

Mr. MIYAGI said that the Japanese contemporary theater has been imported from the European theater.

If so, I asked myself, what is the true Japanese contemporary theater?

Perhaps we are all westernized without knowing it.

While the Japanese traditional customs are lost, and Bunraku puppet theater is in its decline, we enjoy the Mickey show while holding a hamburger in one hand and an iPhone in the other---that is fun, too, but shouldn't we be rather rethinking about being Asians instead?

Thus I thought that perhaps the Japanese theater and the Japanese actors will gain more recognition overseas if we communicated the positive qualities of the Japanese actors to the other Asian countries and the world. I participated in the Art Camp, therefore, intending to ask the participants from the other countries for their positive impressions they gained about the Japanese actors through the international collaboration.

The Korean actress of Mr. Shigeki NAKANO's piece *Waiting for Something* responded to my question, "What are the positive qualities of the Japanese actors?," by saying, "The Japanese actors are very conscious about their surroundings."

However, when I asked the same question to Mr. PARK Jang Ryul, who directed "Mom's Favorite Song", he told me that he did not find any difference between the Japanese and the Korean actors, and I myself did not find any difference in the acting style or the atmosphere on stage between the Korean actress and the Japanese actors. Perhaps it is due to the fact that our countries are in such proximity that not only do we share similar environment and physical features, but also similar senses.

I asked the same question to many other people, but to be honest, there was no one who gave me a straight answer. I do not know if the nuance was more or less altered through the interpreting, or they were being purposefully vague, but many of them talked about the humanity of the Japanese participants, but not about the positive aspects of the Japanese actors.

What I felt through my observation starting from the auditions is that the Japanese actors often lack vocal power and physical abilities compared to the actors from other countries, and they seem to overtly rely on words even when facing the actors from other countries. Just as I was becoming disappointed, someone came up to me discreetly and said, "I think (one of the positive qualities of the Japanese actors is) having a keen sense of the space ('ma')." It was Mr. Junichi HIROTA, one of the directors of the Workshop EXT. Unfortunately, I did not have the opportunity to expand on the conversation, but as far as I understand, the "space ('ma')" refers to the stage space. Just as the spatial refinement is revered in tea ceremonies and flower arrangements, according to Mr. HIROTA, the Japanese actors naturally take the appropriate positions without the director having to tell them.

Maybe it is just due to the fact that the spatial directing is in their taste, but to say that "the Japanese actors have an excellent sense of the space" would make a nice catchphrase.

Concerning the performances, the work that left the most impression on me was that of Ms. Zuleikha CHAUDHARI from Delhi.

I feel that the Japanese tend to shy away from things they do not understand, and that is one of the reasons that they turn away from the performing arts. What one does not understand is considered boring. To be honest, I had difficulties understanding Ms. CHAUDHARI's work based on *Mahabharata*. Five minutes into the play, I could not follow the plot anymore, and there were question marks flying all over my head. I was even turned away by the work. I could not understand the director's intentions. Not at the least. I heard that Ms. CHAUDHARI is a popular artist in Delhi. But, to be honest, I was helpless in front of her work.

When I encounter something and I completely fail to understand it, it makes me want to run away from it. Then I stop and think: maybe encountering a new culture *is* the objective of the cultural exchange.

Just as there are all kinds of Japanese actors, there are people in the world with all kinds of roots. Therefore, it is premature to determine the characteristics of an artist from a specific country.

What I can say for sure is that the Korean actor was quite charming, and the director was deeply reflective. The Taipei actors excelled in the physical abilities and had the intuition for sound, and the director from Delhi presented the public with a challenging work. When I sum up, that is all, but I feel that the experience will lead

to the next step in the future.