

Asian Performing Arts Festival  
Participant Interview #08

Ayaka NISHI / (“APAF ART CAMP” participant / a woman in her 20's)

Currently working as a company employee, NISHI studied design in college. At first she wanted to work in the art field, but gave up at one point and got a job at a company.

However, aspiring for a career change into the art industry again, she moved to Tokyo about a year ago.

While working, she is actively involved in art events as staff on the side.

Even though she had no theater experience, and did not even know where the local theater was located in her hometown, she became nonetheless interested in theater after having moved to Tokyo, and she joined the Asian Performing Arts Festival as an “APAF ART CAMP” participant.

“It was great that I could observe both the rehearsals and the performances at the 'Workshop for International Collaboration.' For example, even though the actor in *Amalgam Note* was struggling during the rehearsals with the 15-minute line which appears at the beginning of the play, on the day of the performance, his acting was flawless. I felt that a production is the fruits of one's labors, and I was touched by the beauty of the work that people created through hard efforts.

What is actually interesting in art is the process of creation. (Rather than just watching the production,) it gave me the feeling of actually being involved in the process.”

NISHI also likes to travel abroad, and so far, she has traveled alone to Asian countries as well as to the United States and Europe. Her interest in other cultures was one of the reasons she participated in the Asian Performing Arts Festival.

As an example, *Ghost of Hanoi* (a work created by a team of Japanese and Vietnamese actors led by the Japanese theater director Shintaro MORI), used *che* as a motif. Although it is unfamiliar to the Japanese, it is the national food for the Vietnamese.

“I knew about it since I travelled in Southeast Asia, but I think the ordinary Japanese audience would not be able to imagine what kind of food it is. I suppose the same thing can be said of *onigiri* rice balls, which are very familiar to the Japanese, but hard to imagine for people from other countries. What was striking was the gap emerging from the differences in food culture; the cultural gap (difference) emerging from the differences between Japanese and Vietnamese 'hometown food.’”

NISHI also had some exchanges with a Taiwanese woman who was participating in the ART CAMP.

“While I was watching *Scarecrow* (created by a team of Vietnamese and Japanese actors, led by the Vietnamese director NGUYEN Hoang Tuan), the woman who was sitting next to me turned towards me and asked, 'Is that a traditional Japanese costume?' (except the Vietnamese traditional hat.) I answered 'No.' and I was struck by the fact that what seemed Vietnamese to me looked completely different to her.”

※All the costumes in

For example, Taiwanese, Chinese, Korean, and Japanese all look similar and indistinguishable in appearance, but there are also significant cultural differences. What NISHI felt – the similarities and the differences between different cultures that are expressed on stage, as well as the diverseness of the audience who are on the receiving side– was a unique experience which was only possible through the APAF ART CAMP.

“What we think is commonplace becomes uncommon. It prompts us to think about the fact of being Japanese from someone else's point of view. I think that the best part of traveling abroad is to broaden

our views by coming into contact with different cultures. I had the same sensation while sitting in the theater among the audience at the Asian Performing Arts Festival, as if I was traveling abroad.”

For NISHI, who is not involved in the actual theater creation, participating in the two-part Round Table Discussions where Asian theater artists debated on “Artistic Quality v. Audience Accessibility,” as well as the Special Lecture by the world renowned choreographer, LIN Lee-Chen of <Legend Lin Dance Theatre (Taipei)> was a “truly fascinating” experience.

“I have not had an opportunity to think deeply about the theater before, but I think that the development of new customers is a common challenge to any industry. The discussion about 'Artistic Quality v. Audience Accessibility' was very meaningful in the sense that conceptual basic ideas were discussed, which are essential in thinking about the theater.

The Special Lecture was extraordinary – it was filled with a special atmosphere that I would never have known had I been leading a normal life. I could feel this new world with all my five senses, and my perspective was widened.

I would like many more people to know that [the Asian Performing Arts Festival] is also for people who are not involved in the theater.

Even though I have no theater experience, I felt so many things through the Festival. I think those who are involved in the theater should definitely participate in the Festival. I am convinced that the way one looks at the theater will be completely altered.”