

SATO Makoto

Japan | Playwright & Stage Director

Asia, Stage, and People: Organizing Encounters

■ Date: Thursday, September 12, 2019 19:00 - 21:00

■ Participants: 170

■ Venue: Event Hall, ACROS Fukuoka, B2F

Part 1: Panel Discussion

Topic: What is Asia today? Using dramatic theory to explore changing perceptions of Asia



Reflecting on Mr. Sato's history of working throughout Asia within historical context, a passionate discussion was held on the situation facing the Asian theater today compared to its past.

According to Mr. Sato, a few decades ago, Asian theater was already doing what is expected by the Japanese theater industry today, and already had an organized system. In his assessment, the term "Asian theater" embodied an attempt to relativize itself to reflect

modern theater, however no one openly proclaims that they are practicing "Asian theater nowadays. He showed video to explain how artists throughout Asia have become even more active in different ways by collaborating, visiting and inviting each other to workshops. When he was asked why he began working in Asia, he replied by saying, "I was forced to think about Asia because Japan is without question, located at the eastern edge of Asia. I was also interested in Asia in terms of Japanese involvement in the region and the fact that 'Asia' is a term that was not coined by Asian people but decided by someone else to mean 'non-European.'" Next, Mr. Sato showed a video of his Wakabacho Wharf project and used gestures to explain that theater has the mysterious power to foster communication without words. Finally, Mr. Sato touched on the change of three fundamental values of sharing, networking, and crossing borders. The first session ended with Mr. Sato's thanking his colleagues, and he mentioned that he wanted to develop a better understanding of the changes occurring in the world today.



Panelist: UCHINO Tadashi
(Professor, Department of Japanese Studies,
Gakushuin Women's College Professor
Emeritus, The University of Tokyo)



Panelist: TAKAHASHI Hiroyuki
(Theater Critic
Full-time Lecturer, Toho Gakuen
College of Drama and Music)

Part 2: Interview



Interlocutor: WATANABE Eri
(Playwright, Stage Director & Actress
President, Japan Playwrights Association)



Topic: The Dreams of Theater I want to show the joy of watching 'people'

The audience was enthralled by the fascinating interview with Ms. Watanabe, who has been writing plays for 40 years. Mr. Sato said that the world of theater is often thought to be glamorous, but in fact, it is something much more realistic and close to people. He told the audience he wanted them to watch at least two plays a year, and Ms. Watanabe quipped, "I could watch plays every day", which drew laughs from the audience. She continued by saying that one good point about plays is that they cast a spotlight on minorities. She also mentioned that there is no other country that shows various plays as much as Japan does. She said the same play can be performed in many different ways because of the tolerance for diversity in the Japanese theater industry.

However, she also talked about how she accepted the role of president for the Japan Playwrights Association, because she questioned the male dominated industry, and she showcased the vast number of women who are active in theater. Then the conversation switched to behind-the-scenes topics, like how performers give everything right up to the last moment. Next, the two turned to the main topic of *The Dreams of Theater*, Mr. Sato said that he chose the topic based on Ms. Watanabe's motto, "the power to dream". Their enthusiastic discussion came to a close with them both in agreement that they want to believe in the power to dream because theater has the ability to unify different ideas into one theme.

Participant Comments

- Having attended this forum, I was inspired to think about the past, present, and future of Asia from a variety of viewpoints.
- I was impressed by Mr. Sato who has made his dreams come true in the theater industry. People are happy when they have someone to share the same dream with.
- I was impressed by the long and amazing career of the award-winning Mr. Sato., and his story.
- The lecture explained why Mr. Sato was selected for the prize, and it provided me a better understanding of his achievements. It is admirable to see people of my generation remain active in their profession.