PART I.

M.C.,  R. KEVIN DOYLE: Aloha and welcome to this celebration of life for Emeritus Professor James Rodger Brandon. My name is R. Kevin Garcia Doyle, and I had the privilege of being Dr. Brandon’s student in the 1990’s. I’ll be your M.C. for today, and will begin by reading “A Look Back at Jim’s Life” for you.

[A LOOK BACK AT JIM’S LIFE]

James Rodger Brandon was a beloved husband, a trailblazing scholar, and an inspiring director, mentor, teacher, translator, actor, editor, and friend. He has left a remarkable legacy in the world of Asian theatre studies, a discipline he pioneered and fertilized with the numerous scholars and artists he so graciously and carefully nurtured over half a century. Born in Minneapolis and raised from age ten in the small town of Mazomanie, Wisconsin, he joined the State Department Foreign Service after receiving his PhD from the University of Wisconsin in 1955, and spent six years in Java and Japan. While in Japan as a language officer, Jim met Reiko Mochinaga at the U.S. Embassy, where she was one of several university students teaching Japanese to the language officers. They dated for a while, and then Reiko left on a Fulbright Fellowship to study at the East West Center in Honolulu. Jim remained in Japan, but after a year of separation, he proposed marriage. Already engaged to someone else, Reiko did not say yes! But Jim persevered, went to Reiko’s parents’ home in Japan, and asked permission to marry their daughter. Reiko’s mother was utterly confused by this obviously heartfelt request from an unknown (to her) gaijin, and demanded that Reiko return to Japan immediately and sort this out. She returned, and Jim was, in Reiko’s words, “absolutely determined.” They were married soon after at the U.S. Embassy in Tokyo.
Jim and Reiko then moved to the U.S. in 1961, so Jim could take up a position teaching Asian theatre. It was in the Department of Speech and Comparative Literature at Michigan State University, where he directed his first two Kabuki plays in English, *Kanjincho* and *The Zen Substitute*. In 1968 Jim then joined the University of Hawai‘i Department of Drama and Theatre as a Full Professor, and remained with U.H. until his retirement in 2000. During his 32 years with what became the Department of Theatre and Dance, he firmly established its unique Asian Theatre Program, co-founded the *Asian Theatre Journal*, served as Department Chair from 1985 to 1988, and brought international recognition to the department through his scholarship and large-scale English language Kabuki productions. Reiko, who became an internationally known and respected textile artist and curator, was his artistic collaborator on most if not all of these productions—sometimes designing costumes and wigs and selecting appropriate materials and fabrics, other times overseeing their use, and more than once designing the stage set as well.

In his illustrious career, Jim Brandon authored approximately 80 articles, book chapters, and reviews in addition to 20 books, displaying an amazing depth as well as breadth in geographic and artistic range. His books include standard texts in the field of Asian Theatre today, such as *Theatre in Southeast Asia* [1967], *On Thrones of Gold: Three Javanese Shadow Plays* [1970], and *Kabuki: Five Classic Plays* [1975]. Groundbreaking research in *Kabuki’s Forgotten War: 1931-1945* [2008] forced a reexamination of long-held “truths” about the fossilization of Kabuki in the 19th century; it was designated an Outstanding Academic Title for 2009 by the American Library Association's *Choice* magazine for its excellence in scholarship and importance to the field. His creative endeavors include 22 productions at the University of Hawai‘i as translator, director, adaptor and/or playwright, and include national recognition from the American College Theatre
Festival, commendations from the Hawai‘i State House of Representatives and Senate, and Po‘okela awards from the Hawai‘i State Theatre Council. His dedicated scholarship and artistic work brought him international recognition and accolades, including the Imperial Decoration of the Order of the Rising Sun with Gold Rays with Rosette from the Government of Japan, the John D. Rockefeller 3rd Award from the Asian Cultural Council for his exemplary contributions to the understanding and appreciation of Asian Theatre, a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Hawai‘i State Theatre Council in 1991, the UH Regents’ Medal for Outstanding Teaching, and a national award as Outstanding Teacher of the Year from the Association for Theatre in Higher Education.

Outside of his extraordinary career, Jim Brandon also lived a rich and full private life, with many friends and a great variety of activities. He and Reiko loved to travel, and did so often and widely—they lived for prolonged periods in Germany, India, Indonesia, and Japan; they traveled throughout Southeast Asia and Europe on several occasions, and they criss-crossed the North American continent from E-to-W and W-to-E at least twice each way, without preplanning, stopping when it felt right to stop, hiking and mountain climbing. Jim ran daily for most of his adult life, lifted weights with a group of friends for years, and ran and finished marathons well into his 80s (although some say he cut corners a bit on one of the last ones…). He was a lover of music, from gamelan to opera to his beloved Scott Joplin. He and Reiko gave wonderful cast parties for all his productions, and Jim loved to assemble groups of colleagues and students to play Railroad Barons, one of the simpler games of which he was a connoisseur.

James R. Brandon attained iconic status in his own lifetime, yet remained humble in demeanor, genuinely interested in and encouraging of young scholars. Though he claimed to “never give advice,” his guidance as mentor, teacher, director, actor, role model, scholar and gentleman cultivated generations of Asian
theatre scholars, artists, and aficionados throughout the world, who will always remember him with love and gratitude. [by Iezzi & Wichmann-Walczak]

**********

PART II.

M.C., R. KEVIN: This afternoon, four of us will read tributes and reminiscences from a few of these individuals over the next hour. You will then have the opportunity to look at more of these yourselves during the reception to follow.

ALVIN CHAN: Aloha. My name is Alvin Chan, and my fondest memory of Doctor B. dates from 2004. It was the final dress rehearsal for Nozaki Village, and with our sensei/director about to give birth to twins, I was feeling a bit lost & anxious about performing Kabuki in front of an audience for the first time. I asked Dr. B. for advice, and he said: "As a fellow actor, I feel the need to tell you something that rings true in all performance—you are the one performing on stage tomorrow, and it is your responsibility to own it. Not for me, or your teachers, but for yourself." I have been trying to own it ever since.

This first reminiscence is from Jim’s oldest friend, playwright and Emmy award winning writer and filmmaker Loring Mandel.

[INVITED TRIBUTE FROM: Loring Mandel]

I met Jim Brandon in the Spring of 1946. I was a freshman at the University of Wisconsin, and so active in the theater club, cleverly titled The Wisconsin Players, that in that freshman year I had some role, either backstage or onstage, in eleven productions. Jim, already a sophomore, had achieved real status as the leading comic actor in the group. And what first triggered Jim’s friendship with me was his love of music, and mine. I was trying to work out a comedy piano-playing routine, and Jim, though he played the trombone at some earlier time but
had no pianistic experience, joined in.

Jim was as esoteric a character in my experience as I was in his. I had never known a person from such a small, insulated community as Mazomanie, Wisconsin. He had never known a Jewish person and, in fact, thought that Jews were a Christian sect, like Baptists or Seventh Day Adventists. He was as naive as I was, but he knew it and I didn’t. What I brought to the friendship at the beginning was, in my mind, an urban sophistication. I was wrong about myself, of course, but too arrogant at the time to know it.

Jim had an eagerness about him that never faded, and a boundless energy to pursue whatever pricked his interest. Looking back at it now, I think he was trying very systematically to build a new life for himself. The University was a get-out-of-jail-free card for him. He found a house owned by a spinster and her father, and they rented him a room. He found work in an Oscar Meyer meat processing plant, a sort of strange but not totally inappropriate background for the Theater. He fell in love with music he’d never heard in Mazomanie. I remember once he called me to ask if I’d heard the waltz from *Der Rosenkavalier*. Another time he called and told me to turn on my radio to the local station at once: they were playing the *Colonel Bogey March* and he wanted me to love it as much as he did.

We performed our piano act in Madison and then in various places throughout Wisconsin, earning sufficient money to pay our way at the University. We wrote plays collaboratively, both comedies and pathos-filled dramas. For a year-and-a-half, in addition to theatrics and piano-playing, we headed the lighting crew for the plays at the Wisconsin Union Theater. We spent one summer, with a third friend, hitch-hiking to New York, working in a Catskills hotel while writing a musical comedy. When my wife and I were married, it was Jim who drove us to New York to start our honeymoon. Years later, when both Jim and I were soldiers
in Korea and far apart, we were writing a Korean musical together, 
communicating by mail. We spoke and met from time to time while he was 
working in New York. And corresponded when he went back to Asia.

There was tragedy ahead for Jim and Reiko, and judging from his letters, it 
appeared as if losing their son Ken might defeat him, but it didn’t. He had a core 
of great strength, and as the years passed he seemed to grow stronger in wisdom, 
without losing his essential humor and kindness. I witnessed it when my wife and 
I visited him in Hawaii, when I spoke to his class, when he and Reiko visited us in 
Massachusetts, when we shared the evening with him as he won the Asia Society 
honor.

In the last year or two, Jim’s health was declining, but when we spoke on 
the phone his words were affirmative, his humor fully intact, his memory of that 
part of his life where we worked together was as detailed as my own. I regard my 
friend as a lesson in how to grow, how to live, how to survive tragedy, how to be 
productive, how to improve the world immeasurably before leaving it.

And in those memories we have of him, he remains alive and capable of 
inspiring us. We are thankful for that gift. And Reiko, our warmest wishes for you 
in this unhappy season. It would be wonderful if the future found a moment we 
could spend together.

Loring Mandel

*******

M.C., R. KEVIN: At this time, we will present a slide show covering some of the 
highlights of Jim’s early life in Mazomanie through his time at Michigan 
State University.

FIRST SLIDE SHOW—JIM’S EARLY LIFE
PART III.

M.C., R. KEVIN: We will now read excerpts from selected tributes and remembrances written by some of Dr. Brandon’s peers.

NICOLE TESSIER: Aloha! My name is Nicole Tessier, and I had the honor of performing in Dr. Brandon's last Kabuki production.

This reminiscence is from Samuel L. Leiter, Professor Emeritus of Brooklyn College and The Graduate Center, City University of New York.

[TRIBUTE FROM: Samuel L. Leiter]

With Jim Brandon’s passing, I’ve lost a close friend, colleague, collaborator, and inspiration, whom I’ve known for nearly fifty years. Jim was not only the Mount Fuji of Asian theatre scholars over the past half century, he was also a wonderful guy, with a marvelously upbeat, ever-curious, youthful disposition that he maintained into his mid-80s. His loss is an enormous one for the field of Asian theatre, but especially for kabuki scholarship, in which he was indisputably the Western leader. His accomplishments in this field as a teacher, director, researcher and writer were awesome, and I cannot conceive of anyone ever equaling them.

I look forward to the memories that will now surely start flooding back as I think over our many times together, and when I gaze at the spines of those many marvelous books sitting on my shelves. Sayonara, Jim, and may the cherry blossoms always be in bloom for you.

Samuel L. Leiter

SAMMIE CHOY: Aloha, my name is Sammie Choy. Whether I saw James Brandon in the halls of Kennedy Theatre or in the occasional yoga class, he was intense and focused, but always approachable.
These two short but heartfelt accolades are from colleagues at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa. Emeritus Professor of Theatre Dennis Carroll writes:

[TRIBUTE FROM: Dennis Carroll]

James Brandon was a world-renowned teacher, director, and scholar, with an enthusiasm for life and art that remains indelible and inspiring. I am forever grateful for all the years of support, advice and exemplary administrative leadership.

[Dennis Carroll]

SAMMIE: Emeritus Professor of Psychology and former Dean of the College of Social Sciences, Richard Dubanoski, writes:

[TRIBUTE FROM: Dick and Joan Dubanoski]

Jim's presence and wit brightened every room he entered; his laughter and chortle brought smiles to those around him; his intellect and curiosity enriched each conversation of which he was a part. He was the best; he will be missed. Aloha, Friend.

Dick and Joan Dubanoski

ALVIN: Professor Emeritus of Theatre and English at Brown University, John Emigh, writes:

[TRIBUTE FROM: John Emigh]

My first memory of Jim is of him surrounded by a small and wonderful band of Asian theatre scholars—all new to me, many of whom are sadly no longer with us—at Galatoire's restaurant in New Orleans. It was during a break in an American Theatre Association conference; I was recently returned from Bali and had been invited to perform, though I hadn't even started to write up my research. There was Jim at the head of the table, marveling at the new found richness of Oysters Rockefeller, and wondering that the academic world thought
"Asian Theatre" was such a narrow field of specialization when those of us assembled had the remarkable histories, cultures, and performed lives of over 2 billion people and their ancestors to keep us busy, engaged, and in a perpetual state of discovery. “And meanwhile our fellow 'specialists,'” he went on, with growing delight, "have to content themselves with teaching Milton year after year, finding what pleasure they may in an unexplored nuance here, a new reading or unexplored historical fact there." He was beaming. A picture of joy. That meeting and Jim's joyful embrace of an emergent academic "field" and its artistic and human significance changed my life.

Jim and I went on to collaborate on several projects, including the founding of the Association for Asian Performance. He was the most rigorous critic, the most supportive colleague, and remains a joyful example of life well lived!

John Emigh

*********

PART IV.

M.C., R. KEVIN: At this time we will present our second slide show, of images from Dr. Brandon’s life since coming to Hawaii.

SECOND SLIDE SHOW—JIM’S LIFE SINCE COMING TO HAWAI’I

*********

PART V.

M.C., R. KEVIN: I was the actor who had laryngitis in that slide earlier. Dr. Brandon provided my voice. I don’t think I will ever sound as charming and intelligent again.

We will now read excerpts from selected tributes and reminiscences written by Dr. Brandon’s younger colleagues and students.

NICOLE: From Kent Devereaux:
It was Jim’s gift for supporting the work of younger scholars that I will always remember.

I had just finished graduate school and only recently returned from living in Java on a Fulbright when I met Jim for the first time at what I believe was the second Association for Asian Performance conference. I told him how his book had sparked my interest in wayang kulit. He expressed more interest in hearing about my latest work than in being on the receiving end of a young, idealistic student’s praise. When I told him about my research, he insisted that I join him on a panel and present my work later that day. That is how I presented my very first academic paper. I remember it well. First Jim, then Leonard Pronko, then me. I was terrified as I sat there listening to two icons in the field, superb presenters, both of them. How do you follow that?

I think Jim knew how terrified I was, but he never let on. Instead, in his introduction he showered me with praise. He told the audience how excited he was to hear about my latest work, and that he was sure they too would be thrilled to hear about it. He put me at ease and then ceded the podium to me; “teacher" to “pupil,” one generation to the next. I try to live up to his example every day.

Kent Devereaux

ALVIN: From David Jortner:

James Brandon was one of the lions of the field, a man versed not only in the rich wealth of Japanese theatre but also in the theatre of Southeast Asia and Europe. He was an actor, director and scholar of the highest order.

On a personal note, Jim was kind, gracious and encouraging. We met frequently at conferences because we shared the same scholarly interest—the theatre of the Occupation of Japan—and rather than being threatened, he actively encouraged me as a graduate student and later as a junior faculty member to pursue the work he felt he had left undone. Those of us who had the
pleasure to know Jim will remember with great fondness his infectious laugh, inquisitive spirit, and gracious nature. I was thrilled to know Jim, and will feel his absence deeply.

Dave Jortner

Sammie: From Kevin J. Wetmore:

One of my first major conferences as a graduate student was the Theatre Symposium, on the topic of "Theatre East and West," and Jim was one of the keynoters. I was presenting on Christianity's influence on shingeki, one of a handful of graduate students invited to present. I felt overwhelmed, and a fraud, and was sitting alone at a table at lunch on the first day. Jim came over, asked if he could sit down, and did just that, asking me who I was and what I was presenting there. What followed was an hour of conversation that has stayed with me ever since. I knew who he was, of course, as I owned all of the books he had published up to that point. His interest was genuine, not just polite. The talk turned to academic publishers. I mentioned sending a book proposal to one, and he feigned indignation: "When you have a great topic, why would you shoot so low?" His encouragement meant a lot, and every time I saw Jim after that, 2-3 times a year at conferences, he always came right over and started talking as if we had never left off. He was a model for scholars, teachers and artists and I fear we shall not see his like again. I shall miss his voice.

Kevin J. Wetmore

R. Kevin: From Carol Fisher Sorgenfrei:

We have lost not only a truly brilliant mind and incredible scholar and artist, but a kind, generous, joyous spirit. We are all, really, his students, for he was one of the first and foremost. He will live forever in our hearts as well as in his many wonderful publications. Those of us who knew and loved him, and all of us who
were privileged to see his shows (and those of you who were privileged to be in them), will never forget him.

Carol Fisher Sorgenfrei

NICOLE: From Aaron David Anderson

Dr. James Brandon was a giant in his field (though small and mischievous in person). His recommendation got me into the doctoral program at Northwestern, and his lessons in class taught me more about professionalism than anyone has before or since. He used to say that teaching was like pushing a string from the back—unless the student pulls on the other end of the string, all you get is a big mess. His lessons were never messy. Everyone who ever met him became a better person for it. He will be mourned by thousands. This is no exaggeration. Rest in Peace, Dr. Brandon. And thank you.

Aaron David Anderson

ALVIN: From Colleen Lanki:

Dr. Brandon was an inspiration and the epitome of "a gentleman and a scholar." He will be remembered by everyone in the field, and that memory will urge us to "do what we are doing."

[Colleen Lanki]

SAMMIE: From Kathy Welch

Jim's teaching and encouragement has guided my career. I hope every show I direct reflects in some small way the artistry and humanity he taught. Truly a giant.

[Kathy Welch]

R. KEVIN: From Penny Bergman

From carrying “Brandon’s Guide to Theater in Asia” backpacking through Asia in the mid-70's, to finally meeting him at the University of Hawai‘i, (where he offered me a scholarship to grad school, a job, the unparalleled opportunity to
study with Nakamura Matagoro and be in the cast of CHUSHINGURA—THE 47 SEVEN SAMURAI and KANJINCHO—THE SUBSCRIPTION LIST), and then to our continuing friendship through the years, Jim was a smart, supportive, good-hearted, inspirational sensei. As the accolades pour in from his devoted community, his spirit lives on.

Penny Bergman

NICOLE: From Holly A. Blumner

Perhaps the most important thing that I learned from Jim in grad school, which I didn’t understand until much later in my life, is this: Don’t assume they [whoever you are asking] are going to say no. Do what you need to do. Keep pushing forward unless you see that you simply can’t go on anymore.

As a grad student, I was always going into Jim’s office because I loved talking with him. He made time for me. Even when he was busy doing other things, he made me feel welcome. Once, he told me about a school prank in which he and a friend went to a rival school and “borrowed” their cow. Somehow it ended up in an elevator. Jim said he got in big trouble, and laughed when he told me.

After studying with Jim, and interacting with him over time, he gradually became a member of my family, the family I carry around in my heart. I still hear Jim’s voice in my head every time I enter a classroom to teach Japanese theatre. I hope his laughter-filled voice in my head never goes away.

Holly A. Blumner

ALVIN: From R. Kevin Doyle

In addition to being a towering intellect, rigorous scholar, and inspiring director, Dr. Brandon was a very fun and funny person. I had the distinct pleasure of playing Dungeons and Dragons with him (I’m not making this up), and he was an absolute blast. His favorite character was a big, dumb fighter who was more
prone to kicking down doors and getting everyone in trouble than he was to thinking. Hearing Dr. Brandon laugh with glee as a choice he made in game inevitably invited ruin down on everyone is one of my fondest memories of him.

R. Kevin Doyle

Sammie: From Patricia Pringle

We were going to see a performance of Okinawan dance somewhere on the other side of the island. We were standing in line for our tickets, when a man in very nice aloha wear turned and introduced himself. They exchanged names, and the man asked Jim, "What do you do?" Jim stood up very straight and with obvious pride said, "I am Professor of Asian Theatre at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa." The other man gave Jim his card, and said, "Board of Regents, UH. Call me when you want a raise."

Patricia Pringle

R. Kevin: From Dallas McCurley

Jim has always been the model of teaching, research, and collegiality that I've tried to emulate, and I’ve come to realize that his amazing abilities in these areas aren't at all easy to achieve. Last time we had lunch, he described meeting the ghost of Ichikawa Danjuro I at a gravesite; now he walks among the other great artists of Kabuki who time has taken. Aloha, Jim.

Dallas McCurley

Nicole: From Andy Utech

I use his lessons every day. I know I’m not alone.

Alvin: From Alan Shepard

He literally wrote the book.

Sammie: From Elaina Malm

When I was in my 30s, I decided to run the Honolulu Marathon to prove I wasn't quite over the hill yet. Jim, in his mid-sixties, agreed to run the marathon
with me. We set off together filled with fresh energy as fireworks filled the sky and cheers erupted. I sort of kept pace for about the first mile. At the end of the day, Jim beat me by 2 hours!! Jim had such boundless energy, that one of my nicknames for him was the energy bunny. That day the tortoise did her best and finished, but the hare was the clear winner!

Elaina Malm

R. KEVIN: From Kathy Foley

Jim was dedicated to the work of creating a field of academic study and international performance of Asian Theatre, which was bigger than any of us. He made us each a link in that larger idea that extended beyond our particular dissertation topic or the production we experienced. There was discipline, vision, and the sense of being part of something big. He took emoting Stanislavski actors and turned us into ethereal lovers on a michiyuki or patient samurai who could wait years to find that sword or restore a fallen clan.

I remember watching as an assistant director the moment in Chushingura where Enya Hangan has just slashed his stomach in the seppuku scene, when Yuranosuke rushes in just before his master will die. Hangan manages to whisper, "Remember me!" Yuranosuke bows: "I swear!"

Jim Brandon, through his writing and teaching, has created a band of more than forty-seven now master-less ronin: we will work through the future to carry out his vision. Some of us are in academic positions, others are stage managers, directors, actors, translators, film makers, or do a hundred other things. But the vision Jim established—of making the west aware that theatrical genius and complexity goes beyond Europe and often reaches heights that those Elizabethans didn't even dream of—will continue.

Though we feel like wave men for now and all wish we had been there to say goodbye, in our many different places, we will carry out the mission.
He made us what we are: 'a treasury of loyal retainers.'

SAMMIE: What follows is from James R. Brandon’s *Chushingura: Studies in Kabuki and the Puppet Theatre*, University of Hawai‘i Press, [1982];

the closing of the play:

ALVIN: [“Akagaki:] At the cock’s crow announcing, dawn of a new day . . .

R. KEVIN: [Takemori:] . . . our heart’s filled to overflowing, rise with the rising sun . . .

NICOLE: [Goemon:] . . . as we go together to . . .

ALL FOUR [All:] . . . our Lord Hangan’s grave.

SAMMIE: *Each person turns to those next to him, nods, wipes tears of gratitude, grips an elbow or places a hand on a shoulder. Then their thoughts return to their master, Hangan, and all of them stand silent, posed in mingled happiness and grief.*”

From Kathy Foley

********

PART VI.

M.C., R. KEVIN: What follows are video excerpts from some of Dr. Brandon’s Kabuki productions here at UHM.

*SHOWING OF VIDEO EXCERPTS FROM JIM’S UHM KABUKI PRODUCTIONS*  

********

PART VII.

M.C., R. KEVIN: At Reiko Brandon’s request and with a generous initial donation from Professor Emerita Barbara Smith, we have just established a new fund at the UH Foundation, the James R. Brandon Memorial Asian Theatre Fund, to help continue Jim’s legacy here at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa. If
you would like to contribute, a table is set up in the upper lobby for doing so.

There is so much more to say about Jim and his influence on our lives. We all have stories. So, we would like to invite everyone to the Upper Lanai for pupus and drinks while we share some of those stories and memories with Reiko and each other.

Before we go out together, however, I would like to introduce someone to you. David Furumoto is a professor at Dr. Brandon’s alma mater, the University of Wisconsin. While studying under Dr. Brandon here at the University of Hawai’i, Professor Furumoto performed in five of his Kabuki productions. As a living tribute to Dr. Brandon, Professor Furumoto will perform a pair of excerpts from Kanjincho.

DAVID FURUMOTO: I would like to dedicate this brief performance to the sensei who changed my life, Professor James R. Brandon. Ronald Cavaye and others from the earphone guide group in Japan send their condolences, as well. Brandon-sensei, onegaishimasu.

PERFORMANCE OF KANJINCHO EXCERPTS

********

PART VIII.

M.C., R. KEVIN: Please join me in congratulating Professor Furumoto.

David, please come back on stage and lead us out with a roppo in honor of Jim and Reiko! (To audience.) Thank you for coming, and we’ll see you on the Lanai.

PERFORMANCE OF ROPPO BY DAVID FURUMOTO

*******
RECEPTION IN UPPER LOBBY AND ON UPPER LANAI