

## Next Generation

Next Generation (NG), part of the ASSITEJ network, was held online from March 22 to 31. NG is divided into two parts: a residence program participated in by young artists in theatre for young audiences and a network which gathers previous participants of the residence program. This report focuses on the latter.

For this program, Norifumi Hida (Professional College of Arts and Tourism), a participant in the first Next Generation, and Jayne Batzofin (freelance artist/South Africa) and James Riordan (artistic director at Brú Theatre/Ireland), both participants from the Next Generation held during the Artistic Gathering in Norway in 2019, acted as coordinators, designing and developing the program.

Due to time differences, everyone was not able to meet together at the same time, but 11 young artists from 10 countries, including four from Japan, participated, and several activities were conducted under the leadership of the coordinators.

For the normal residence program held in-person, young artists deepen their understanding of theatre for young audiences from around the world and develop a common understanding by watching the same plays together and participating in the same symposiums and seminars. Private time is also scheduled, and participants search for what is needed among their generation for theatre for young audiences by introducing the current state of theatre for young audiences in their own countries to other participants, introducing their own special techniques, and creating plays together. For this program, as it was difficult to conduct activities for long periods of time online, the coordinators narrowed the programs offered to participants down to three programs and had participants encounter only the particularly important experiences and ideas from the residence program.

The first program was a workshop led by Batzofin and Riordan. For example, Batzofin instructed participants to select three words in the participants' mother tongue to symbolize the previous (pandemic) year and to use those words to create a simple poem. Once the poems were finished, she then asked participants to explain the details of the poem and read them out loud. She then asked those who were listening to the poem to react to the poem and somehow create an

expression using their bodies or objects. Through this activity, participants learned what it meant to create a single work together with artists who come from different cultural backgrounds.

The second program was public forums. Participants attended three public forums (1. "The Role of TYA in the Time of Pandemic", 2. "How Can TYA Help Overcome Child Poverty Problems?", and 3. "What Do We Need to Produce TYA Productions with Diversity?") and discussed each of the topics from the viewpoint of a young artist with members of the general public in attendance. For example, in the first forum, Myunghee Ko (South Korea) reported that she had thought about what kind of theatrical performances could be done even during a pandemic, so she created plays with QR codes that contained music, video, and performances and distributed them to children. The children then went off into town with the play and their smartphone in hand, and performed the play at the designated location. In the second forum, Rebecca M. Padonu (Nigeria) spoke about how there are children who beg in her town. Education is essential in escaping poverty but those children don't understand the value of education. Padonu explained that she offers the opportunity for these children to see plays and explains the importance of getting an education.

The third program was a mentorship. Veteran artist Viviane Juguero (Brazil) was invited and participants attended her lecture on democracy and theatre for young audiences.

This program presented major challenges. There were issues, including difficulties in holding activities for long periods of time online and not being able to have all participants at the same time due to time differences, but more than that, many participants prioritized their own circumstances as we were not all physically present in the same place. As a result, only three people were able to properly attend the program as prepared from start to finish. In light of this, the next time Next Generation is held online, we think it is best to hold it over a short period of time, from one to two days, or three at the most.

(Norifumi Hida)