Japan Journal 2004

April 19 - June 2

金鳥の渦巻
MOSQUITO COILS
蚊取線香
キンチヨウコウ
ヨクキウ
十巻入
COOKSEC MOSQUITO COILS
JAPAN INSECTICIDE MFG.CO.
日本除蟲菊株式會社

Sara Pearson + Patrik Widrig

• 2 •

Arrival in Kyoto

• It's Suntory time! We emerge from our dawn walk up the mountain through the 400-year old forest behind our ryokan (traditional Japanese inn) onto a concrete panorama that looks out over the entire city of Kyoto. At our feet, along with hundreds of cigarette stubs, is an empty plastic bottle of "Boss Coffee" (we discover later that this is only one of many choices – Super Boss, Relaxation Boss, Extra Dark Boss). The logo is of a James Bond style macho man's profile (ambiguous ethnicity) with chiseled features, smoking a pipe. We have arrived!

CAFE AU LAIT
BRAND NEW BOSS
BOSS
COFFEE
カフェオレ
[コーヒー飲料]

SUNTORY
RELAXATION
BOSS
COFFEE
休憩中
[コーヒー]

SUNTORY
INTERMISSION
BOSS
COFFEE
休憩中
[コーヒー]

SUNTORY
ON BUSINESS
BOSS
COFFEE
仕事中
[コーヒー]

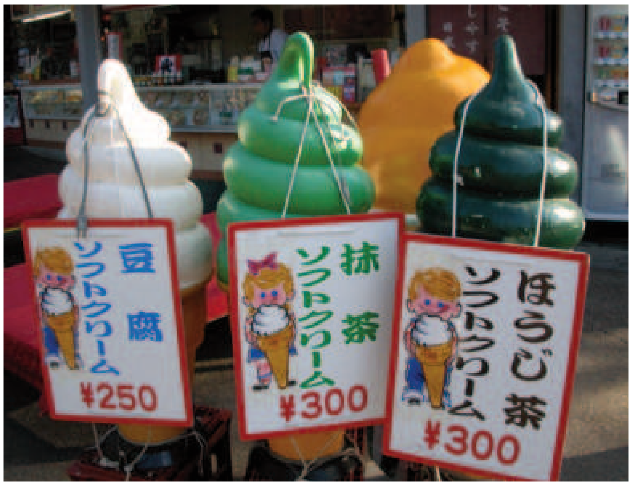
SUNTORY
CALORIE OFF
BITTER
BOSS
COFFEE
カロリーオフ
[コーヒー]

• It's been two years since we were last in Japan, and to our great delight we are back at Yoshimizu, replete with Japanese bath and tatami rooms, nestled in between our most beloved Maruyama Park (the first public park created in Japan 120 years ago) and the wooded mountains. This is on the eastern side of Kyoto, and the Kamo River has created a natural barrier from the fires that would periodically destroy the central city through the centuries. Our hike takes us past shrine after shrine (there are over 2,000 of them here!), all hidden in the forest. As we pass a small temple, we hear a double clap: a monk has just arrived in beautiful brown robes, bows to the shrine, claps twice more, and disappears. A Japanese man dressed in sweat pants marches busily by us on the path (where is he going with such purpose?), and when we get to the top, there he is in a clearing, with a half dozen other men, all talking with great animation. All are doing exercises – some with determination, others barely flapping their arms as they laugh and enjoy their morning together. We turn and notice the Suntory vending machine. The big ad on the front is not a Bond-san, but of the faces of two beautiful young Japanese women. One has a black toothbrush being held above her mouth to look like a mustache (the hand holding it is clearly a man's), and the other woman's lower face is covered in shaving cream with a man's hand holding a razor and "shaving" her. With a man's help, even a woman can pretend to be boss! (Or am I missing the point?)

Yoshimizu ryokan, Kyoto

Yoshimizu, Maruyama Park and Beyond

• We take our first walk through Maruyama Park. It is a beautiful warm day, the park is filled with young couples, old men, grandparents with grandbabies, all sitting in the sun or the shade, with thermoses open and little picnics between them. And there are still cherry blossoms!! We can't believe our good fortune. And our favorite iris garden (discovered as you walk across the creek on these marvelous manmade inspired-by-nature stepping stones) has begun to bloom. We are here a month earlier than last time and there is still the early green of spring everywhere, and all is about to burst into blossom. And there is the heron! And the soft serve green tea ice cream!



• And now we are walking through the Yazaka-jinjya Shrine which is , you may remember, not just one building but a whole "campus" of walkways, shrines, even a Noh stage, and unbelievably impressive structures. The roofs of course are amazing, and the enormous bells hung high, with long ropes dangling, available for anyone to ring to call on the gods. And that orange! All the more striking as 99% of the clothing people wear here is gray, brown, beige, or navy blue. And then we arrive back into the 21st Century, waiting to cross the Higashioji-dori, and into the noisy, polluted city. But first, we must stop at Lawson's, our local 7-11. What has changed in two years? Yes, many more Western foods – packaged sandwiches on white bread (egg salad, ham + cheese), flavored yogurt, endless choices of bottled and canned coffee, Häagen-Dazs ice cream. But also: a whole new shelf of fancy rice cakes (our favorite: nori-covered wasabi, thin and crispy). Sara's favorite match boxes and a marvelous new discovery – but what is it? In a similar style, but much bigger and more ornate, must bring these back as gifts – but oh no – they are pesticide mosquito coils!

• And then the traditional pickle store (Sara's favorite), a fluorescent-free "cave" where one is welcome to sample over 20 different varieties – daikon, cabbage, broccoli, little radishes, spinach, countless god-knows-whats, all delicious and strange and marvelous – and expensive. We buy a couple for our picnic dinner (Please refrigerate, the salesgirl tells us – but isn't the original purpose of pickling to preserve without refrigeration?), find a bank that has an ATM, take a taxi home (still lace-covered seat cushions, drivers in white gloves, and doors that automatically open and close), and fall asleep way too soon, knowing we'll wake up (again) in the middle of the night.

• I am sitting on a step facing Shijo-dori, the main drag of downtown Kyoto. It is rush hour; the street is bumper-to-bumper traffic. All cars are silver, black or white except for one taxi company that has these great sea foam cars, similar to Alan's sweet old Indian automobile. People walk quickly, and every once in a while in the midst of a fashion-unaware crowd walk a couple of geisha in staggeringly beautiful kimonos. The few 'modern" women who seriously dress are all in 40's style tight straight skirts and spike heels. Some ride bicycles in these outfits. We are looking for essentials- computer paper, laundry soap, video camera cleaning tapes, food. (I'm remembering my first French tour with the Murray Louis Dance Company in 1978. No knowing what that extra thing was in all the bathrooms (a bidet) we thought it was a place to wash our clothes. I had soaked my favorite pair of pants overnight only to discover in the morning that what I had bought thinking to be laundry detergent was indeed bleach, and my beloved pants were no more.)

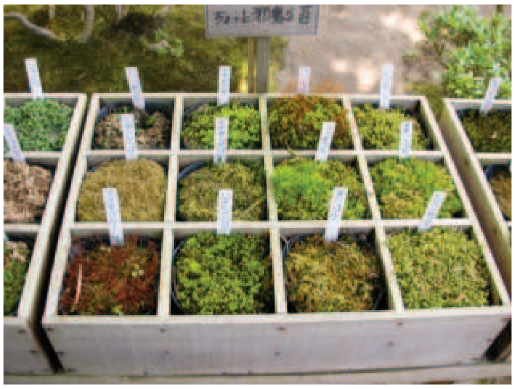
• The supermarkets, found in the basements of the large department stores, rival a state fair in items of curiosity and mystery. Much of what we see we have no idea as to what it actually is - animal? vegetable? mineral? In the aisle of birthday decorations, nestled in with typical western adornments, is a tiny package that is the most highly priced of anything on the shelf. It's something that glitters and sparkles, tiny specks, in an amount no more than a teaspoon. I turn the package over - there is a drawing of two fish heads. Hmmm… dried eyeballs? Fish scales? And in the aisle of spices, on the shelf with non-Japanese items, a series of curry spices called "Spice Home Sally" with this quote on each box: "Our life is surely turned into rhythmically one by some spices - excited experience, amazing grace, etc. We do pray to realize it in food. It is our philosophy." I'm in love.

• There must be at least 50 kinds of rice crackers, we'd like to try them all. Now there is a natural food section- we find organic yogurt, and a variety of apple and orange that we have never tasted before. Apparently having adopted the American desire for bigness in their fruit, each piece - apple, orange, grapefruit, strawberry - is enormous. Sara finds some spicy nori strips for snacks, Patrik a Japanese sweet that looks like two silver dollar pancakes stuffed with his favorite chestnut and bean paste. We pick up some burdock root salad and a fresh soup box- each compartment had a separate ingredient (noodles, ginger, scallions, sesame seeds, wasabi, and broth seasoning) and when we get home boil water, mix it together and have a lovely picnic in our room. Shock and awe - Patrik's pancake sweet is stuffed with a version of whipped cream! One vanilla, one chocolate. It is delicious - much less sweet than a western (or Indian!) cake. Sara suggests that we get more of these for her birthday. And then off to the Japanese bath. The slippers - you may remember that one removes one's shoes before entering the house and puts on slippers. But now, my favorite part - when going to the toilet you remove those slippers and put on toilet slippers that are placed in each bathroom. These are usually a white plastic (the others are dark brown fake leather) and have a circular design on top with the words, "Dreamy poem. TOILET." What better way to be sent to bed?

• Sara wakes before dawn each morning. She has developed a new passion for crows. Their morning music has inspired her for an entirely new piece. Intermittently comes that amazing deep gong from the temple next door, or monks chanting, or the double clap. This is layered with the ticking of the battery-operated travel clock which completes what she believes, in her half-awake half-asleep state, to be the perfect new sound score.

Ginkakuji, the Silver Temple

• After morning ablutions we're off on our first excursion: Ginkakuji and the Philosopher's Walk. The "Silver Pavilion," considered by some to be an unequaled masterpiece of garden design, was built in the late 1300s by the shogan Yoshimasa who is remembered for the artistic renaissance that flourished during his time. The ruinous Onin war thwarted his ambition to cover his pavilion in silver leaf to partner his grandfather's gold leaf Kinkakuji, but in its natural wood state, it is so beautiful. The approach to it is fabulous – you walk along this narrow road, made all the narrower by these enormous hedges maybe 20 feet high. They are camellias!!! And in bloom - a variety we have never seen before. A couple of turns and there it is, surrounded by an incredibly intimate "back yard" of moss and water and wooded mountains. Magic. We begin to walk along the path (carried along by a stream of tourists – mainly Japanese; some Italians and Brazilians) and are now at a moss exhibit. There are 130 varieties of moss here. The three boxes show "Foreign Invaders", "Special", and "Very Important Moss - like VIP". Wow. It would take a good teacher to open our eyes to the differences.



And there is a groundskeeper, kneeling in the moss with a hand broom, gently sweeping and lightly, lightly picking out what we assume to be weeds. I wonder what he does in his free time. The pine trees covering the mountainside are amazingly vertical, no branches for the first 100 feet or so. Marvelous. And then, as we circle up and around the mountain, we see it- they are all tied together in this intricate system of "pulleys" to make sure all are in perfect alignment with each other. We depart, walking down a street lined with little shops. We buy two fresh mochi mini-kebabs- one coated with sesame, one with that great mix of peppers. Then to the "Philosopher's Walk," a quiet one mile stroll along a small canal graced with cherry blossoms, bushes filled with yellow flowers, snowbells, irises and azaleas just ready to open. The Eastern mountains on one side and temples on the other, it is one of the most loved places in Kyoto.

- Sara finds what first appears to be an English speaking radio station:

> The gold fish's eyes are open.
> Is it sleeping?
> How can you tell?
> Because it isn't moving.
> Fish sleep with their eyes open
> Because they have no eyelids.
> This means they can't do one thing.
> Do you know what that is?
> They can't wink!
> What about you?
> Can you wink?

Fifteen minute English lesson, 15 minute French lesson, 15 minute German lesson…

- Yoshimi-san has arrived from Tokyo! She is the owner of this ryokan, "Yoshimizu", and in the past two years has built a new ryokan in the heart of Ginza, with all organic materials. There's an organic restaurant, even the rooms have organic futons! And, according to Nori, it is incredibly beautiful and most unusual. There is also a small performance space where she would like us to perform. And she is eager to have us stay there- YES! It was Yoshimi-san who took us to that amazing tea ceremony two years ago and who opened up much of what we know/feel of the heart of traditional Japan. She and her husband started their honeymoon in the late 60's by taking the train across Canada, ending up in Woodstock for two years. She is quite remarkable – an astute businesswoman, a great lover of old Japan without any of the accompanying conservatism, an innovative thinker, great lover of the arts, all with a child-like enthusiasm and an eager generosity to share what she loves. Plus she likes us. We have a festive reunion and she offers to take us on a special trip the next day.

two of Miyama's magnificent
thatched roofs

Miyama

• We take off in her car, and within an hour we are in the mountains. It's a gorgeous two-lane highway, she obviously knows this winding road well because we are going FAST. The highway follows a narrow river, the tree-lined mountains are occasionally in full bloom with cherry blossoms. In another thirty minutes we arrive at the destination - Miyama, a small village with all houses still in the traditional architectural style. Exquisite, like the mountain villages in Switzerland, Greece, Italy- all the thirty or so houses are grouped close together, with their small plots of land behind. It's a "living" village - the inhabitants, once extremely poor, now make good money by logging and selling the wood from the mountains. There's one house that is a museum open to tourists. We go inside. The rice paper screens are open wide, allowing for the spring breeze to flow through the house. The literature talks of how "the concept of the traditional western farmhouse was to be a fortress, keeping the outside out". In Japanese traditional architecture, there was no such delineation. As the most consistent danger in the weather was the humidity, having all breathable materials - wood, bamboo, straw, rice paper, and a system of cross breezes - could dry out the houses. The central fire, always kept burning (a grandparent's job) also dried out the house, the smoke providing a natural insecticide for the thatched roof as well as drying and smoking the fish and vegetables hanging in the top levels of the roof space.

• After walking through the rooms, up into the "attic," we sit outside on the porch (cross-legged on little pillows) and have tea, looking out at the countryside in full bloom. Yoshimi-san tells me to go around the corner to the "treasure room." Oh my! Unbelievably beautiful woven baskets, little boxes, a wicker suitcase, an indigo dyeing pot, an elaborate wooden machine (for hulling rice?) and what is this? It looks like a Tahitian grass skirt. I find Yoshimi-san. It is a rain cape! Unbelievable. Woven on top, open straw below, with a detachable lower level for more complete coverage. Fabulous. And the shoes - all wooden clog sandals. I pick up the littlest ones for the children, turn them upside down to look more closely at the bottom of the soles, and there's an empty space carved out, with little bells! Wonderful.

Yoshimi-san and Sara in front of blooming peach tree in Miyama

• And then back to Kyoto. But as we approach the city, Yoshimi-san gets another idea. Her friend has told her that the cherry trees are still in bloom in this temple garden in the northern part of the city, famous for its cherry blossoms. By now the sun is setting and we have just entered a place of enchantment. A small placard explains that there are thirty different kinds of cherry blossoms to be found here - and indeed it's true - the weeping willow varieties are already finished, but here is one that is bright pink with carnation-like multiple burst of color, another a delicate white with pale pink center with small petals facing down…and then another 500 year old tree. I have seen more 500 year old trees in this past week than I have in my entire life put together. We are ready to fall asleep now but no! Yoshimi-san, all 85 lbs of her, has boundless energy and has decided to cook us dinner. We go into a nearby market and buy eel, some small fresh water fish from the north, unsweetened yogurt and some strange vegetable we've never seen before that looks like a cross between celery, asparagus and scallions. Before we know it we're home, in twenty minutes a delicious meal is served and then a bath, a print-out of great articles from Maureen Dowd and Frank Rich, and to bed.

• 8 •

Potential Workshop Sites in Kyoto

• Today Nori and Ritsuko are taking us around Kyoto to look at potential sites for our workshops. We are introducing site choreography and our original idea (to use multiple spaces of the marvelous old school building which now houses the Kyoto Arts Center) is not possible for various reasons. Plus, we have a small studio this time - not the big hall - and big classes - a three- hour class for professionals in the morning, a two-hour class for any and all in the evening.

• Our first stop is the Eiun-in temple. A charming cottage- like Buddhist temple of many rooms, walkways, courtyards and gardens, it is headed by a sensei who welcomes non-traditional arts. In a city of over 2,000 temples and shrines, he is the only such person. We meet with him- he is natural, generous and enthusiastic over the idea of us moving our morning workshop here. We have no need to look at other spaces- this one clearly says yes! in every way. It has a wonderful simplicity, a calm, focused energy, and such beauty. All wood, tatami, sliding rice paper screens. What a remarkable opportunity we have just been given. And then, like that great shot in Jules & Jim when they open the windows to the panorama of the French countryside, we leave the temple only to enter a village of temples that goes on and on and on. How is this possible! In each temple live the master and his family; he is responsible for praying and maintaining the graves of the families (about 200 of them) who belong (and support) the temple. The cemetery goes up the mountain, completely packed by now with little stone markers, each unique- it looks almost like a miniature modern city of skyscrapers, but surrounded by an ancient forest. And then the big temples where all the heads of the individual temples chant each morning, and then the shrine, a kind of 800 year old version of a billboard, but instead of advertising Calvin Klein, it's this temple complex and the architecture, of course, is staggeringly beautiful - one of these unbelievable thatched roofs, supported by enormous pillars made from tree trunks, the planks of wood are so wide it's hard to imagine trees this big. And how on earth did they haul them here? There are these women practicing their t'ai chi on the small platform- it looks like a relatively new practice for them. Nice. This is the first time we have seen any martial arts or meditation being done outside.

• And then on to the Fushimi Shinto shrine. We have seen a photograph in our guidebook which has caught our eye- a "tunnel" of orange wooden arches under which one can walk. By now you'd think we'd have been prepared, but no. The enormity of it all! We were expecting one little passageway. Instead, it's an entire mountainside of these gates- we had thought we were finished when we walked through the first set. But then there's a clearing, with little buildings and little stands selling chains and trinkets and this map. "What's this?" we ask. It turns out that this is just the beginning of a two-hour pilgrimage of sorts. It is under the "guardianship" of these fox gods- so you see these great sculptures of the two foxes everywhere- one holding a key in its mouth, the other a bell. Ritsuko doesn't like this place. It gives her the creeps and she feels a dark energy. From what we understand it has a lot to do with facing things one is afraid of, a place to go for praying for future improvement. You can buy these little wooden sticks, write your name, age and what you wish for and leave them at the shrine. For all humans to read as well. Well, at least nosy me. Everyone over 65 prays for better health. Everyone around 22 prays for successful exams. Everyone in their 40s prays for an improved marriage. There's a narrow table with three brass canisters on it, a booth next to it with three lovely young women ready to read your fortune that you shake out of one of the canisters. All for 100 yen. I am told that my health is not so good now but will improve in the future, that my business is not for profit - these are the exact words they use which Patrik and I laugh uproariously over - that my marriage is "arranged", and that I have a friend in danger who is not listening to me. We then wander among the trinket booths of amulets and chachkas, some with English translations:

"When you meet a bad happen, this will save you."
"This is a nature of money. This will hope that you can receive lots of money."
"If you have this you can take out of all bad things."
"Every way leads to one point."

• It turns out that when Nori and Ritsuko were in their Butoh company, they lived very near the shrine and would jog up through these hills and passageways at midnight to stay in shape. A Butoh version of the gym. He highly recommends that we return for a two-hour walk by moonlight.

Classes Begin

• We start our two-week workshop with a lec-dem for all the participants. Because the studio is small, they've limited it to around thirty people. The first to arrive is a 10-year old girl with her mother. Everyone is surprised. And then comes Go-san in his wheelchair. We saw him perform in Liz Lerman's workshop last week and while this will be the first time for us working with a dancer in a wheelchair and we are not sure how it will all work out with the site-specific ideas we have planned, we are very eager to work with him- he's a beautiful dancer and performer- great sense of timing, loves momentum, works with a wide range of dynamics and has a refreshing, clear energy. And then a basketball player who has never had a dance class before, and then some of the top dancers and choreographers in Kyoto and there's Ryoko-san, the wonderful grade-school English teacher from last time, and a whole roomful of new faces- a handful of men, and the women look to be in their 20s-40s,- some staggeringly beautiful, others already worn out. All are dressed in t-shirts and sweat pants and many, we are thrilled to see, are good dancers, comfortable with the floor and all are open and ready. We show clips of *A Curious Invasion, Ordinary Festivals, Lot's Wife*, and Patrik's video pieces *My Old Flame, Terra Firma*, and *WaterSkyBoatFly*, the boat piece from Central Park. It's the first time working with Shina, our translator and things go better than we expected. Except we got completely bogged down with the word "disobedience." Sara is trying to succinctly explain the story of Lot's Wife (four people in the audience actually know it) and the ideas the piece was exploring (love, relationship to God, disobedience, punishment.) Although frustrating in terms of performance flow, conceptually it's a stellar moment. We do a short class, talk about our plans for the workshops (morning class explores site-specific choreography at temple, evening explores both site and text at Arts Center) and ask people to come on time, giving our speech about the importance of beginning together, and all depart with shining faces ready to start tomorrow.

• Sara decides to dive right in with exploring weight shift and density. But Shina can't translate "density" and our attempts to define it fail completely. So we turn to elemental imagery- stone, water, air. Ooh, water and air bring out the worst of modern dance noodling, so we stick to stone. Close your eyes. Follow the exhale. Things begin to radically improve. Soon they are choreographing very short phrases. We group them into pairs, ask them to teach their phrase to another, making unison duets, then show them. Sara puts on music and S&P introduce choreographic play with them. (What if you added three more people and did it in a two part canon? What if we changed the music? What if we have them face different directions?) It's Sara's birthday and the gods are generous. Their phrases, already good, develop and clarify in simple but wondrous ways. Sara discovers she still loves dance and Patrik is overflowing with video ideas inspired by the various sites we've seen.

• With the evening class we work with space- first feeling space between your hands, then duets feeling changing space between partners, then we take it out into the long hallways and do space improvs lit only by the exit lights. They get it, we are thrilled, and all leave happy. In demonstrating how NOT to do it- "I love you, I hate you" -(adding dramatic emotional narrative instead of listening to space and time), Sara's toe catches on the marley and darn, another broken toe. Patrik learns the Japanese word for ice and we decide to take a taxi home, forfeiting our walk through beloved Maruyama Park for one evening. When we arrive back at the ryokan, there are three women cleaning up the kitchen with some big platters of food- the end of a dinner party? The main man in charge (who speaks no English but some Spanish!) invites us to have some leftovers - a kind of cold rice salad with vegetables, omelet strips and a plate of cold tempura vegetables - mushrooms, beans and – oh my God - rosemary! It sounds suspicious but it turns out to be absolutely delicious. Then a quick bath and get the e-mails, read Maureen Dowd and to bed. We plan, at Sara's request, to celebrate her birthday on the weekend.

• From unseasonably already-too-hot, it is COLD. I am wearing an undershirt, a shirt, two down vests and a polartech jacket. And long underwear. And my head is wrapped in two scarves. Must get out of our dark, somewhat musty room into Maruyama Park sunlight. The azaleas are in full bloom, the air is filled with a delicate perfume. And "fuji"- wisteria! Two and three year olds delight in chasing the crows and in carrying their little sisters on their backs. Huge groups of school children, all dressed in uniforms (girls in navy blue pleated skirts- very short, with sailor- style tops; boys in western style suits, with some in more military variations) getting their group photos taken on the bridge with the photographer across the pond shouting out to them. Lots of 40-50 year old daughters take their 70-80 year old mothers for a stroll. We decide to go shopping, inspired by our "old Kyoto" guide book. Sara has researched four interesting restaurants where we can start our adventure. Patrik locates them on the map, and one by one we find them.

• The first is down a narrow lane by the canal at the edge of Gion. Slick looking men stand in each doorway. Smoking cigarettes and dressed in black suits with identical hairstyles, they look like they could be in a Saturday Night Live version of some 1950's Japanese grade B movie. Ah! These are not restaurants, or at least not primarily restaurants…well, that explains their slimy energy. And here is the restaurant at the end of the lane- how could something so small exist here? But it goes back, and up, and ... it has fluorescent lights - how sad we can't stay. And on to restaurant #2.

Brooms & Bamboo

• We walk along Shijo-dori, the main drag, and everyone is out. The sidewalks are packed - a few western tourists, but mainly locals it seems, doing their shopping and going out with their friends for a weekend lunch. We get lost and find a fabulous ultra-hip shoe shop that makes a new version of the split-toe worker tabis - polka dots and stripes and weird designs and colors. Jason would definitely buy a pair. And then around a building and down the narrowest alley we've ever seen and there it is, replete with a fish pond and garden. Even more charming, even more fluorescent lights. And another. And another. So we give up, get a ready-made sandwich, our first Herald Tribune since we've been in Kyoto and on to store #1- the traditional handmade broom shop. It is even better than we imagined. Brooms made from twigs so beautiful how could you use them, brushes so tiny they must be used for cleaning watches. Brooms tied with knots and designs to die for. Our book lists the following brushes: one for cleaning your "hanko" (seal), another for ash trays, one for the corner of desk drawers, the collars for shirts, rusty iron kettles, the wooden frames of "shoji" screens. Sara wants to buy out the store and bring back presents for everyone.

• And next door- Funahashi-ya, a traditional cracker store, established in 1885, with maybe fifty varieties - including potato chip-style crackers made from zucchini, okra, lotus root. While Patrik checks them out, Sara makes the acquaintance of a lovely myna bird (in a cage) in the accompanying courtyard. It speaks Japanese! And then on to the bamboo store. What a delight- huge cooking ladles, tiny, tiny spoons, and anything and everything you could imagine is made here out of bamboo- balls and suitcases and lanterns and sake sets and teapots and rakes and fences and beer mugs. The designs are ingenious, the feel smooth and soft. There are 118 varieties of bamboo in Japan; one old account lists over 1400 uses in all.

• We cross over the Kamo river. Couples line the banks and even though they are sitting on the ground, all are spaced perfectly equidistant from one another. The young couples have their arms around each other, the old ones sit with respectful space between them. We save the umbrella store, the handmade paper store and the antique kimono shop for next time and head home, back through Maruyama Park where it has finally warmed up and everyone is eating green tea ice cream cones.

The Sake Museum

• We decide to brave the subway. Hmmm. Very helpful, young Japanese women show us how to use the machines and with Patrik's uncanny sense of direction and map reading we're off on the right train in the right direction. The subway car is quiet and immaculately clean, the seats a dark green and gold imitation velvet, the walls a 1920's Cuban green.

• The Gekkeiken brewery, founded in 1637, is still the #1 selling sake in the world. Originally made only in the winter for 100 days each year, farmers from the surrounding villages were employed for the back-breaking work- and still are, for a limited amount of "handmade" sake. The brewery museum, of course, doesn't give any history on the working conditions then or now of these "Togi" so we can bask uninterrupted in the glow of the beauty of their work.

• The building itself is a delight in it's simplicity and high ceilings with a complex system of wooden beams. The tour starts in the courtyard with a drink from the underground spring, the key to the high quality of any sake, we are told. The water is delicious, maybe the best we have ever tasted. Then into the first room which demonstrates the brewing process (not only the enormous barrels and tools are fascinating but the old black and white photos of the workers that line the walls) and then to the next room with its historical displays of bottles and labels and advertising and then to the "sampling" room where we are given three different mini-glasses of sake and then to the gift shop. Sara eyes a miniature wooden vat, we stand in line for ten minutes only to be told that it is $50, not $5.00 as we had originally thought. Oh well.

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- And then a lovely boat ride along the willow-lined canal - and a stroll back to the train station. An older woman passes us walking her two beautiful labs. We later see her standing perfectly still in front of a shrine, palms together, praying, and her two dogs standing, perfectly still, looking up at her and waiting. Priceless.

- Back to Maruyama Park where we meet Nori and Ritsuko and head off to a fluorescent-free restaurant in Gion. We love being with them and the food is beyond delicious. Everything is a new taste. We begin with spring vegetables in a light cold broth. Then cold, cooked octopus. Then a kind of gooey custard tofu that is unbelievably fresh and topped with a couple of sea urchin. Then a broiled sea fish fillet of some sort. Then tempura fiddle-head ferns (Oh my God!), then a roll of some kind of tiny fish eggs and rice that is totally unfamiliar and wonderful and then a Japanese version of Sandy's Minnesota Ritz-cracker sunfish tempura that is exquisite in its lightness and flavor. And then a walk to the other side of Gion which is a protected national treasure neighborhood of two-story wooden houses along a cherry blossom-lined canal. A small Shinto shrine for the Geiko (the geisha) sits in the center of the square. Little stickers with Japanese characters are pasted all over the orange columns - it turns out that these are the names of various geikos who pray here (advertisements?…)

- Patrik goes off to his meeting with Kosei, a Kyoto choreographer and producer. Sara, Nori, and Ritsuko go to another restaurant for sweets and more conversation. Sara asks them about their relationships to their families, how their parents handled their radical artistic/life choices, what kind of American influences they encountered when growing up. The American television programs (all dubbed in Japanese) were the same as for Patrik in Switzerland - I Love Lucy, Flipper, Mr. Ed, Bewitched- and for Ritsuko (this took a while to figure out given the literal translation of a variation on the title) Little House on the Prairie. So she knows every obscure detail of pseudo-pioneer Wisconsin life. And now everyone watches 24 and Dharma & Greg, Ritsuko's actress sister dubbing the voice for Dharma.

• After a late night walk through Maruyama Park, we get an e-mail with the very sad news of Homer Avila's passing. Losing a leg and hip to cancer three years ago never stopped him from dancing. His amazing improvisations with Patrik in our last Movement Research MELT workshop - rolling and flying with abandon and beauty, his unfathomable spirit and appetite for work and play were inspiring to say the least. Thank you Homer, and bon voyage!

Eiun-in Temple Showing

• "Golden Week" is finished today and so are we. The workshops this past week have been unusually demanding, intense, exhausting, rewarding. Three morning site-specific exploration classes at Eiun-in Temple culminate in a public showing which seems rather premature to us to say the least, but they love it, rise to the occasion, and so do we. Having been raised with an "anti-recital" attitude and the assumption that how on earth, why on earth would you want to perform your first creative "exercises" – and a day or two after having had your first classes - has been turned upside down. The pressure/reality of the showing seems to focus them. The pressure/reality of coming up with a structure for a showing that will give each a rewarding performing experience, organize an order which works aesthetically and in terms of audience flow, and make everyone look as good as possible takes everything and then some out of us. This is the first time any of the dancers have danced outside of the studio, the first time they or the audience have created/seen site-specific choreography.

• And what a site! The first assignment is to walk around, find a space that intrigues you, imagine where you want the audience/camera to be and create three separate moments - a still image, an image that repeats in a small, detailed way, and something with bigger energy. They get 15 minutes or so, then we go around, watching each one. Some, of course, are dreadful, but some are fabulous. Each opens new aspects of the temple architecture to us. Sara gets in trouble with the priest for jumping in the 200-year old stone birdbath, not because it is disrespectful or harmful to temple property but because he fears it might fall down and hurt her. Ah, a Buddhist boss! The next assignment is similar except the image is to be created with/for a group of people. We're working on SIMPLE, on not stringing a bunch of movements together but on creating ONE moment, with an acute sense of time and space. They've learned a lot in one day and these are much better. Patrik comes up with a group image that Andy Goldsworthy would love - a row of six people standing in a single-file line with closed eyes, faces angled up to the sun, parallel to and between a long tall green hedge and a row of six tall ancient gravestones. The best part is the approach - the audience has been up on a high walkway looking down at another walkway where Seiko has just performed a lovely solo and then they are asked, one by one, to peer around the corner and look down, where they discover his image - a marvelous, quiet surprise. And then it's over, and we are eager to escape for our one-hour break before the evening class comes for their one-time class at Eiun-in, but of course, who are we kidding. The audience has questions and the dancers want to gather for a circle to talk about their experience and have a final moment together in this remarkable space. They have all performed beautifully and even with the glitches that turn our stomachs inside out, it is a great success. And then they all go to work cleaning the temple - something obviously has not been translated to us and here are sixteen people buzzing around - dusting, vacuuming, mopping ALL surfaces, raking the gravel in the garden. Even during the workshop, if someone has danced in the gravel, they smooth it out before we go on. And did I mention the toilets? They not only have the spritzer bidet buttons, but some new options we have never seen before - this one opens the lid automatically on approaching! This one lifts the seat! This one flushes the toilet!

• The evening workshop is a gift. We have learned how better to teach what we are trying to share from the past three days with the morning group and they get it. And then we stagger home. Because of Golden Week all of our favorite restaurants are full so it's back to Lawsons. We discover a seaweed salad that is pretty mediocre and some coconut dessert - except it isn't coconut…it's lychee! The little fruit chunks are embarrassingly satisfying to bite into and we fall into bed, too exhausted even to go downstairs to take a Japanese bath.

Wave Heart Garden

• While waiting to cross the street, Sara notices the names of the cigarettes in the vending machine- alongside the American brands are some new ones, all in English, of course: "Cabin," "Frontier," "Hope," "Peace." "Peace" is obviously the most popular brand- a row of five identical packs to choose from. Then we notice another tobacco vending machine with fascinating, strange options, many in Chinese and Japanese - perhaps variations of cigars? And here is a package that says "snuff" in English. All of these have beautiful, old designs - maybe we will have to get some to add to our "collection" (so far containing the mosquito coil box and some fabulous match boxes).

Every day we pass an old Western building which has the following Latin inscription on the front:

FESTINA LENTE
DUM SPIRO SPERO
OMNIA VINCIT AMOR
VITAE SAL AMICITIA

Could anyone translate this please?!

• We're on our way back to the Fushimi Shrine with Shina, Yuka and Nori - three of our favorite dancers- to experiment with some choreography/video ideas. It's sunset and the light is quickly fading here, deep in the woods under the massive row of orange gates. We work for an hour and a half and decide to call it a day as it's too dark and then some lights come on, illuminating the gates and the passageway with fabulous shadows. Wow. Irresistible, we work for another hour and then depart. They've been great to work with - easy and open and focused and willing to try anything - running and crashing through the woods, falling into the dry creek bed (over and over and over) walking slowly, slowly in absolute precision through the passageway, starting a marvelous pillar dance which we hope to continue in NYC…and then home on the green velvet train. We find a Herald Tribune and devour it as we head back, almost missing our stop.