



Teatro Akebono 2013 Performs in the Land of the Rising Sun

By Arisa Junio and Mary Joy E. Barcelona

Teatro Akebono once again captured the hearts and minds of Japanese people and some Filipinos when the team went on a theater tour from May 18-31, 2013.

The group performed its original play *"The Crane Dog"* in different prefectures in Japan.

The story depicts the life experiences of Japanese Filipino Children (JFC) abandoned by their Japanese fathers and their struggles in their everyday lives.

The Development Action for Women Network (DAWN), through its partnership with DAWN-Japan and other Japanese support groups, was able to tour, perform and showcase the play. In the Philippines, support came from the National Commission on Culture and the Arts (NCCA), the Social Security System (SSS) and Pag-Ibig Fund.

The delegation was composed of six JFC together with three DAWN staff. The cast of performers include Masami Angel Kuraoka, who played the lead role as crane dog; Nobuyuki Paulo Mosatalla, as the crane dog's crane father; Sora Sato, as the friendly dog; among the casts who played double roles were Jemina Shilyn Alnas, as the crane dog's mother and the crane's wife; Tsuyoshi Imai, as the crane dog's stepfather and crane grandfather; and Yorgei Cerezo, as the bully dog and hunter.

The team of staff were: Carmelita Nuqui, DAWN's Executive Director; Mary Joy Barcelona, SIKHAY Coordinator and in-charge of the play, and Arisa Junio, a DAWN intern and student of Miriam College.



Cast of *"The Crane Dog"*

Teatro Akebono's first play was performed at Kanda University for International Studies (KUIS) in Chiba prefecture. Many Japanese viewers were touched by the performance, some even shed tears in some parts of the play.

After the play, a group of Japanese congratulated the team and gave some tokens to show their appreciation to the JFC performers.



The DAWN entourage at Kanda University

Right after the play at KUIS, there was a meeting among the members of DAWN-KUIS, DAWN-Japan and DAWN on how to improve the marketing of Sikhay. Then, the team with the help of Tamura-san, went to Tokyo for their upcoming performance. Philip Sasaki-sensei, the principal of Makoto Center in Tokyo, welcomed and assisted the team during their stay. On May 20, 2013, the team, led by Sasaki-sensei, performed simple dances and sang Japanese-translated chants to Japanese elders who are staying in the center. The simple performance brought priceless smiles and joys to the Japanese elders present in the hall.

Afterwards, the team met and had lunch with Japanese children in the center. After lunch, Teatro Akebono made a performance.

The children enjoyed and expressed their appreciation to the team and asked them questions. To cap their presentation the team led the dancing of Follow the Leader with the children. They also played ball games like dodge ball and baseball.

The following day, the team traveled to Yokohama.



With the children at the Makoto Center

Prof. Chiho Ogaya, of the Yokohama National University (YNU) and the coordinator of DAWN-Japan arranged for the team's performance in the university.

Hours before the play, the team along with Prof. Ogaya's students, went around YNU and distributed flyers to promote the play and invite students.

By 4:00 PM, a group of students from Prof. Ogaya's class made a short presentation about DAWN and their programs.

Teatro Akebono presented their play. A number of people from the audience asked questions to the JFC performers.



At the Makoto Center with the elderly

Questions like "What is your favorite Japanese dish?", "What is the reason in representing the Japanese parent as crane and the Filipino parent as dog?" and other questions were raised.

After answering the set of questions, the volunteer students organized a mini-game, followed by a "welcome party" in one of the conference rooms in YNU.

The following day, the team went to Saitama.

Natsuyuki Imagawa, the coordinator of YUMEUTA in Saitama, welcomed and fetched the team from the Omiya station.

The Yumeuta members prepared a lot of activities for Teatro Akebono team.



The DAWN team at the Yokohama National University (YNU)

Masayo Fukuda, along with Imagawa-san, brought the team to a farm and picked fresh vegetables such as radish (daikon), strawberries, broccolis, and other vegetables. That night, Imagawa's team prepared a barbecue party at Baobab Restaurant, owned by one of their members. Teatro Akebono team socialized with the other members of Imagawa's team.

The following day, the Yumeuta's members brought the group to a Rose Garden. The JFC with the DAWN staff were able to appreciate the beauty of the place, most especially the magnificent rose flowers in the garden.

It was a perfect opportunity for pictorials. Then the group was brought to the Yonohonmachi Center where they cooked Filipino dishes for their Japanese friends.



DAWN-YNU Group Photo



In the afternoon, the team presented the play, for the fourth time. And like in other prefectures, the audience was touched and moved by the JFC's performance.

The show ended with dance numbers rendered by Sora, Masami, Nobuyuki, and Jemina. Sikhay goods were also appreciated and several items were sold.

Yumeuta also chose assorted items that they will help sell in their next bazaars.

Nobuyuki Mosatalla was very fortunate because he was able to meet and bond with his father.

Vegetable and strawberry picking with Yumeuta members

Team Akebono prepared and cooked Sinigang na Baboy, Adobong Manok, and Lumpiang Shanghai. The Yumeuta members and their friends with the Team Akebono had a wonderful dinner and exchange.

The following day, Imagawa's friend gave a free nail-art to team Akebono. The group was invited to a radio program. Smile FM interviewed Imagawa-san, along with Joy, Tsuyoshi, Jemina and Yorgei.

The JFC interviewees were asked about their memorable experiences in Japan, their favorite Japanese dishes, and their dreams. They also sang the Philippine National Anthem in the radio program.



Preparing Filipino food for dinner with friends

He related, “Nakita ko ang papa ko, hindi ko po inisip na makikita ko siya. Nung nakita ko po si papa, niyakap ko siya at napaiyak ako sa tuwa,” (I saw my dad. I never thought I will ever meet him. When I saw him I embraced him and I cried in joy). Nobuyuki, age 12 shared his unforgettable experience in Japan. The last time he was with his dad was when he was only five years old (photo on page 6).

The following day, Imagawa’s team held a shirt-dyeing activity for team Akebono. Everyone was given the chance to design their shirts. While having the activity, Tsuyoshi Imai’s father came. “Nakita ko ulit yung tatay ko, nakausap ko siya. Mas nagsasalita na siya [tatay] ngayon hindi ‘gaya dati (I saw my dad again and we talked. He talked more unlike before). We exchanged e-mails and contact numbers.” Tsuyoshi haven’t seen his dad for the last five years, thus, making his stay in Saitama memorable (photo on page7)

After the activity, a dance-farewell party was held for team Akebono. Everyone danced and enjoyed the party that ended quite early.



DAWN staff and JFC with their fathers in Saitama



Radio Interview at Smile FM

Imagawa-san brought everyone to a nearby park to relax, enjoy the view, and have fun.

The following morning, Imagawa’s team brought team Akebono to the Omiya station for the trip to Nagoya for the next presentation. The team was met at the Nagoya station, by Tamurasan, Koushou Nakashima (student of Prof. Seiko Hanochi at the Chubu University), and Prof. Hanochi. The group was brought to the Kousouji Catholic Church where they stayed and had their performance.

That afternoon, team Akebono presented their play where the majority of the audience are Filipino women, their Japanese husbands and children. At the end of the show members of Teatro Akebono were asked very interesting questions. A welcome potluck-dinner followed where almost everyone brought Philippine or Japanese dishes that were shared to all.

So much food and drinks were enjoyed by everyone including the discussion while having dinner. Sikhay products were patronized by the attendees.



At the Kousouji church in Nagoya after their presentation

In Nagoya, Yorgei Cerezo was able to meet his aunt after several years. “Yung pinaka-memorable na nangyari sa ’kin sa Japan ay nung nakita ko yung tita ko. Kasi minsan lang kami magkita o mag-bonding”(The most memorable that happened in Japan was meeting my aunt. It is so rare to see and bond with her), shared Yorgei.

The following day, Tita Risa invited the whole team to have lunch at her place. Everyone enjoyed the Filipino dishes that were served. That night, Yorgei’s aunt invited everyone to karaoke singing to have fun before the team moved to Osaka the next morning.

Team Akebono was welcomed at the Shin-Osaka station by Anno-sensei and a group of Japanese student volunteers from Kansai University. Tita Mel, together with Masami and Tsuyoshi left after lunch to meet with Masami’s father in Kumamoto City. “Masaya ako nang nakita ko ang tatay ko” (I was happy when I met my dad), said Masami when asked about her feelings meeting her father (photo on page 6).



With elementary school students in Osaka

The rest of the team was brought to the Nagai Youth Hostel in Osaka. In a meeting with Joy, Sikhay Coordinator, the Kansai University students expressed their interest to help in the marketing of Sikhay products. They chose from several products, determined the prices and terms of payment were discussed.

The following day, everyone went to a grade school in Osaka. Team Akebono showcased their talents as they danced Follow the Leader in front of the grade two pupils whom they also invited to join in the dancing. The team had lunch with the rest of the kids inside their classroom.

The team was able to watch as well the Japanese grade school pupils perform a dance number they will be performing in their upcoming school festival. Everyone enjoyed the activities in the school. That night, Nobuki Fujimoto, a DAWN-Japan volunteer from Osaka, together with Anno-sensei brought the team to dinner in an Indian restaurant and everyone enjoyed the food.

The next day, team Akebono presented The Crane Dog in Osaka University. Oue-sensei welcomed them. Before the play, Megumi Hara gave a short introduction about DAWN using power point presentation to the audience composed mainly of Japanese students. A discussion followed after the play. Some in the audience asked questions about the personal lives of the members of the theater group. A farewell dinner for team Akebono followed.

The team enjoyed and had a great time dining at an okonomiyaki restaurant. Students from Kansai University told the team that they will visit the Philippines in August and that made everyone excited of meeting again.

On May 31, 2013, Teatro Akebono went back to Manila. They brought with them new memories and fun experiences which made their Japan trip a cherished one. Once again, the team was able to capture and enlighten their viewers about the plight of Japanese-Filipino children through their play The Crane Dog.

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The Joy of Meeting Our Fathers!

By Tsuyoshi Imai

Every year, since 1998, the Development Action for Women Network (DAWN) and its Teatro Akebono program has been going to the different prefectures in Japan for a musical play. Japanese Filipino Children (JFC) undergo a summer theater workshop and then they are selected to take part in the show.

This year, I was lucky once again to be part of the cast of the musical play entitled "The Crane Dog." For children who have never been to Japan the prospect of performing is always very exciting and for those who had performed it is always an unforgettable experience. Because of the musical play, the children are given the chance to go to different prefectures around Japan, meet new friends, experience Japanese culture, and a whole lot more. But more importantly, we are able to make people understand the real story of being Japanese-Filipino children and share with them our situation.

This yearly musical play, for me, is the heart of the organization. It shows the cooperation and unity of each and everyone in the family who give their very best to stage the play. Chosen to be part of the cast is almost like a dream come true because with it comes hope, a chance for the DAWN-JFC to meet their fathers even if it is only for a brief moment.

This year was my fourth time of being a member of the cast of the DAWN's Teatro Akebono musical play. I participated last year but the last time I was chosen was ten years ago. I was only a kid back then and almost forgot what Japan was like. Even if I did remember some things, I knew for sure that a lot has changed since then. So I was really excited going again.

My hope was to see my father because I had not seen him for the last five years.



Nobuyuki with father



Masami (center) with father and Tsuyoshi

The last time he visited me was during my high school graduation. I had also seen him twice before that when I was a little boy and I remember loving the moment as we talked about my performance.

But last year, in May 2012 was a different story. We were able to contact him but unfortunately he was very busy and didn't have time to meet with us, so I was unable to see him. Though that experience did not turn out in my favor, the trip was still memorable and worth it.

Some of the kids like Masami Kuraoka, Jemina Alnas, and Sora Sato were at least able to meet their fathers. It was a special moment especially for Sora because he met his father for the first time.

This year was different from last year. Every year is a different chance, a new opportunity. We also had a new member, Nobuyuki Mosatalla who hasn't seen his father for seven years. As much as any other year, the children were full of hope that they will meet their fathers. However, some were lucky and some were not.

With our first week almost over, not one of us had met with our fathers. But when we arrived in Saitama, we all got a surprise. Through the help of DAWN and Yumeuta we were able to contact some of our fathers. Nobu's father came and they got reunited. It was a very touching and heart-warming scene. Both of them just kept on staring at each other's faces, smiling, hugging, and a few tears were shed. His dad did not want to let go of him that he even spent two nights with Nobu and with the rest of the team.

Nobu was hoping to meet his father during the trip. He said that when he saw a guy coming in that looked exactly like him, he already knew that it was his father.

“I was very happy and excited at the same time because we met at last after seven years,” explained Nobu who was emotional from his first time encounter with his father.

While spending only two days with his father, for Nobu, it was a worthy and fulfilling experience, although it wasn't enough to alleviate their longing for each other. If only man has the ability to stop time and prolong moment of being together. But we all have to move on and part ways again. Both father and son are hopeful that it is not the last time but the beginning of many more meetings and constant communication.

Masami was also fortunate in meeting her father. It was their second time to meet and just as before, her father was very cooperative and also eager to see Masami. Accompanying her, we travelled by train for three hours to Kumamoto City from Osaka to meet up with her dad. Even if it was only for a brief meeting, the long travel time was worth it.

It wasn't difficult for them to communicate because Masami's father can speak Filipino. Masami was very shy and just kept on smiling at her dad. He was very happy to see his daughter and told her that he really wants to be with her because he misses her and can't stop thinking of her.

Although the encounter was short but it will be one of those cherished memories of Masami of her dad.

As for me? Well, I am one of the lucky ones also. I was blessed with the opportunity to meet with my father again. It was five years ago when I last saw him, so there were lots of things to talk about. We met at the Yumeuta office in Saitama and talked for a couple of hours because he still had a meeting to attend and was quite in a rush. Despite the brevity, we were able to spend the time together by catching up, telling stories about each other, and my siblings. I am thankful for the opportunity given to us to have a little conversation. Who knows when we will be able to talk to each other again in person.

We had a chance to exchange phone numbers and e-mail addresses, so we can communicate more often.

Every child has a right to know who their parents are no matter the consequences. It is a right, not a privilege.



Tsuyoshi with father

But for us Japanese-Filipino Children of DAWN most of us really can't exercise that right but instead we cling on opportunities that someday we will meet our fathers.

And that shouldn't be the case, but for now that is our reality. I am hopeful that in the near future this will change. I believe we deserve more than this.

“Don't lose hope, always pray to God and always have faith. If you haven't seen or met your father there will always be another time, just believe,” a quote on Nobu's contagious optimism.

Theater Workshop (cont'd)

The children started with a warm-up, stretching and some preliminary dance routine. The focus was to finish all the blockings and structure of the play. A run through was set for scenes 1-6, to polish all steps and movements. Blockings for scenes 7 and 8 were made. Various movements and dance number were added at the final phase and the actors were made to memorize the steps but had some difficulty in expressing their emotions. Other rehearsals were done to add artistic input in the music, costumes and set was facilitated by Mr. Ronie.


Sounds, props and costumes of the play were finalized. Mr. Errol John Noel, a costume designer was requested to help in reconstructing the costumes to suit the dance performances.

A final review was laid down to emphasize all the important reminders such as the

actors' movements, travels, delivery of lines, characterization and actors connection. Another run through was set, this time using their costumes and improvise props to actualize the play. Some movements were modified to suit the costumes.

A final run through was set with costumes and sounds with an audience to critique the show. Most of the people in the audience were very glad about the performance of the whole cast. Additional rehearsals were suggested for artistic excellence and in preparation of the presentation co-organized by the Center for Human Rights and Gender Studies of the Polytechnic University of the Philippines (PUP), Sta. Mesa, Manila on May 15, 2013.

The trainings and workshops were supported by the National Commission on Culture and the Arts (NCCA) and the University of Makati (UMAK).



SINAG (akebono or yoake in Japanese) means dawn or daybreak.

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DAWN MOMS & KIDS JOIN THEATER WORKSHOP

By Mary Joy E. Barcelona and Ma. Cristina S. Tenorio

Every year, the Development Action for Women Network (DAWN) continues with its project of promoting Cultural Appreciation and Mutual Understanding Among Cultures Through Theater. Trainings and workshops are conducted for mothers and their children each year.

This year's, training-workshop is on acting, dance-choreography and music that was held from April 22-26, 2013 at the DAWN's office in Manila.

The first two days of the workshop were given to a total of 20 participants, 15 Japanese-Filipino children (JFC) and five mothers. The succeeding workshop was given to the seven Japanese-Filipino children namely : Nobuyuki Paulo Mosatalla, Sora Sato, Masami Angel Kuraoka, Yorgei Cerezo, Jemina Shilyn Alnas and Tsuyoshi Imai to perform in the musical play entitled "The Crane Dog."

The first day started with a review of the play "The Crane Dog." The participants were asked to read the script and do a run through of the presentation done last year. The comments were focused on acting, blocking and movements.

The script was divided into eight scenes and actors were assigned in each scene.



Each scene was presented and reworked incorporating the concepts and elements of theater discussed in the workshops.

Emphasis was placed on delivery of dialogues, blockings and choreography. The costume design was altered to make it easier for the actors playing multiple roles to readily change costume and shift to their other character.

The entire concept of the play was reworked and clarified.

Sessions incorporating exercises and dance were facilitated by Mr. JP.

A review of scenes 1-3 was done, followed by a run through of scenes 4-6.

The afternoon session started with stretching and recapping some dance routine and recalling some of the movements from scenes 1-3 and movements were added for scenes 4-6.

Other workshop activities were given to enhance facial expression like "Pass a Mask" and "Face Warp," since most of the actors lack expressive facial expressions. The activity helped them exaggerate facial expressions conveying different emotions. Production matters were also discussed.

(continued on page 7)

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