

The wash: a play by philip kan gotanda



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Philip Kan Gotanda's, "The Wash," is a two-act Asian American play written in 1949 and first staged in 1972 at the Manhattan Theatre in New York. In 1988 it was re-created as a screenplay for independent film version ("Philip Kan Gotanda's The Wash," 2007). "The Wash" narrates of a story about a Nisei (History Dictionary, 2002)¹ Japanese couple, Nobu and Masi Matsumoto, who after 40 years of marriage, decided to live separately. Ironically, their dwellings were only a few meters away from each place. Once every week, Masi drops by to do Nobu's laundry.

Throughout the play their individual and collective struggles with their traditional past as well as few funny romantic moments give form to the whole play. While Masi is able to move on and begins dating the widower Sadao, Nobu is forced to confront his traumatic memories of the internment camps. It was too late for Nobu to learn that the two have grown into the relationship in just a short time. In the end, Nobu gives in to Masi's appeal to divorce him and marry Sadao, proclaiming that she also "has the right to be happy." (Act 2, Scene 8).

Other characters who give life to the play are the following: Marsha and Judy, daughters of Nobu and Masi; Kiyoko Hasegawa, owner of a restaurant located a few meters away from Nobu's house and has a fondness for Nobu; Sadao Nakasato, a widower and retired pharmacist and is attracted to Masi who later became the latter's second husband; Chiyo Froelich, Kiyoko's friend and owner of a beauty salon which is located beside Kiyoko's resto; Curley Sakata, works as a cook at Kiyoko's resto, and Timothy, Judy's baby from an African American husband whom Nobu dislikes. ——— 1 Persons

whose parents were born in Japan but who were themselves born outside Japan.

Many Nisei were moved by force in the internment of Japanese Americans in World War II I. Set Design. Three locales representing the following: 1) Nobu's house (located at the upper center stage), 2) Masi's apartment (situated at the lower left most stage), and 3) Kiyoko's restaurant (located at the lower right stage), will constitute the major sections of stage.

At the back of Nobu's house are clotheslines secured by bamboo poles on a platform that lead to a two or three step stairs situated to the extreme upper right and extreme upper left most parts of the stage that will serve as the actors' exits. The extreme lower part of the stage will be allocated for minor occurrences (scenes) in the play. Props are minimal so that the audience's attention will be focused on the characters and their acting.

Hence in Nobu's place, the following props will be set up: 1) a TV set in the lower center part of the house facing, 2) a traditional Japanese center table where a kite frame will be seen all throughout the play (the kite transforms as the play unfolds though), 3) a brown-colored, couch where Nobu is usually seen most of the time, 4) a kitchen table, situated a few steps behind the couch and where the laundry basket and the dirty clothes are placed, 5) to the right of the table is the a) dish rack, b) sink with some dirty cups and plates, c) stove and d) a fridge.

To the right of the kitchen is a door that leads to the hallway and the bedroom; to the left is also a door that leads to the exit and to Masi's apartment This portion of the stage should be placed onto a " lift" that could

<https://assignbuster.com/the-wash-a-play-by-philip-kan-gotanda/>

be raised or lowered to give way for the clothesline scene (2. 1). The general untidiness and gloominess of the house seem to echo the confusion and struggles that Nobu undergo all throughout the play. Nonetheless, the general set up of Nobu's place is characterized by its simplicity and restraint, an atmosphere common to Japanese setting.

Masi's place, on the other hand, is “ a small apartment with bedroom downstage from main room” (Act 1, Scene 3). A front door opens to the sala where a sofa is set in the middle of the room. A side table placed to the left of the sofa with a phone on top can also be seen here. A few steps from the sofa, is the kitchen counter. Masi's apartment is almost always neat and tidy and everything seems to be where it is from the beginning to the end of the place depicting the main character's systematic personality—focused and determined.

At the upper left most stage, a signage is set on top of the structure saying that it is Kiyoko's restaurant. A door set to the right and directly above the signage leads to three tables with chairs lined around each. To the upper most part of the resto is a bar counter. The overall ambience in the resto is bright and colorful to match Kiyoko's lively and upbeat personality. A back drop depicting a Japanese section of the San Francisco also divides the back stage and main stage is set right next to the clothesline.

The lower stage, where other minor scenes in the play will take place, is bare except for the lamp posts lined from side to side. The overall atmosphere of the play is melancholic to highlight every event or scene that will take place. Playing with the lights as well as with the sound effects will then definitely

add to the desired dramatic effect (create existing mood and tone, provide visibility of the performers, reinforce the style of the production, etc). II.

Directorial Concept. The play will concentrate on the break-up of two Japanese couple and the internal conflicts and struggles of each character in the play.

Consequently the main plot will center on how the main characters, in the person of Nobu and Masi, try to reveal or conceal these struggles and their strategies to overcome such challenges. Various subplots of third party emotional involvements (Masi and Sadao; and Kiyoko and Nobu), restrained family relationships (Nobu with her daughters Marsha and Judy; Nobu with son-in-law and grandson, Timothy); recurring past memories (Kiyoko and her memories of her American soldier husband who have passed many years ago; Masi's reflection of her husband's annoying trait; Nobu's unforgotten memories at a Bank) likewise reflect these internal struggles.

Hence in order to support this concept of struggles and consequent yielding or breaking out of a specific state, each sub-plot should although presented separately, must be perceived to be a part of the whole play. III. Acting technique – Acting is like dancing, to some extent.

In a play, the lines narrated by the actors who are in character conveys the whole story while in a dance production, the whole presentation creates the mental picture for the audience to give meaning to. In dancing, the background music, the sound (or sound effects if applied) as well as the dancers' movements set the presentation's tone and mood and contribute to

the overall effectiveness of the dancers in transmitting the intended message.

In a play, though more is expected from the actors, considering that they don't just use their bodies to relay a specific message but rather must also always be in character to effectively be the 'reality' being created throughout the play, each dialogue or monologue is so much alike with the unconscious accommodating of each dancer to give way for each partner's movement, thus creating a continuous, meaningful action. "The Wash" is an honestly bland drama depicting not just the lives of these Japanese couple but rather the tragedy that befalls so many married couple, who after many years of marriage, end up living separate lives.

In staging "The Wash," both reality and art should be meshed seamlessly, that it might be far from impossible to distinguish the two. As early in the first scene, the dynamics in the relationship of the couple are already made apparent; hence it requires that the main characters should effectively convey their emotions towards the other through their actions.

No background sound will be heard throughout the play, except for the momentous, memory sequences in Act I, Scenes 8 and 9 (the first when Nobu was reflecting on the occasion when Masi asked why "he does not want to sleep with her any more?" and the following scene when Masi was contemplating on one of her petty fights with Nobu over a fishing hook). The only time that a song (String of Pearls) is played as background music was in Act 2, Scenes 1 and 8. Hence, for the most part of the play, the audience will

rely on the actor's lines and actions as well as the play on lights to create the intended dramatic effect.

Nobu is presented as gruff, proud and inflexible and builds kites but never changes the design, because " My old man did it this way" (Act 1, Scene 1, Line 65). Nobu's unbending character is limited. Masi, on the other hand is strong-willed but tentative about her new life (Act 2, Scene 2). The other characters, on the other hand, sprinkles the play with some comic as well as playful touch, thus keeping the audience focused on each scene through out the play. IV.

Marketing Strategies: In any theatrical production, it is an indisputable fact that first, once a targeted audience is informed of an up-coming event, ticket sales definitely will be larger. Second, a good performance will inevitably result to repeat purchases. Hence, the following strategies will be considered in staging this play: 1) setting up a tour hat includes at least one school from each district in the state with two performances per school; 2) increase funding, and 3) increase public contribution.

Other specific tasks may include: 1) staging sample performances to increase public awareness (may be put up as an informal presentation as in a street presentation (school ground or hallway, or on the streets for more captive audience) or formal performance as in a theater, 2) connect with school administration through invites distribution and for possible posting and distribution of flyers and posters in their facilities; and 3) contact and communication with audience members (opening-night or gala after performance party for casts, production crews and audience; invitations for

reviewers and other special audience members; and offering specially discounted tickets.

Since the whole production relies on ticket sales, funding and contribution for the uninterrupted staging of the play, unforeseen events (losing enough of the production's sales and funding that there is no marketing budget left) should also be considered, hence the marketing crew should make it a point to establish relationships with local businesses (i. e. local papers, publishers, catering providers) who in exchange for advertising in the production's programs and our referrals, the production may receive reduce rates or even free rates. V. Other Aspects: Reflection on the play

The play “ The Wash” is filled with exquisitely enmeshed love stories (Nobu and Masi; Masi and Sadao; Nobu and Kiyoko), hilarious misunderstandings about food (Act 1, Scene 5, Act 2, Scene 1), behavior (Act 1, Scene 6, Nobu's unusual spending time in front of the TV, even when other people are around his house, etc), and grave heartache scens (Act 1, Scenes 7 and 8). As such, it gives us a glimpse into a world that is both distant and extremely familiar. Moreover, the play exposes, to some extent, the myriad issues that are still prevalent today concerning immigration, cultural identity, cross-cultural relationships, and the definition of race. With the manner each scene is portrayed, it would be easy for anyone to empathize with the characters and, as a result internalize the message imparted by the play.