



## Creating a Contemporary Circus Network in Japan and Its Collaboration with International Circus Network

### Table

Language: Japanese, English

Host: Michiko Tanaka (Director, Setouchi Circus Factory)

Topic: Artist / Creation, Production, Festival, Platform, Networking, Community, Collaboration, Co-production / Commission, Funding / Support

“Creating a Contemporary Circus Network in Japan and leading it to a collaboration with International Circus Network” Nowadays, more and more theaters have come to plan contemporary circus shows regularly. Usually they invite shows and artists from abroad such as Cirque du Soleil, while the creation of circus program is quite restrictive in Japan. By collaborating with international circus network, we’d like to develop our own network of contemporary circus in Japan, not only to invite shows from abroad, but also to create shows and organize tours in Japan. The moderator, Ms. Tanaka, is the director of Setouchi Circus Factory, which produces original shows or, pieces several times in a year in Japan.

### 【Summary】

Tanaka: I am Michiko Tanaka, the director of Setouchi Circus Factory (SCF). At first, I introduce you the reason and background that leads me to organize this networking session today. This is a



map of Japan. I have put points on places where circus programs or creations have been held before. I have related to some of them, or just heard about them. If you know any other places, please write them down during this session.

Before a discussion, I want to introduce SCF. SCF is a corporation which promote the contemporary circus totally. Our axis is to create a new, original circus program. Accompanied by this main task, we also bring up local circus artists and technical staffs. Our base is in Takamatsu city, Kagawa, Shikoku area.

In this two or three years, the number of domestic theatres or festivals, which produce shows of the cotemporary circus, is increased. That is the reason why I make a proposal to organize a network of the contemporary circus today. This is the time to launch the network, I suppose. I also propose to make a network of the Artists in Residence at the same time, which is indispensable to create “Japanese contemporary circus”.

So, I want to ask someone about past invitation of foreign circus shows to Japan. First, Ms. Sakai from Setagaya Public theatre.

Ms. Sakai: The aim of Setagaya Public Theatre, since 1997, is to produce programs based on local area, Setagaya Ward in Tokyo. In corporation with Setagaya Cultural Foundation and local commerce society, we hold annual Street Perform Festival called “Sancha de Daidohgei” and invited many circus companies. We used to invite street performers for outside programs. Recently, however, we have come to focus on shows inside our theatre. According to this, we have invited “Compagnie XY” from France last year, “Compagnie Defracto” from France two years ago, and “Cirkus Cirkör” from Sweden for this year.

Tanaka: Next is Mr. Fujita, the director of the Art Museum of Kochi.

Mr. Fujita: We have invited Kinderzirkus TABORKA from Berlin twenty years ago, since the contemporary circus has interested me for long time as the other performing arts. However, we could not have chance to invite the circus until we have invited “Compagnie XY” last year as well. We attained the program in collaboration with Setagaya Public Theatre and Fukuoka City Foundation for Arts and Cultural Promotion. We also put our eyes on information of the contemporary circus festivals abroad. For example, “Cirque Alfonc” attracts our eyes recently. We are



eager to produce the circus show in Kochi if we find any company coming to Japan. However, our budget is not enough to invite many shows in a year, so we are looking for a partner who can invite the companies with us.

Tanaka: Ms. Sunagawa, from Festival Tokyo.

Ms. Sunagawa: Festival Tokyo is one of the biggest annual festival in Japan. Unfortunately, we have never invited circus shows before. However, we are very interested in the contemporary circus for this two or three years. We want to try it in near future.

Tanaka: Mr. Takahagi, the vice curator of Tokyo Metropolitan Theatre.

Mr. Takahagi: In Tokyo Metropolitan Theatre, we produce a creation of the circus with Camille Boitel from France and Japanese traditional musician. We would like to organize a tour of the show in Japan and France. The show may not perform only inside the theatre, but also in open space.

Tanaka: The network of the contemporary circus has come to born not only in Japan, but also in East Asia. Seoul Street Art Creation Centre has proposed the launch of the network in December 2017. If there is anyone who is willing to join the East Asia network as well, please declare yourself today.

Tanaka: I want to make a free discussion in the latter half of this session. Above all, I assume that it is crucial to consider “what is Japanese or Asian Contemporary Circus?”. Now, we know we can invite the circus program abroad. However, we should have our uniqueness or peculiarity, in order to make true exchange or communication with other circus networks. There is each peculiarity in each zone such as European, South American, North American, and North African contemporary circus. In terms of Asia, I think there is a uniqueness in Cambodian or Vietnamese circus. But how about Japan? We need to consider this matter when we discuss about the contemporary circus.

Tanaka: Any comment or question? How about you, Ms. Matsumoto from the Art Museum of Kochi?

Ms. Matsumoto: As we said, we have invited “Compagnie XY” last year, and it was my first opportunity to work with a circus company. Anyhow, we do not have knowledge and know-how to invite the contemporary circus program.

Tanaka: We have the director of circus section in Parc de la Villette of Paris, Ms. Raffaella Benanti. How about you, Raffaella?

Ms. Benanti: First of all, we have little information about Japanese circus artists, such as Arata Arakawa who have won a bronze prize in “Cirque de Demain”, which is world famous circus competition, or Hisashi Watanabe who performs around Europe recently. And that’s all. In International Circus Network, “Circostrada”, we exchange and share information each other passionately. One of the important focus in our discussion is the advocacy, or, how to express the reason why the public organization should support the contemporary circus, and how to persuade them. Furthermore, I must say the importance of Circus Schools in Europe, especially in France. I also want to tell you how “Circostrada” has born. At the very beginning, there is no difference from the situation of now in Japan. Some producers from several nations have met together and discussed about the problems they had. Then they have come to hold regular meeting during a festival. And finally, they have opened their own office in National Circus Information Center “HorslesMurs” of France and they have got their budget to make an action. We are also very informal at the beginning.



Tanaka: Thank you very much everyone. It’s time to close this session.

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Report by Chikara Sugawara, Fukuoka City foundation for Arts and Cultural Promotion.

“About the Foundation.”

Our foundation was established, in March 1993, as an auxiliary organization of Fukuoka city. Our income depends mainly on a subsidy from the city. We have any theatre nor halls in our charge. Therefore, we had to rend a facility of the city in each time when we held an event. The Fukuoka city is now getting to have large population, over 1,500,000 people. In addition to this, the number of customers from abroad is greatly increased year by year. However, we do not have any public creation centre at this moment. The city will open new civil centre on 2023. Although we initially expected it to be a creative centre, now the concept has changed to be a rental theatre. A designated administrator of the facility will be elected by PFI (Private Finance Initiative) and we have no chance to be elected.

“About the contemporary circus shows.”

We organized the show “Il n’est pas encore minuit” of Company XY on October 15<sup>th</sup>, 2017 at Namiki Hall. We have received a subsidy from Japan Foundation for Regional Arts-activities as a cooperative program with Setagaya Public Theatre and the Art Museum of Kochi. The number of audience was up to 670 and it was 95% full of the theatre. Some artists visited five elementary schools in the city and the number of participants was 368 in total, for eight classes. The budget was about 8.500.000 yen and it was the first time for the foundation to organize a contemporary circus show.

The problem is, we do not have enough budget to organize this scale of the show, and furthermore, we do not have good place for the show.

“About the potential of the contemporary circus in the city.”

As for the potential of the contemporary circus in the city, the Cirque du Soleil performs in Fukuoka every year and the Canal City, an enormous commercial and cultural centre near the Hakata Station, has already organized some contemporary circus shows. By seeing the audience’s reaction at the Compagnie XY’s shows, I feel that the contemporary circus matches the taste of audience in Fukuoka. Nothing could be better if we can organize an open-air festival in the centre of the city, which is free in charge. We shall organize an event as our business with a company such as “Compagnie XY” which has a movable stage set and is willing to do workshops during the festival as well. Our ideal season for a festival is between September and December. Also, some subsidies, such as by Japan Foundation for Regional Arts-activities, are indispensable to organize shows.