

Final Report

Title: Survey report on the state of traditional and contemporary theater in Vietnam and the potential for theater exchange

During my stay in Vietnam, I watched all sorts of theater regardless of genre. I was stimulated in a variety of ways when I went to the theater. Encountering the unknown brought both anticipation and anxiety. There were some dull performances among both traditional arts and contemporary theater, but the diverse modes of expression and refined performances kept my keen interest.

The birth of expression is deeply engraved with all the influences of the region and society around it. Expression born apart from society invites doubt as to how it will survive in the next place it is set in. If such expression sympathizes with the issue awareness of the audience and becomes a place for communication between them, then a new relationship will be born.

It is often said that “Government is a reflection of its people.”

For better or for worse, the government manages politics, economics, culture, and external work with foreign countries, so it reflects an overall view of the cultural level of the people living under that system.

As is widely known, Vietnam has a single-party government ruled by the Communist Party. Even in the 21st century, they uphold the principles of socialism. Accordingly, both Vietnamese and foreigners alike are constantly restricted in their actions and thoughts in Vietnam. In this sense, understanding the politics of Vietnam substantially aids in making clear the character of the people living in Vietnam. To put it another way, in order to understand the political mechanisms and systems of Vietnam, you must put an antenna on the people who live there, and carefully observe their true form including their history, geography, and environment.

Watching the vast numbers of motorcycles that drive through the streets of Hà Nội and Hồ Chí Minh City, I marveled at the bottomless energy and dynamism of Vietnamese people. There is a strong, uncanny mood here that cannot be seen in other cities of Southeast Asia.

I frequently think that this country Vietnam was able to overcome so many hardships thanks to the energy of its people.

Compared with Japan, the average



income in Vietnam is extremely low, but the faces of Vietnamese people are always filled with joy.

Time came to a stop in Vietnam due to long wars against France, Japan, America, and China, but now that those wars are over, Vietnam is once more on its way to becoming a core part of the world. None can doubt that after a few more years, it will become a strong economy.

I took this fellowship project as an opportunity to revise once more my thesis of “Asian Theater”, and felt that I have reached the time to advance to the next step.

So long as there is rich earth in which theater can grow, the theater situation and theater education of Vietnam has infinite potential.

1. Report on the scale and current state of the theatrical world in Vietnam

In Vietnam, there are 12 performing arts organizations under the jurisdiction of the central government (Vietnam Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism). They include theaters, theater groups, orchestras, and dance groups operated with government subsidies. 10 of these organizations are concentrated in the capital Hà Nội, and work with adjacent exclusive theaters as their base. (See Table 1)

Furthermore, the administrative divisions of Vietnam are divided into 58 provinces including 5 centrally administered municipalities (Hà Nội, Hồ Chí Minh, Hải Phòng, Đà Nẵng, and Cần Thơ), and art groups belonging to local governments at the province and city level are also very sound.

There are also traditional Chèo groups and contemporary theater groups belonging to the army and the Ministry of Public Safety. Priority is given to their role as entertainment groups for the army and police, but some of them are nationally famous actors who appear on television.

Yet, the existence of private theater groups that do not belong to any public institution especially deserves mention.

In the 21st century, private theater groups appeared rapidly in Hồ Chí Minh City, and the audience developed a habit of paying money to watch theater. This is limited to Hồ Chí Minh City, and there are no officially approved private theater groups in Hà Nội.

As you can understand from such conditions, Vietnamese theater is concentrated in the cities, with national theater groups playing a central role in the theatrical world of Hà Nội, and private theater organizations playing a central role in Hồ Chí Minh City.

Although not entirely accurate, according to Nguyễn Thế Vinh, director of the Vietnam National Drama Theatre, there are nearly 50 theaters dedicated to theater across Vietnam, and 150 arts organizations involved in performance activities.

1. Vietnam National Drama Theatre adjacent to an opera house

The Vietnam National Drama Theatre is located directly behind the Hà Nội Municipal Opera (known as the Hà Nội Opera House) in the center of old Hà Nội. This opera house was built in 1911 in imitation of Parisian opera houses. A crimson carpet lies on the central level of its broad entrance, and its floor and walls are covered in gorgeous marble.



It is rather small with just 585 seats, but the royal décor and huge chandelier capture the gaze of the audience. It has a glittering and gorgeous atmosphere characteristic of France, and from the balcony you can see August Revolution Square where 6 radial roads intersect. It is said that President Hồ Chí Minh spoke to the people from this balcony, saying “Nothing is greater than independence and liberty!”

The Vietnam National Drama Theatre was established subordinate to the opera house in 1952, as a theater dedicated to theater. It is a historical theater that continued to explore the potential of Vietnamese original contemporary theater even while Vietnam was bogged down in long wars against France, America, and China. Currently it is under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism (the Vietnamese government), and a total of over 100 employees work with this 180 seat theater as their base. Director Nguyễn Thế Vinh, who is about the same age as me, has directed the theater since 2012 following service as the deputy director of the Youth Theatre of Vietnam. Although they were in a long downturn due to economic difficulties, Nguyễn undertook radical reform after his appointment, and the theater has regained vitality.

The organization is divided into the Administrative Department, Marketing & Relations Department, Accounting Department, and Arts & Training Department. 50 actors, 2 directors, and an eminent artist belong to the Arts & Training Department, which is central to their activities, and they strengthen the body of performance.

In the past 4 years, they have created a repertoire of 20 works, and actively stage performances in Hà Nội and provincial cities, as well as participating in theater festivals overseas. The director’s office is



decorated with gold and silver medals, as well as certificates and award plaques won at domestic and foreign theater festivals.

Deputy Director and Eminent Artist Phạm Anh Tú says that he wants to break down the formality of traditional Vietnamese theater and create his own Vietnamese contemporary theater that is not simply a vessel for Western theater.

2. Youth Theatre of Vietnam, always making new attempts at art

The Youth Theatre of Vietnam is in a corner set back from a main street that runs north to south through central Hà Nội. It was established in 1978 after the end of the Vietnam War.

It consisted of youth members when it was established, so it was named “Youth Theatre”.

This theatre has stated its goals as providing younger generations with an opportunity to watch performing arts and deepen their knowledge, and it also serves as the International Association of Theatre for Children and Young People Vietnam Centre.

It has a medium sized theater with 618 seats, and a total of 4 theater groups performing with this theater as their base, including 2 contemporary theater groups, a song and dance group, and physical theater group emphasizing physical expression, which is rare in Vietnam. With a total of 120 artists, it has over 200 employees including the staff.

It has a wide repertory ranging from contemporary plays, to children’s plays, translated plays, and musicals, and a crowded schedule including regional tours, overseas performances, and activities to educate and spread theater to young people.

Several dozen members of this organization visited Japan as part of a cultural cooperation project for ASEAN countries conducted by the Japan Foundation in 2014, and over the course of 4 months, they trained in actual field of theater production in Japan.

The Youth Theatre of Vietnam is very interested in Japanese theater, and has accepted performances by the Tokyo Theater Ensemble in 1997 and 2007. Furthermore, it participated in the International Ibsen Festival held in Tokyo in 2010, where they performed “A Doll’s House”. In 2016, as a Japan-Vietnam international collaborative production with Youkiza Marionette Theater Group, they performed “The Wild Duck Addiction”, based on Ibsen’s “The Wild Duck” in Tokyo, Hà Nội, and at the Sibiu Theater Festival (in Romania).



Truong Nhuan has served as the director until now, but he will pass this responsibility to the actor Phạm Chí Trung from June 2017.



(Table 1) Performing arts groups based in Hà Nội

(No. 1 to 10 are under the jurisdiction of the Vietnam Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism)

| | Primary groups in Hà Nội | Est. | Address & Remarks | Logo Mark |
|----|--|------|--|---|
| 1 | Nhà Hát Kịch Việt Nam Vietnam National Drama Theatre (National) | 1952 | 1 Tràng Tiền, Hoàn Kiếm, Hà Nội *Has a small theater with 180 seats. |  |
| | | | | |
| 2 | Nhà Hát Tuổi Trẻ Youth Theatre of Vietnam (National) | 1978 | 11 Ngô Thì Nhậm, Hai Bà Trưng, Hà Nội *Has a medium theater with 618 seats, and 4 groups |  |
| | | | | |
| 3 | Nhà hát Tuồng Việt Nam Vietnam Tuong Theatre (National) | 1959 | Rạp Hồng Hà - 51 Đường Thành, Hà Nội *Based in the Hồng Hà Theater, which has 395 seats |  |
| | | | | |
| 4 | Nhà Hát Cải Lương Việt Nam Vietnam National Cailuong Theatre (National) | 1951 | 164 Hong Mai, Quỳnh Lôi, Hai Ba Trưng, Hà Nội |  |
| | | | | |
| 5 | Nhà hát Múa rối Việt Nam The Vietnam Puppetry Theatre (National) | 1956 | 361 Truong Chinh Thanh Xuan, Hà Nội. |  |
| | | | | |
| 6 | VNSO Dàn Nhạc Chèo Hường Vietnam National Symphony Orchestra (National) | 1959 | 226 Cầu Giấy, Hà Nội *Mainly performs at the Hà Nội Opera House |  |
| | | | | |
| 7 | Nhà Hát Chèo Việt Nam Vietnam Chèo Theatre (National) | 1951 | (Nhà hát Kim Mã) tại số 71 Kim Mã, Hà Nội *Based in the 476 seat Kim Mã Theater, also has a 50 seat small theater |  |
| | | | | |
| 8 | Liên Đoàn Xiếc Việt Nam Vietnam Circus Federation (National) | 1956 | 67 Trần Nhân Tông, Lê Đại Hành, Hai Bà Trưng, Hà Nội |  |
| | | | | |
| 9 | Nhà Hát Nhạc Vũ Kịch Việt Nam Vietnam National Opera & Ballet (National) | 1959 | 11 lane Núi Trúc- District Ba Đình Hà Nội *Mainly performs at the Hà Nội Theater | VIETNAM NATIONAL OPERA & BALLET |
| | | | | |
| 10 | Nhà hát Ca Múa Nhạc Việt Nam Vietnam Contemporary Music Group (National) | 1986 | 8 Huỳnh Thúc Kháng, quận Ba Đình, Hà Nội | |
| | | | | |
| 11 | Nhà Hát Chèo Quân Đội Military Chèo Theatre (Military) | 1954 | 45 Xuân Đình, phường Xuân Đình, Bắc Từ Liêm, Hà Nội, *Entertains the military, but also does public shows | |
| | | | | |
| 12 | Nhà Hát Kịch Nói Quân Đội Military Theatrical Theater Group (Military) | | 6 Hồ Tùng Mậu, Mai Dịch, Cầu Giấy, Hà Nội *Entered 3 rd Vietnamese Experimental Theater Festival | |
| | | | | |
| 13 | Nhà Hát Kịch Hà Nội Hà Nội Drama Theatre (Municipal) | 1959 | Cong Nhan theater No.42 Trang Tien, Hà Nội. |  |
| | | | | |
| 14 | Nhà Hát Múa rối Thăng Long Thang Long Water Puppet Theatre | 1969 | 57, Dinh Tien Hoang Str., Hà Nội. *Performs regular shows at a 200 seat theater |  |
| | | | | |

| | | | | |
|----|---|------------------|--|---|
| | (Municipal) | | | |
| 15 | Nhà Hát Cải Lương Hà Nội Hà Nội Cải Lương Theatre (Municipal) | | 72, phố Hàng Bạc, quận Hoàn Kiếm, Hà Nội. | |
| 16 | Nhà Hát Chèo Hà Nội Hà Nội Chèo Theatre (Municipal) | 1954 | 15 Nguyễn Đình Chiểu, Q. Hai Bà Trưng Hà Nội. |  |
| 17 | TRƯỜNG ĐẠI HỌC SÂN KHẤU - ĐIỆN ẢNH HÀ NỘI Hà Nội Academy of Theatre and Cinema (National) | 1980 1959 | Khu Văn hóa nghệ thuật, P. Mai Dịch, Q. Cầu Giấy, Hà Nội *Combined cinema and theater school established |  |

3. Hồ Chí Minh City Contemporary Theater...Phẳng Sài Gòn, the private theater group popular with young people

Hồ Chí Minh City, which once thrived as the capital of South Vietnam, and continues to exist as an important economic city of Vietnam after unification, has an even greater population than the current capital Hà Nội, and has a vibrant theater community. There are several private theater groups in this city, which enjoy great popularity among young people. (See Table 2)

A distinct feature of these private theater groups is that most of them are young groups formed since the year 2000. Because they do not receive support from the government like theaters in Hà Nội, their only source of assets is income from ticket sales. They have great significance as commercial theater.

The programs of private theater groups is mainly entertainment with a touch of comedy, and they cast popular film actors to emphasize their entertainment value.

Phẳng Sài Gòn, a particularly popular theater group established in 2009, is based in a 285 seat theater on the premises of the School of Theatre and Cinema of Hồ Chí Minh City. According to their representative Trần Đại, the audience did not have a habit of paying admission to watch theater when the group was founded. Therefore, he carefully studied the play and leisure trends of young people in Hồ Chí Minh City, and made repeated interview surveys of students about entertainment. Then, focusing on the fact that movie theaters are crowded with young couples and teenagers, he had the idea to put well known film actors on the live stage.

He then recruited actors who had graduated from the School of Theatre and Cinema of Hồ Chí Minh City, and gave all his strength



to creating original works. Using the fame of the actors, he staged one-off free performances for a limited time. Theater performed live by actors working in film and television soon spread by word of mouth among young people, and they soon developed a habit of paying admission to watch theater. Anyways, if theater is not fun and funny, people will not come to the theater.

However, Vietnam is a socialist country.

Just like in China, there is censorship of scripts, and content that is critical of politics or society is taboo. There are also severe restrictions on speech and the Internet.

Therefore, the works of this theater group are focused on romantic comedies, horror theaters, and musicals not bound by ideology.






Phẳng Sài Gòn has 55 actors, 5 directors, and 3 playwrights, and is operated by 8 resident staff. In the 6 years since its founding, the group has added 30 works to its repertory, and different performances are done each day on Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays. It has become a great success, as all seats are reserved, but advance tickets sell out quickly, so supplementary seats are added to the aisles every time. Admission price is set at ¥700, which is nearly twice as much as a movie ticket.



Phẳng Sài Gòn Show Poster

Among the private theater groups headquartered in Hồ Chí Minh City, many of them have directors who are anxious to do joint productions with Japanese theater groups. I think that a new challenge for me is how to build up new exchange relationships.

(Table 2) Popular private theater groups in Hồ Chí Minh City

| | Hồ Chí Minh private groups | Est. | Address & Remarks | Logo Mark |
|---|--|------|---|--|
| 1 | Sài Gòn Phẳng Phẳng Sài Gòn | 2009 | Nhà Hát Thế Giới Trẻ (“Young Generation” Theater) 125 Công Quỳnh, Quận 1, TP.HCM *A theater with 285 seats in the School of Theatre and Cinema of Hồ Chí Minh City |  |
| 2 | IDECAF Thai Duong Art and Theater Company | 2000 | Sân Khấu Kịch Idecaf (IDECAF Theater) 28, Lê Thánh Tôn, Quận 1, TP.HCM 7 Trần Cao Vân (Trần Cao Vân No. 7 Theater) |  |
| 3 | Hoàng Thái Thanh Hoàng Thái Thanh | 2010 | Sân Khấu Kịch Hoàng Thái Thanh 139 Bắc Hải, Phường 14, Quận 10, TP.HCM |  |
| 4 | Hồng Vân Hồng Vân Theater | 2006 | Sân khấu kịch Super Bowl (“Super Bowl” Theater) 43A Trường Sơn, Q.Tân Bình, TP.HCM |  |
| 5 | Hồng Hạc Hồng Hạc Theater | 2015 | Sân khấu kịch Hồng Hạc (Flamingo Theatre, 162 seats) 155 bis Nam Kỳ Khởi Nghĩa, Quận 3, TP.HCM |  |
| 6 | Trống Đồng Trống Đồng Theater | 1989 | Sân Khấu Trống Đồng (“Bronze Drum” Theatre) 12B Cách Mạng Tháng 8, Quận 1, TP. HCM. | |

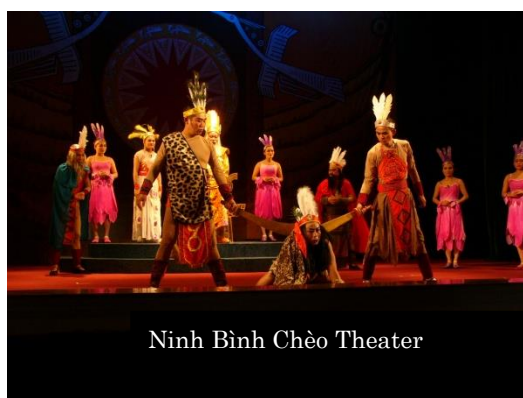
4. Vietnamese Original Traditional Theater... Chèo, Tuồng, Cải Lương, Múa rối Thăng Long

All forms of Vietnamese traditional theater are musical theaters incorporating elements of song and dance, and are deeply connected to people’s lives. Their form differs depending on the region of origin, but they can basically be divided into the following 4 categories.

- A. Northern Vietnam: Chèo popular musical theater
- B. Central Vietnam: Tuồng closely linked to imperial court culture
- C. Southern Mekong Delta: Cải Lương in which people sing folk songs
- D. Red River Delta: Múa rối Thăng Long (water puppet theater) was created here

A. Chèo

Chèo occupied the position of entertainment by the farmers themselves in farming villages in Northern Vietnam, which was strongly influenced by China. It integrates dance and music with comedic folk tales. The plot is clear, and the stories speak of good deeds and how people live their lives. Chèo has a fixed form, which you can see in how the stages are made. Formerly, Chèo



Ninh Bình Chèo Theater

was performed on 2 mats, with the audience surrounding performers on 3 sides. However, at the beginning of the 20th century, Chèo was brought into specialized theaters in urban areas, and performances by dedicated theater groups became common.

Currently there are 16 Chèo theater groups throughout Vietnam, and in rural provinces it is also performed at festivals and the like.

B. Tuồng

Tuồng originated in Chinese farce theater brought to Vietnam in the 13th century. It originated in Northern Vietnam, but in the 19th century it was brought to Huế in Central Vietnam by the Nguyen Dynasty, where it reached a golden age as an art of the imperial court.

Tuồng has many historical plays handling Chinese narratives and historical facts, power struggles in the imperial court, and warlords. The people of Da Nang call Tuồng by the name “Hát Bộ”.

Da Nang has a dedicated Tuồng theater, but there are few opportunities for it to be performed here.

The Tuồng that I saw while staying in Da Nang was performed outdoors. Every Sunday a night market is held along the river, and an outdoor stage is set up in a corner of the market. When the sun goes down, actors painted with colorful makeup and wearing vivid costumes take to the stage, where they perform skits and folk music. There is no admission fee, and there are many parents with children in the audience. While this is not limited to Tuồng, young Vietnamese people are distancing themselves from traditional theater, so the size of audiences has plummeted. Although performances have been staged to bring in more foreign tourists, traditional theater in Vietnam now faces the tremendous challenge of survival.



C. Cải Lương

The translation of Cải Lương means “revival theater” or “reformed theater”.

In Hồ Chí Minh City, it is performed about once a month in the municipal theater in the city center, with older middle-aged people forming the majority of the audience.

Unfortunately, it is hard to find young people among the audience. Like Chèo



and Tuồng, the government does not put effort into preserving this art, nor does it have a firm tradition like water puppet theater, which has survived successfully thanks to tourism. The history of Cải Lương is shallow.

It is said to have appeared in Southern Vietnam under the influence of French comedies in the 1920s when Vietnam was still a colony of France.

Music occupies an important position in Cải Lương, but it does not use percussion instruments. Rather it uses the dan tranh, a string instrument unique to Vietnam, as well as guitars, and frequently features traditional songs called “vọng cổ”. A friend of mine living in the Mekong Delta says that when sung in the southern dialect, it has a very deep flavor.

On the stage, performers wearing thick makeup and gaudy costumes sing their lyrics and dance along with the music. While there are sword fighting scenes, they do not have much impact. Looking at the form of this theater, it could be compared to public musical theater in Japan. Despite the fact that it has existed for less than 100 years, there is a vast number of plays.

This includes works based on history and social changes, dramatizations of romance novels, and plays depicting romantic and family relationships, and it was extremely popular with many people in the Mekong Delta when it was first created.

D. Múa rối Thăng Long

While there are many puppet shows in the world, Vietnam is likely the only one performed on water. This art is said to have originally been performed in the Red River Delta area of Northern Vietnam, and has a history of nearly 1,000 years.

Múa rối Thăng Long was performed at festivals and village events celebrating the harvest of crops, with motifs including local folktales, legends, and

Outdoor water puppet theater at the Museum of Ethnology in Hà Nội



myths. It was established as entertainment for the imperial court from the 11th to 15th centuries, and there are several theater groups in Huế and Da Nang in Central Vietnam. Generally outdoor swamps and irrigation ponds are used as venues, and the stage is divided into squares. A curtain is hung in the background, and the operators stand in water up their waist in the background, where they operate the puppets along with songs and instrumental music. The

dolls themselves are made from fig tree wood and attached to the tips of long poles, with a mechanism that moves their heads and arms using strings.



Hà Nội, known as the city of water, has two public theaters dedicated to water puppet theater.

I researched one of them, the Thang Long Water Puppet Theater. Large buses were parked on the road in front of the theater, and the entrance was crowded with foreign tourists. Pamphlets in several languages were available in the lobby, including English, French, and Japanese, introducing 14 programs chosen from over 400 in total. Everyday scenes from rural areas including

rice planting and fishing are portrayed elegantly and comically, following live music centered on percussion instruments. Various scenes are composed as units, but there is no narrative consistency. The performance time was 50 minutes.

Doll making techniques and operation techniques are succeeded inherently by villages, and it is said to take 5 years to learn these skills. In the past, only men could become puppeteers, and the secrets of the doll's mechanisms were strictly managed. The reason for this is that women would be married to men in other villages, where there was the possibility of the mechanism being discovered. However, female puppeteers have increased recently, and they have started to convey the appeal of water puppet theater by displaying the backstage as well.

Theater festivals held by the government and the efforts of arts groups supporting them

In Vietnam, there are many festivals led by the government.

Of these, Japanese art groups participated for the first time in the 3rd Vietnam International Experimental Theater Festival, and delivered excellent results.

At the end of 2015 when I had just come to Vietnam, I was invited to a meeting of the Vietnamese Performing Arts Society which holds theater festivals, and was asked by the executive chairman to have Japanese groups participate.

Administration of theater festivals is organized by the director of the National Theater, which was my host institution, as well as theater people who have the title of “people’s artist”, and by coincidence, my acquaintance the Singaporean director Chua Soo Poog was named as one of the judges.

This theater festival is held every 3 years, and was held for the third time in 2016.

In the summary of the theater festival, the intent was written as “Exploring new forms, while satisfying the desires of the audience, and aiming for development of the entire performing arts community”, but it had no particular theme, and there was no specific explanation of experimental theater. To be honest I could not see the outlines of this event, as though looking at an out of focus picture, but it still intrigued me in Vietnam which has so few performances from overseas.

Never mind Grotowski’s theory of experimental theory, Vietnam has nothing close to avant garde theater or absurdist theater. In such a situation for theater, if this has an impact on the younger generation, develop young people’s thinking and imagination, and cultivate free individual expression in the arts, then contemporary theater in Vietnam would change theatrically.

Seven foreign countries participated, including Panama, Greece, France, Germany, the Philippines, China, and Japan, and 15 groups including the Vietnam National Drama Theatre, Youth Theatre of Vietnam, the Thang Long Puppet Theatre, and the Military Theatrical Theater



Group competed at various theaters in Hà Nội.

The series of works “Kamome” sponsored by “Theatre Centre Without Walls”, which I recommended, came with a grant from the Japan Foundation. It was performed for 2 days with the cooperation of the Vietnam National Drama Theatre. On the day of the day of the performance, many spectators gathered in the theater, so that some of the audience had to stand in the aisles.

There were some problems with subtitles using a projector, but the audience watched the show with bated breath, and gave tremendous applause once the play was over. It was a moment mixed with excitement and relief.

At the closing ceremony that marked the finale of the theater festival, following ornate folk dances and traditional music, the judges announced various prizes and held an award ceremony.

In the individual actor's division which was announced first, the names of two Japanese actors were suddenly announced, and I could see from the awards they were given on the stage that they had won silver medals. Next, the gold medal for best actor was given to 3 actors who starred in "Kamome", and a Japanese director was also chosen for the excellent director award, so I realized that the performance of "Kamome" had gained high acclaim. Finally, Theatre Centre Without Walls was called for the honorable best work award, which every participating group was eager to win. They shone as the best of 15 groups in attendance.

While I hesitate to sing my own praises, new attempts befitting experimental theater were made for the performance of "Kamome", which entranced the Vietnamese audience, and made the high level of Japanese contemporary theater known to Vietnam. I felt that it closed the distance between Vietnamese and Japanese theater, and I saw the potential for Japanese-Vietnamese joint productions.

2. Record of activities concerning travel during the period of my fellowship

| Date | Origin → Destination | Activities |
|-------------|-----------------------------|---|
| 2015.12/11 | Tokyo → Hà Nội | Stayed in Hà Nội |
| 2016.02/04 | Hà Nội → Nam Định | Observed Tết (Vietnamese New Year) in Nam Định |
| 02/05 | Nam Định → Hà Nội | |
| 03/13 | Hà Nội → Hồ Chí Minh | Researched the culture of everyday life and traditional dance by ethnic minorities on the South Central Coast of Vietnam (Nha Trang, Đà Lạt). |
| 03/18 | Hồ Chí Minh → Nha Trang | |
| 03/20 | Nha Trang → Đà Lạt | |
| 03/23 | Đà Lạt → Hà Nội | |
| 04/09 | Hà Nội → Ninh Bình | Visited the Ninh Bình Chèo Theater. Discussed the potential for future joint productions with Director Nguyễn Quang. |
| 04/10 | Ninh Bình → Hà Nội | |
| 04/11 | Hà Nội → Da Nang | Stayed in Da Nang. |
| 04/29 | Da Nang → Huế | Covered the 9 th International Performing Arts Huế Festival. |
| 05/04 | Huế → Da Nang | |
| 05/20 | Da Nang → Hội An | Covered the outdoor water puppet theater in Hội An |
| 05/22 | Hội An → Da Nang | |
| 06/03 | Da Nang → Hồ Chí Minh | Stayed in Hồ Chí Minh. |
| 06/08 | Hồ Chí Minh → Châu Đốc | Visited on the Mekong Delta at the border with Cambodia. Researched the Chăm ethnic minority. |
| 06/10 | Châu Đốc → Hồ Chí Minh | |
| 09/04 | Hồ Chí Minh → Cần Thơ | Observed the culture of everyday life in Cần Thơ, the largest trade city on the Mekong Delta. |
| 09/06 | Cần Thơ → Hồ Chí Minh | |
| 09/30 | Hồ Chí Minh → Ninh Bình | Observed education in junior and senior high schools and visited |

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|-------|----------------------|--|
| 10/02 | Ninh Bình → Hà Nội | average families in Ninh Bình. |
| 11/26 | Hà Nội → Hồ Chí Minh | Workshop for “Learning Japanese By Expression”, a cultural lecture by the Japan Foundation Vietnam Japanese Culture Center |
| 11/29 | Hồ Chí Minh → Hà Nội | |
| 12/02 | Hà Nội → Nam Định | Visited the Nam Định Chèo Theater. Discussed the actual conditions of Chèo with Director Diệu Hằng. |
| 12/04 | Nam Định → Hà Nội | |
| 12/10 | Hà Nội → Tokyo | |



Nam Định Chèo Theater



International Performing Arts Huế Festival



Junior High School in Ninh Bình

3. Concluding fellowship activities

Vietnam, which I saw over the course of 1 year, was a society in which the sights of my childhood (the 1960s) and the present exist side by side. Some Vietnamese have become wealthy, but there are extremely poor people among them. In cities like Hà Nội and Hồ Chí Minh, and in rural towns in the Mekong Delta, I clearly witnessed the disparity between them. I thought that that life must be difficult in a socialist political system, but the sight of people working as hard as they can and their bright smiles gave me energy. I was fascinated with such a country, and joined their life without air conditioning, Wi-Fi, or even tap water. In undeveloped areas, I met many people who had no notion of theater. These were direct encounters. They invited me into their homes and welcomed me like a family member.

In general Vietnamese people respect Japanese culture and they were very kind to me, a Japanese person.

Considering what social function is fulfilled by theater in poor areas also contributed to clarifying the relationship between family and Vietnamese society. It was also an attempt to explore a situation completely different from the situation in which theater was formed, and to understand theater in people's living spaces.

Because this fellowship is the activity of an individual, and because it involved such a long stay, it made "living exchange" possible, and allowed me to experience diverse cultures of daily life in Vietnam. I did not simply act like a nomad, but found major clues for future joint work by verifying cultural background and holding a perspective that contributes to creation. It was truly a valuable experience.

Theater starts from sharing a time and a place. It is a fantastic medium that makes it possible to take interest in each other and think about people and society. Even now when the development of the Internet has caused rapid development of the volume and speed of information transmitted worldwide, I doubt that the role of theater will diminish.

Since about 4 or 5 years ago, the theater community of Vietnam has finally opened its eyes to cultural and art exchange with foreign countries, and has begun to introduce new trends. Speaking only of contemporary theater, my host institutions the "Youth Theatre of Vietnam" and the "Vietnam National Drama Theatre" have a strong interest in Japanese theater. They have escaped from the conventional isolated theater condition known as "tradition", and are aiming for a reform of the performing arts.

During my stay, I formed a strong network and gained knowledge of people involved in performing arts in Vietnam, including the Vietnam Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism; the Vietnamese Performing Arts Society; the International Theater Association Vietnam Center; and the Hà Nội/Hồ Chí Minh Academies of Theater and Cinema.

Based on this foundation for exchange, I would like to promote sustainable collaborative efforts with landing points 1 year, 3 years, and 5 years in the future, and present solid direction. I plan to

continue to keep my base of activities in Vietnam from 2017 onwards, and develop an “Asian Theater Movement”.

