



## From Takebu Tabi's "Isolated Death" to "Independent Death" Vol.61

# "Senior theater" is funny and can not be stopped!

2015.12.28 Journalist Takeshi Yabe

In "Stage Bridge" established in 1978 as the first American drama school for the elderly, Acting (Play), Playwriting (Playwright), Musical, Impro (Improvised Theater), Tap Dance, Story Telling etc. 30 We offer a variety of classes above. Participants in their 50s and 90s dance musical dance, play Shakespeare plays, show off improvised theater without scripts, make stories based on experiences, etc. and present themselves very much That's it. Performing arts such as theater / song / dance stimulate the brain while moving the body, it is said that it has the effect of raising the creativity and potential of the elderly, but "Stage Bridge" in Oakland, California ( We visited the site of STB) below.



José Rivera Executive Director who explains STB's history and class content

## I want to break through the established concept for the elderly

In the 1970s when the STB was founded, it was thought that "elderly people do not need to be creative" even in the United States. In other words, when retiring from active service, it was said that creativity is not necessary because it is about watching television at home, playing with grandchildren, or playing a bingo game at an elderly home.

However, Dr. Stuart Candel, who studied theater in the UK graduate school, wondered about such a situation and wanted to break down the established concept for the elderly. Then, by establishing an opportunity to learn theater, songs, dance etc. to the elderly, STB was established to increase creativity and potential.

According to José Rivera secretary general who responded to the interview, at STB, a lecturer who knew the mind and body of the elderly, so that lecturers will

make unreasonable movements during lessons such as drama, dance and so on enough Consideration. In addition, some people who can not walk without using Walker sometimes join the class while consulting with a doctor or a caregiver. It is also one of the objectives of senior theater to overcome the inconvenience of the body and challenge individual possibilities.

Speaking of possibilities, some people retaliate again to try their dreams when they were young. A former bankman's late 60's man tried hard at a young aim to become an actor, but he gave up on his way. However, after my retirement, my dream and passion as a young generation was raised and I took classes of plays and musicals at the STB. Then he played a stage theater debut at a local theater and fulfilled his dreams brilliantly. His performance was highly appreciated even in the newspaper, he said that he continued to perform for the rest of the time.

After receiving explanation of Rivera secretary general, I had my class observe. In the class "Radio Drama" first peeped out, about ten students were practicing while watching the script of the musical performed at Broadway in New York. Radio drama is a drama mainly played by actors and voice actors, broadcast on the radio. Every student is acting truly with voices reaching far without a microphone. In the interval between words, other casts put sound effects in good timing, such as drums and shoes, horse calls, applause, chorus, sounds knocking on the door, but the team is united with the heat of making drama.



Class of radio drama

The next time I watched was a class of storytelling. Storytelling is to make stories and announce them based on their thoughts and thoughts, personal stories, and other stories. The female lecturer (70 years old) of a former newspaper reporter explained the important points of how to make a story and how to speak.

There is a principle that "5W1H (when, where, who, what, why, what,)", but the most important thing is "what" part. Then it decides whether it is one person talking or a conversation style, but in the latter case, you must use the voices of multiple characters. It is important to effectively use the eye contact, face expression, voice size, gesture, etc., as a point of way of speaking, to grasp the heart of the audience. After that, the students stood one by one and released a story made in advance.

The first woman talked about the youth's homeless. After saying the title with a loud voice saying "homeless!", I slowly looked at the face of the other students and started talking.

"Everyone may know, but in front of the movie theater in the downtown area of the town, 5 or 6 young people like homeless are always hanging out. They are doing what they are doing, One day, I decided to listen to the courage and listen directly, one day, I took a handmade cookie and went out, "Excuse me! It is cookie baked at home, how are you? "Talking to them, they showed a little alarmed, but received the cookie and answered my question ...".

So I found out that they were from a middle-class family, but they were seeking their way of living while going out of the house without having a good relationship with their parents and staying at a friend's house. And he said that he showed off the song that the boy with the guitar made for the girlfriend.

When the woman's story finishes, the other students say the impression, the instructor said, "Because the guitar boy showed off songs is the core part of the story, even if you sing a part of the song Was not it good? "Advised.

The 85 - year - old woman then talked about the old Italian trip. She was broken-hearted in her thirties and went to Italy where she fell in love with a handsome Italian male doctor at first sight, and she said that she soaked up completely by being called "madam, madam" but that experience was talked about Italian style humor While intertwining, I talked funny. I was excited unexpectedly what happened to the way of love while traveling, and the fun of the storytelling was well transmitted.



Drama class practice scenery

## **Demonstration at regional elementary and junior high school and nursing home**

Storytelling students regularly visit local elementary and junior high schools and senior citizens' homes and perform demonstrations. It is popular that the story of elderly people who have experienced life is better for elementary and junior high school students. Some people talked about the civil rights movement involved at the young age, the bullying experience, the damage caused by the bullying, etc. However, the students listened seriously.

After learning the fun of the storytelling, students listen to stories from their grandparents, etc. and create a story and be given the task of presenting in the classroom.

STB conducted "grandparents' story contest" for elementary and junior high school students who conducted storytelling last year. So I won the first place was a black boy in elementary school, the title was "Coca-Cola Bottle".

His grandmother spent his childhood in the southern part where racial discrimination is heavy. At the time Coca-Cola was going on, she wanted to drink because it was OK, but it was not allowed for blacks to enter the store selling Coke. After a couple of years, blacks also began to buy Coke and finally got drunk. My grandmother never forgets the impression at that time, and as I drink the coke thereafter, my memory will revive. As a message to the grandson at the end, he told "I can not give up my dream never".

Other Nikkei students who talked about grandparents' experiences in concentration camps during the Second World War also won. By knowing grandparents' past experiences and family history, students will be able to understand where they are coming and be proud of themselves. This is a great merit of different-generation exchanges between children and elderly people.

Students such as musicals, jazz chorus, Impro (improvisation theater) visit the elderly home and nursing home care facilities, and perform demonstrations. A tenant looks at singing, dancing and performing nearly the same generation as myself, and gives a big applause to "This is amazing!" It is no exception in patients with dementia. Once I got a musical at a senior citizen's home, until a show began, when dementia patients who yelled loudly at the stage and started to get angry started to smile, they sang together while clapping their hands It said.



A woman singing and dancing to accompany the piano accompaniment

## Health effects of senior theater

The characteristic of the senior theater is not only to cheer the body but also to activate the work of the brain.

Especially at the theater and storytelling, I make a role and think about the composition of the story, even though I am at home, I am using my head. It also becomes a new kind of motive.

Senior theater is said to have the effect of delaying the progression of dementia and Alzheimer's disease and inhibiting onset. Although memory function declines when it comes to

dementia, on the other hand the function of feeling and expressing things increases. Therefore, it seems to be inspiring to see a musical like the dementia patient mentioned earlier, and to sing with a smile together.

There are survey results showing the influence of play lessons on the recognition function of the elderly by numbers. Professor Tony Nottis (Theater Studies) at Elmhurst University in Illinois conducted a survey on 122 categories of elderly people who took the theater for 4 weeks. As a result, it was found that 19% improvement in the memory test, 37% by the understanding test and 12% by the creativity test, respectively.

This survey was published in 'Aging, Neuropsychology, Recognition, Journal' in 2008, but Dr. Notice said:

"The best way to improve cognitive function is to always try new things, the elderly through the theater," Life is fun! pleasant! "You can recognize again."

STB classes usually finish in 3 to 6 months, but even if they finish, they take other classes and many students continue for a long time. What they say with their mouths is that they are "funny and can not stop."

STB is a pioneer in this field, but senior theater is now spread throughout the United States. Of particular note is the increasing number of elderly homes and nursing homes that introduce senior theater programs. When I interviewed, a female manager at a nursing home facility that is considering introducing a theater program came to the STB for 6 hours from the eastern Massachusetts state by airplane. While observing a class such as storytelling, she had a convincing expression on her face.

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