Any ride/attraction changes that have been made do not affect the status quo of the pavilion. The current ride in the Mexico pavilion was installed in 2007, but it integrated much of the ride mechanics it replaced; only an updated sound system and new movie screens were installed, used to reflect the new theme featuring the Three Caballeros, characters from the 1944 Disney film.³ Similarly, new films have been made for the China and Canada pavilions, but they follow the themes of the original films and utilize the same projection system. World Showcase remains essentially the same as it was when the theme park opened in 1982, when a top Disney executive described it as “a permanent international people-to-people exchange” (Beard 1982:29).⁴

The movies and other attractions of World Showcase are less kid-friendly than what is found in the other half of the park, while pavilion shops and restaurants do not contain very many items that would appeal to children. Consequently, the area’s offerings tend to cater to an older audience. This is evident whenever one wanders through World Showcase; in my time

³ The new Mexico ride, less educational than its predecessor, may suggest an effort to move in a less didactic-direction, but to this point no further changes have been made in World Showcase, so it cannot be determined if a broader change in philosophy is forthcoming.

⁴ The reasons for these changes are rarely given. In the case of the new movie for the Canada pavilion, however, the new movie was filmed after the Canadian Tourism Commission lobbied to have the movie updated in an attempt to remove outdated stereotypes (Atherton 2007).

spent both in the Japan pavilion and in other pavilions, I observed that the average age of those around me was much higher than in Future World.

Additionally, I observed that the primary draws within each pavilion were not the rides or movies, but the shops and restaurants. In my experience, supported by the reports of Epcot visitors on fan websites, the lines for rides in World Showcase were never very long, nor were the movie theaters ever more than halfway full.⁵ The restaurants and shops, on the other hand, were often quite busy. This behavior suggests that the educational function promoted by the Walt Disney Company is not necessarily the primary focus of park guests when they visit the pavilions. Rather their interests lay with dining or buying a souvenir.

With its duality of entertainment and education, along with its purported mission of promoting understanding, World Showcase is an intriguing site for research, one that has attracted the attention of many scholars. A number of perspectives have been brought to focus within the academic discourse about Epcot. Scholars have illuminated the manner in which history and geography are presented in a mishmash fashion that caters to the consumerism that dominates the ideology of Walt Disney World. Simultaneously, they have drawn heavily upon the study of museum exhibitions, showing similarities between what is found in museums and what is shown in World Showcase. Combined, these perspectives have revealed much about how countries are represented – or rather, exhibited – within the World Showcase section of Epcot.

⁵ Such was the case even during my visit during the two weeks before Christmas, some of the busiest times of year at Walt Disney World.

3.0 CRITIQUING THE WORLD: CONSUMERISM, ‘DISTORY,’ ‘DEOGRAPHY,’ AND THE EXHIBITION OF CULTURE

The theme parks of the Walt Disney Company have been a subject for scholastic discussion since their opening, drawing both praise and scorn. Louis Marin in a 1973 essay called Disneyland a degenerate utopia where visitors are drawn unknowingly into a fantasy world; within its boundaries, tourists are “subjected to a kind of semantic ideological neurosis” (Negley 1977:319). Umberto Eco drew upon Marin’s ideas in his 1975 essay “Travels in Hyperreality.” He saw Disneyland, and by extension Disney World, as a “fake city,” where “within its magic enclosure it is fantasy that is absolutely reproduced” (Eco 1986:40, 43). Disneyland is described as “the quintessence of consumer ideology,” where “what is falsified is our will to buy, which we take as real” (Eco 1986:43).

To Eco, visiting a Disney theme park has for the tourist the consequences of “leaving his own humanity, consigning himself to another power, abandoning his own will” within a realm of ‘total passivity’ (Eco 1986:48). He does not blame intellectuals for not wanting to go there or to Disney World; the Florida Project, in Eco’s opinion, is even worse, as it “presents itself as a model of an urban agglomerate of the future” (Eco 1986:47). To Eco and Marin, the tourist has the ideology of Disney parks forced upon them without their knowledge, an ideology in which fantasy and fun hide an underlying current of consumerism and merchandise; Eco phrases it as “you buy obsessively, believing you are still playing”(Eco 1986:43)

However, I would argue that the consumer is quite aware their actions and their participation in the Walt Disney Company's fantasy/consumerist world. It is the tourist's choice to visit Walt Disney World; by doing so, he or she agrees to temporarily conform to Disney's rules, but they do not have to necessarily give up free will or are tricked into doing something. Certainly they are participating in the consumerism that pervades the parks, but that does not mean they do so unknowingly or unconditionally. When I would walk through the parks during my research period, not everyone I would see was happy and was satisfied with their experience. It is not uncommon to hear as much, if not more, complaining than expressions of pleasure when visiting Walt Disney World. If tourists were buying into the Disney "ideology" without question, as Marin and Eco believed, then it would not be expected to hear constant complaining and doubting of the world while they are within it.⁶

Still, Eco's emphasis on consumerism has merit, and it has been echoed by other scholars. Elting Morison's 1983 article "What Went Wrong with Disney's Worlds Fair," published less than a year after the opening of Epcot, praises much of the effort done by the Walt Disney Company in the construction of the park but also recognizes the effect of consumerism within its boundaries. Morison praises the educational nature of the pavilions and the ideals that they attempt to uphold; at the same time, however, he questions the manner in which the messages are presented to the tourist. Morison He out several lapses in logic in the pavilion presentations – for example, a general atmosphere in which "what happened in the past is understood to be a fairly funny," along with curious absences in discussions of energy (atomic power) and transportation (steam power) (Morison 1983). These lapses are attributed to either "the difficulty of establishing a reasonable balance in any large-scale presentation" or, from a less idealistic perspective, "the

⁶ Still, they DO buy merchandise as they play, so there is some truth in Eco and Marin's claims. Where brainwashing ends and free will begins, however, is not easily discovered.

special interest of WED Enterprises and those corporations that joined it in this exercise” (Morison 1983).

Certainly it is hard to avoid the corporate presence in Epcot. The corporate logo of each sponsor is prominent on pavilion signs and ride signs (for those rides with individual sponsors). In other parks in Walt Disney World such an act may not be as much an issue, but Epcot’s endeavor to be an educational site results in the need for more scrutiny. Has corporate involvement affected what is presented to tourists? It is not outside the realm of possibility. Nevertheless, in his article Morison was upbeat and confident about the direction that the park was taking at the time, believing in its message even as he hesitated to accept the manner in which it is presented. In the time since Epcot’s opening, however, other scholars have not been as kind.

3.1 EPCOT’S HISTORY AND GEOGRAPHY LESSONS

Since the opening of Epcot, scholars have gone even deeper in their critique of the messages found within the park’s boundaries, proceeding from the generalized observations of their predecessors to addressing more specific issues. One such subject is the content of the lessons being taught to tourists in the semi-educational realm of Epcot. Historian Mike Wallace sees in the Disney parks an example of “the growing world of commercialized history,” where

“the past gets presented to popular audiences more by commercial operators pursuing profit than by museums bent on education” (Wallace 1996:135).⁷ He portrays it in the following manner:

“Corporate desire to fudge the past combined with Disney's ability to spruce it up promotes a sense of history as a pleasantly nostalgic memory, now so completely transcended by the modern corporate order as to be irrelevant to contemporary life. (Wallace 1996:149)

What results is called “historicide” by Wallace. The view of history as presented in Epcot, he writes, “defuses the danger inherent in the intrusion of “real” history by redeploying it within a vision of an imperfect but still inevitable progress”(Wallace 1996:153).⁸

William van Wert further characterizes the repression that Wallace addresses as having removed “the shame, vitality, and all traces of race-class-gender-sexuality of a more accurate history” (van Wert 1996:213). The end result is:

“...a master narrative that seems contentless... but in fact serves as voice dreck, a balm to numb the thinking mind, an invitation to accept the replacement of real figures and history with puppetry, holography, and simulacra, and, finally, an invitation to ride passively into the future with nothing to do but be swarmed with progress fed to us by big corporations, whose motives are never questioned” (van Wert 1996:189).

Wallace and van Wert focused their attention on the American Adventure pavilion in World Showcase, where a large-scale Audio-Animatronic show summarizes American history for the tourist – conveniently leaving out a number of more controversial periods of American history, such as the treatment of Native Americans and the Civil Rights Movement – but these

⁷ Wallace is not necessarily saying in this article that commerce and education cannot coexist – he is simply looking to spur historians and museum operators to take a closer look at their competitors, while simultaneously musing about the possible effects of such developments.

⁸ Wallace’s use of the term ““real” history,” may be problematic, but I do not believe he is saying there is a single history that applies to all. He is well aware that the writing of history is a selective process – he just wishes for more of what happened to be included in the process, regardless of how uncomfortable it may make people feel.

observations can be applied to all of World Showcase. Each pavilion takes a selective approach to deciding what aspects of their countries to present to the tourist. This affects all aspects of the pavilions' design, from architecture to live entertainment.

The selective presentation of history is not something that is unique to Walt Disney World. Wilton Corkern highlights the manner in which so-called "heritage tourism" skirts the truth; instead of presenting "a version of history that is dirty or controversial," one that might "challenge the conventional wisdom," what is presented is "pabulum, based more or less (usually less) on history" (Corkern 2004:10). He suggests that the three major sources of historical information for the American public are movies, theme parks, and heritage sites. What heritage sites do that separate themselves from the other two sources is present their materials as authentic. They "reinforce the popular notion of history more often than they correct it." (Corkern 2004:13).

World Showcase exists somewhere in between these three sources. It is part of a theme park, constructed in a manner similar to the techniques used in movies, and seeks to present itself as authentic through the reconstruction of actual buildings, employment of college students from the represented countries within the pavilions, and the display of folk art. Still, Epcot is first and foremost a theme park, meant to entertain. And yet, as long as Epcot continues to hold on to the ideals espoused at its founding, in which World Showcase in particular was declared to be a site where people would come to learn about each other, than it is not without merit to examine those lessons that are being taught. What is presented to tourists will affect how tourists think about the cultures they encounter. If all that tourists find at World Showcase is, in the words of Keith Hollinshead, "quaint people talking quaint languages and living quaint existences," then that is

what they might expect to find should they visit of the represented countries (Hollinshead 1998:103).

The views of scholars like Eco and Wallace were incorporated in a 1992 book by the anthropologist Stephen Fjellman entitled *Vinyl Leaves: Walt Disney World and America*. In this study, Fjellman recognizes the consumerism that pervades all aspects of the resort, seeing not only history but all aspects of culture as having been commoditized. Everything, particularly in Future World, exists to present “a rhetorical metastory of corporate ideology” that tells the tourist that “the past was zany,...the present is terrific,...the future... is full of challenges” that can be solved if “‘we’ (the people) place ourselves in ‘our’ (the corporations) hands” (Fjellman 1992:14). For the most part, writes Fjellman, it is continuation reflection of a general shift in the 20th Century, as the market moved from one of production to one of consumption. What separates Walt Disney World as a site for analyzing this process is the degree to which it occurs – it incorporates every aspect of life within the theme park. In World Showcase, this process involves “a delighted acceptance of cognitive and sensory overload,” in which tourists pass “one brilliant simulation of a sacred sight after another – each fronting for the commercial activities behind it” (Fjellman 1992:223).

Fjellman refers to the layout of World Showcase, both within each pavilion and within the area as a whole, as “real fake geography.” (Fjellman 1992:232) It is a geography that is highly cultural and commercial, created by a compromise between “Disney conceptions and those of the participating countries and foreign corporations” (Fjellman 1992:232). Keith Hollinshead calls this selective presentation of geography “deography,” borrowing from Fjellman’s use of the term “distory” to describe history as presented by Disney.

What tourists encounter is “a depiction of the ‘spirit’ of those nations, built of symbols recognizable to most visitors” (Fjellman 1992:232). Consequently:

“Many of the pavilions in World Showcase represent other times as well as other places. The countries are depicted in a truncated, idealized fashion. For many pavilions, the icons of idealization are those of the past. Yet these idealizations and icons are precisely the distilled versions of cultural geography the participating countries highlight in the interest of their own tourist trades.” (Fjellman 1992:233)

Indeed, the past is very important in Epcot. In Future World, rides often take the form of a travel through time to show the tourist the (technological) direction from which we have come. Meanwhile, the presentation of each country in World Showcase utilizes recreated ‘icons of idealization’ from these countries’ past. For the United Kingdom, it is Victorian England; Norway, the era of the Viking. This, in turn, affects employees and performers within these pavilions, as they must fit within this presentation. How this plays out in the Japan pavilion in particular shall be discussed later in this thesis.

3.2 WORLD SHOWCASE AS MUSEUM

While writers like Wallace and Fjellman have examined the individual history and geography lessons presented at World Showcase, others have chosen to study the presentation of these lessons as a whole; in the process, they have drawn many comparisons between World Showcase and museums. Corinne Kratz and Ivan Karp observe that museums “control audience behavior for specific purposes in carefully designed settings” (Kratz and Karp 1993:33). This is no different, they suggest, than what Disney does within its theme parks – all experiences are

carefully planned and controlled by the operators of the parks, so that the unexpected (to the operator, not to the tourist) is kept to a minimum. Such an observation hearkens back to Marin and Eco, who question the manner in which park visitors are being “controlled.” But while Marin and Eco were concerned about ideology and thought, Kratz and Karp frame this control within the realm of tourist actions. Theirs is a valid claim, especially considering that once the tourist has entered the walls of the theme park their choice of activities is entirely determined by the Walt Disney Company; furthermore, each action is meant to evoke a particular response, whether it is fear on a thrill ride or a feeling of nostalgia when riding a ride tribute to the greatest movies of Hollywood’s history.

Kratz and Karp characterize World Showcase as a place where “the ‘past’ is packaged in a manner that allows it to be experienced in the short compass of a tourist trip or museum visit” (Kratz and Karp 1993:35). Each “uses conventions that evoke different museum genres, quoting museums of culture history, art, and ethnography” (Kratz and Karp 1993:37). Additionally, they point out that certain pavilions have mini-museums with small exhibitions.⁹ The end result is a site where “a museum aura is appropriated into Disney’s own blend of cultural authority” (Kratz and Karp 1993:39).

Feelings of resonance and wonder are meant to be evoked as a tourist moves through the pavilions, terms that Kratz and Karp borrowed from Stephen Greenblatt. Greenblatt originally developed these concepts in connection to literary theory, but saw them as being applicable to a wide variety of disciplines. He defines “resonance” as:

“the power of a displayed object to reach out beyond its formal boundaries to a larger world, to evoke in the viewer the complex, dynamic cultural forces from

⁹ The Japan pavilion is one of such pavilions, with a rotating display hosted in one of the buildings.

which it has emerged and for which it may be taken by a viewer to stand”
(Greenblatt 1991:42).

Meanwhile, “wonder” is defined as:

“the power of the displayed object to stop the viewer in his or her tracks, to convey an arresting sense of uniqueness, to evoke an exalted attention”
(Greenblatt 1991:42).

Kratz and Karp apply these terms to World Showcase, showing how Disney multiplies modes and experiences of resonance and condenses them into a single place, thus appropriating the authority of a museum. The sense of wonder, in particular, is one “associated with the achievements of other cultures and other times, wonder associated with the presence of authentic objects” (Kratz and Karp 1993:41).

Authenticity within World Showcase, suggested by Karp and Kratz to be important in the establishment of a sense of wonder, has been brought up by other scholars. Ramona Fernandez points out that Disney “takes great pains to advertise the authenticity of its simulations” (Fernandez 1995:243). This occurs within shows such as the one found at the American Adventure, with the use of period costumes and reproduced voices, but outside the show as well. Within each pavilion, there will often be a small placard or display next to a building, providing detailing the history and location of the real building from which the Disney version was inspired.

Frank Salamone expands upon the issue of authenticity in a 1997 study of the San Angel Inn within the Mexico pavilion, itself a recreation of the original inn found in Mexico City. Salamone reports that the owner of the Epcot version is the son of the owner of the Mexico City

Inn; thus, a connection exists between the original and the facsimile.¹⁰ Additionally, employees from Mexico City often compete to work at Epcot for a year.

Salamone suggests that both Inns “impart their version of idealized aspects of Mexican culture,” but neither he nor the workers at the Inn view the actual authenticity of what tourists encounter as being much of an issue (Salamone 1997:319). The employees at Epcot’s Inn realize that they are part of a show, and this show is designed to teach an aspect of Mexican culture, but this is not an issue to them. Musing about the definition of culture, he writes:

“Culture is never either this or that, but rather this, that, and something else too. Culture is, among other things, a pattern for living and a means for adapting to an ever-changing cultural environment. Therefore, questions regarding its eternal authenticity degenerate into mere platonic squabbles for those with political axes to grind” (Salamone 1997:319)

Consequently, in relation to Epcot he suggests that scholars should not worry too much about the authenticity of the offerings. Still, the idea of authenticity is important to the Walt Disney Company. Within its promotional materials a large effort is made to demonstrate how an item in World Showcase is genuine. This occurs on a broader scale across Walt Disney World, as materials about new rides, park areas, and hotels discuss at great lengths the ways in which Disney Imagineers attempt to remain true to their source material, whether it is a movie, a country, or a geographic area. For this reason, the idea of authenticity within the Disney parks remains a viable topic for study.

And yet, can “authenticity” be defined as it exists in Walt Disney World? It is a question worth asking, as Disney puts so much credibility in the authentic nature of its recreations. For

¹⁰ Shops in World Showcase are often run by companies from the represented country, but this is perhaps the only instance in which there is a connection between a original building and its Epcot recreation.

something to be authentic, it appears to need to be linked to the original source – a building or artistic practice, perhaps. If it accurately reflects what is found in the original country, then it is deemed as being authentic. This, however, can also extend to the “spirit” embodied in pavilions, as Disney employees attempt to evoke “the emotion and the sense one gets from a place” (Wright 2006:77). However, the ones that determine this emotion are Americans, not inhabitants of the countries. What tourists get in World Showcase, ultimately, is an American perspective of a country. Nevertheless, Disney has these thoughts and images in mind when portraying something as “authentic,” concepts that are worth keeping in mind as a more in-depth look at World Showcase takes place.

In his writings, Salamone draws upon a 1995 article by Edward Bruner and Barbara Kirschenblatt-Gimblett, anthropologists who studied the Mayers Ranch (a tourist attraction in Kenya that featured Maasai tribal dancing). Within this article, they demonstrate how “the Maasai at Mayers Ranch make their living by performing the noble savage in a carefully and collaboratively constructed ethnographic present” (Bruner 2005:33). It is “a show written by international tourist discourse,” where culture is put on sale, its actions dictated by the whims of the tourist industry (Bruner 2005:70). This harkens back to what Eco and Fjellman wrote about the commoditization of culture in Walt Disney World. Everything you see within the limits of the theme parks is part of the tourist industry. Other scholars agree; Steve Nelson described World Showcase (and the World’s Fairs from which it is descended) as a space where world cultures are packaged “as entertainment for consumption by a mass American audience”(Nelson 1996:106).

Bruner and Kirschenblatt-Gimblett call the environment in which the Maasai perform “*experience theater*, an imaginary space into which tourists enter and through which they

negotiate a physical and conceptual path” (Bruner 2005:49). World Showcase is another sort of experience theater. Each pavilion, including the Japan pavilion, is a site where tourists can, if for a brief period of time, experience Disney's version of the life of the inhabitants of other countries.

4.0 VISITING THE WORLD: THE JAPAN PAVILION



Figure 2. View of the Japan Pavilion from across the World Showcase Lagoon

The “experience theater” that serves as the research site for this thesis is the Japan pavilion. Situated like all other pavilions on the edge of the World Showcase Lagoon, it can be easily seen from any spot on the water’s edge (Figure 2). The pavilion sits on the south side of the lagoon in between the American Adventure and Morocco pavilions, an example of the ‘deography’ criticized by Fjellman.¹¹

¹¹ Japan’s nearest geographical neighbor, China, is four pavilions to the east, in between Norway and Germany



Figure 3. *Torii* at the edge of the Japan pavilion

One of the first structures that visitors encounter as they approach the pavilion is the large *torii* gate placed at the edge of the lagoon (Figure 3). Like the majority of structures in World Showcase, its design was based on a real-life object; in this case, the *torii* at Itsukushima Shrine in Hiroshima Prefecture, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.¹² It is a near-replica of the 12th Century original done on a smaller scale; the red and blue paint scheme is the same, and there are even fake barnacles at the bottom of the gate's legs, like one would see at Itsukushima Shrine during low tide. The difference between the original and the replica lies in the gate's *hengaku*, a plaque that has the shrine name carved into it: the *kanji* (Chinese characters) on the original *torii* reads Itsukushima Shrine (厳島神社), while Disney's version simply says Japan (日本). Epcot's gate also lacks the images of the sun and the moon that can be found underneath the roof of the original.¹³

¹² <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/776/> (accessed January 17, 2009)

¹³ Pictures of sun and moon images on the original gate can be found at <http://www.miyajima-wch.jp/jp/itsukushima/column.html> (Accessed January 17, 2009)

A nearby placard tells park guests about the *torii*'s history and symbolism, part of the educational mission that is said to be at the heart of Epcot. Similar placards can be found near all the other buildings in the pavilion. This one reads:

“Like the great Torii at the *Itsukushima Shrine*, standing in the tidal waters of Hiroshima Bay, this ‘Gate of Honor’ welcomes all that pass by its sturdy beams. Originally conceived as a small perch for roosters to welcome *Amaterasu, The Sun Goddess*, the *Torii* grew in size. Eventually these magnificent forms came to symbolize the shrines of Japan.” (italics in original)

In three sentences, those visitors who choose to read the placard are informed about the original *torii*'s geographic location, history, and importance within Japanese society. However, most park guests simply pose for a picture in front of the *torii* then continue along their way. Benches at the edge of the walkway make it a popular meeting spot, as well. These simple acts reveal the degree to which education is important to the common Epcot visitor. Most are not that interested in learning about the surroundings in the pavilions; they see them and accept them as being “Japanese.” Still, given Disney’s interest in authenticity and education, the placards remain an example of one way in which it approaches these goals.



Figure 4. Japan pavilion as seen from in front of the *torii*

The whole of the Japan pavilion can be seen from in front of the *torii* (Figure 4). Looking from right to left (geographically, west to east), the first thing that can be seen is a Japanese rock garden (*karesansui*), found at many Buddhist temples across the Japan as well as at many Japanese gardens in the United States (Figure 5). It is a subtle example of how Disney relies on images familiar to tourists to establish a sense of place.



Figure 5. Japanese rock garden at Epcot

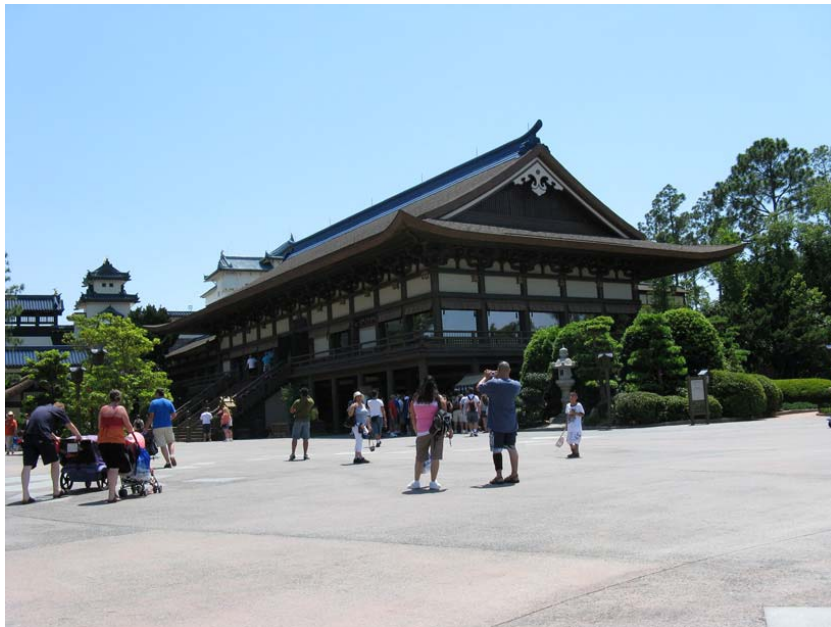


Figure 6. The *Shinshiden* at Epcot

The rock garden lies adjacent to a two-story building based on the *Shinshiden* found at the Imperial Palace in Kyoto (Figure 6). A nearby placard informs visitors:

“The great ‘Hall of Ceremonies,’ or *Shinshiden*, inspired this elegant structure. Originally part of the *Gosho Imperial Palace* in Kyoto, The *Shinshiden* was built in 794. It is said to be one of the first true styles of Japanese architecture.”

Epcot’s version has numerous structural differences that warrant the use of the term “inspired” in the educational placard. The paint scheme is different, with the top part of the roof painted blue to match the other buildings in the pavilion. It is two stories, as compared to the single story-original, a change made in order to house shops and restaurants.

The bottom floor of the structure is home to a shop run by Mitsukoshi, regarded as one of Japan’s top department stores – not to mention one of its oldest, with a history stretching back to 1673 (Davies and Jones 1993) . Inside are a variety of Japanese-themed products available for purchase. In 1983, a Disney publication listed its wares as “toys, prints, incense, tea sets and accessories, a wealth of traditional bamboo products, ceramics, kimonos, kites, dolls, lanterns – every tempting product of Japan” (Beard 1982:192). Today’s offerings are generally the same, with some additions. Clocks and jewelry now line a wall that used to be occupied by dolls and ceramics. The wind-up toys have been supplemented by popular Japanese pop culture icons like Hello Kitty, Pokémon, and an assortment of *anime*-inspired merchandise. There is even a section where park guests can extract pearls from oysters, perhaps a nod to the *ama* pearl divers of Japan.

The second floor houses two restaurants, also run by Mitsukoshi.¹⁴ Tokyo Dining, with windows that face the World Showcase Lagoon, is described in Disney promotional materials as “a modern setting that celebrates the excitement that is modern Tokyo in a harmonious union

¹⁴ While not an official sponsor of the pavilion, Mitsukoshi was crucial in getting the project completed. At the open ceremonies for the pavilion, remarks were given not by a member of the Japanese government, but by a member of the Mitsukoshi board.

with the traditional food culture of ancient Edo.”¹⁵ This ‘traditional food culture,’ however, amounts to sushi, along with various fish, chicken, and steak dishes that would not be unknown to the modern diner.¹⁶ Still, its modern interior makes it one of the places in the pavilion where a touch of modern Japan can be found.

Occupying the rest of the second floor is Teppan Edo, a teppanyaki restaurant. It is advertised as a place where “the spirit of authentic Japanese cuisine is celebrated through the culinary talents of Teppan Chefs cooking traditional dishes on grills at your table.”¹⁷ However, this statement is misleading, an example of how Disney’s appropriation of what is defined as “traditional” or “authentic.” In reality, what is contained within the restaurant is a dining show of the sort pioneered at the Benihana chain of restaurants in the United States, started in the 1960s by a Japanese immigrant. It was the belief of Rocky Aoki, Benihana’s founder, that “because the restaurant was near Broadway, the showmanship of the chefs was extremely important.”¹⁸ Entertainment provided by the chefs was as much of the dining experience as the food itself; they routinely engaged in acrobatic throwing of their utensils and, sometimes, the food that they were serving. This original store spawned a whole chain of restaurants, the popularity of which has caused teppanyaki dining to become equated with “traditional Japanese cuisine” in the minds of many American diners. The dining experience at Teppan Edo, therefore, is not a the sort of dining experience that one would find in Japan, but one created in America for Americans.

¹⁵ <http://disneyworld.disney.go.com/parks/epcot/dining/tokyo-dining/> (accessed January 17, 2009)

¹⁶ The idea of what constitutes “traditional” in the Japan pavilion will be discussed later in this thesis.

¹⁷ <http://disneyworld.disney.go.com/parks/epcot/dining/teppan-edo-restaurant/> (Accessed January 17, 2009)

¹⁸ <http://www.benihana.com/about/the-benihana-story> (Accessed January 17, 2009)



Figure 7. Himeji Castle at Epcot

Beside the recreation of the *Shinshiden* stands a castle structure modeled after Himeji Castle in Hyogo Prefecture (sometimes known as the *Shirasagijō*, or “White Heron Castle”), another UNESCO World Heritage Site (Figure 7).¹⁹ The original castle was built in the early 17th Century, and is one of the few castles to have not been damaged during World War II.²⁰ Like the *Shinshiden*, Epcot’s version of Himeji Castle had its color scheme changed to match the other buildings; the main change comes in the form of the blue roof. The inside of the structure houses part of the Mitsukoshi shop, as well as a museum space for displays of the sort discussed by Kratz and Karp. The current exhibition at the time of writing is entitled “Tin Toy Stories: Made in Japan,” and features a display of toys from the 1950s and 1960s. This display has been in

¹⁹ http://whc.unesco.org/pg.cfm?cid=31&id_site=661 (Accessed January 17, 2009)

²⁰ <http://www.himeji-castle.gr.jp/index/English/index.html> (Accessed January 17, 2009)

place since at least 2006; past exhibits have included one featuring kites and a mixed-media show about women artists (Fjellman 1992:243).²¹

Epcot's reconstruction of Himeji Castle was also supposed to house a show entitled "Meet the World," advertised as "an unparalleled overview of Japanese history" (Beard 1982:197). The attraction was to appear at both Epcot and Tokyo Disneyland, but only the Tokyo version was built (due to problems during the building of the castle).²² However, studies of the Japanese version reveal that it contains much of the 'Distory' that scholars have claimed to be present at Walt Disney World. Aviad Raz demonstrates how the show ignores, among other items, the influence of Korea on the development of Japanese culture and, rather surprisingly, World War II. He quotes an American Disney employee who says that "the spiel is full of mistakes, and nobody bothered to correct it...it's an embarrassment for everyone" (Raz 1993:59). Given that the show was originally designed for Epcot, critiques of the Tokyo Disneyland version are relevant, and suggest much about the original intent for the Japan pavilion. Before the opening of Epcot, Disney advertised that "audiences... will be fascinated by the Disney way of showing them history in a manner they've never before experienced" (Beard 1982:197). Wallace and Fjellman's critique of 'Distory' could certainly be applicable in this situation.

²¹ There is also a VIP room present in the building where sponsors can entertain guests, but it is not easily viewable in the theme park and cannot be visited by tourists.

²² An English language soundtrack was recorded, and could be heard in Tokyo via headphones. Additionally, members of Walt Disney World fansites have made videos in which this soundtrack is paired with handheld video recordings of the Tokyo attraction, providing an interesting look into what might have been.



Figure 8. Katsura villa at Epcot, behind a small hut housing a shop

Beside the castle sits a reconstruction of the tea house of the Katsura Imperial Villa, built in Kyoto in the 17th Century (Figure 8). It houses the Yakitori House restaurant, a counter-service location (Disney's term for fast food) where tourists can dine on offerings like udon, teriyaki chicken, and curry.



Figure 9. The Japan Pavilion's *koi* pond

A small stream of water runs down from the outside seating of the restaurant, falling down a series of waterfalls to drain into a small koi pond – like the rock garden, an example of the use of familiar imagery to establish a sense of place (Figure 9). The stream runs through a mini-garden, described by Disney as “a formal garden conceived as an oasis of serenity” (Beard 1982:191).



Figure 10. Pagoda at the Japan Pavilion

The final building in the Japan pavilion is an eighty-three foot tall five-storied pagoda, modeled after the one found at the Hōryū-ji Temple in Nara – another UNESCO World Heritage Site, and believed to have been built in the 7th or 8th Centuries (Figure 10).²³²⁴ Disney’s original design was deemed by the company’s Japanese advisors to be too Chinese. This was a result of Disney’s attempts to be as authentic as possible; however, many of older pagodas in Japan, including the one at Hōryū-ji Temple, were built in a Chinese style. The Japanese advisors

²³ <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/660> (Accessed January 17, 2009)

²⁴ The use of UNESCO heritage sites as sources of inspiration in the Japan pavilion (and to a large degree in many of the pavilions in the World Showcase) is interesting, given the academic interest surrounding UNESCO’s actions. Such a discussion is out of the scope of this thesis, however, and thus will not be covered within it.

informed Disney that the Japanese adaption, which came later in the architectural history of the pagoda, “used less color and less curvature of the roof and eliminated much of the ornamentation, emphasizing, above all, simple lines and purity of form” (Beard 1982:191). Following these directions, the pagoda was redesigned; in addition to structural changes, it was given blue roof tiles to match the other buildings in the pavilion, along with special lighting at night.²⁵

Hourly taiko performances take place on the first level of the pagoda; drums are stored in a small room in the center of the building. During the Christmas season, a storyteller tells park guests the history of the *daruma* doll from the foot of the pagoda steps. In addition to these performers by the pagoda, there are also daily demonstrations just outside the Mitsukoshi shop by Miyuki, “the only woman ever to become a professional performer of *amezaiku*, the 400-year old Japanese art of candy-making.”²⁶ In the past, a more varied entertainment program was offered in the pavilion. Among the advertised acts prior to the theme park’s opening were “a troupe of Japanese folk dancers,” “a flower arranger,” and “a parade featuring Japanese dolls and kites” (Beard 1982:134).²⁷ There have also been performers dressed in full samurai armor riding horses, and a *kimono*-wearing Minnie Mouse with who guests could have their pictures taken; none of these are still present in the modern-day pavilion.

Since Epcot’s 1982 opening, plans have been introduced to expand the pavilion, adding a show to take the place of “Meet the World.” Pictures exist of planning sketches for a proposed theater show, in which guests would stand inside a mockup of a *shinkansen* (the high-speed, so-called ‘bullet train’) car while a movie about Japan’s landscape was projected onto screens

²⁵ This again raises the question, what exactly is “traditional” and “authentic” in the Japan pavilion?

²⁶ <http://candymiyuki.blogspot.com/> (Accessed January 25, 2009)

²⁷ Video documentation exists of the dancers, but there is no evidence that the other two acts ever occurred at Epcot.

surrounding the car. Also proposed was an indoor roller-coaster housed in a Mount Fuji-like structure. There was even a plan to create a mockup of the modern Ginza district of Tokyo inside the space, but like the others it never went beyond the planning stages. These might have served to bring a bit of modern Japan to the pavilion, but instead the park was left with the Japan of the past. Thus, the Japan pavilion that visitors experience today is for the most part exactly the same as it was nearly 27 years ago when the park opened.

4.1 CONSTRUCTING “JAPAN”

A number of the themes highlighted by scholars emerge when a more critical perspective is focused upon the Japan pavilion. Fjellman calls Walt Disney World “a epicenter of decontextualization,” where “history...is disaggregated” and “geography is mixed up” (Fjellman 1992:31). Certainly the pavilion presents a mishmash of history and geography, with buildings gathered regardless of their original time and place (see Appendix 1). The only common point is an emphasis on the Japanese-ness of each building within the discourse found in the placards by each building.

Beyond an emphasis on the Japanese-ness of the structures within the placards, a more critical commonality uniting the descriptions of the various elements of the Japan pavilion, whether they may be buildings, food, or performances, is an emphasis on the past and a connection with “tradition.” “Traditional cuisine” and “traditional majesty” are said to be offered within the restaurants on the second floor of the *Shinshiden*, regardless of the modern nature of the restaurants’ food and presentation. Descriptions of the performances held within the pavilion continue the emphasis on tradition. The description of Miyuki’s demonstration explains

that her candy art is “a Japanese art form that goes back hundreds of years;”²⁸ similarly, the taiko drumming is described as a “time-honored form of drumming.”²⁹

Kratz and Karp described World Showcase as a museum of culture and history that “presents each country on display as a ‘past’ that can be visited through a tourism experience” (Kratz and Karp 1993:34). Fjellman, meanwhile, saw this connection to the past as reflecting the depiction of countries represented in “a truncated, idealized fashion,” in which “the icons of idealization are those of the past” (Fjellman 1992:233). These portrayals epitomize the type of atmosphere that Disney attempts to create within the Japan pavilion. Before the park even opened, Disney emphasized in its marketing elements of Japanese culture that embody “its enduring traditions, characterized by grace, refinement, serenity, formality, taste, proportion, decorum, delicacy” (Beard 1982:189). At the dedication ceremony of the pavilion, a Disney representative described Japan as a place that “offers the splendors of ancient traditions, cultures, and forms. It is a land where unique architecture and nature blend with an uncommon harmony.”³⁰

The emphasis within the pavilion is on what Fjellman calls “art, landscaping, and other elements of the exotic harmony Americans have vaguely come to understand as the flip side of Japan, Inc.” (Fjellman 1992:242). This point of view has emerged out of a history of Western interest in Japanese art forms since the opening of Japan to the West in the 19th Century. From Monet, to Frank Lloyd Wright, to Jack Kerouac, haiku, Buddhism, and architecture served as subjects of fascination for Westerners. For these artists, Japan was “an increasingly fragile world of beauty and elegance” (Napier 2007:54). This changed for some in the 1980s, with the advent

²⁸ <http://disneyworld.disney.go.com/parks/epcot/entertainment/miyuki/> (accessed January 17, 2009)

²⁹ <http://disneyworld.disney.go.com/parks/epcot/entertainment/matsuriza/> (accessed March 31, 2009)

³⁰ Transcribed from a speech given at the dedication ceremony for the Japan pavilion, October 1, 1982

of an economically strong, technologically-advanced Japan, but this shift in image occurred after the opening of Epcot; at World Showcase, “the serenity and drama of traditional Japanese settings” continued to be presented (Wright 2006:104).

Hollywood has had a major influence in the establishment of this image. In the post-war era, Japan was portrayed as a country with a “‘picture book landscape’ and ancient artistic traditions” (Napier 2007:111). Then, during the 1980s and 1990s, the Japan found in movies was often an “economic juggernaut” threatening “not only... American financial and political power, but also American identity” (Napier 2007:91). The 1993 film *Rising Sun* is perhaps the most evident example of this portrayal of Japan; Deborah Wong illustrates the way in which the performance taiko (by one of the founders of American *kumidaiko*) is used to create “a stage for xenophobic anxiety over Japanese corporate conspiracy” at the beginning of the film (Wong 2006:87). Even in this movie, however, cultivation of Japanese traditions and ethics is placed in a positive light, personified in the way of life followed by Sean Connery’s character, one of the movie’s heroes.³¹

2003’s *The Last Samurai*, starring Tom Cruise, marked a return to a less-aggressive portrayal of Japan within mainstream cinema, with its customs placed in opposition to the modernization (and for some, loss of Japanese identity) that came with the adoption of a Western-style of government and military. The movie is full of scenes filmed in temples, and cherry blossom-filled gardens, and sweeping country landscapes populated by people living in harmony with nature.³²

³¹ Therefore, can the corporate environment be something that was imported from the West, and thus the Japanese are simply beating the Americans at their own game? It is an interesting question, one that puts the East-West relationship in a curious light, but outside the scope of this thesis.

³² Some scenes for *The Last Samurai* were filmed at Himeji Castle.
<http://www.city.himeji.lg.jp/fc/english/index.html> (Accessed January 17, 2009)

Within the Japan pavilion, perhaps the only place contemporary Japan exists is within the store and restaurants run by Mitsukoshi. The restaurant interiors are sleek and modern, with only a television that broadcasts images of nature to remind guests of Disney's marketing scheme. Meanwhile, the area directly inside the main entrance to the store is occupied by pop culture items like Hello Kitty and Pokémon; a large display case features anime- and video game-inspired figures. This inclusion of the present is short-lived, however; once you move beyond this space, "traditional" Japan reappears. Visitors can purchase *kimono*, porcelain, artwork, and even *bonsai* trees and miniature Zen gardens. According to a Disney training manual, what is sold "represents what people would expect to find on their travels rather than what they actually will see in a given country's shops" (Fjellman 1992:163). What is found within the Japan pavilion store, therefore, is what tourists have come to expect from Japan, based in part on the atmosphere outside the building but also influenced by images of Japan in popular media. However, Disney's disregard of Japan's present in its marketing, where Japan is described as a place in harmony with nature where the people practice refined arts, only serves to reinforce the stereotype of Japan that has pervaded popular thought and culture.

What, then, constitutes "traditional" Japan as it exists in the Japan pavilion? The emphasis on the past suggests that a connection with the past helps to delineate something as "traditional." Similarly, a connection with nature seems to play a part when something is defined as "traditional." At the same time, however, teppanyaki dining is passed off as traditional, even when the dining experience is clearly a modern creation then. It suggests, then, that Disney is not beyond appropriating something as being "traditional" even if it is not; this takes place through an attempt to establish a connection between the item and the past.

This is the environment in which Maturiza performs. Their hourly concerts, occurring as often as six times a day, seven days a week, also play a major role in the establishment of the pavilion's atmosphere. Group members are not only ambassadors of Japanese culture, but ambassadors of the Japan pavilion, and as such they must fill a particular niche within the constructed environment. Yet the actions that the group undertakes in order to fill this niche have resulted in their performance style people static and unchanging, much in the way that Barbara Kirschenblatt-Gimblett described when she described music that is performed repeatedly for an exhibition as becoming "like artifacts" (Kirschenblatt-Gimblett 1998:64)

5.0 PERFORMING IN THE WORLD: MATSURIZA AND *KUMIDAIKO* AT THE JAPAN PAVILION

Matsuriza's performances can be heard from across World Showcase, drawing visitors to the Japan pavilion. Steve Nelson calls performances at Epcot "glorified costume parades intended more as lures for the food and souvenirs than as self-sufficient entertainment" (Nelson 1996:139). Admittedly this does play a part, but I argue that they have a greater meaning. Matsuriza's hourly concerts are a way to introduce Epcot guests "to the cultures, customs, crafts, and foods of other lands" (Beard 1982:135).³³ Each performance is a chance to introduce someone to a part of Japanese culture of which they may have previously been unaware.

Watching Matsuriza is an experience that sticks with visitors; long after they leave Epcot's borders, they may forget about the porcelain they saw in the Mitsukoshi shop or the tin toys on display, but chances are they will remember the sound of the *taiko*. In trip reports that have been posted on Walt Disney World fansites, most mention that they had watched a performance by Matsuriza; very rarely is there another mention of the Japan pavilion, unless they had chosen to eat at one of the restaurants. Additionally, Matsuriza remains one of the most-recommended attractions for tourists, with mentions in media ranging from *USA Today's*

³³ Of course, these cultures are been objectified by Disney.

Recommended Orlando Itineraries³⁴ to a website guide to visiting Epcot with small children.³⁵ The introduction to Japan – or at least, Disney’s image of Japan – via Maturiza’s performances, therefore, is quite often a successful one.

Still, Maturiza is not a Disney creation meant solely for the Japan pavilion. While the group’s main performance venue is Epcot, it maintains an active performance schedule outside the theme park. Furthermore, the group has a direct connection to the early days of *kumidaiko*, the style of Japanese group drumming Maturiza performs. And yet, its performances practices are not immune to the effects of performing within a theme park. By performing in Epcot, it has become a part of the museum atmosphere of World Showcase; in the end, it is just another exhibit on display in the museum that is the Japan pavilion.

5.1 MATURIZA AND THE *KUMIDAICO* TRADITION

Maturiza was founded in 1998 by Takemasa Ishikura, but lays claim to a heritage that can be traced back to the early days of *kumidaiko*, before the art form was introduced to the United States. *Kumidaiko* (“group drum”) performance is a recent development, evolving out of the performance tradition of Japanese festivals. Drums are a part of *matsuri-bayashi*, or festival orchestras. They perform alongside flutes and cymbals; occasionally, a larger drum – often, an *odaiko* (“large drum”) – will perform solo.

³⁴ http://www.usatoday.com/travel/destinations/2008-03-19-orlando-itineraries-tips_N.htm (Accessed January 18, 2009)

³⁵ <http://www.buildabettermousetrip.com/article-epcot-with-young-children.html> (Accessed January 18, 2009)

The foundations of *kumidaiko* were laid in Japan's Nagano Prefecture during the early 1950s by a jazz drummer named Daihachi Oguchi. Oguchi was given a score from which he was asked to perform for a festival. To his jazz-trained ears, however, it "did not seem very attractive" (Bender 2003:71). Rather than playing it as written, he decided to create "an arrangement of Japanese drums for an ensemble of players modeled on the arrangement of comprising the drum set and central instruments in an orchestral percussion section" (Bender 2003:72). Before, drums had served only an accompanying role in *matsuri-bayashi*; Oguchi decided to bring them to the forefront. Among his innovations were an increased tempo, more complex rhythmic patterns, exaggerated arm movements, and vocal gestures modeled after those found in *kabuki* (called *kakegoe*). This new style of performance quickly became popular and began to spread across Japan, culminating in an appearance by Oguchi and his group, called Osuwa Daiko (named for the shrine at which it first performed), in the Opening Ceremonies of the 1964 Tokyo Olympics.

At the same time that Oguchi was refining his new performance style in Nagano prefecture, a group of young men from Tokyo were creating their own brand of *kumidaiko* during Obon festivals in the mid- to late summer. Bender characterizes the atmosphere of Bon drumming – that is, the drumming performed during Obon – as "directing innovation and experimentation in the direction of and popular appeal," as drummers competed for attention among the large festival crowds (Bender 2003:77). Out of this environment, Seido Kobayashi, Ganei Onozato, Yutaka Ishizuka, and Yoshihisa Ishikura formed "a professional group centered on the ensemble performance of an assortment of taiko drums and shamisen" (Bender 2003:82). Calling themselves Oedo Sukeroku Daiko, they played not at festivals and shrines, but at hotels, cabarets and clubs. Like Osuwa Daiko, their performances integrated *kakegoe* and exaggerated

physical movements, but they separated itself from Oguchi's group through an emphasis on solo performance and acrobatics, along with the diagonal angle at which drums were placed.

The original version of Oedo Sukeroku Daiko split apart in the mid-1970s; at that time, Yoshihisa Ishikura founded a new group named Kanto Abare Daiko. Among the members of this new group was Ishikura's younger brother Takemasa. When Epcot opened, the group was asked by the Walt Disney Company to perform in the Japan pavilion, which it did beginning in 1983. Kanto Abare Daiko performed at Epcot for 10 years; in 1993, a group from San Francisco named One World Taiko temporarily took over the role of providing taiko performances in World Showcase. One World Taiko performed at Epcot until 1997, when Kanto Abare Daiko returned.

In 1998, Yoshihisa Ishikura decided to take his group back to Tokyo; his brother Takemasa chose to remain behind in Orlando and formed Maturiza.³⁶ Maturiza members are both of Asian and non-Asian descent, reflecting the multi-cultural nature of most American *kumidaiko* groups. It has been the featured performer in the Japan pavilion since its founding, but the group also has an active performance schedule outside the park. Maturiza routinely performs at Asian- and Japanese-American events in Florida and the greater Southeastern United States.

Maturiza performs both its own original compositions and works from the repertoire of Oedo Sukeroku Daiko, being one of the few groups in the United States with permission to do so (Leong 1999). Beyond its performance activities, the group has also formed Orlando Taiko Dojo to teach others about taiko performance practices. This venture has spawned the children's taiko group Maturiza Junior. Still, it is the group's performances at Epcot for which it is most recognized, and the ones that most occupy the group's time.

³⁶ <http://www.maturiza.com/html/about.html> (Accessed January 18, 2009)

5.2 THE PERFORMANCE

The number of performances each week by Maturiza changes depending on the tourist season. In the busiest periods, such as the time around Christmas and New Year's and the summer vacation season, the group will perform daily, with hourly (or near-hourly) performances between 1:00 PM and 6:00 PM. In the less crowded times of the year, such as the period after New Year's, they perform five days a week; performances will still take place every hour, but typically they begin at 2:00 PM and end around 7:00 PM.³⁷

Three members of Maturiza perform at Epcot; repeated research trips, combined with a survey of videos posted on video sharing sites, have suggested that a core group of five or six Epcot performers exists.³⁸ This group is dominated by female artists – many days, it will be comprised entirely of women – but male members of Maturiza, including Takemasa Ishikura, perform as well.

None of Maturiza's non-Asian-descended performers are involved in the Epcot concerts. This could be explained by the idea that a person who does not appear to be Japanese performing within the Japan pavilion might cause tourists to question the authenticity of the performance. This would ruin Disney's efforts to portray its pavilions and the performances contained within as being authentic. Granted, the group that tourists see in the Japan pavilion is not an accurate reflection of the demographic makeup of taiko performers today (a large number of people with no relation to Japan perform taiko, particular in the United States), but such a decision helps to maintain the atmosphere that Disney has created.

³⁷ Walt Disney Worlds's performance schedules have been published weekly on the internet since 1997 by a fan living in Orlando. <http://pages.prodigy.net/stevesoares/index.htm> (Accessed January 19, 2009)

³⁸ The makeup of the trio varies daily.



Figure 11 - Maturiza performing on the first floor of the pagoda, using *shime-daiko* (left) and *o-daiko* (right)

The majority of performances, each lasting approximately 15 minutes, take place on the first floor of the pagoda, on the side facing the re-creation of the *Shinshiden* (Figure 11). On sunny days when sunlight shines directly in the performer's eyes, as was the case for several of the performances during my research period, the drums are moved down to the courtyard between the *koi* pond and the Mitsukoshi store.

Among the drums used by Maturiza are a *nagado-daiko*, a long barrel-shaped drum that has the skin attached to the body of the drum by tacks, a *shime-daiko*, a smaller rope-tensioned drum, and an *o-daiko*, the largest of the drums, also rope-tensioned. A *fue*, or bamboo flute, is also occasionally used. When the group performs in the pavilion courtyard, it will only wheel out the *nagado-daiko*, which in turn limits the choice of music for that concert.



Figure 12 -Members of Maturiza playing a *nagado-daiko* in the courtyard

The performers dress in clothing that has become the standard wear for many taiko groups (Figure 12). On their feet and legs are *tabi*, split-toed, soft-topped outdoor shoes; and *momohiki*, tapered pants that wrap around and tie at the front and back. A *haragake*, or carpenter's apron, is worn on the upper body, with an *obi* (a sash or belt) tied around the waist. Each performer also has a *hachimaki* (a type of headband worn by taiko players and also by sushi makers) tied around their heads.³⁹ The color of these items sometimes varies from person to person, but it is always red, blue, yellow, or white. Depending on the weather, performers might also wear a tank-top or long-sleeved shirt underneath the *haragake*.

On one day in mid-May that I had chosen for a research period, Takemasa Ishikura was performing alongside two female drummers; he was wearing white, while the two women were wearing red and blue. Slightly before their scheduled 3:45 PM performance, they wheeled out

³⁹ Clothing descriptions taken from Heidi Varian's *The Way of Taiko* (Varian 2005).

five *nagado-daiko* (arranging them in two groups of two on the sides and a single one in the center), and a *shime-daiko* (placed beside the solo *nagado-daiko*).

Once the drums were in position, the group began playing without announcement (0'14" in the included video file). A few people had already begun to gather at the base of the pagoda; two were sitting in the shade of a few trees that had been planted in the sidewalk directly in front of the pagoda. These tourists may have found out about the performance via a schedule handed out at the entrance to Epcot, or perhaps by reading the schedule posted on a signboard near the entrance to the pavilion. Once the drummers began to play, a small crowd began to gather in front of the pagoda. A number of the tourists entering the Japan pavilion stopped walking and began to watch; many others turned their heads to observe the group but kept moving.

The first piece – entitled “Hayagake no Taiko,” as I later found out – featured four distinctive sections. Following a two-measure introduction, the work began with a layered-ostinato section; one rhythmic pattern was played by the two *nagado-daiko* players and another by the *shime-daiko*. After this was repeated twice, each of the *nagado-daiko* players performed a short solo section while the other continued the ostinato (Figure 13).

The musical score is divided into three main sections: Introduction, Ostinato, and Solo.

Introduction: This section features three performers. The 'Performer in Red' and 'Performer in Blue' both play 'nagado 1 (R)' and 'nagado 2 (L)'. The 'Performer in White' plays 'shime' and 'nagado'. The tempo is marked 'on rim' and 'regular'.

Ostinato: This section continues the rhythmic patterns established in the Introduction. The 'Performer in Red' and 'Performer in Blue' continue to play 'nagado 1 (R)' and 'nagado 2 (L)'. The 'Performer in White' continues to play 'shime' and 'nagado'.

Solo #1: This section features a solo for the 'Performer in Blue'. The 'Performer in Red' and 'Performer in White' continue to play their respective parts.

Figure 13. "Hagayake no Taiko" – Introduction; Section 1, Ostinato and Solo

After a brief period of alternating solos, the two *nagado-daiko* players beat a single rhythmic pattern, distinct from the ostinato pattern that they had played before (Figure 14 – video file 1'20"). Then, they returned to the ostinato pattern that opened the piece.



Figure 14. "Hagayake no Taiko" - Unison Pattern #1, performed by *nagado-daiko* players

Following a three-measure transitory pattern, played in unison by all three members, the second section of the piece began. It opened with four-bar phrases consisting of interlocking solo patterns between the *nagado-daiko* players and the *shime-daiko* player (Figure 15 – video file 2'00"). This pattern would continue throughout the section. Gradually, the rhythms became more complex. In addition to the interlocking patterns, another defining trait of this section was an increased solo role taken by the *shime-daiko*, as compared to the first section in which the *shime-daiko* played an ostinato pattern for nearly two minutes.



Figure 15. "Hagayake no Taiko" - Unison transition pattern; Section 2, Interlocking Pattern #1

As Maturiza continued to play, the crowd grew from the two that had awaited the group's performance to about twenty by halfway through the piece. Those tourists that did not

stop to watch tourists turned their heads to observe the group as they walked past the Japan pavilion; some marched in time to the beat of the drums. Many took pictures or video recordings of the group, a souvenir of what they were witnessing.

The players soon returned to a variation of the opening section; this time, the *nagado-daiko* players performed their opening ostinato while the *shime-daiko* performed a solo. After a short period of improvisation by the *shime-daiko*, utilizing rhythms similar to those used by the *nagado-daiko* soloists at the beginning of the piece, the transition pattern was played again. The *shime-daiko* immediately followed this with its original ostinato pattern, only this time played at a much faster speed. The *nagado-daiko* players entered one by one, playing the same rhythm as the *shime-daiko* player. Once all three players were playing in unison, the rhythm changed, beginning the third major section of the piece (Figure 16 – video file 4’25”). This time, the drummers all played the same rhythm, moving between their two drums at an increasingly faster pace.

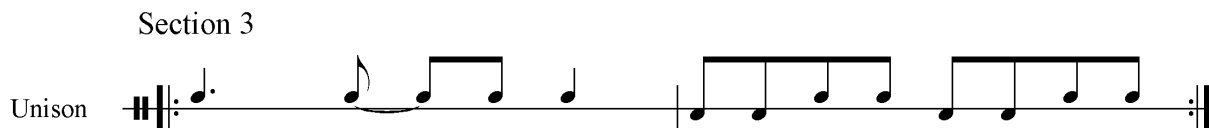


Figure 16. "Hagayake no Taiko" - Section #3, opening unison pattern

“Hagayake no Taiko” ended quite suddenly, as the players all stopped in unison and posed with their *bach*i (drumsticks) out to their sides. The crowd began to applaud, and the players lowered their *bach*i and bowed. As the applause began to die down, Ishikura and the female dressed in red started to move the drums while the female in blue picked up a microphone and began to address the crowd. She gave a prepared speech that I heard often while observing the group (video file 5’39”). In watching twelve different performances over a period of three

days in December 2007 and May 2008, I heard the same speech eleven times; the only thing that differed in these was the name of the pieces that had been performed. A survey of performances found on video-sharing sites such as YouTube, some taken several years before my research period, yielded similar results. It appears that the same speech has been used for many years with no changes.

She said:

“*Minna-san, konnichi wa.* Good afternoon everyone. Welcome to the Japan pavilion here at Epcot.

The history of taiko, Japanese drumming, goes back centuries. It began in religious ceremonies in shrines, and changed throughout the years. Drums are used in festivals, for praying for rain for crops, even by soldiers in battlefields.⁴⁰

Our name, Maturiza, means “festival of drumming.” We just performed “Hayagake no Taiko.” Our next number will come from our CD, called “O-Daiko,” which means “big drum.”

And also, if you are interested in taiko drumming, we have two new DVDs, *Toyo* and *Lantana* available. We hope you enjoy our powerful drum sounds. Thank you!”⁴¹

By the end of the speech, the crowd watching the performance had grown even larger. Ishikura and the woman in red had moved the *nagado-daiko* and *shime-daiko* to the left side of the stage; an *o-daiko* painted red, with a red teardrop design painted on the heads, now stood to the right.

⁴⁰ In the version of the speech on the video included with this thesis, the speaker says “Drums are used...” However, given that in every other video I took – as well as videos watched online – the past tense has been used, I believe that the use of present tense in that instance is a mistake. Within this context, the observations and analyses I have made in this thesis are based on the determination that the past tense is the correct usage.

⁴¹ One addition that is sometimes included is a mention that the group comes from Tokyo, Japan, which is curious considering that the group was founded in Orlando. This may have been included as a way to further situate the group as being “authentic.”

The woman in red soon began playing one side of the *o-daiko* (video file 7'00"). She started off slowly, using long, drawn-out rhythms without any real sense of tempo. Eventually, once the woman in blue was in position on the opposite side of the *o-daiko*, the soloist repeated a single note in a moderate tempo. Finally, with a yell, she indicated for the other two to join in. The soloist began to improvise as the *shime-daiko* and *o-daiko* accompaniment played an ostinato pattern (Figure 17 – video file 8'18"). Alternating strokes were combined with simultaneous hits to make the sound of the *o-daiko* reverberate through the Japan pavilion. A number of tourists stopped to take pictures of the soloist before continuing on their way.

The musical score is organized into three systems, each with three staves. The first system is labeled 'Performer in Red O-daiko solo', 'Performer in Blue O-daiko accomp.', and 'Performer in White Shime-daiko'. The second system is labeled 'Solo', 'Accomp.', and 'Shime'. The third system is also labeled 'Solo', 'Accomp.', and 'Shime'. The notation includes various rhythmic patterns, including triplets and sixteenth notes, with dynamic markings like 'p' and 'f'.

Figure 17. "O-daiko" - Opening solo and accompanying ostinato

After approximately a minute and a half, the soloist stopped, as did the two accompanying players. The woman in red bowed to the audience, then switched positions with Ishikura. The woman in blue was the next to solo, using similar rhythmic patterns as the similar

performer, while the other two drummers continued the ostinato. Finally, another minute and a half later, Ishikura joined her in playing a brief rhythmic pattern while the *shime-daiko* continued its ostinato (Figure 18 – video file 10’57’’).



Figure 18. "O-daiko" - Unison *O-daiko* pattern

Once the unison section was completed, Ishikura began his solo, which was more rhythmically diverse than the previous two improvisations (video file 11’20’’). Ishikura also utilized a greater variety of motions than the other performers. One of the unique elements he brought to his solo was a motion in which he would swing his arms in an X-pattern while hitting the *o-daiko*; additionally, for a time he hit the drum while standing perpendicular to the head, as compared to the normal performance practice of hitting the *o-daiko* while facing the drum.

Finally, the piece ended with a single unison hit by all three players. The crowd began to cheer and applaud as the drummers walked in front of the *o-daiko* and bowed. As the crowd continued to clap, the woman in red picked up the microphone and addressed the crowd, saying:

“Arigatou gozaimasu. Thank you very much. We are Maturiza. Our next show time will be 5:25. Have a wonderful and magical day here at Epcot. Bye-bye!”

All three waved as the crowd clapped once more. They then began to move the drums back into the storage room, where the instruments would remain until it was time for the next performance. As this took place, the crowd dispersed. Some stayed to watch Miyuki create her candy art on the opposite side of the courtyard, while others went to browse in the Mitsukoshi shop or get something to eat in one of the restaurants. Others still left the pavilion entirely, choosing to move to another pavilion to continue their three-hour tour “around the world.”

6.0 DRUMMING FOR THE MOUSE

The above-described scene repeats throughout the year for thousands of tourists daily.⁴² Maturiza is one of the biggest draws for the Japan pavilion. Given that the exhibit within the reconstructed Himeji Castle gets very little foot traffic (during my research period, I noticed large crowds outside, but very few people inside the exhibit), I would venture that Maturiza is the primary non-dining/shopping draw in the pavilion. The sound of the drums can be heard from across the World Showcase lagoon. Curious guests may notice it and then choose to visit the pavilion to find out what it was that they had heard. Once they have arrived, they may decide to watch Miyuki's candy art demonstration, shop in the Mitsukoshi shop, or eat at one of the restaurants. All these actions could be seen as a direct result of having heard Maturiza's drums while on the other side of the lagoon. From this perspective, then, Nelson was correct in stating that performances within the World Showcase pavilions act as lures for shopping and dining.

More importantly than that role, however, Maturiza's performances embody that which Disney claims to be the purpose of World Showcase. They are one of the ways in which Disney attempts to introduce park visitors to "the cultures, customs...of other lands" (Beard 1982:135). By watching Maturiza's hourly shows, they can see an element of Japan that they might have

⁴² During my research, I observed about 40 tourists watching each performance. With an average of six performances a day, six days a week, 51 weeks a year, it would not be beyond reason to suggest that Maturiza performs for at least 73,000 tourists per year (with the average adjusted for time off, weather, and additional factors that might contribute to a canceled performance).

not have been aware of. Disney would have park visitors see Maturiza as cultural ambassadors for Japan; to these tourists, they are as much representatives of Japan as the men and women that staff the Mitsukoshi store and the restaurants. Park guests can even take the Disney taiko experience home with them, in the form of DVDs and CDs sold in the store, continuing their exploration into Japanese culture outside of the context of the Japan pavilion.

At the same time, the hourly performances also continue Disney's intended educational goal for Epcot. The speech by a Maturiza member teaches the audience about the history of *taiko* and its place within Japanese ceremonies and festivals. Audiences learn about the use of music in Japanese religious ceremonies and military events. They even are introduced to a little bit of the Japanese language, as they are greeted and thanked in Japanese (accompanied by the English equivalent).

Of course, this lesson contains some of the 'Distory' that critics have accused Disney of furthering in Epcot, particularly the idea presented by Wallace and Fjellman that everything within World Showcase emphasizes the past. The history of taiko is said to go back 'centuries,' placing its origins in some vague time during Japan's past. Every example of the usage of taiko given during Maturiza's performance is a reference to the past; it is said that taiko was used in religious ceremonies and military events, yet the military use of taiko has not occurred for nearly two hundred years (since the beginning of Meiji era and the institution of a Western style of military organization).⁴³

The speech by the members of Maturiza also reflects the image of Japan that is put forth in the Japan pavilion. Given Epcot visitors' assumed unfamiliarity with taiko and a lack of

⁴³ That is not to say that the military history of taiko is ignored by modern *kumidaiko* groups. Shawn Bender illuminates in the manner in which Daihachi Oguchi maintained the connection of his group to the martial drums of the past; it is not something that all groups share, however. See Bender 2003.

information within the park or in Disney's promotional materials, the speech is their only opportunity to learn something about the art form. As Epcot guests hear it, Maturiza's performance style is a continuation of an ancient tradition that was used to help make a connection between man and nature. It even assisted in the martial elements of Japan's past, used during times of war by the *samurai* that have captured the imagination of the West. The performance is advertised by Disney as "a traditional, 15-minute performance," one that features "a time-honored form of drumming."⁴⁴ This fits in with the image of Japan that exists in the Japan pavilion. Everything within the pavilion celebrates the past, an undefined time when samurai roamed the land. Modern-day Japan is barely acknowledged, and even then the emphasis is on the country's harmonious living with nature and its refined spirit.

Admittedly, this issue is one that is not easily rectified. The time for the speech is very limited (only about a minute), and the history of taiko performance is quite detailed. Still, the emphasis on the past situates taiko performance – more specifically, *kumidaiko* performance – in the past. If one would judge solely by the speech, the type of taiko being performed at Epcot, with exaggerated movements, rhythmic patterns inspired by jazz and other Western musical art forms, and an emphasis on solo improvisation, is exactly the type of performance as one would find at shrines four hundred years ago. Consequently, if a tourist bought one of Maturiza's DVDs with such an idea in mind, they might be surprised by what they find on the merchandise – DVDs that were recorded in a concert hall, with the group using electronics and instruments created within the last fifty years. Even a simple mention of the fact that taiko is played around the world in many different settings may help to broaden the image of taiko performance that is created within the tourist's mind.

⁴⁴ <http://disneyworld.disney.go.com/parks/epcot/entertainment/maturiza/> (Accessed January 19, 2009)

The style of *kumidaiko* performance developed by Oedo Sukeroku Daiko and practiced by Maturiza evolved from Obon festival performances, but it was adapted for concert performance, with an increased emphasis on acrobatics and solo performance. The pieces they perform are not *matsuri-bayashi* works, but original compositions by members of the group that are inspired by *matsuri-bayashi*. Shawn Bender characterizes this style as “neo-folk,” existing between tradition and modernity;” *kumidaiko* groups are “rooted in communities of ‘the folk’ but lack the long history distinctive of Japanese folk and classical performing arts” (Bender 2003:48). Nevertheless, for the purposes of “Distory” *kumidaiko* is passed off as a purely “traditional” art.⁴⁵

Beyond the connection to the past, Maturiza exemplifies in its speeches the commodification of cultural forms that has been criticized by scholars like Fjellman. The history lesson about taiko is coupled with a commercial for CDs and DVDs that can be found in the Mitsukoshi shop. Those guests interested in taiko are encouraged to purchase them, but the merchandise is not didactic. They are concert DVDs, not documentaries on taiko or *matsuri*. These DVDs could be looked at as another souvenir of a trip to Epcot, similar to the videos available for sale that highlight various rides in the park (marketed as “a day in the park”). In such a light, the folk performances within the pavilion area, the way in which visitors are supposed to learn about other cultures, are simultaneously a way to get tourists to buy more merchandise.

And yet, what does this mean for the performers themselves? Maturiza is not a Disney-created entity. They exist outside the world of Epcot, but at the same time they perform within it. This duality has influenced every aspect of their performance in this venue. By working for the

⁴⁵ Again, the connection with the past helps to define tradition within Disney’s discourse.

Walt Disney Company and performing in the Japan pavilion, Maturiza has reified their performance practices in order to conform to the environment in which they perform and the expectations that are created by this environment.

6.1 REIFICATION WITHIN THE WORLD

As discussed earlier in this work, World Showcase has been referred to by scholars as a museum of culture and history. Everything within it is an exhibit of sorts, and Maturiza is no exception. They are put on display, becoming something for the park guests to look at and appreciate. Barbara Kirschenblatt-Gimblett writes how when music or other art forms are performed repeatedly for an exhibition (as is the case in World Showcase), they “can become like artifacts. They freeze. They become canonical” (Kirschenblatt-Gimblett 1998:64). Such performances run the risk of becoming no different from an artifact in a museum, static and unchanged even as the world outside changes. This is what has happened to *kumidaiko* at Walt Disney World.

6.1.1 Expectation and Performance

Maturiza continues to experiment and evolve as a performance group in their performances outside of the theme park, expanding upon the idea of what constitutes *kumidaiko* performance. It integrates the use of electronic instruments into the group’s pieces, as well as utilizing a variety of percussion instruments, including one invented by Daihachi Oguchi called

the *tetsu-zutsu* or *tetto*, “three sizes of pipe welded together” (Varian 2005:57).⁴⁶ Yet none of these innovations are found within Epcot. Pieces originally written to be performed with electronic instruments and *tetto*, such as one entitled “Hado,” are performed for tourists using drums only. The musical structure is largely the same, with the same general rhythmic patterns and alternation of group and solo performance, but the instrumentation is different, changing the overall sound of the piece.

Using electronic and non-traditional instruments would run counter to the image of Japan that is built up at Epcot. As has been demonstrated, the Japan pavilion introduces tourists to the Japan of the past, with an emphasis on “tradition” and harmony with nature. Maturiza’s audience expects a performance that reiterates this image of Japan; if the group was to introduce new ideas – and more importantly, new sounds – it would run counter to these expectations. The visual element of performing on the first level of the pagoda helps to situate Maturiza within this particular mode of expectation. As a result, if the group wishes to be successful with its performances, it must adjust its performance practices to adhere to the image of Japan that has been built up in the minds of tourists.

Cheryl Krause Knight recognizes within her writings the role that audience expectation plays in the performances of World Showcase. She characterizes these performances as “cultural mimicry that gels with his [the visitor’s] provincial expectations” (Knight 2000:381). The goal of such performances is not to challenge the tourist’s ideas of what is performed at particular countries by presenting an accurate reflection of musical life within a particular place; rather, the intent is to provide the tourist with what they expect to see.

Such an approach affects other pavilions in World Showcase, not just the Japan pavilion.

⁴⁶ The *tetto* sounds similar to an *atarigane*, a bell-like instrument used in *matsuri-bayashi*, but rhythmically its usage is typically different.

Many feature performances that correspond to a particular stereotype that accompanies that country's music. Mariachi music is performed in Mexico, near booths that sell piñatas and a restaurant where you can order tacos. The Germany pavilion features a lederhosen-clad polka band playing inside a reconstructed beer hall. Charles Carson recognizes this selection of musical styles as representing "idealized visions of guests' vacation experiences" in regards to the type of cultural arts on display (Carson 2004:231).

Beyond Walt Disney World, this use of stereotype takes place at events such as cultural festivals and international fairs in cities across the nation. Such events are also designed as sites to introduce visitors to art forms performed in other countries, but inevitably there is nothing to challenge pre-conceived notions of what might be seen in these countries. One such festival, The Pittsburgh Dragon Boat Festival, describes its mission as attempting "to promote intellectual understanding between the East and the West in a fun way."⁴⁷ Like World Showcase, some of the primary vehicles for promoting understanding are food and performances. And yet, the offerings are standard fare that is associated in the public mindset with Asian countries; in this instance, the culture with a largest presence is Chinese culture. There are *kung fu* demonstrations and lion dances on stage, with *lo mein* and other noodle dishes available at food vendors. Nothing at the festival challenges previously-existing notions of what constitutes "Chinese culture."

Within Epcot, there is not much that can be done by Maturiza to combat this creation of a certain mode of expectation. The Japan Pavilion is not going to change; consequently, Maturiza cannot change either. In cultural festivals and international fairs, however, organizers can help to provide a more diverse picture of the cultural life of a country or people. Their actions may help to educate visitors, possibly challenging their assumptions about countries

⁴⁷ <http://www.pittsburghdragonboatfestival.org/index.html> (accessed November 22, 2008)

beyond their own.

6.1.2 Expectation and Repertoire

The reification process at Walt Disney World has also influenced Maturiza's choice of repertoire. Over the course of my research, I witnessed the performance of seven pieces by the group; this number was confirmed by a survey of videos taken by other visitors to the park, some taken up to four years prior to my research.⁴⁸ A visitor could visit the park after a number of years and see the same performance; even a visit on two consecutive days might result in watching the same pieces, even if they are played by different performers. Meanwhile, outside the park, the group has at least nineteen different pieces within its repertoire, as represented on the group's CDs and DVDs.⁴⁹

Over a decade has passed since Maturiza began performing at Epcot. During this time, Maturiza has created a number of new pieces that draw inspiration from other musical sources, yet the same pieces are still being performed at Epcot. Just like the inclusion of modern instruments, a constantly changing repertoire would run counter to the expectations of the audience, albeit in a different fashion. There is a sense of familiarity present in Walt Disney World; tourists ride their favorite rides and eat at their favorite restaurants visit after visit. They do not expect or desire change, but rather expect to see the same attractions each time. Steve Nelson characterized this as being "little different from McDonald's, where the ability to offer the same unchanging product year after year is critical to the maintenance of a family audience"

⁴⁸ See Appendix A for a performance log listing pieces performed by Maturiza

⁴⁹ See Appendix B for a comparison of repertoire

(Nelson 1996:131). Maturiza's performances are a part of this experience at Epcot, and as such they are expected to always be the same.

Of course, the limiting of repertoire is not unique to Epcot; it takes place in other settings as well. In recent years symphony orchestras have often come on the "favorites" in their program repertoire – quite often, works from the Romantic era and earlier dominate the schedule. Symphony repertoire selection, however, relies greatly on audience demand. Paying customers generally want to see these works, as compared to less familiar, possibly more contemporary works. Similarly, seasonal performances such as those of the Nutcracker during Christmas feature the same piece being performed daily for an extended period. In such instances, however, the audience is paying solely to see the Nutcracker. That is not the case for Maturiza. Epcot visitors pay to see the park as a whole; over the course of an entire day at Epcot, the average tourist may only spend at most ten to fifteen minutes watching the group. Compared to the amount of time spent waiting in line for a ride, or even eating, it is a brief moment. And this brief moment even serves a large purpose – the sound of the drums draws people to the Japan pavilion, where they may spend money. From this perspective, Maturiza's performances are merely a means to an end. Watching a symphony orchestra concert, meanwhile, is the sole purpose of visiting a concert hall.

Likewise, familiarity with the music being performed, so important to the success of symphony concerts and events like the Nutcracker (where it influences concert success, often measured in terms of attendance), is not a factor in World Showcase. It is Disney's expectation that the tourist knows nothing about what they are seeing and hearing. The act of watching taiko at the Japan pavilion, Disney believes, will be a learning experience. Furthermore, a new audience is expected to watch the group perform every day. It is not anticipated that a tourist

might come to see Maturiza over and over again; instead, they are more likely to spend the next day in a different theme park. Given this lack of familiarity and constant turnover rate in audience population, the variety of taiko performance is not particularly relevant. It is treated as another attraction in World Showcase, and attractions remain the same day after day, year after year, until they are replaced.

Changing the course of such a stifling approach in symphony orchestras and similar organizations is not easily accomplished. It would require not only a change in the thinking and planning process of those in charge of programming, but also a change in how audiences approach the act of attending concerts (and what they expect to see at these concerts). A return to appreciating innovation within the concert hall might open organizations to be bolder with their programming. Maturiza, meanwhile, has a little more control over their environment. They could try and experiment by adding new pieces to their Epcot repertoire. Many of the pieces they play outside the park, and have recorded for their DVDs, could be rearranged for a trio utilizing only *nagado*-, *shime*-, and *o-daiko*. The arrangements would still have to conform to the mode of audience expectation created within the Japan pavilion, but they would provide a more varied experience for those who might see the group multiple times.

This process of reification that occurs with Epcot (and World Showcase in particular) – in which a performance does not change even after years of routine – has much in common with how museums treat their displays. Special exhibitions may change, but the regular displays remain the same. It is expected that one can return to see favored exhibits over and over again; these exhibits will always be the same. In this sense, by performing at Epcot Maturiza has become another exhibit in the museum of culture that is World Showcase, on display for all to see and appreciate.

7.0 LEAVING THE WORLD

Performing at Epcot presents Maturiza with the opportunity to introduce hundreds of people daily to the world of *kumidaiko*. These people might be struck by the performance and choose to purchase a CD or DVD from the Mitsukoshi store, pursuing their newly-sparked interest in the art form after the concert is over. This might even spark a greater interest in Japanese culture. If this occurs, then World Showcase has succeeded in its purported mission: it has introduced aspects of a country to someone who previously had no knowledge of what takes place in the life of its people. But such an act – performing within a theme park – does not come without a price. Taiko as presented by Maturiza at Epcot is a reified art form, unchanged even after years of performance. As the group performs each day, multiple times a day, repertoire and performance practice are subject to the environment created by the Walt Disney Company, an environment that has created expectations in the mind of the audience concerning what they are going to hear. Anything that runs counter to the image of a solemn, elegant Japan has no place with the Japan pavilion. To conform to these expectations, Maturiza leaves its innovations outside, becoming just another unchanging attraction within the theme park.

The impact of audience expectations on performance practice has a greater scope than just Walt Disney World. All performing groups must take into account what their audience expects them to perform. It is an essential part of maintaining their existence; furthermore, if the audience does not buy their albums or attend their concerts, they would be hard-pressed to cover

their touring costs, given the degree to which merchandise helps cover these expenses. In this regard, then, Maturiza is no different from any other performing group, let alone other *kumidaiko* groups. However, unlike touring groups, I do not think the sales of Maturiza's merchandise at the Mitsukoshi store are of much importance to either Maturiza or the Walt Disney Company. The amount of taiko-related merchandise in the Mitsukoshi shop is miniscule in comparison to everything else that is for sale. Furthermore, despite the promotion of the DVDs and CDs during the performance these items are not very well displayed within the store itself. They are shelved in a corner of the store alongside a number of other CDs containing nature sounds and flute and harp music advertised as being "Asian," not easily found unless one is actively looking for them. Regardless of merchandise sales, as long as the taiko performances continue to attract tourists to the pavilion, the group will have fulfilled one duty, and will thus be able to fulfill their other duty – that is, educating tourists about taiko performance.

Similarly, attendance of Maturiza performances is only a slight consideration in the mind of Disney executives. The number of tourists that watch each performance is miniscule in comparison to the amount of people who enter the shop or restaurants in the Japan pavilion, even though some may do both.⁵⁰ Furthermore, the audience numbers fluctuate as the park attendance fluctuates; the two are not disconnected.

A more relevant connection between Epcot and *kumidaiko* in the outside world is found in the discourse surrounding taiko performance. In Disney's marketing for Maturiza's *kumidaiko* performances, it says that "taiko shows the spirit of the Japanese people and reflects

⁵⁰ Even then, however, it is still larger than many of the other performers around World Showcase.

the essence of their soul.”⁵¹ This is quite similar how taiko is described in other performance settings. At an October 2007 performance in Pittsburgh by the group San Jose Taiko, a member of the Pittsburgh Japanese community spoke about taiko in relation to abstract concepts such as the ‘Japanese soul,’ all the while connecting *kumidaiko* to festivals and Shinto rites.

There seems to exist a common thread throughout descriptions of *kumidaiko* in the United States, as discussions about taiko single it out as being something uniquely Japanese even as the art form moves away from its Japanese roots. Particularly in the United States, *kumidaiko* started as a way for people to get in touch with their Japanese roots, but this has become less prominent a motivation as the art form has spread.⁵² For some, it is just another form of drumming. Musically, more and more non-Japanese elements have been brought into the art form. At non-Epcot performances, Maturiza regularly uses electronic instruments, while San Jose Taiko often utilizes non-Japanese rhythms and non-Japanese instruments. San Jose Taiko strives to “express the beauty and harmony of the human spirit through the voice of the taiko as they strive to create new dimensions in Asian American movement and music.”⁵³ They see their music as being a world performance style rather than something uniquely Japanese.

The internationally-renowned group Kodo operates in a similar manner. Its mission is “to both preserve and re-interpret traditional Japanese performing arts.”⁵⁴ It continues to perform arrangements of matsuri-bayashi pieces from across, many of which were originally collected by members of Kodo in the 1960s and 1970s. Simultaneously, the group also works with Western

⁵¹

<http://disneyworld.disney.go.com/wdw/entertainment/entertainmentDetail?id=MaturizaEntertainmentPage> (Accessed January 19, 2009)

⁵² This has been a popular topic of study since scholars began intensely examining the art form in the late 1990s. (Konagaya 2001, Powell 2008, Yoon 2001)

⁵³ <http://www.taiko.org/history-traditional-japanese-drumming-rhythm-world-beats/> (Accessed January 19, 2009)

⁵⁴ http://www.kodo.or.jp/general/index_en.html (Accessed January 19, 2009)

artists like Mickey Hart and Zakir Hussein; it also integrates Western rhythmic ideas and styles in its own original compositions. All these are performed in concert, providing audiences with a large scope of what constitutes ‘*kumidaiko* performance.’ Through their efforts, and the efforts, of many others, what has emerged is a global art form of sorts, one that is still evolving. Nevertheless the same discourse continues to be utilized when promoting it. Despite these changes, *kumidaiko* often continues to be talked about as being uniquely Japanese in nature, tied to the country’s history and heritage, whether the performance site is Walt Disney World or a concert hall in Pittsburgh.

There exists the gap between how performers view taiko and how outsiders view taiko. Performers may work to expand the boundaries of what constitutes taiko performance, but inevitably they are forced back into the standard East-West dichotomy. A continuation of this runs the risk of highlighting differences that may no longer be as prominent as they once were – the gap between *kumidaiko* and Western music is not as big as this discourse might suggest. It is not that the connection of *kumidaiko* with Japanese history is negative; rather, only focusing upon it ignores the fact that influences on taiko performance have come from around the world. Taiko performers and scholars can help to broaden the concept of taiko performance as it exists in the general public.

Still, Maturiza when it performs in Walt Disney World is helpless in fighting this stereotyping, as they do not control how taiko is described in Disney’s promotional materials. The environment in which Maturiza performs at Epcot serves to situate the group within the context of taiko in relation Disney’s created sense of “Japanese-ness.” Indeed, the performance site of the Japan pavilion sets Maturiza apart from other taiko groups, despite whatever commonalities they might share. No other group performs in a venue like Walt Disney World,

nor do they perform as often as Maturiza does there. However, this is not without its consequences. In a concert hall, a degree of innovation is accepted and perhaps even appreciated; World Showcase allows the performer no such opportunity. As in a museum, the atmosphere of the Japan pavilion must be maintained at all times. The past is favored over the present, innovation is not permitted. The artifact must remain the same, and the exhibit must remain on display.

APPENDIX A

MATSURIZA EPCOT PERFORMANCE LOG

Date	Time	Pieces Performed	Performance location
December 18, 2007	2:05 PM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oiuchi Daiko • Hado 	Pagoda
	3:00 PM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hado • Yodan Uchi 	Pagoda
	3:50 PM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Matsuri Daiko • O-daiko 	Pagoda
	4:25 PM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oiuchi Daiko • Lantana 	Pagoda
May 12, 2008	2:00 PM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oiuchi Daiko • Lantana 	Pagoda
	2:55 PM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hado • Yodan Uchi 	Pagoda
	3:45 PM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hagayake no Taiko • O-daiko 	Pagoda
	5:25 PM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oiuchi Daiko • Lantana 	Pavilion Courtyard
	6:30 PM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oiuchi Daiko • Lantana 	Pavilion Courtyard
	7:10 PM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oiuchi Daiko • Hado 	Pagoda
May 13, 2008	1:55 PM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oiuchi Daiko • Lantana 	Pagoda
	7:55 PM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oiuchi Daiko • Hado 	Pagoda

APPENDIX B

ORIGINAL LOCATIONS AND DATES OF BUILDINGS RECONSTRUCTED IN EPCOT

Structure	Location	Date
<i>Torii</i>	Itsukushima	12 th Century
<i>Shinshiden</i>	Kyoto	794
Himeji Castle	Himeji	17 th Century
Katsura Imperial Villa	Kyoto	17 th Century
Pagoda	Nara	7 th -8 th Centuries

APPENDIX C

COMPARISON OF MATSURIZA REPERTOIRE

At Epcot	In Concert and on CD/DVD
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oiuchi Daiko • Hado • Yodan Uchi • Matsuri Daiko • O-daiko • Lantana • Hayagake no Taiko 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oiuchi Daiko • Hado • Yodan Uchi • Matsuri Daiko • O-daiko • Lantana • Hayagake no Taiko • Yatai bayashi • Mutsumi • Toyo • Tomoe • Oroshi • Ah-Soh (MASK MAN) • Hi Ho Izurukuni • Hajimari • Yushima • Hachijo • Himuga • Kai Hime

APPENDIX D

GLOSSARY OF JAPANESE TERMS

Romanized Reading	Kanji
<i>amezaiku</i>	飴細工
<i>fue</i>	笛
<i>hachimaki</i>	鉢巻
<i>haragake</i>	腹掛け
<i>hengaku</i>	扁額
<i>kakegoe</i>	掛け声
<i>karesansui</i>	枯山水
<i>koi</i>	鯉
<i>kumidaiko</i>	組太鼓
<i>matsuri</i>	祭り
<i>matsuri-bayashi</i>	祭囃子
<i>Matsuriza</i>	祭座
<i>momohiki</i>	股引
<i>nagado-daiko</i>	長胴太鼓
<i>o-daiko</i>	大太鼓
<i>obi</i>	帯
<i>shime-daiko</i>	締太鼓

Shinshiden

紫宸殿

Shirasagijō

白鷺城

tabi

足袋

Torii

鳥居

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