Abstract

Takarazuka Revue Company — How to Make an Attractive Revue in Takarazuka?

Takarazuka Revue Company is the all-female theater group, which performs the musicals and the revues from 1914. Though there were many Girls Opera companies in Japan, now the popular one is only Takarazuka. In general, Takarazuka plays the musical in first act of the performance, and the revues in second act after thirty-minute intermission. It is famous for the successful production of “Elisabeth” and “Romeo and Juliette,” but it is important that they keep performing the Revues from the post-World War I to now. Thus, in this thesis, the Revues in Takarazuka will be analyzed to see the traits of Takarazuka.

In this thesis, three productions of Takarazuka Revues are compared. These are the Revues which were performed in 2014, the hundredth anniversary of Takarazuka. Each of the performances were the last performances of the male role top stars.

First one is Mega Stage “Takarazuka Mugen,” which was performed by Flower Troup. After this performance, Tomu Ranju retired Takarazuka. Another one is Grand Revue “My Dream TAKARAZUKA,” which was played by Snow Troup, and this was the last performance for Kazuho So, the male role top star, and her partner, Ayu Manaka. The last one is Grand Show “PHOENIX Takarazuka!! — Love Resurrected,” which Cosmo Troup performed. It was the last performance for Kaname Ouki. They were the last performance for the top stars, so they had many traits of the typical Takarazuka Revues because they were the last chance for the viewers to see them in the male role in Takarazuka.

After this comparison, the traits of Takarazuka Revues can be found: the ability to cross over the borders, “the hidden story” of stars and the three-act structure without a plot.

First one is its ability to cross over the borders. It includes the borders not only among the cultures but also between the genders. For example, in “Takarazuka Mugen,” there was the scene which shows some Spanish images suddenly. In “My Dream TAKARAZUKA,” the viewers saw the scene called “Paris Dream,” and after that they also saw the scene called “I atin Dream.” As these example shows, the Takarasienne can go over the border of the cultures during one performance. Sometimes there is the danger that this phenomenon makes many stereotypes and the typical orientalism, but it also makes Takarasienne as the free existence, which can go over all around the world. Also, in “PHOENIX Takarazuka!! — Love Resurrected,” the viewers saw Ouki played the role called “Lady PHOENIX,” which means that she played a woman though she was a male role actor. It is paradoxical because she already played a man but again played a woman in one revue. However, it implies the freedom of the male role player who can go over the borders between genders. In this way, Takarazuka Revue has the potential to cross the inviolable borders in the world.
Second trait is “Revues. Takarazuka is the Revue group which runs under the star system. Especially, in the revue, there is no linear story, and the performers do not have the particular roles, so they have to play themselves on the stage. It influences the content of the performances, and “the hidden story,” which only the fans can understand such as the retirement of the stars and the succession of the top stars. For instance, in “PHOENIX Takarazuka!! —Love Resurrected,” the scenes, “Fire Bird,” “Prayer” and “Love Resurrected,” showed one long story, but actually it showed the next top stars, Misaki as the female role top star and Asaka as the next male role top star, and implied the succession from Ouki to Asaka. Though it was just the scene which shows a love story, for the fans, there were many “the hidden stories”. In this way, the element of “the hidden story” makes the people who see Takarazuka for the first times and the fans see the Revue in the different viewpoints because most of the Takarazuka Revues do not have the linear stories unlike the musicals. There were some revues which had the plot such as “Nova Bossa Nova,” which shows the love story in the carnival of Rio, but it was not the mainstream of Takarazuka Revues because the aim of Takarazuka Revues is to make the stars look more attractive and show the diverse images of the stars. Nowadays, this aim accelerates the use of “the hidden story” to make the fans who know stars well satisfied. Therefore, there is the element of “the hidden story” in Takarazuka Revues.

The last trait is the three-act structure in Takarazuka Revues. The three-act structure is famous for the screenwriting of the Hollywood movies and the entertainment movies. As this structure, there are three acts which rely on three climaxes in Takarazuka Revue. First climax is the opening, second one is the midpoint called “Chuzume,” and the last one is the parade. Three climaxes are the center for each acts in the revues, and all of the performers appear on the stage while the viewers see the top star as the center. Though the most of Takarazuka Revues do not have the plots, its structure has a certain linear structure to make the viewers satisfied. It introduces Takarazuka world to the spectator by the opening, and it ends with the parade, which is known as the typical Takarazuka scene. In this way, the structure of Takarazuka Revue makes people enjoy many different scenes within Takarazuka world. Consequently, Takarazuka Revues has the three-act structure, which is without a plot, to make the spectator to enjoy the variety of the scenes within Takarazuka world.

In this way, Takarazuka Revue has its distinctive trait. It is important to trace how the revue will change because it contains the essence of Takarazuka.

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