

Greetings from the President's Office

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The Comfort of *Warabi-za*

The *Warabi-za* Theater, located in Senboku city, has a long history since the end of World War II. Having a stronghold in Akita, which is obviously not a big city, they give public performances nationwide as well as occasionally worldwide. The *Warabi-za* Theater is really an intriguing organization.

About three years ago, I had an opportunity to watch their play at their invitation. It was different from the stereotypical play at a gorgeous theater in a big city and in front of a large audience, which can often be overwhelming or exhausting, but the *Warabi-za* play made me feel heartwarming and somehow nostalgic. *Warabi-za* does not fit the typical and traditional image of a play. I do not know how to describe it, but every aspect that makes up *Warabi-za* is just truly warm. The theater is surrounded by bucolic landscape with rice and vegetable fields, away from any unpleasant advertisements.

I recall my time of more than 60 years ago as a child, the *Warabi-za* delegation visited my elementary school in Tochigi Prefecture. I cannot remember the title of the performance but vividly remember there a scene in which they sang "Song of Bandits." Encouraged by the actors and actresses, all of us students delighted in singing the song together with them.

I cannot recall what kind of play they performed, however, their authentic performance was absolutely impressive for us kids, especially for those of us that never watched a play before.

The play lasted for more than an hour and the children were unable to stay still during the show. Some of them started talking and even moving around in the middle of the performance. Eventually, the children's attitude began to distract the actors and actresses and affect the play, and the actors and actresses unfortunately had to stop their play to ask us to be quiet.

It was difficult for elementary school kids to behave well during a romantic play. After their performance, the leader of the theatrical group gave us a serious talk about manner and showing respect and appreciating theater. I still remember that we had a meeting to reflect on our behavior afterwards. Thinking back and admiring their play with such old memories, all of sudden, I realized one thing: in 60 years, nothing has changed yet in *Warabi-za*. As proof, their warm-hearted atmosphere and the feeling I got still continue.

At the play three years ago, for an instant, my feeling exactly overlapped my feeling 60 years ago. Theatrical entertainment cannot be built on normal human life without ups and downs, but is instead created on dramatic turbulent comedies and tragedies, with the audience identifying with characters in the play and reliving various feelings, culminating to a successful performance.

Nowadays, I may refrain from entertainment experiences with intense emotion and feelings, probably due to my age. But the *Warabi-za* is warm and comfortable enough for me.



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<http://www.asahi.com/area/akita/articles/MTW20180618051550001.html>

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