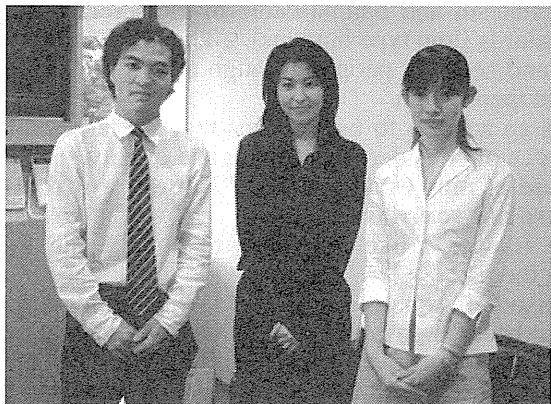


Two Japanese successes in the entertainment world: Acting makes Takako Matsu and Masahiko Tsugawa

(by Yohei Harada, Daisuke Hirose, Kenjiro Tsujino)



The "Mita Campus" has had the opportunity to meet two great personalities. Takako Matsu, which is a heiress of one of the greatest Kabuki families present in Japan, and Masahiko Tsugawa who has lived a life through Japan's acting history. They both have their message towards us students. We hope you enjoy and learn from their words, through this interviews.

Interview with Takako Matsu

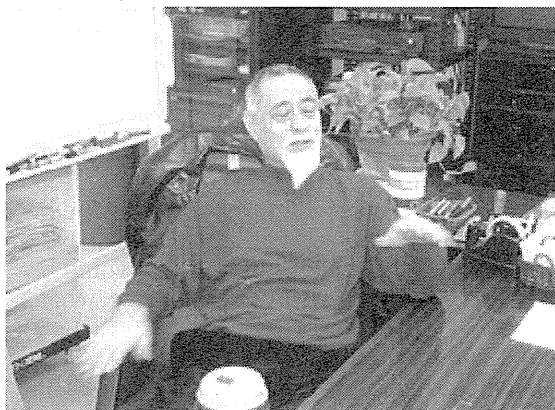
MitaCampus: Matsu-san, I guess your career as an actress was almost decided when you were a child. But did you have any other things you wanted to be before your debut, was there a conflict when you had to choose?

Takako Matsu: Well first of all in the world of Kabuki only men are allowed to practice it, so my occupation was never decided as a child. Therefore I never had a conflict in choosing a career.

The dream I had as a child were just like other children around me, to fulfill the desire. It is like if one likes to read books then the dream would be to become a librarian or a bookkeeper just because they would be able to read many books. I had many of dreams like that. But from childhood I had interest towards Kabuki so I guess that is what made me have an interest towards acting subconsciously.

Since I went to a junior high school that went directly to high school I didn't have the need to present entrance exams like many others do. But when I entered into high school I had the opportunity to meet other students that had gone through the so called entrance exam war. Those students I met were then preparing themselves for the university entrance exams by doing double school and attending to jukus. By seeing that in people I lost interest in going to a university. Then is when I started to notice my true interest towards being an actress and not working in an office.

Interview with Masahiko Tsugawa



MitaCampus: What was the reason you became an actor?

Masahiko Tsugawa: All my relatives have ones been on the top as actors and directors. I come from an entertainment family and becoming an actor was like inheriting the family business and the easiest road to choose. But in the acting world inheriting is not enough, one needs capability and luck. It is a world in which becoming successful is difficult, because there is no system nor manual for acting. So the opportunity was given to me by my parents but I was able to survive as an actor with my skills and my luck.

MC: have you ever been distressed by people telling you that your career has influences from your parents?

Tsugawa: Those that attract attention are always hit on, in this world it is good while you are criticized on. Since childhood I have heard those rumors from my parents and they have taught me how to deal with the critics. It has brought me to a good mental health so I think I was raised in a good family.

MC: Your father Kunitaro Sawamura is also a famous actor. Have you ever been insecure in becoming like him?

Tsugawa: I was a very handsome man and that is why I had confidence that I was going to be OK. On the other hand my brother was a very ugly man, I guess he felt more uncertain towards the future.

Takako Matsu

MC: When you look back into your life now, do you think that acting was a suitable career ?

Matsu: Honestly I can not say that I am suited as an actress or not. The only thing I can say is that I try very hard in everything I do. I never give up and do every thing until it finishes. If I feel "I am doing bad" I never drag that feeling to the end. May be that kind of feelings(personality) are what make have the factors to be an actress. I am not that self-confident since I think there are more beautiful and stylish actress then me. However I always have in mind the thought of "if I do better, something good may happen and then is when it gets better".

MC: You are from a distinguished family and so I guess the media criticizes your success because of the influence from your father and family. What is the thing that supported you to overcome that kind of situation?

Matsu: When I was I child I saw the articles that stated that my family was "distinguished" or famous because it was one of the Kabuki families. But I was not sure of what that meant. With my growth I started to see my parents and then is when I noticed, "it is tough to be in a distinguished family". This is because it is not the influence that my family has on me but the improvement I have to do in my family. But when I acted on stage at "Man of La Mancha" I was criticized by many magazines, because of my family back grounds. That is when I really felt that I was from a distinguished family and was really distressed and anguished. However, the audience that came to see me thought in a different way, they were came to see the drama to enjoy themselves and they would go home impressed. And because of that I decided I had to try my best to please my audience. Even thought it took me a lot of struggles to change I always had the support of my parents and other people. Many of my TV audience supported me too, and then I knew that I was not alone. That has continued until the present date, and when I do something I know that I am not doing it alone but it is thanks to those who support me in the back.

MC: Is there anyone whom you respect? Is there a person you put as a Goal?

Matsu: I am a very simple person and I respect everyone but myself. I respect my family the most. But I do not have a person whom I would put as a goal because then I would become exactly like that person. I always want to be what I am.

MC: Do you have favorite movies?

Matsu: I liked "Underground", a movie that described the old Yugoslavia. I also like "La Strada" of Fellini a film with strong personality. But on the also like fairy tale kind of movies such as "Edward Scissor hands". Akira Kurosawa's "Rashomon" was a film that made me admire the beauty of the costumes and wigs. I also saw "Titanic" and I was impressed with the large amount of money and time invested in making an idea into shape.

MC: Can you give a message to those that worry about the future?

Matsu: It is very important to feel the curiosity of "why is that?" at all times. That doubt is really essential and if you notice it don't ignore it, try to look for the answer. By searching for the solution you may find your way. Even if it is something you do not like and looking for the answer is difficult you must still challenge and then you will find what is really yours. I think that being a university student is were you have the opportunity to do this the most. I did got in to a university but due to my busy schedule I haven't had the time to assist to it. I think that it will be OK with me if I go when I have more time or get older. This is because I think that university is a place filled with freedom, an the ideal place were one can think "why is that? what should I do then?". If there are any questions you have to assert them it wouldn't be correct to ignore them because of fear. That is the way I want to live my life.

Masahiko Tsugawa

MC: What is your policy as an actor?

Tsugawa: It may continue with the "ugly man" thing but I think Yujiro Ishiwara, was an ugly man with long legs, Kiyoshi Atsumi a typical ugly man. Ken Ogata, Toshiyuki Nishida, and Beat Takeshi are all ugly.

The period of time that was looking for handsome man ended with me. The entertainment world can be said to be an industry of jealousy. Jealousy becomes love and affection, it also becomes energy. In the time when handsome men were a demand the audience had a jealousy that was in a form of admiration saying "I wish I could be like him". But with the appearance of the TV the amount of audience increased. If the amount increases the quality goes down, becoming obscene was the world's fate, and jealousy changed from "admire" to "contempt". So the audience started to scorn Yujiro Ishiwara's face but admire his legs, and felt compassion towards Kiyoshi Atsumi. When Takeshi and Sanma came to the screens, they were called "bastards (low type humans)". The audience's jealousy changed and seek for people to laugh at and not people that would make them laugh.

My policy as an actor is to be on films that are targeted to (for) an audience of considerable amount and quality.

MC: What kind of movies do you like? I guess crowd targeted movies are not your taste...

Tsugawa: The movies I like are those that make me feel worth watching them.

"Star Wars:Episode I" was a popular movie but I think it was cheap. It was sad to see so many people anxious to see that movie. "The Matrix" was a well constructed movie. The story was not a big deal but the director was talented and able to cover that. Well, box-office number 1 ranking movies are not good movies. A big amount of audience means that the quality of the audience is low.

MC: As an actor what are the things that you keep in mind daily?

Tsugawa: There is a thing I keep in mind not only as an actor but as a person.

Today Japan's society has no tension. When WWII ended I was in the first grade of elementary school, today I am 60 years old and had lived at the head of this. Of the society that was made incompetent by the occupation policy called "democracy" passed by the Americans.

I started on the movie "PRIDE" and that is when I studied the history and reached the truth. Until then I was living comfortably with no doubts towards this insane world. But due to that movie I have felt how Japanese lack in culture and personality compared to the western society. The westerners have firmly maintained their culture and personality but Japanese have sacrificed that in order to become an economic power. We were not able to value those characteristics and that is why it is easy to find a smart Japanese but difficult to meet a noble one.

That is why ever since I acted on that movie I value and keep in mind the affections and the beauty that Japanese people used to have in the past.

MC: Can you give us a Message for those worried minds?

Tsugawa: Japan can't get worse than it is right now, and that is why I want you to have your own doubts towards this era.

The worst enemy there is now is the computerized world, the non-analog world. It is killing personality. One good example would be Disneyland, were everything is artificialized and commercialized. A family can't bring in a home made lunch, they have to buy it in the amusement park. That makes it a space were the parents can't show their love towards the children, because they are restricted in doing so. I would prefer a park were a family can fully enjoy it's atmosphere by eating the mother-taste lunch together.

Letters have no meaning when they are printed out by word processors. The true meaning of a letter is when it is hand written and the recipient can feel the human touch and a sense of culture in it.

I want you to value those rudimental and old fashioned acts.

No alcohol, No yakuza, No foreigners?

(by Dasuke Hirose)

Some people that come from overseas have lived long enough in Japan to call it their motherland. However their physical appearance makes Japanese to treat them as gaijin (foreigners) and are seen differently from local people. Dave Aldwinckle, an assistant professor at Hokkaido Information University, is one of them. He is just another man who lives in a Japanese neighborhood but is looked at differently from neighbors because of his Caucasian appearance.

In Otaru, one of the largest onsen (hot spring spas) towns in Hokkaido, there was an incident. Foreign-looking people had been rejected to enter one of the onsen. Dave Aldwinckle, who is known for speaker of foreign-resident's right in Japan, gathered several other foreign-born resident in Japan to make an investigation team and tour the onsens which were known to reject foreigners. Their spouses were also included so Japanese and children were also added into the group. Dave and his company visited Yunohana Onsen. Japanese and Chinese women from the group went into the onsen, but the onsen personnel did not stop them from entering. However when Dave and other Caucasian looking people tried to go in, they were denied to enter. They were told that there was a policy to not admit foreigners in to the onsen. There was also a sign in front of the onsen that said "Japanese only". They were treated the same way as the yakuza (Japanese Mafia). Yakuza's are known for their tattoos and because of that many onsen's and public baths around Japan ban their entering by putting a sign "refuse entrance to people with tattoos". The investigation team asked the manager of the onsen for the reason. The onsen's side of the story was that the foreigners especially the Russian sailors had bad manners. They jump in the bath and splash waters everywhere, they do not wash off the soap before they enter the water, drink vodka in the bath and so on.

Otaru is one of the largest port towns in Hokkaido, approximately 30,000 Russian sailors visit Otaru each year. As a result many frightened Japanese customers complain to the onsen every year. Even worse some customer says that they will not come again if there are Russians in it. These problems are caused basically because of the cultural difference between Japan and Russia. Then why ban those people whom lived in Japan long enough to know the Japanese culture? Yunohana onsen's manager answered "we cannot ban only Russian in particular, so we ban all foreigners out for fairness".



Although it said that the onsen ban all foreigners, Chinese woman could enter without a problem. It is clear that the refusal is based on the customer's appearance. And the manager continued "we have a business to run, and we cannot allow people who will spoil the atmosphere of our onsen". It was not hard to imagine the logic the manager used. It was simple; foreigners cause trouble, so do not let them in. He jumps to easy conclusions that do not solve the problems but creates another one: discrimination.

The news spread to overseas. Otaru's sister city Dunedin, New Zealand claims Otaru for discrimination against foreigners. The mayor of Dunedin, Suhki Turner and the Dunedin city council contacted Otaru city council to stop discriminatory practice. The issues has attracted interest from the Washington Post and the New York Times.

When the group, led by Dave Aldwinckle visited another onsen in Otaru, they got a different answer compared to the one before. They visited the place called Freizeit in Otaru shopping center. The manager of Freizeit said that they had no exclusionary policies. There are some bad-mannered foreigners but also there are bad-mannered Japanese too. They are treated in the same way. Freizeit made rules clear for the foreigners by making pamphlets in several languages and consequently all the customers were satisfied and there were no Japanese customers that stay away.

Two onsen that had different answers to the problem. It is clear that the reaction of Freizeit showed more sincerity. Yunohana onsen claimed that they had to enforce the exclusionary policies because of economical reason. But since there are ways Japanese and foreigners to coexist as shown by the case of Freizeit, it is hard to understand that they still had to enforce the policies. If the policies are not controlled there is a danger that the policies may spread to restaurants, hospitals and even schools.

Similar discriminatory incidents had happened at Tokyo, a Brazilian journalist Ana Bortz was refused entrance to a jewelry store because of her nationality and physical appearance. Also a public pool in Gunma Prefecture banned foreigners. They may be untold small incidents of foreigner discrimination existing everywhere in Japan. But as the world shifts into the age of internationalization, Japan has to be open to the world as well as to change Japanese standards and laws that obstruct Japan from doing so. Dave Aldwinckle also said that at the same time foreigners have an obligation as well. They have to learn to speak, read and write Japanese to be accepted and assimilated. "People who are not trying are foreignizing themselves" he added. This is a reasonable and ideal way of thinking. It is also the first step to understanding the difference we all have, and to stop judging people by their appearance and look into their individuality.

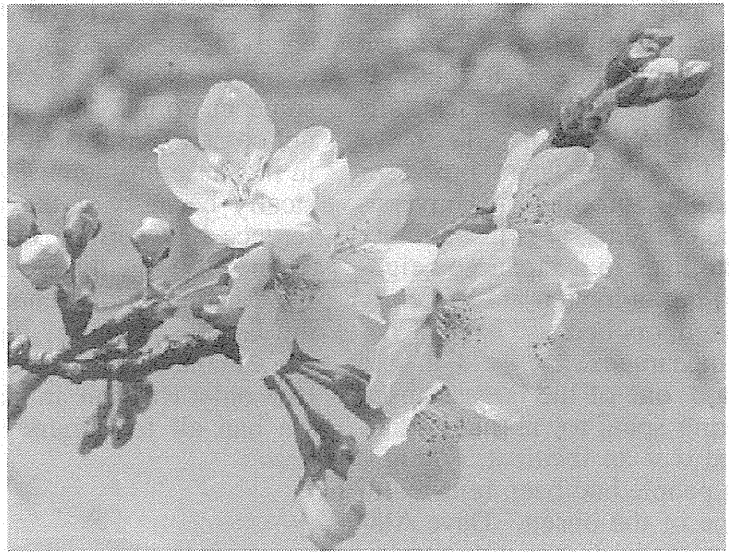
"Which do you prefer, dango or Cherry Blossoms?"

- "Ohanami", a typical Japanese way to celebrate spring

During April you will probably be invited to the events called "Ohanami", or Cherry Blossom appreciation parties, held at various student clubs on campus. Even if you do not take part in them yourselves, you will surely see groups of people relaxing under Cherry trees and enjoying sake. At "Ohanami" you will be able to meet many people and devour as much alcohol as you wish to. Some of the parties even let you join for free of charge if you are freshmen.

"Ohanami" has its roots hundreds of years ago, when feudal lords around Japan invited other powerful samurais to their castles to show off their wealth and power. Famous tea masters were also requested to join such gatherings to offer green tea to the guests. Perhaps the most famous "Ohanami" ever taken place was the one held by Toyotomi Hideyoshi in 16th century. Toyotomi was the most powerful feudal lord in Japan who had literally conquered all of the land by then, and was well known for his tea ceremonies.

Being a part of the Japanese tradition to greet the coming of spring, "Ohanami" has even inspired us to come up with a widely used proverb, "Hana yori dango", which is quoted when someone prefers enjoying dango, sweetened rice dumpling served at "Ohanami", than actually seeing the Cherry Blossoms(=Hana).



Nowadays Ohanami is merely an occasion to enjoy yourselves and beautiful cherry blossoms. Popular places for Ohanami in Tokyo are Chidorigafuchi, near the Imperial Palace, and Shinjuku Gyoen. Near Hiyoshi Campus, Tamagawa-en is an ideal site and popular among the students because it is not as crowded as other mayor places. You can observe the beautiful cherry blossoms from the Toyoko Line, when the trains pass near by the Tamagawa-en station.

Have yourselves some fun at the party under the marvelous situation... just make sure not to get too drunk!

(By Motoko Kawakami)

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