

②一般（大学生以上）の部 最優秀賞

受賞者名： 下鳥里美 様

Nohgaku: Winds of Change

‘Is this the real life? Is this just fantasy? Caught in a landslide. No escape from reality’ - my British friend Chris appropriately compared Nohgaku to Queen’s operatic megahit, ‘Bohemian Rhapsody’ after he watched the UNESCO Anniversary Noh Performance of ‘Aoinoue’.

English subtitles and some background knowledge of the original text helped Chris follow the story, drawing him into the deep and mysterious world of Nohgaku. As we left the theatre, Chris exclaimed with excitement, ‘That was incredible. I can’t wait to tell my friends back home’.

In contrast, after seeing a performance with friends a few years ago, my colleague Rosa had complained that she hadn’t enjoyed Nohgaku because of its complexities and lack of drama. It was a discouraging criticism to hear, but Chris’s enthusiastic reaction reignited my belief that the allure of Nohgaku is potentially borderless.

I wish to promote Nohgaku as one of Japan’s most important and captivating intangible cultural heritages. Furthermore, I’d like to help this traditional performing art grow its international fan base considerably. I have been working in global marketing & PR for most of my career; I am aware of so-called ‘best practices,’ as well as how to encourage engagement and localise marketing strategies.

The key to appreciating Nohgaku is ‘participation’. Often Nohgaku is considered somewhat lofty and a little stuffy; I couldn’t disagree more. My own love affair with Nohgaku began when I attended an introductory workshop. Even though I’m Japanese, everything was new to me, but the more involved I became the more I enjoyed myself.

If subtitles are impractical, non-Japanese speaking audiences can depend on English handouts to understand what is taking place on stage. For those that have the time, a more complete package should be offered: a tour of the theatre, a hands-on experience with the *ohayashi* musicians or

perhaps even costume trials and photo shoots to capitalise on Nohgaku's rich visual appeal. Unique Nohgaku programs for tourists could be developed in cooperation with organisations such as travel agencies, the Japan Olympic Association, the Nohgaku Performers' Association, etc. Expanding existing Takiginoh or Nohgaku tourist programs and running them alongside other cultural events will help emphasise Nohgaku's inherent beauty. Upon investigation, I discovered that a number of Noh performers or cultural circles had begun hosting independent events geared towards the internationalisation of Nohgaku; however, the majority are either undersupported or unsustainable. A more cohesive and collective venture should be designed. It will also be necessary to hold recruitment drives to enlist enthusiastic volunteers for the purposes of staffing programs, offering advice and aiding translation efforts.

In all honesty, while I understand that 'compromise' is the key to localising strategies, I want to preserve the traditional Nohgaku style without losing the spirit at its core. Super Kabuki has been successful in attracting a whole new audience; however, considering the history and deeply-rooted tradition of Noh, I don't think this strategy would be suitable. Some acceptable and perhaps necessary compromises may include shorter performance times or more dynamic and easily comprehensible plays where characters' roles and the outcomes of the stories are explicit.

Relying on an influx of first-time inbound tourists is insufficient; we need to encourage a word-of-mouth system to generate interest. I would propose the introduction of an 'Ambassador Program'. Offer incentives to tourists in compensation for sharing their Nohgaku experiences and photos via their blogs, SNS, community papers, etc. Just as Chris compared Nohgaku to rock music, I would encourage them to consider Noh in the context of their own culture. There are many books about Nohgaku published in English; however, self-expression is much more personal and meaningful. In the digital, image-driven age, it also has the power to reach far more people.

Many universities abroad run respected Japanese culture programs. Developing partnerships with such institutions will give students the chance to actively participate in ambassador programs while encouraging the inclusion of Nohgaku studies in curriculums. Prominent figures could attend/host events or workshops. Ultimately, these programs must be realistic, attainable and needs-based. For example, younger performers could be used to keep workshop costs down while opening up the tradition to new talent.

My years of experience tell me that this is the path to success. I truly believe in the potential of Nohgaku. This is no fantasy; it's a goal I'm resolved to pursue. 'Don't stop me now...'