

Asian Performing Arts Festival
Participant interview # 05

Kiyo MISHINA (CHEN Wei-Ning's team (Taipei) / Assistant Director)

This year, MISHINA participated as Assistant Director of the team led by <Century Contemporary Dance Company (Taipei)>'s CHEN Wei-Ning and YAO Shu-Fen.

In the Asian Performing Arts Festival 2012, she participated in the team led by <Amayadori>'s Junichi HIROTA (Japan) as an actress, along with two actresses from <Sun Son Theatre>. As she writes and directs plays for her own theater production unit, she decided to participate as Assistant Director this year.

The work as Assistant Director, however, was busier than she had imagined. While being at the side of the Director in the rehearsal studio to support him as well as running errands to buy various necessities such as props, she was also in charge of the live coverage of a scene played outside the theater using Skype.

There were actors from South Korea, Taiwan and Japan in the rehearsal studio, as well as the Korean and Taipei interpreters. In order to communicate directly with the Director and the dancers, she often resorted to using her broken English as well.

In spite of the complexity of the communication among the team members, MISHINA says that the teamwork was excellent.

“Everyone was cheerful and kind, and we made a great team. As was the case last year, I felt that the 'language does not matter.' We can understand each other through the theater expression, and we become naturally closer to each other through teamwork, with the common goal of creating a piece.”

In the creative process, the team repeated the *étude* process based on the synopsis prepared by the Director before she came to Japan.

It was a story of a family depicted through the “rice” motif; at the same time, it shed light on the similarities and the differences between the neighboring Asian cultures.

“The Taiwanese rice is very much like the Japanese rice, and I felt that Taiwan is culturally close to Japan. I learned that there are many nuclear families in Taiwan and South Korea, and that there is an increasing number of people who eat alone.

On the other hand, it was the first time for me to see the Taiwanese divination using rice. I was also surprised to hear from Mr. Kim, the Korean actor, that he 'eats with [his] parents at least once a month,' even though he is married. I was touched by the reverence for the ancestors and the parents, and I think that this 'sense of respect' is something that the Japanese have forgotten.”

Through the Festival experience, she was also impressed by how much the performing arts in other Asian countries have 'advanced beyond [her] expectations.'

“Mr. Kim told me that there are more than 1,000 small theater companies in Korea, and I was surprised that they were thriving so much. The dancers from Taipei were also very attractive, and I felt that they may be ahead of Japan.

I am afraid that it has become something out of the ordinary to go to the theater in Japan. Current Japanese theater is not for everyone. I feel that the audience no longer visit the theater as they used to.”

Through the creative process and the performance with the Asian theater artists, MISHINA discovered many different faces of Asia that she did not know before. The experience was also a process of recognizing the current Japanese situation including the negative aspects, and it gave her an inspiration as an actress.

“When I think that my colleagues are also practicing somewhere in the world while I practice, it makes me happy to know that I have many friends all over the world. If I have the chance, I would like to perform with the Asian actors again, and create new works with them.

I think the quality of a work created through collaboration by people from different countries is transmitted to the audience. I want many more people to come and see this Festival.”