

A close-up photograph of a Kabuki actor. The actor's face is painted white with dramatic, dark red and black markings around the eyes and nose. They are wearing a red robe with a white collar and a white sash. The actor's hair is styled in a traditional, braided manner. The background is dark and out of focus.

American and Japanese University Students Perspective of Kabuki

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Outline

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Significance of the Study

- I saw Traditional Kabuki during my year abroad at Toyo University, which made me curious on how university students perceive this performing art.
- Since this art form dates back to 1603 I want to see if students can still grasp the true essence of Kabuki

Research Background

- a. Videos of Kabuki
- b. Comparison of two Kabuki style
- c. The Elements of Kabuki
- d. History of Kabuki
- e. Super Kabuki
- f. Popularity of Kabuki



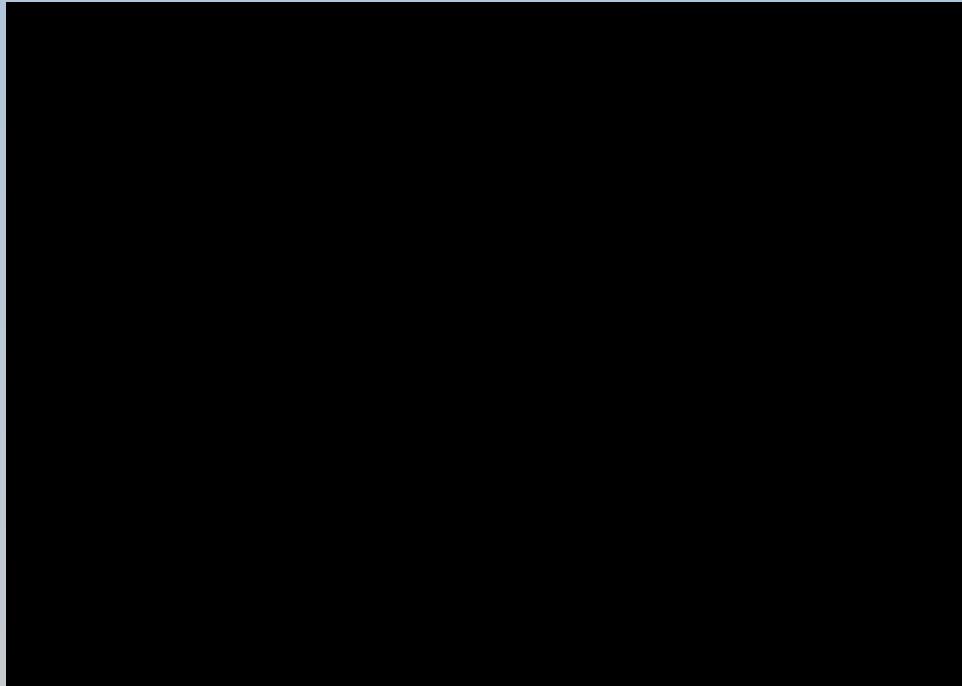
Research Questions

- 1. What are American and Japanese university student's perception of Kabuki?
- 2. In today's society can university students grasp the true essence of Kabuki?

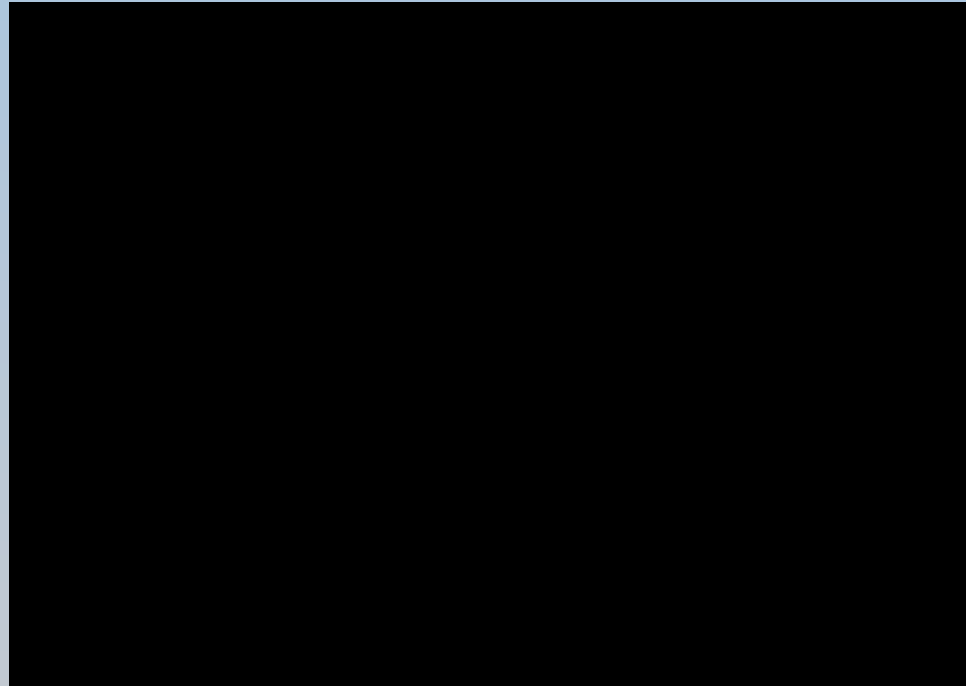


Traditional and Super Kabuki Videos

Traditional Kabuki



Super Kabuki

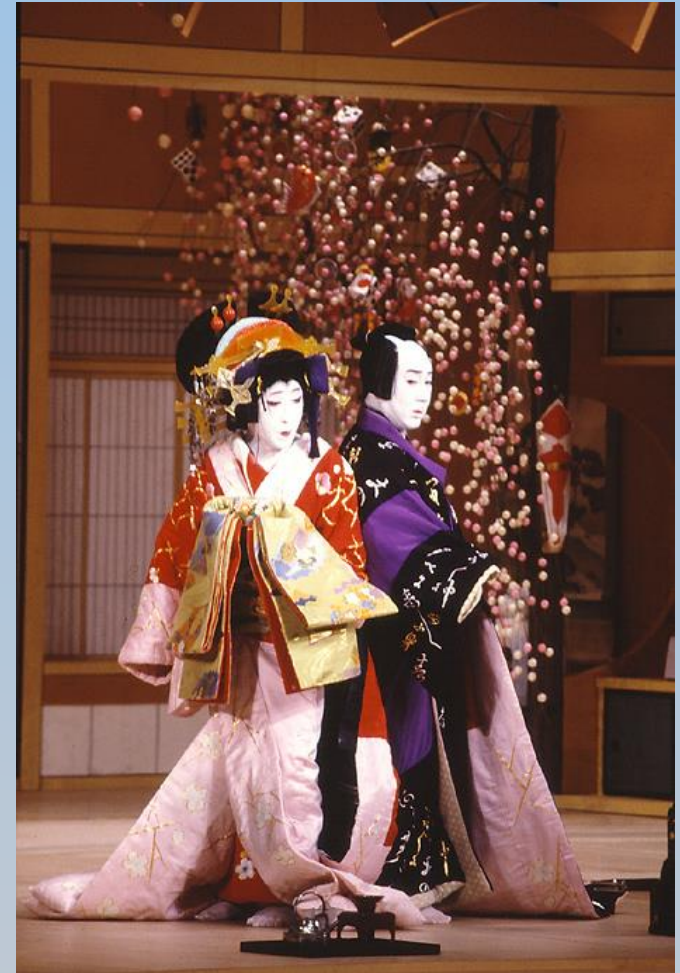


Comparison of Traditional Kabuki and Super Kabuki

Traditional Kabuki	Super kabuki
Traditional Japanese Dialogue; difficult to understand	Modern Japanese dialogue; easier to understand
Simple but elegant costumes	Flashier, more ornate costumes
Live band that incorporates flutes, drums, and shamisen	Use of pre-recorded music that incorporated electric instruments
Simple stage setting	Elaborate stage settings

Elements of Kabuki

- **Kabuki** consist of several elements that blend together to make a unique performance
- **Actor**- Blending voice, shape, color, pattern, movement, and precise gestures appealing to the spectators eyes and ears.
- **Kumadori**- Kabuki style of make-up
- **Music**- Live orchestra that utilizes the shamisen and flutes and drums
- Simple **stage setting**.



(Pronko,2007)

Acting Roles in Kabuki

Aragoto

The rougher, arrogant role, dynamic gestures. Exaggerate makeup



Wagoto

The gentler, modest, humble role, and realistic gestures. Simple makeup



Onnagata

Male playing the female role.



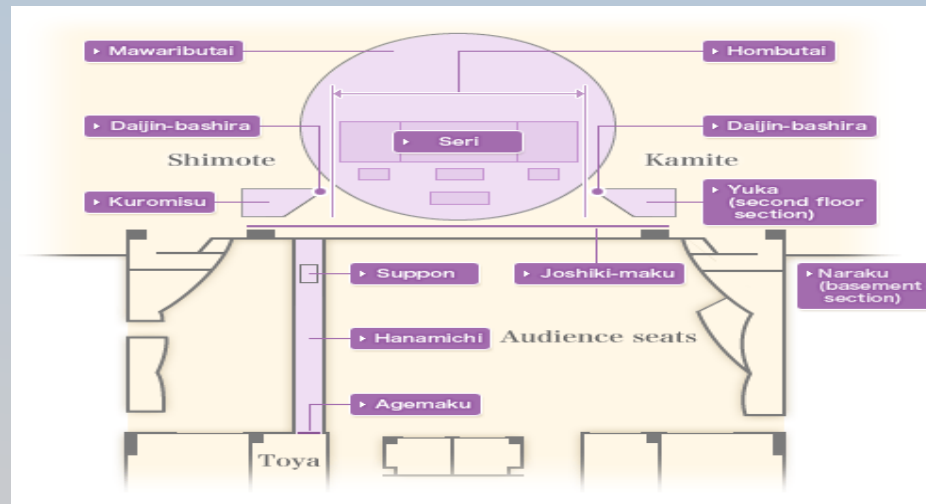
Kumadori (make-up)

Emotion	Color	Image
Power	Simple, light red lines	Image number 1
Sadness	Blue lines across the face	Image number 2
Jealousy	Yellow lines	Image number 3
Anger	Deep red spread all over the face	Image number 4



Stage Setting

- The Kabuki stage consists of 3 main parts
- **Agemaku** is the curtain hung at the end of the Hanamichi (passageway to/from stage) and is visible from the stage.
- **Hanamichi** is the passage that extends at right angle to the Hombutai from its Shimote side, passing through the audience seating area to the Agemaku; it is used mainly for actors' entrances and exits.
- **Suppon** is a small Seri located near the section where the Hanamichi joins the stage.



Costume

Kugeaku

Noble and villains have the most ornate costume



Wagoto

Simple outfits that the common people of the era would wear

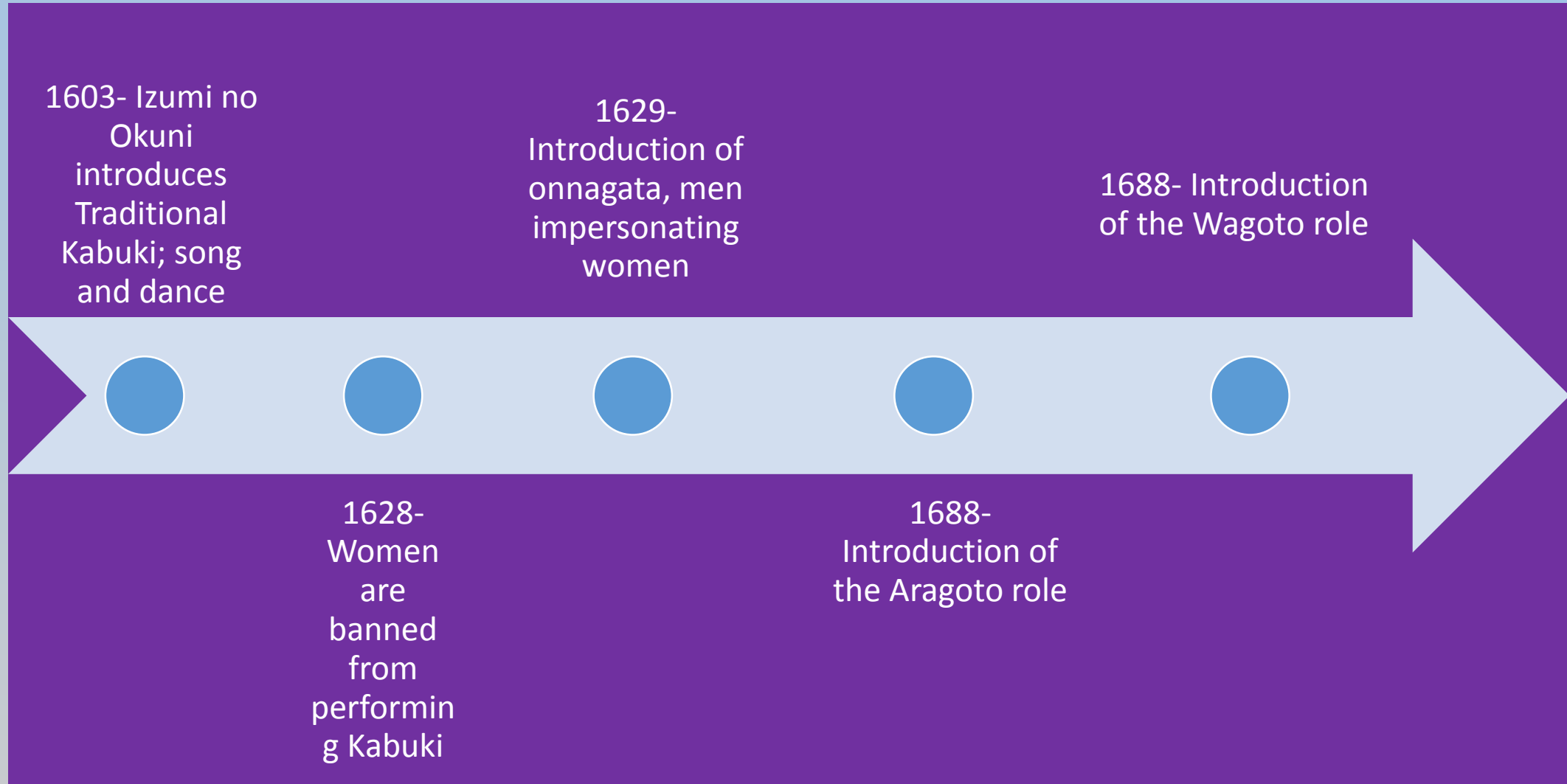


Aragoto

Stylized mainly by samurai fashion of the era



History Kabuki



History of Kabuki Continued

1787-
Introduction of
Shosagoto, all
Onnagata dance
performance

1889- The
opening of the
Kabuki-za
located in
modern day
Ginza

1878- The
opening of the
Shintomi-za, first
Kabuki theater in
built in
downtown Tokyo

1989- Super
kabuki is born.
Yamamoto
Takeru sells out
Kabukiza for six
months straight

Super Kabuki

- “ It is important to attract today’s audience by creating a stage with free ideas, new interpretations, and various ways of expression”
Ennosuke III
- Instead of using live instruments Ennosuke III used prerecorded music that utilized electric instruments. Many say this is the Broadway of the Kabuki spectrum

(Natsuko, 2002)

Popularity of Kabuki

- “The future of Kabuki should be in trying to please the public, just as Okuni did when she started it as popular art for commoners”
Ennosuke
- At times Japanese drama actor’s perform Kabuki, generating a larger crowd.



Research Method

Survey

Totals of 60 University students

30 Japanese University Students

13 male, 17 female

Age 17-27+

30 American University Students

11 male, 19 female

Age 17-27+

Research Survey:

Google Form (English) (Japanese)

A Kabuki actor in a dramatic pose, wearing a white and red striped garment, with arms raised. The actor's face is painted with white and red makeup, and they have a serious expression. The background is dark.

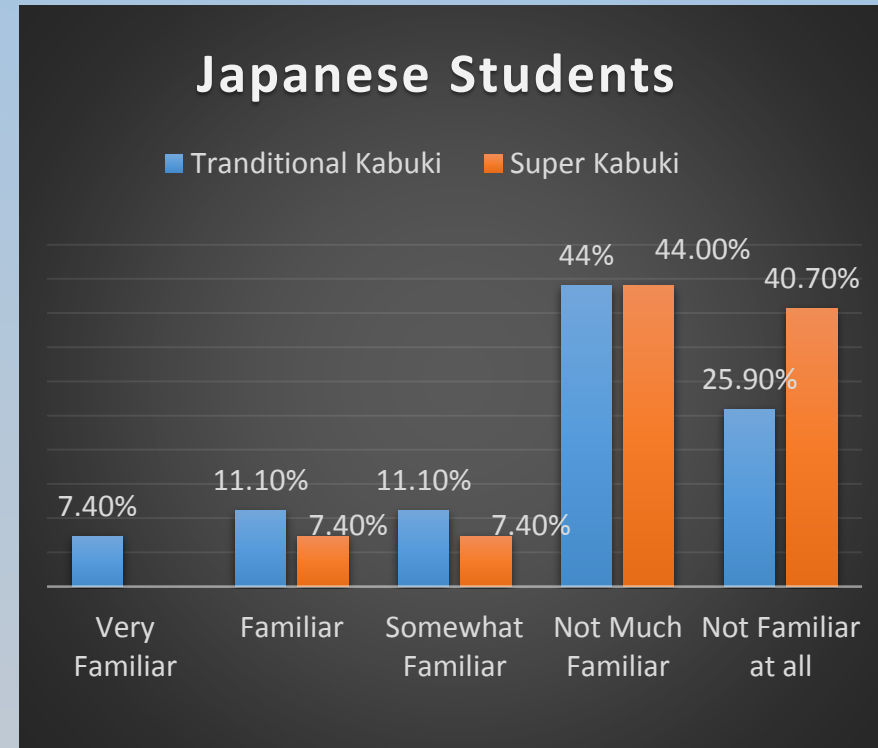
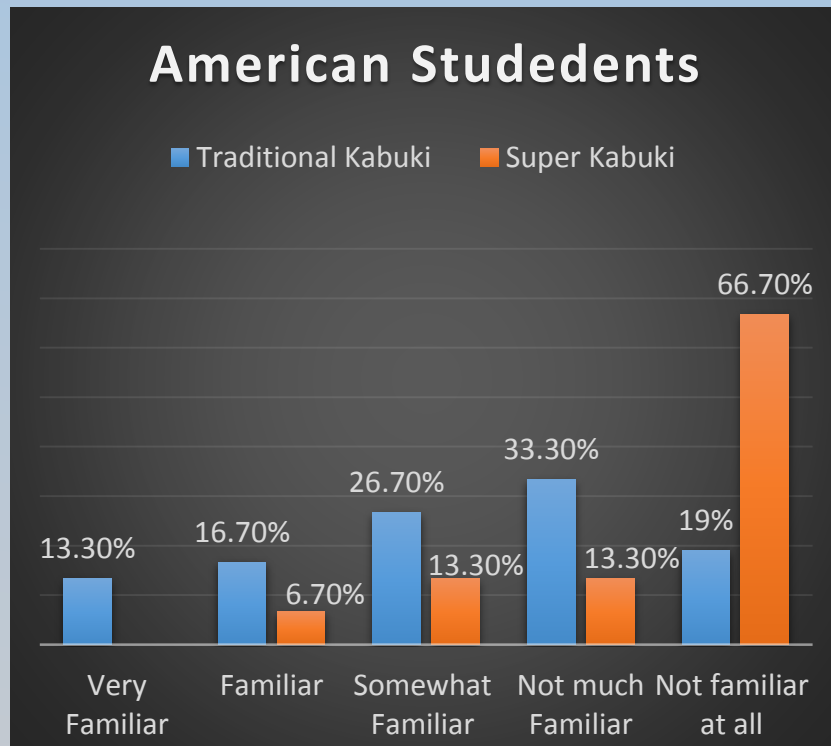
Research Results

Research Question 1:

What are American and Japanese university student's perception of Kabuki?

Familiarity of Kabuki

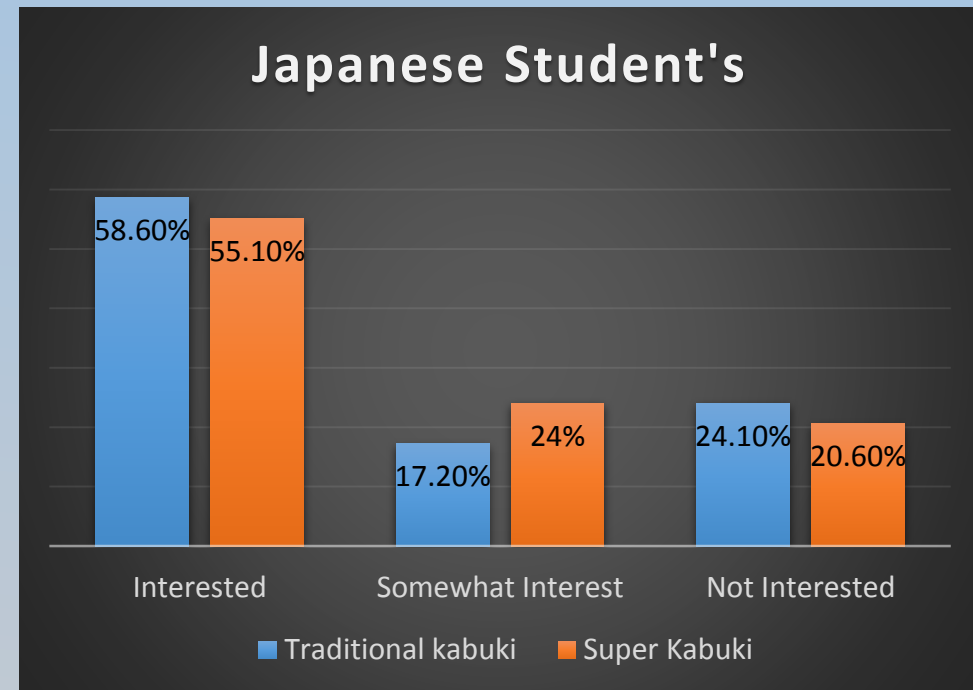
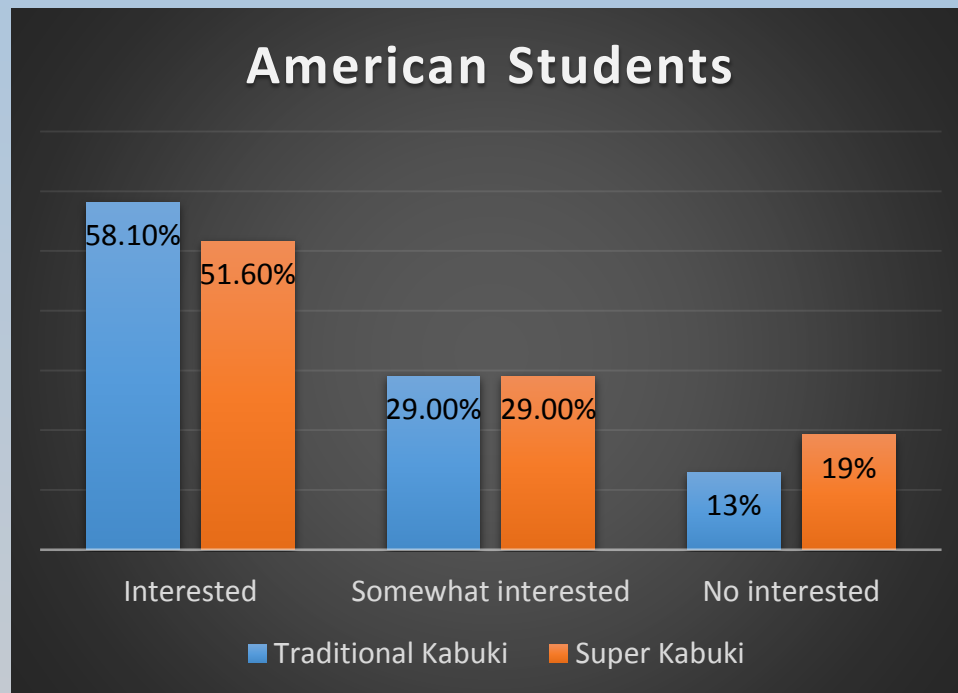
Which Kabuki are you more familiar with?



American students are more familiar with Kabuki than Japanese Students.

Interest in Kabuki

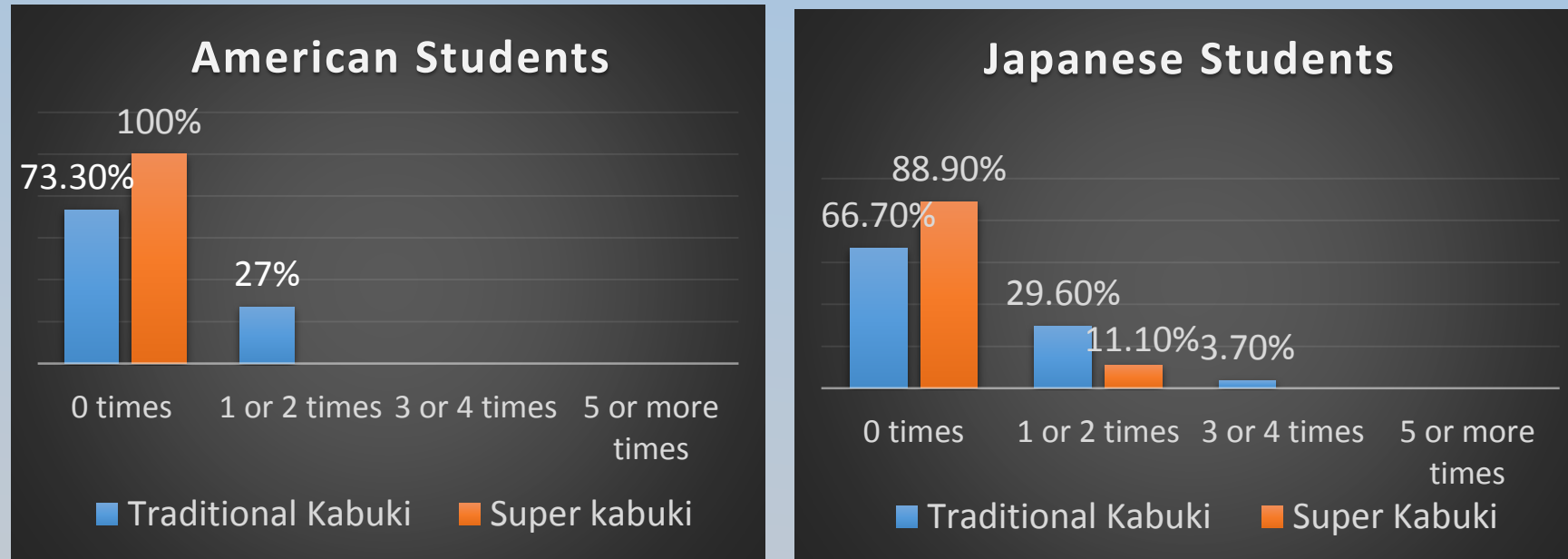
Which style of Kabuki are university Students interested in?



Both American and Japanese are more interested in Traditional Kabuki.

Experience of Kabuki

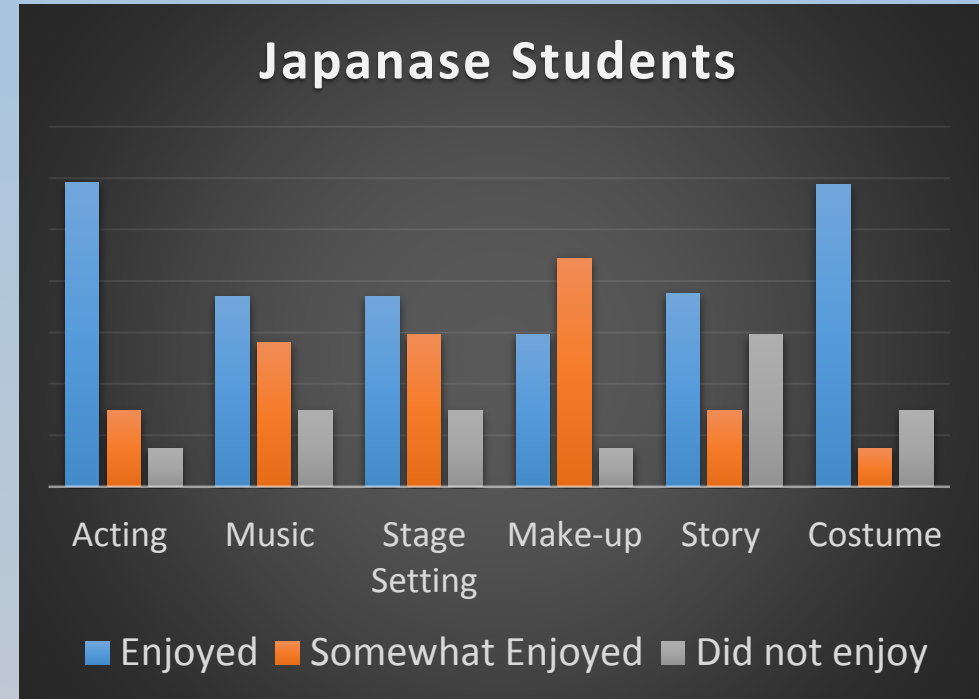
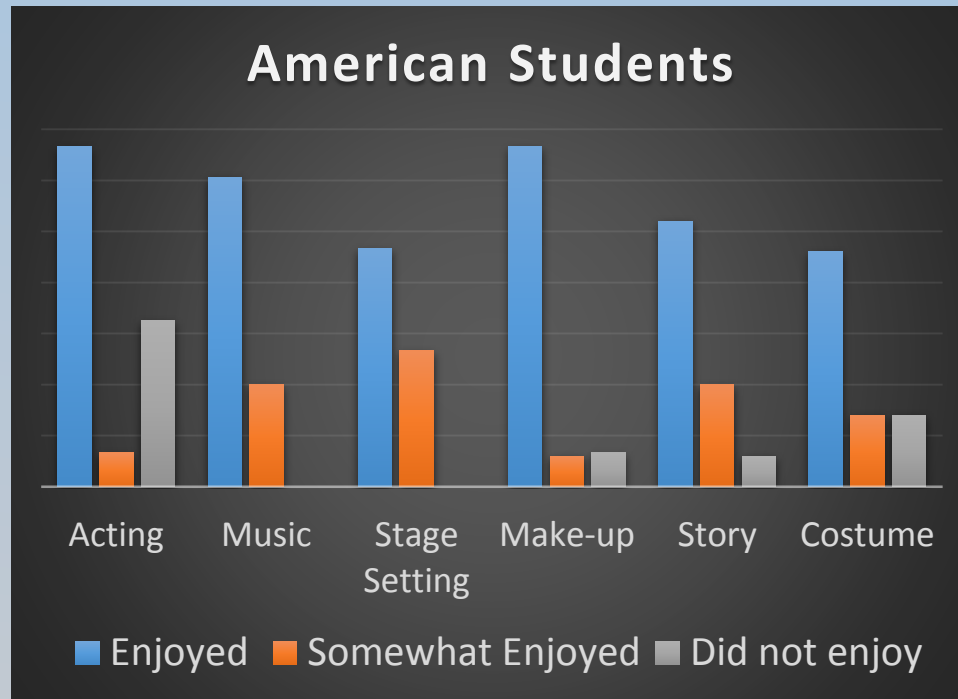
How many times have university students viewed Kabuki at the theater?



Both students have seen Traditional Kabuki at the theater at least once or twice. A few Japanese students have seen Super Kabuki.

Enjoyment of Kabuki

Which element of Kabuki did students enjoy at the theater?



American University Students enjoyed all aspects of Traditional Kabuki at the theater while Japanese students primarily enjoyed the make-up and the costume.

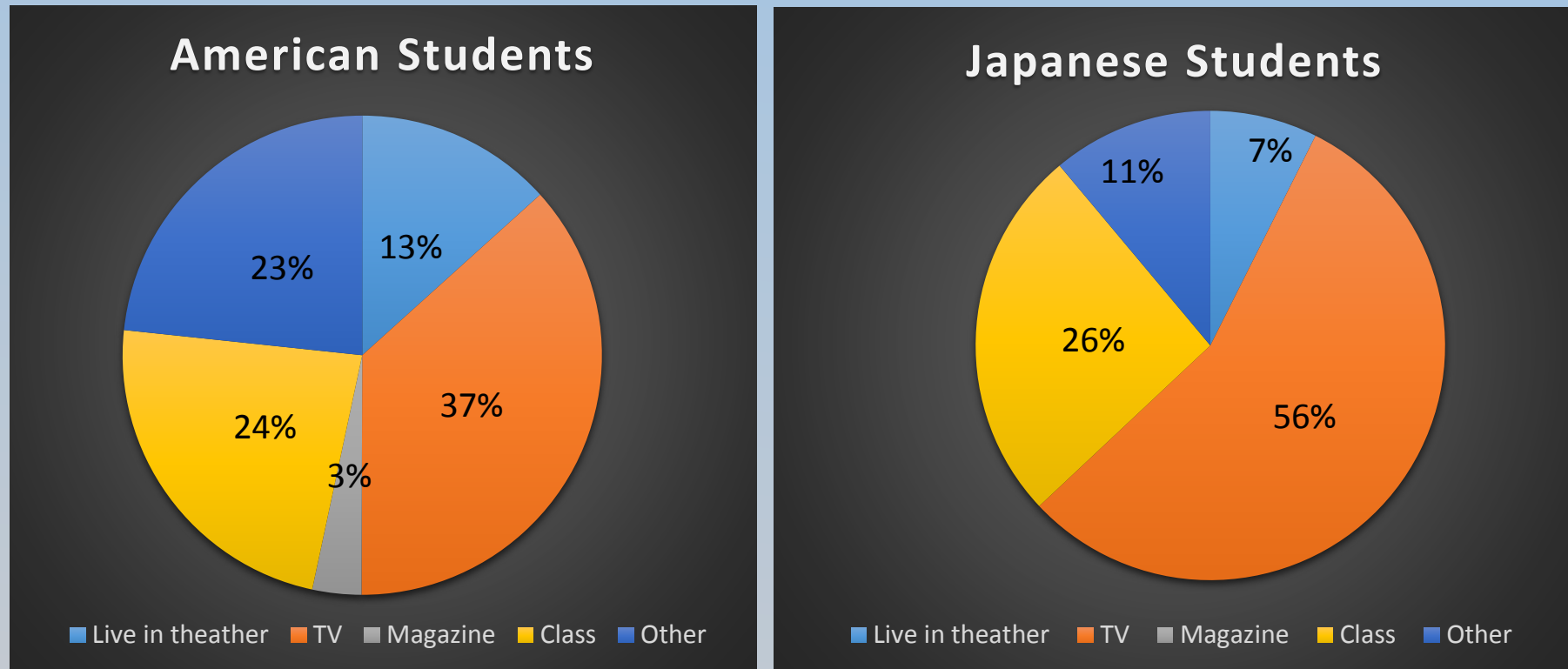
Ranking of Enjoyment

American	Japanese
1 st Tie between the make-up and acting at 33%	1 st Acting at 29.6%
2 nd Music at 30%	2 nd Costume at 29.4%
3 rd Story at 26%	3 rd Story at 18.8%

2nd place was the only difference. Music for Americans and the costume for Japanese

Introduction of Kabuki

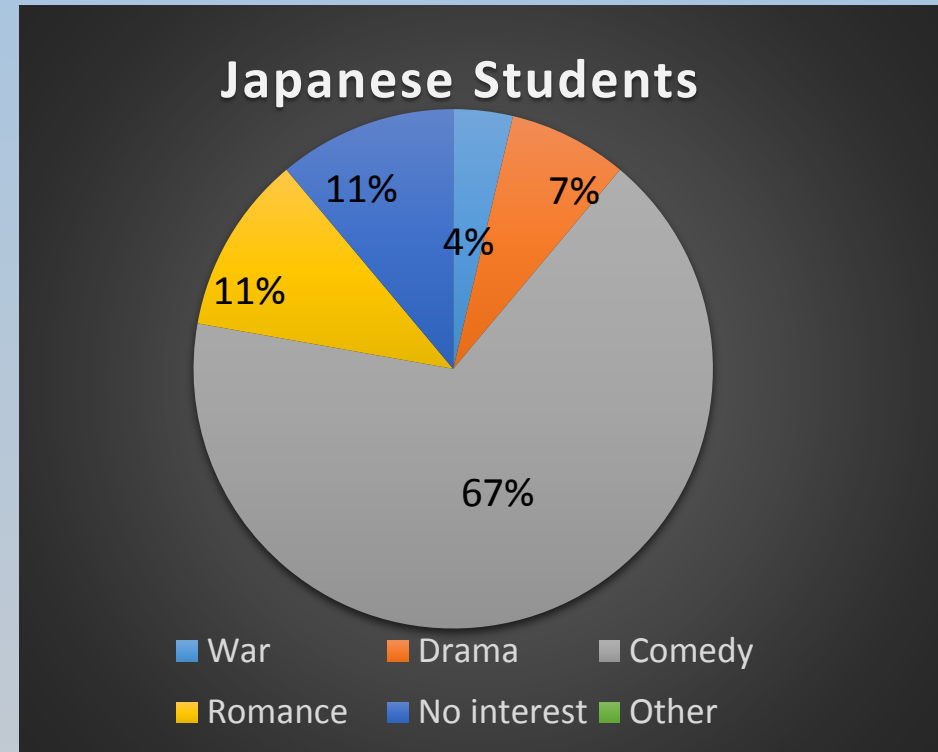
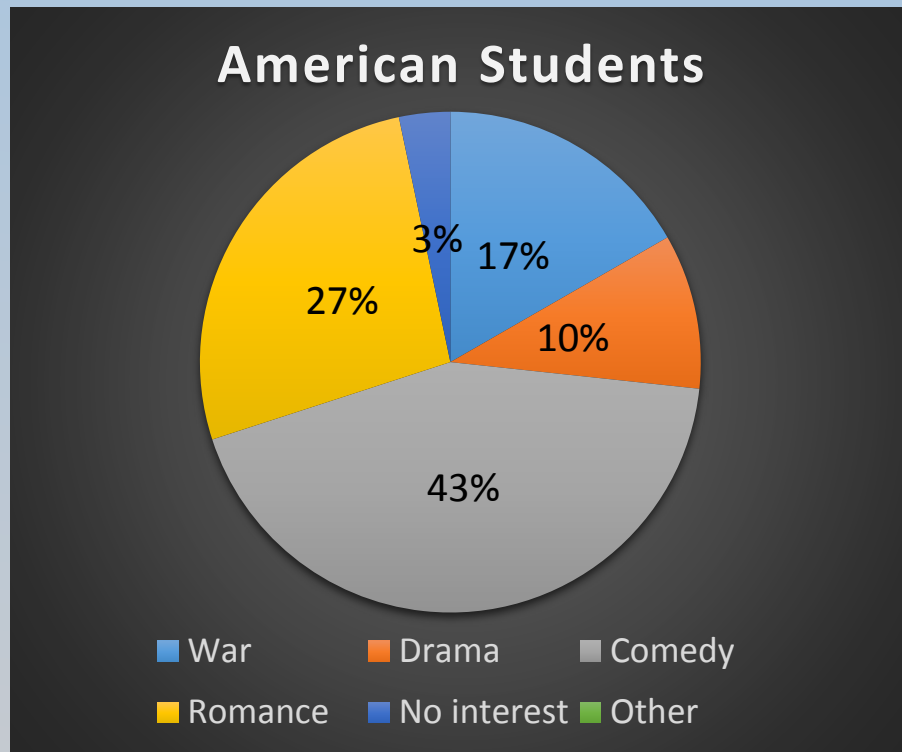
How were university students introduced to Kabuki?



Both American and Japanese students were introduced to Kabuki by TV.

Genre of Kabuki

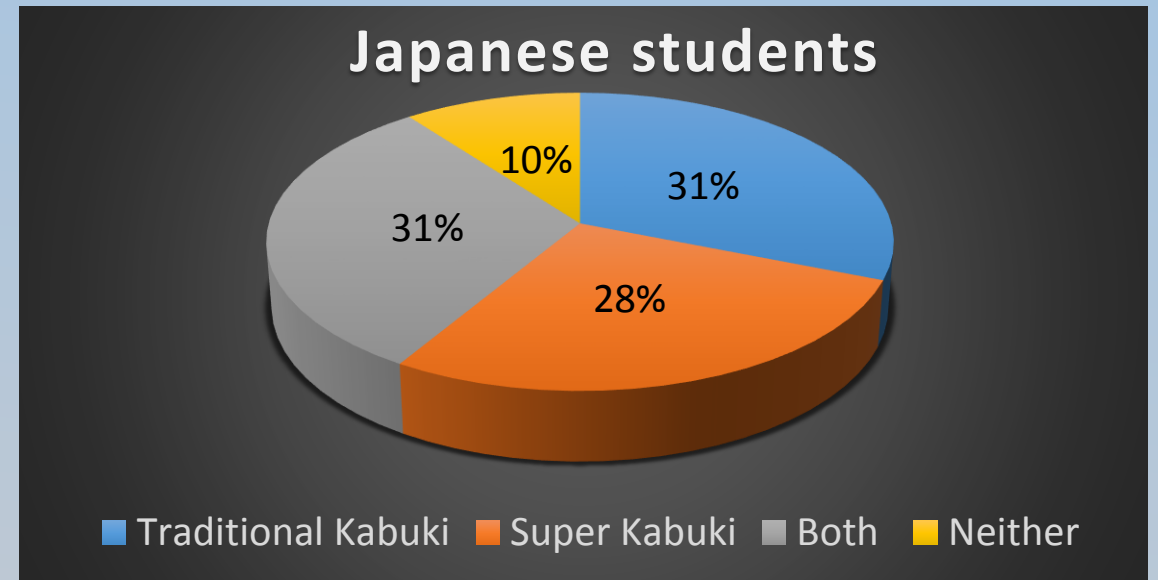
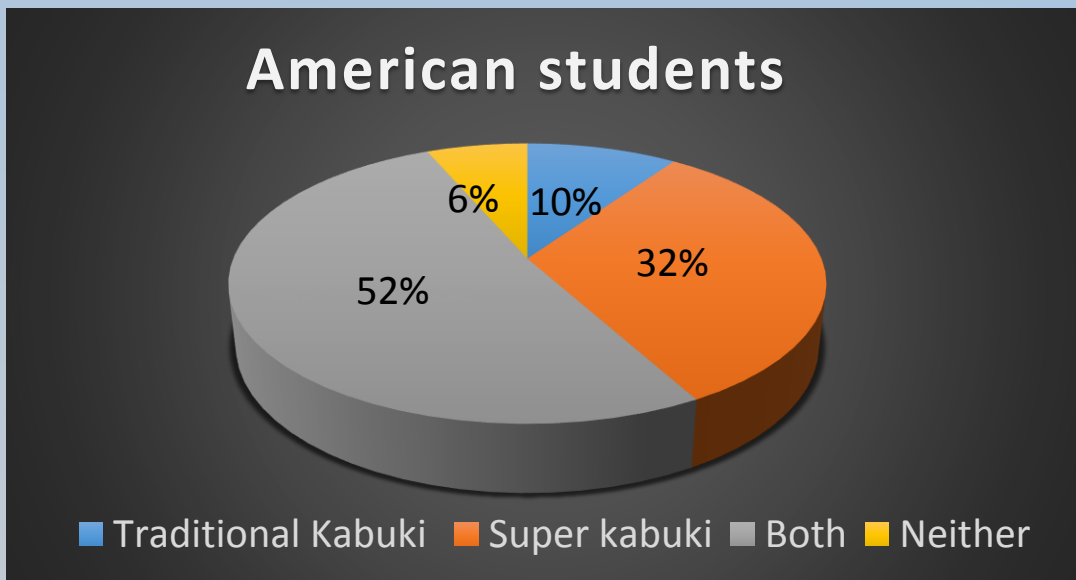
Which genre of Kabuki do university student want to see at the theater?



Both American and Japanese students are inclined to watch a comedic Kabuki performance

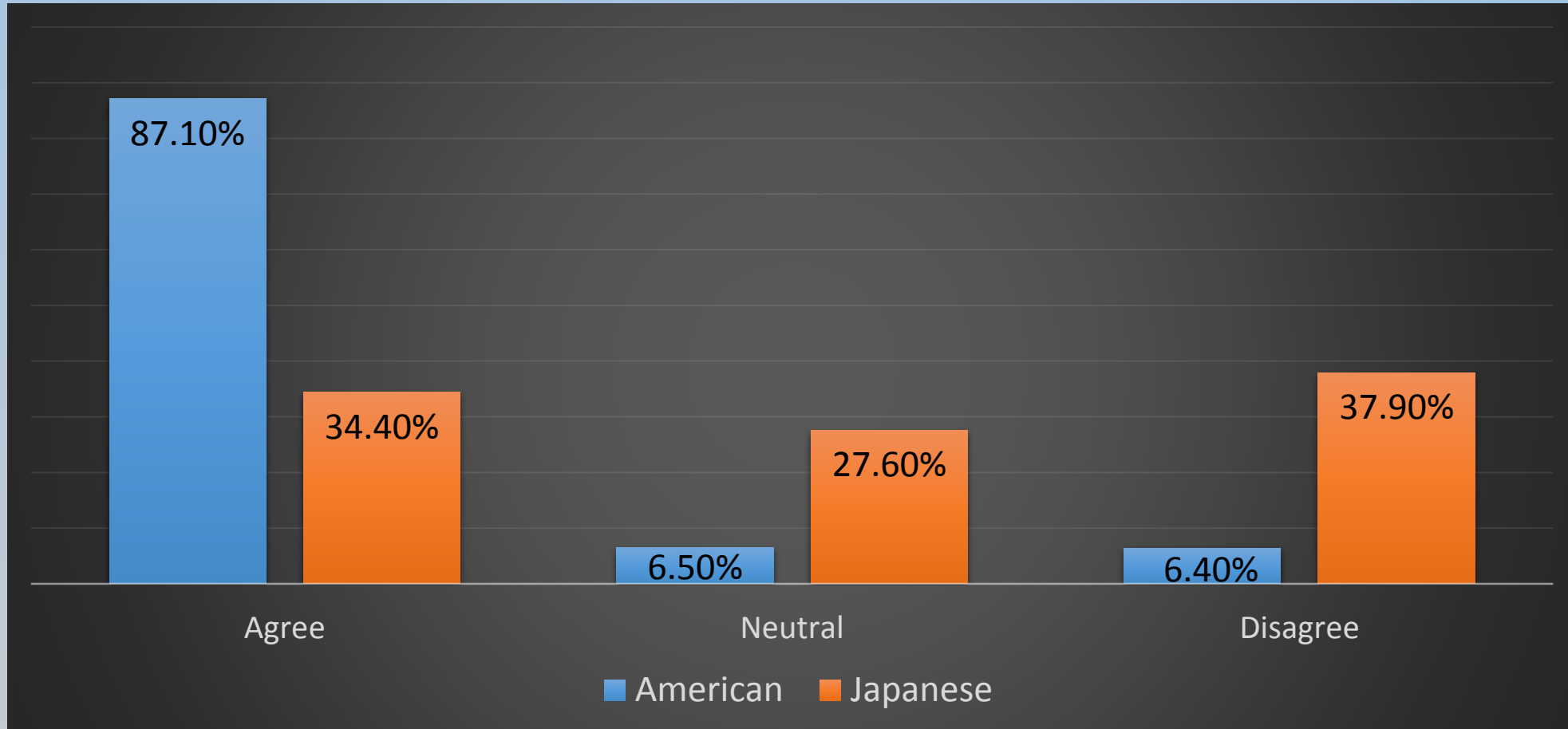
Preference of Kabuki style

Which style of Kabuki are students more inclined to watch at the theater?



American University are more inclined to watch [both styles] which came in at 50%, followed by Super Kabuki. For Japanese students there was a tie between [Both] and [Traditional Kabuki] at 31%, followed by Super Kabuki at 28%.

Gender equality in Kabuki



American Students agree that women should be allowed to perform in Kabuki while Japanese Students disagree with this.

Summary of Research Question 1

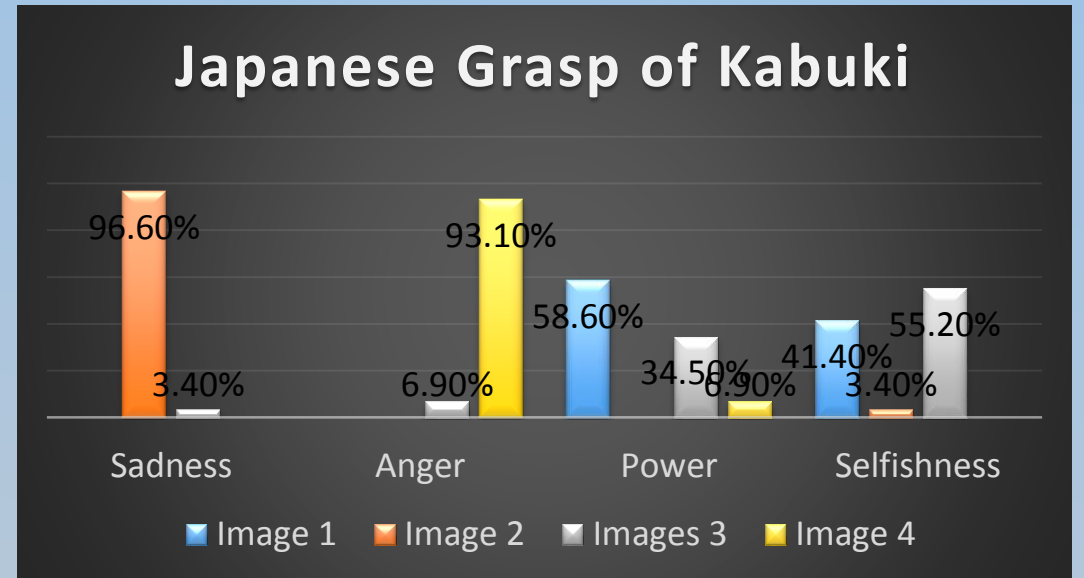
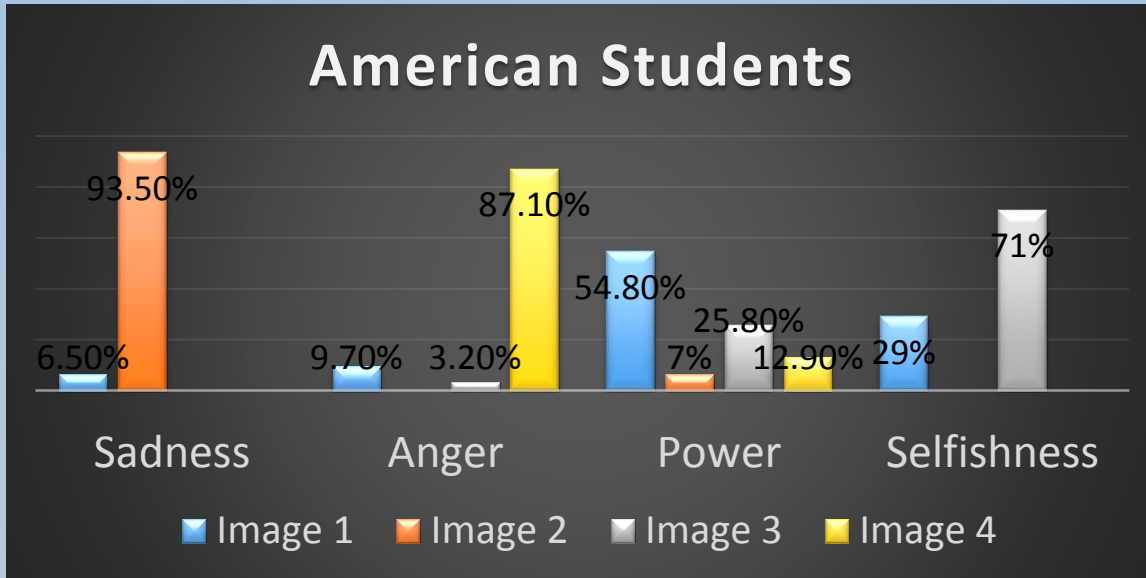
- Both American and Japanese students enjoy and show more interest in Traditional Kabuki
- If there were more comedic performances of Kabuki, University Students would see this art form at the theater
- American University Students agree that women should be able to perform in Kabuki while Japanese students disagree with this.

Research Question 2

In today's society can university students grasp the true essence of Kabuki?



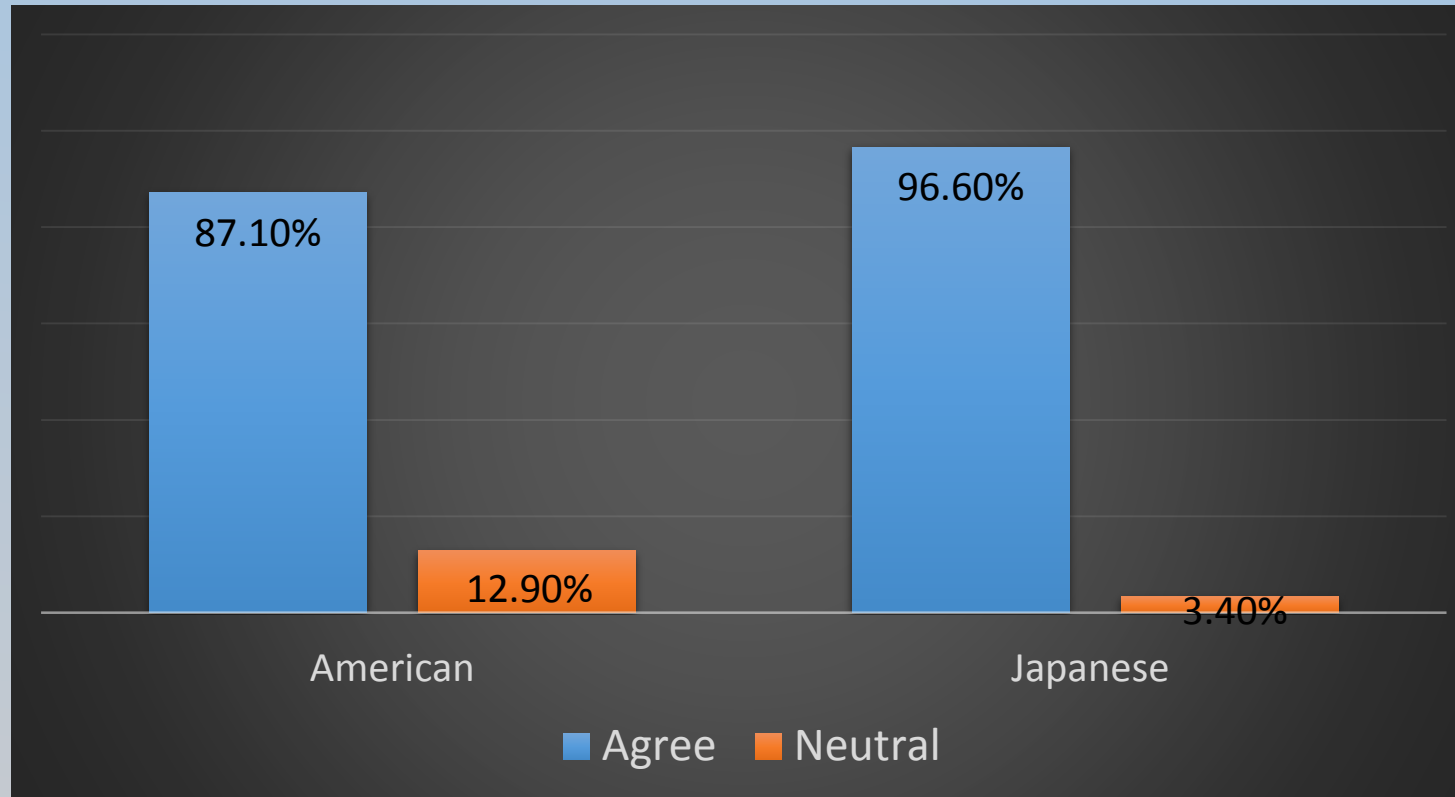
Emotions in Kumadori



Japanese university student's were able to distinguish power, sadness, and anger. American students were able to distinguish all the emotions, including selfishness.

Kumadori and the Actor

Because of the make-up, the actor becomes a live special effect.



Both Japanese and American Students agree that the make enhances the actor.

Summary of Research Question 2

- American university students were able to distinguish **all of the emotions** represented in Kumadori. The Japanese university students were only able to distinguish 3 of them.
- Both American and Japanese university students agree that the Kumadori enhances the acting and overall experience.

Conclusion

- University students are interested and recognize Kabuki as a performing art. Before my research I believed that university students showed no interest for Kabuki, **but I was surely mistaken.**
- Surprisingly, according to the research university students showed a greater interest and wanted to see **Traditional Kabuki** at the theater.
- American university students believe that women should be able to perform in Kabuki., while the Japanese students are against this notion. This can be due to culture within each respected country

Discussion

Limitation of the Study:

This research was conducted on a small scale with few participants, making it difficult to generalize.

Future Study:

I want to explore on exactly how the make-up enhances the quality of the acting. I also want to explore in further detail on why American Students agree the women should be able to perform in Kabuki, while the Japanese students are against this.

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